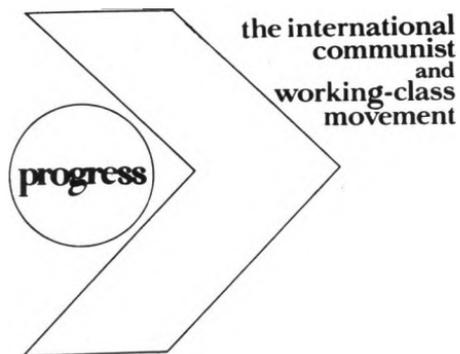


soviet
foreign policy
and
international
relations



**Soviet Peace Efforts
on the Eve
of World War II**



the international
communist
and
working-class
movement

progress

MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
SOVIET PEACE EFFORTS ON THE EVE OF WORLD WAR II

Soviet Peace Efforts on the Eve of World War II

(September 1939-August 1939)

DOCUMENTS AND RECORDS

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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
FOREWORD	35
DOCUMENTS AND RECORDS	
1938	
1. AGREEMENT BETWEEN GERMANY, BRITAIN, FRANCE AND ITALY September 29	51
2. ANGLO-GERMAN DECLARATION September 30	54
3. STATEMENT BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AT A SESSION OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS COUNCIL September 30	55
4. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN CZE- CHOSLOVAKIA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR October 1	56
5. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR October 1	57
6. TASS ANNOUNCEMENT October 2	57
7. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOR- EIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR October 2	58
8. TELEGRAM FROM A SOVIET MILITARY INTELLIGENCE	

OFFICER IN JAPAN TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE RED ARMY October 3	60
9. TASS ANNOUNCEMENT October 4	61
10. EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR October 12	62
11. TELEGRAM OF THE US CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN FRANCE TO THE US SECRETARY OF STATE October 13	63
12. EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN October 17	65
13. LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE October 19	66
14. EXCERPT FROM A TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR October 19	67
15. TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADORS IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE October 20	67
16. EXCERPT FROM A DIRECTIVE BY THE REICH CHAN- CELLOR AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES OF GERMANY October 21	68
17. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRI- TAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR October 22	70
18. EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR October 25	71
19. LETTER FROM THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN GER- MANY TO THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF POLAND October 25	73
20. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR October 29	74

21. LETTER FROM THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GERMANY October 31	76
22. EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN THE USA November 14	80
23. EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR November 17	80
24. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE COUNSELLOR OF THE GERMAN EMBASSY IN POLAND AND THE VICE-DIRECTOR OF THE POLITICAL DEPARTMENT OF THE POLISH MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS November 18	82
25. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE FRENCH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN THE USSR November 20	82
26. LETTER FROM THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN THE USA TO THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF POLAND November 21	84
27. MEMORANDUM TRANSMITTED BY THE HUNGARIAN LEGATION IN GERMANY TO THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GERMANY November 21	87
28. TELEGRAM FROM THE DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR November 24	88
29. EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR November 25	90
30. MEMORANDUM OF THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE GERMAN ARMED FORCES — "NOTES FOR WEHRMACHT'S DISCUSSIONS WITH ITALY" November 26	91
31. TASS COMMUNIQUE ON SOVIET-POLISH RELATIONS November 27	93
32. COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY THE PRESS DEPARTMENT OF THE POLISH MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO GERMAN CORRESPONDENTS IN POLAND November 28	94

33. EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN December 4	95
34. FRANCO-GERMAN DECLARATION December 6	96
35. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN AND LLOYD GEORGE December 6	97
36. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN AND THE CHIEF DIPLOMATIC ADVISER TO THE BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY December 8	98
37. LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE December 10	100
38. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND THE BRITISH MINISTER IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA December 10	102
39. TELEGRAM FROM A SOVIET MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER IN JAPAN TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE RED ARMY December 10	104
40. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF ITALY AND THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR IN GERMANY December 15	104
41. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN GERMANY TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR December 15	105
42. EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF POLAND December 16	106
43. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN AN OFFICIAL OF THE DANZIG SENATE AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE December 16-17	109
44. EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE December 19	109

45. REPORT FROM THE COUNSELLOR OF THE GERMAN EMBASSY IN POLAND FOR THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICE OF A WESTERN POWER
December 20 111
46. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
December 22 112
47. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE COUNSELLOR OF THE GERMAN EMBASSY IN POLAND AND THE POLISH MINISTER IN IRAN
December 28 113
48. REPORT FROM THE COUNSELLOR OF THE GERMAN EMBASSY IN POLAND FOR THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICE OF A WESTERN POWER
Not earlier than December 28 114
49. EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE
December 31 115

1939

50. EXCERPT FROM THE DIARY OF THE ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER
January 1 118
51. EXCERPT FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE REICH CHANCELLOR OF GERMANY AND THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF POLAND
January 5 118
52. EXCERPT FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR
January 7 123
53. EXCERPT FROM THE DIARY OF THE ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER
January 8 123
54. LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE
January 11 124
55. TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN
January 15 126
56. TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET REP-

RESENTATIVE AT THE SESSION OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS COUNCIL January 15	127
57. FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE REICH CHANCELLOR OF GERMANY AND THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF HUNGARY January 16	128
58. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN A GERMAN JOURNALIST AND THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE GERMAN SOCIETY FOR EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES January 19	128
59. STATEMENT BY THE SOVIET REPRESENTATIVE AT THE SESSION OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS COUNCIL January 20	130
60. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR January 20	132
61. EXCERPT FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER AND THE PRIME MINISTER OF YUGOSLAVIA January 18-23	134
62. TELEGRAM FROM A SOVIET MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER IN JAPAN TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE RED ARMY January 23	137
63. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF GERMANY AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF POLAND January 26	137
64. NOTE FROM THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF FRANCE TO THE EMBASSY OF GREAT BRITAIN IN FRANCE February 1	139
65. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR February 1	142
66. MINUTE FROM THE COUNSELLOR OF THE GERMAN EMBASSY IN FRANCE TO THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE February 1	143
67. TASS COMMUNIQUE ON THE CLOSURE OF THE SOVIET DIPLOMATIC MISSION IN BUDAPEST February 2	144
68. SOVIET PRESS REPORT ABOUT CLASHES ON THE SOVIET-MANCHURIAN BORDER February 2	145

69. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF ITALY AND AN UNOFFICIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT
February 2 146
70. TELEGRAM FROM THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GERMANY
February 4 146
71. STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF BRITAIN IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS
February 6 147
72. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
February 6 147
73. EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF POLAND
February 148
74. TELEGRAM FROM THE US AMBASSADOR IN JAPAN TO THE US SECRETARY OF STATE
February 8 150
75. SOVIET PRESS REPORT ABOUT A CLASH ON THE SOVIET-MANCHURIAN BORDER
February 9 152
76. EXCERPT FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR
February 9 153
77. EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE
February 10 154
78. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
February 10 155
79. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN A GERMAN JOURNALIST AND THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN POLAND
February 13 156
80. TELEGRAM FROM THE GERMAN LEGATION IN RUMANIA TO THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GERMANY
February 14 157
81. TELEGRAM FROM THE GERMAN LEGATION IN

RUMANIA TO THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GERMANY February 17	158
82. EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN February 19	159
83. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR February 19	161
84. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR February 20	163
85. EXCERPTS FROM A SURVEY OF BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY IN 1938 PREPARED BY THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN February 25	165
86. LETTER FROM THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN GERMANY TO THE STATE SECRETARY OF THE GERMAN MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS February 25	171
87. REPORT BY THE HEAD OF THE GERMAN ECONOMIC DELEGATION TO RUMANIA TO THE COMMISSIONER FOR THE FOUR-YEAR PLAN February 27	171
88. TELEGRAM FROM THE GERMAN MINISTER IN RUMANIA TO THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GERMANY February 27	175
89. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN A GERMAN JOURNALIST AND THE MILITARY ATTACHE OF GERMANY IN POLAND February 27	176
90. TELEGRAM FROM THE US AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE US SECRETARY OF STATE February 28	177
91. LETTER FROM THE STATE SECRETARY OF THE GERMAN MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN GERMANY March 1	178
92. LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE EXECUTIVE YUAN OF CHINA TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS OF THE USSR March 1	179
93. EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE	

SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN	
March 4	180
94. TASS REPORT ON THE RECALL OF THE USSR REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE NON-INTERVENTION COMMITTEE	
March 4	182
95. EXCERPT FROM A REPORT OF THE BRITISH MILITARY ATTACHÉ IN GERMANY TO THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN GERMANY	
March 6	182
96. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN ESTONIA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR	
March 7	183
97. REPORT ON THE SPEECH BY THE REICH CHANCELLOR OF GERMANY AT A MEETING OF GERMAN MILITARY, ECONOMIC AND PARTY REPRESENTATIVES	
March 8	183
98. EXCERPT FROM A TELEGRAM FROM THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN GERMANY TO THE BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS	
March 9	185
99. TELEGRAM FROM THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN JAPAN TO THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF POLAND	
March 10	189
100. EXCERPT FROM A BRIEF REPORT BY THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN GERMANY ON THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN GERMANY IN 1938	
March 11	190
101. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN A GERMAN JOURNALIST AND A COUNSELLOR OF THE GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S OFFICE	
March 13	192
102. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN GERMANY TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR	
March 14	195
103. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR	
March 15	196
104. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR	
March 16	197
105. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE	

	USSR AND THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR March 17 and 18	199
106.	NOTE FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR March 18	200
107.	TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADORS IN GERMANY, BRITAIN, FRANCE AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA March 18	202
108.	TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADORS IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE March 18	203
109.	TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADORS IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE March 18	203
110.	TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADORS IN FRANCE AND BRITAIN March 19	204
111.	TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR March 19	204
112.	TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FO- REIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR March 19	205
113.	EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COM- MISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN March 19	206
114.	EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN GERMANY TO THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF FRANCE March 19	207
115.	TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR March 20	210
116.	TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN March 20	211
117.	EXCERPT FROM A TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET	

	AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR	
	March 20	212
118.	EXCERPT FROM A REPORT BY THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN TURKEY ON A CONVERSATION WITH THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN TURKEY	
	March 21	213
119.	TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN THE USA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR	
	March 21	214
120.	MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR	
	March 21	214
121.	DRAFT DECLARATION OF GREAT BRITAIN, THE USSR, FRANCE AND POLAND SUBMITTED BY THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR	
	March 21	217
122.	TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADORS IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE	
	March 22	217
123.	TASS ANNOUNCEMENT	
	March 22	218
124.	TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR	
	March 22	219
125.	TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN LITHUANIA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR	
	March 22	219
126.	TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN	
	March 23	220
127.	TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN LITHUANIA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR	
	March 23	221
128.	STATEMENT BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF OVERSEAS TRADE	
	March 23	221
129.	STATEMENT BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR	

FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE MINISTER OF LATVIA IN THE USSR March 28	223
130. EXTRACT FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSA- TION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE RUMANIAN MINISTER IN THE USSR March 29	225
131. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FO- REIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR March 29	225
132. EXTRACT FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSA- TION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE FRENCH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN THE USSR March 29	226
133. FROM THE DIARY OF THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF ITALY March 29	226
134. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRIT- AIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR March 30	227
135. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR March 31	227
136. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRIT- AIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR March 31	228
137. STATEMENT BY THE BRITISH PRIME MINISTER ON GUARANTEES TO POLAND March 31	231
138. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FO- REIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR March 31	232
139. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR April 1	233
140. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR April 1	234
141. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE	

PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR April 2	238
142. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR April 2	240
143. TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN April 3	242
144. DIRECTIVE BY THE CHIEF OF THE HIGH COMMAND OF THE GERMAN ARMED FORCES April 3	242
145. EXCERPTS FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN April 4	243
146. EXCERPTS FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR April 4	244
147. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR April 4	246
148. COMMUNIQUE ON TALKS BETWEEN THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF POLAND AND THE PRIME MINISTER OF BRITAIN IN LONDON ON APRIL 4-6, 1939 April 6	247
149. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR April 6	248
150. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR April 7	250
151. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR April 8	252
152. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR April 9	253

153. EXCERPTS FROM A LETTER FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
April 9 254
154. TELEGRAM FROM A SOVIET MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER IN JAPAN TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE RED ARMY
April 9 256
155. TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE
April 10 256
156. TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN
April 10 257
157. EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE
April 11 257
158. EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN
April 11 260
159. PLAN OF GERMANY'S ATTACK ON POLAND ("OPERATION WHITE")
April 11 260
160. DECLARATION BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT ON GUARANTEES TO GREECE AND RUMANIA
April 13 264
161. DECLARATION OF THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT ON GUARANTEES TO GREECE, RUMANIA AND POLAND
April 13 265
162. TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN
April 13 266
163. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
April 14 266
164. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
April 14 267
165. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR

CONTENTS

19

April 15	268
166. TELEGRAM FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE USSR COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS TO THE SOVIET CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN TURKEY	
April 15	269
167. TELEGRAM FROM A SOVIET MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER IN JAPAN TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE RED ARMY	
April 15	270
168. TELEGRAM FROM A SOVIET MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER IN JAPAN TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE RED ARMY	
April 15	270
169. TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADORS IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE	
April 16	271
170. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR	
April 17	272
171. PROPOSAL PRESENTED BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR	
April 17	273
172. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR	
April 18	275
173. TELEGRAM FROM THE GERMAN CHARGE D'AFFAIRES IN BRITAIN TO THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GERMANY	
April 18	276
174. TELEGRAM FROM THE US AMBASSADOR IN BELGIUM TO THE US SECRETARY OF STATE	
April 18	277
175. TELEGRAM FROM THE US SECRETARY OF STATE TO THE US AMBASSADOR IN BELGIUM	
April 18	278
176. TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE	
April 19	278
177. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRIT- AIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR	
April 21	279

178. EXCERPT FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE TURKISH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR
April 21 279
179. TELEGRAM FROM THE US CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN THE USSR TO THE US SECRETARY OF STATE
April 22 281
180. TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE
April 23 281
181. LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE
April 23 282
182. EXCERPT FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE CHINESE AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR
April 23 283
183. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
April 24 286
184. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
April 25 287
185. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
April 25 288
186. EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE
April 25 289
187. TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE
April 26 290
188. EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
April 26 291
189. TELEGRAM FROM THE GERMAN CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN BRITAIN TO THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GERMANY

	April 26	292
190.	EXCERPT FROM A TELEGRAM FROM THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GERMANY TO THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN JAPAN	
	April 26	293
191.	TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE	
	April 27	296
192.	EXCERPT FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSA- TION BETWEEN THE VICE-DIRECTOR OF THE POLI- TICAL DEPARTMENT OF THE POLISH MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR IN POLAND	
	April 27	296
193.	DRAFT AGREEMENT BY FRANCE, BRITAIN AND THE USSR PRESENTED BY THE FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE	
	April 29	297
194.	EXTRACT FROM A TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMIS- SARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR	
	April 29	298
195.	TELEGRAM FROM THE DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR	
	April 30	298
196.	MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN A GERMAN JOURNALIST AND A COUNSELLOR OF THE GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S OFFICE	
	May 2	299
197.	TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRIT- AIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR	
	May 3	304
198.	TELEGRAM FROM THE DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR	
	May 3	306
199.	TELEGRAM FROM THE DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR	
	May 5	306
200.	TELEGRAM FROM A SOVIET MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER IN JAPAN TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE RED ARMY	
	May 5	310

201. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
May 6 311
202. MINUTE FROM THE COUNSELLOR OF THE GERMAN EMBASSY IN POLAND FOR THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICE OF A WESTERN POWER
May 7 311
203. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR
May 8 314
204. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE AMBASSADOR OF BRITAIN IN THE USSR
May 8 316
205. AIDE-MÉMOIRE HANDED BY THE AMBASSADOR OF BRITAIN IN THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
May 8 318
206. TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE
May 8 319
207. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
May 9 320
208. TASS COMMUNIQUE
May 10 321
209. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
May 10 322
210. TELEGRAM FROM THE DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
May 10 323
211. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN ESTONIA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
May 10 323
212. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE AMBASSADOR OF POLAND IN THE USSR
May 11 324
213. AIDE-MÉMOIRE HANDED BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE

	AMBASSADOR OF BRITAIN IN THE USSR	
	May 14	325
214.	TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADORS IN ITALY AND GERMANY	
	May 14	326
215.	MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN AN OFFICIAL OF THE DANZIG SENATE AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE	
	May 15	327
216.	EXTRACT FROM A TELEGRAM FROM THE GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER TO THE AMBASSADOR OF GERMANY IN JAPAN	
	May 15	328
217.	TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN THE USA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR	
	May 16	330
218.	EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE AMBASSADOR OF POLAND IN BRITAIN TO THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF POLAND	
	May 19	331
219.	EXCERPT FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE AMBASSADOR OF JAPAN IN THE USSR	
	May 19	332
220.	TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE USSR AT THE SESSION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS	
	May 20	332
221.	EXTRACT FROM A TELEGRAM FROM THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN JAPAN TO THE GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER	
	May 20	333
222.	TELEGRAM FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE USSR AT THE SESSION OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS COUNCIL TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR	
	May 22	334
223.	STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE USSR AT THE SESSION OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS COUNCIL	
	May 22	334
224.	EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF A CONFERENCE AT THE GERMAN REICH CHANCELLOR'S	
	May 23	335
225.	COMMUNIQUE OF THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR	

FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR May 24	338
226. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN A GERMAN BUSINESSMAN AND THE COUNSELLOR OF THE GERMAN EMBASSY IN POLAND May 25	339
227. TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE May 26	341
228. FROM THE DIARY OF THE ITALIAN FOREIGN MINIS- TER May 26	342
229. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE AMBASSADOR OF BRITAIN AND THE CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES OF FRANCE IN THE USSR May 27	343
230. DRAFT AGREEMENT BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN, FRANCE AND THE USSR HANDED BY THE AMBASSA- DOR OF GREAT BRITAIN AND THE CHARGÉ D'AF- FAIRES OF FRANCE IN THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR May 27	347
231. EXTRACT FROM A DISPATCH FROM THE NAVAL ATTACHÉ OF ITALY IN JAPAN TO THE NAVAL MINIS- TER OF ITALY May 27	349
232. THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION AND THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE USSR. A REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS AND PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AT A SESSION OF THE SUPREME SOVIET OF THE USSR May 31	350
233. DRAFT AGREEMENT BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN, FRANCE AND THE USSR HANDED BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE AMBASSADOR OF GREAT BRITAIN AND THE CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES OF FRANCE IN THE USSR June 2	360
234. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR June 3	361
235. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE ESTONIAN MINISTER IN THE USSR	

June 5	363
236. TELEGRAM FROM THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN JAPAN TO THE STATE SECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GERMANY June 7	364
237. EXCERPT FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN JAPAN AND THE JAPANESE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS June 7	364
238. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR June 8	368
239. TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN June 10	370
240. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR June 10	371
241. AN EDITORIAL FROM <i>PRAVDA</i> : "THE QUESTION OF THE DEFENCE OF THE THREE BALTIC COUNTRIES AGAINST AGGRESSION" June 13	372
242. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE STATE SECRETARY OF THE GERMAN MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN GERMANY June 13	376
243. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR June 14	378
244. EXCERPT FROM THE DIARY OF THE ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER June 14	379
245. DOCUMENTS HANDED BY THE AMBASSADORS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR June 15	379
246. AIDE-MEMOIRE HANDED BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE AMBASSADORS OF BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THE USSR June 16	380
247. TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET	

AMBASSADORS IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE	
June 16	382
248. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR	
June 19	383
249. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN A GERMAN JOURNALIST AND A COUNSELLOR IN THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GERMANY	
June 19	384
250. CONTRACT FOR THE DELIVERY OF SPECIAL EQUIP- MENT BY THE SOVIET UNION TO CHINA	
June 20	387
251. CONTRACT FOR THE DELIVERY OF SPECIAL EQUIP- MENT BY THE SOVIET UNION TO CHINA	
June 20	388
252. TASS COMMUNIQUE	
June 21	389
253. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN ESTONIA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR	
June 21	390
254. DRAFT OF ARTICLE I OF THE TREATY OF MUTUAL ASSISTANCE BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN, FRANCE AND THE USSR HANDED BY THE AMBASSADORS OF BRIT- AIN AND FRANCE IN THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR	
June 21	390
255. AIDE-MÉMOIRE HANDED BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMIS- SAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE AMBASSADORS OF BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THE USSR	
June 22	391
256. TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADORS IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE	
June 23	391
257. LETTER FROM THE US CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN FRANCE TO THE US SECRETARY OF STATE	
June 24	392
258. TELEGRAM FROM A SOVIET MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER IN JAPAN TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE RED ARMY	
June 24	394
259. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR	
June 24	395

260. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
June 25 396
261. TASS COMMUNIQUE
June 26 396
262. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE STATE SECRETARY OF THE GERMAN MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN GERMANY
June 27 398
263. TASS COMMUNIQUE
June 27 400
264. TASS COMMUNIQUE
June 28 400
265. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
June 28 401
266. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FINLAND TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
June 28 402
267. LETTER FROM THE STATE SECRETARY OF THE GERMAN MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN
June 28 402
268. THE JAPANESE PROVOCATION IS CONTINUING (TASS COMMUNIQUE)
June 29 403
269. AN ARTICLE BY A. ZHDANOV "THE BRITISH AND FRENCH GOVERNMENTS DO NOT WANT AN EQUAL AGREEMENT WITH THE USSR"
June 29 403
270. TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE
June 30 406
271. DOCUMENTS HANDED BY THE AMBASSADORS OF BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
July 1 407
272. TELEGRAM FROM THE AMBASSADOR OF THE USSR IN THE USA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
July 2 408
273. DOCUMENTS HANDED BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE

AMBASSADORS OF BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THE USSR July 3	409
274. TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADORS IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE July 3	411
275. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN ESTONIA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR July 5	412
276. JAPANESE PROVOCATEURS ARE NOT CALMING DOWN (TASS COMMUNIQUE). July 6	412
277. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR July 7	414
278. DRAFT ANGLO-FRANCO-SOVIET AGREEMENT HAN- DED BY THE AMBASSADORS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR July 8	414
279. DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY LETTER TO THE AGREE- MENT BETWEEN THE USSR, BRITAIN AND FRANCE HAND BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE AMBASSADORS OF BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THE USSR July 9	417
280. TELEGRAM FROM THE AMBASSADOR OF THE USSR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR July 12	418
281. TELEGRAM FROM THE AMBASSADOR OF THE USSR IN ESTONIA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR July 13	419
282. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR July 14	419
283. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR July 14	420
284. TELEGRAM FROM THE AMBASSADOR OF THE USSR IN ESTONIA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR July 14	421

285. THE JAPANO-MANCHURIAN PROVOCATION IS CONTINUING (TASS COMMUNIQUE)
July 14 422
286. DOCUMENTS HANDED BY THE AMBASSADORS OF BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
July 17 424
287. TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE AMBASSADORS OF THE USSR IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE
July 17 425
288. EXTRACT FROM A TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
July 19 426
289. MEMORANDUM OF THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN
July 21 427
290. NEW VIOLATION OF THE BORDER BY JAPANESE FORCES (TASS COMMUNIQUE)
July 23 431
291. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
July 24 432
292. LETTER FROM THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GERMANY
July 24 434
293. EXCERPT FROM A MEMORANDUM BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR THE FOUR-YEAR PLAN OF GERMANY
July 24 437
294. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
July 25 443
295. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
July 25 443
296. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET NAVAL ATTACHE IN JAPAN TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE RED ARMY
July 25 444
297. JAPANESE PROVOCATION CONTINUES (TASS COMMUNIQUE)
July 27 445
298. TELEGRAM FROM THE STATE SECRETARY OF THE GERMAN MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO THE

GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN July 31	446
299. LETTER FROM THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE STATE SECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GERMANY August 1	447
300. TASS STATEMENT ON ONE OF THE REASONS FOR THE DELAY IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH BRITAIN August 2	448
301. DRAFT DEFINITION OF THE TERM "INDIRECT AGGRESSION" HANDED BY THE AMBASSADORS OF BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR August 2	449
302. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN AND THE CHIEF INDUSTRIAL ADVISER TO THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT August 3	450
303. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR August 4	456
304. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR August 4	457
305. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE AMBASSADORS OF BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THE USSR August 5	458
306. MANDATE OF THE HEAD OF THE SOVIET DELEGATION FOR THE CONDUCT OF NEGOTIATIONS AND THE SIGNING OF A CONVENTION ON QUESTIONS OF ORGANIZING THE MILITARY DEFENCE OF BRITAIN, FRANCE AND THE USSR AGAINST AGGRESSION IN EUROPE August 5	459
307. THE JAPANESE REFUSE TO CALM DOWN (TASS COMMUNIQUE) August 6	460
308. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN A GERMAN JOURNALIST AND THE GERMAN AIR ATTACHÉ IN POLAND August 7	461
309. TELEGRAM FROM THE US CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN BRITAIN TO THE US SECRETARY OF STATE August 8	462

310. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES
IN GERMANY TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
August 9 463
311. LETTER FROM THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN THE
USSR TO THE GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTRY
August 10 463
312. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AIR ATTACHÉ IN BRIT-
AIN TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE RED ARMY
August 12 464
313. FROM MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BET-
WEEN THE GERMAN REICH CHANCELLOR AND THE
ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER
August 12 465
314. RECORD OF THE MEETING OF THE MILITARY MIS-
SIONS OF THE USSR, BRITAIN AND FRANCE
August 12 466
315. RECORD OF THE MORNING SESSION OF THE MILITARY
MISSIONS OF THE USSR, BRITAIN AND FRANCE
August 13 472
316. RECORD OF THE EVENING SESSION OF THE MILITARY
MISSIONS OF THE USSR, BRITAIN AND FRANCE
August 13 479
317. RECORD OF THE MEETING OF THE MILITARY MIS-
SIONS OF THE USSR, BRITAIN AND FRANCE
August 14 486
318. TELEGRAM FROM THE HEAD OF THE FRENCH
MILITARY MISSION TO THE WAR MINISTRY OF FRANCE
August 14 496
319. RECORD OF THE MEETING OF THE MILITARY MIS-
SIONS OF THE USSR, BRITAIN AND FRANCE
August 15 497
320. TELEGRAM FROM THE HEAD OF THE FRENCH
MILITARY MISSION TO THE WAR MINISTRY OF FRANCE
August 15 507
321. TELEGRAM FROM THE WAR MINISTRY OF FRANCE TO
THE MILITARY ATTACHÉ OF FRANCE IN WARSAW
August 15 507
322. TELEGRAM FROM THE ACTING MILITARY ATTACHÉ
OF THE USSR IN JAPAN TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF
THE RED ARMY
August 15 508
323. TELEGRAM FROM THE AMBASSADOR OF THE USSR IN
FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
August 16 509
324. MINUTE FROM AN OFFICIAL OF RIBBENTROP'S SEC-

RETARIAT TO THE PERMANENT LIAISON OFFICER OF THE GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTRY ATTACHED TO THE REICH CHANCELLOR August 16	510
325. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE CHIEF OF THE FOREIGN POLICY SERVICE OF THE GERMAN NATIONAL SOCIALIST PARTY AND AN OFFICIAL OF THE BRITISH AIR MINISTRY August 16	512
326. LETTER FROM THE FRENCH MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF FRANCE August 16	515
327. RECORD OF THE MEETING OF THE MILITARY MISSIONS OF THE USSR, BRITAIN AND FRANCE August 16	517
328. RECORD OF THE MEETING OF THE MILITARY MISSIONS OF THE USSR, BRITAIN AND FRANCE August 16	525
329. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE AMBASSADOR OF THE USA IN THE USSR August 16	530
330. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN GERMANY TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR August 16	532
331. RECORD OF THE MEETING OF THE MILITARY MISSIONS OF THE USSR, BRITAIN AND FRANCE August 17	533
332. TELEGRAM FROM THE AMBASSADOR OF FRANCE IN THE USSR TO THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF FRANCE August 17	545
333. TELEGRAM FROM THE HEAD OF THE FRENCH MILITARY MISSION TO THE WAR MINISTRY OF FRANCE August 17	545
334. TELEGRAM FROM THE AMBASSADOR OF FRANCE IN THE USSR TO THE AMBASSADOR OF FRANCE IN POLAND August 17	547
335. TELEGRAM FROM THE MILITARY ATTACHÉ OF FRANCE IN POLAND TO THE WAR MINISTRY OF FRANCE August 19	548
336. TELEGRAM FROM THE AMBASSADOR OF FRANCE IN THE USSR TO THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF FRANCE August 20	548

337. MINUTE OF THE WAR MINISTRY OF FRANCE.
MILITARY NEGOTIATIONS WITH MOSCOW
Not earlier than August 20 549
338. TASS COMMUNIQUE
August 20 550
339. RECORD OF THE MEETING OF THE MILITARY MIS-
SIONS OF THE USSR, BRITAIN AND FRANCE
August 21 551
340. TELEGRAM FROM THE BRITISH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES
IN FRANCE TO THE BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY
August 22 558
341. EXTRACT FROM A TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMIS-
SARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
August 22 559
342. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
HEAD OF THE SOVIET MILITARY MISSION AND THE
HEAD OF THE FRENCH MILITARY MISSION
August 22 559
343. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRIT-
AIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
August 23 565
344. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES
IN JAPAN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
August 24 566
345. EXCERPT FROM THE DIARY OF THE SOVIET CHARGÉ
D'AFFAIRES IN GERMANY
August 24 567
346. TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
August 26 567
347. MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN
THE DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE CHINESE AMBASSA-
DOR IN THE USSR
August 26 568
348. INTERVIEW WITH THE HEAD OF THE SOVIET
MILITARY MISSION, K. Y. VOROSHILOV ON THE NE-
GOTIATIONS WITH THE MILITARY MISSIONS OF BRIT-
AIN AND FRANCE
August 27 571
349. TELEGRAM FROM THE ACTING MILITARY ATTACHÉ
OF THE USSR IN JAPAN TO THE RED ARMY GENERAL
STAFF
August 31 573

350. SOVIET PRESS COMMUNIQUE ON THE LIQUIDATION OF THE REMNANTS OF JAPANESE-MANCHURIAN FOR- CES IN THE FRONTIER ZONE OF THE MPR	
September 1	574
NOTES	577

FOREWORD

The year 1975 marked the thirtieth anniversary since the end of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet people. This anniversary has revived memories of events which plunged the greater part of the world into a catastrophe and brought untold sufferings to millions. Speaking over American television L.I. Brezhnev said: "The Soviet people, perhaps better than any other people, know what war is. In the Second World War we achieved a victory of worldwide historical importance. But more than 20 million Soviet citizens died in that war, 70,000 of our towns and villages were razed to the ground. One-third of our national wealth was destroyed." * This anniversary urges us to address ourselves again to a study of the causes of the Second World War. To understand the causes of a war, Lenin said, it is necessary to "examine the policy pursued prior to the war, the policy that led to and brought about the war". ** The lessons of history must not be forgotten if we want to prevent a new war whose consequences would be even more terrible.

However, the international situation today is not what it was on the eve of the Second World War. The strength of the Soviet Union has grown tremendously. A number of new social phenomena have appeared in the world. Of these the most significant are the emergence of the world socialist system, the growing

* *Pravda*, June 25, 1973.

** Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 23, p. 33.

influence of the working-class and communist movement, and the collapse of the colonial system of imperialism. They have caused a change in the balance of world forces in favour of socialism.

In thinking of the future, no honest, intelligent person can afford to ignore the lessons of the past, of the events of the 1930's, when efforts failed to create a broad and united front against aggression and to prevent the fascist powers from hurling mankind into the abyss of a world war.

In this book the reader will find answers to many questions concerning the politico-diplomatic history immediately preceding the outbreak of the Second World War. The answers are given in a most convincing language—the language of contemporary diplomatic documents. These documents testify to the persistent efforts of the Soviet Government to create a collective peace front. At the same time they expose the shameful game that was played with the destinies of the peoples and of peace by the ruling circles of the Western Powers in their repeated attempts to direct the fascist aggression against the Soviet Union.

This book begins with documents relating to the Munich collusion, an event which represented the culmination of the policy of encouraging fascist aggression, and which did much to enable fascist Germany to unleash a world war. In the Munich deal the rulers of Britain and France gave Hitler a sizeable portion of Czechoslovakia's territory in the hope that this would pave the way to his expansion eastwards, against the Soviet Union. By paying the price of betrayal of Czechoslovakia, the Western Powers thought they could win Hitler's respect for their interests, and avert the danger of fascist aggression.

Unlike Britain, France and the USA, the Soviet Union was prepared to render Czechoslovakia all the necessary assistance against Hitler's aggression.

Shortly before the Munich collusion the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR declared in the League of Nations: "When... the French Government... approached us with an enquiry about our position in the event of an attack on Czechoslovakia, I gave, on behalf of my Government, a clear-cut and unambiguous reply, namely, that we intended to meet our obligations under the Pact and, together with France, to render assistance to Czechoslovakia...."*

* *New Documents on the History of Munich*, Moscow, 1958, p. 125 (*Russ. ed.*).

The Soviet Government suggested that negotiations be started between the General Staffs of the USSR, France and Czechoslovakia on concrete preparations for joint action. Furthermore, the Soviet Union, as is known, was prepared to go beyond the requirements of its treaty obligations in helping Czechoslovakia. It was prepared to give military aid even without France, provided the Czechoslovak Government requested it and Czechoslovakia herself resisted German aggression. This was later recalled by C. Gottwald in an account of his conversation with J.V. Stalin in the middle of May 1938. However, the ruling circles in Prague led by President Benes chose to capitulate, while the French Government betrayed its ally.

The Soviet Union promptly dissociated itself from the shameful Munich deal and from the very beginning condemned it as illegal (see Documents Nos. 13, 14 and others).

Many documents concerning the aggressive plans of Germany, Japan and Italy have already been published. These imperialist plans were elaborated in strict secrecy. The documents included in this book present a more complete account of how the war was prepared. They help to clarify certain points, notably the question of how the Hitlerites worked out the various stages of their aggressive plans in the West and in the East. The documents show how soon after Munich the Hitlerites decided that, following the seizure of the whole of Czechoslovakia, they would crush Poland and France and bring Britain to her knees. Only after all this had been accomplished was an attack to be mounted against the Soviet Union (see Documents Nos. 50, 58, 64, 89, 97, 101, 167, 196, 202 and others).

These documents help to show how odious were the intensive efforts made by the Anglo-French ruling circles in late 1938 and early 1939 to turn Munich into a starting point for close political and economic co-operation among the four Powers—Britain, France, Germany and Italy—while Nazi Germany continued, with the actual blessings of Chamberlain and Daladier, her aggression in the East. The history of the six post-Munich months, during which time the British and French ruling circles conducted a policy based on such illusions, has been less thoroughly studied than that of other pre-war periods. The new material included in this book will enable historians to form a more complete picture of this period.

The policies of the then ruling circles of Poland were no less

odious, as the documents included here show. It was none other than Poland that was intended by the Nazis to be their next victim after Czechoslovakia. And yet the rulers of Poland, blinded by their class hatred of the USSR and dreaming of further seizures of Soviet lands, went on with their plans for a campaign against the USSR together with fascist Germany and militarist Japan (see Document No. 24).

At the same time, the documents confirm the farsightedness of the Soviet Government's policy in the extremely complex situation that existed on the eve of the Second World War. It is important to note that the Soviet Government was in possession of reliable and sufficiently complete information concerning the events of the day. The Soviet Embassies in Britain, France and other countries were aware of the dishonourable plans of the ruling quarters of those countries. As for the plans of the aggressive countries, reports on them were received from both the Embassies and military attachés. Soviet military intelligence also provided the Soviet Government with timely information about the predatory plans of the aggressive Powers.

The Soviet Government was therefore in a position to correctly appraise the words and the deeds, and to assess the policies and the intentions of the governments of all countries that had a role to play in the events preceding the war, and to take the appropriate decisions.

In informing Moscow on October 19, 1938, of the comments made by Lord Beaverbrook, a prominent figure in the British Conservative Party, on the post-Munich policy of Britain, the Soviet Ambassador in Britain wrote that Chamberlain "*is prepared to capitulate further to the aggressors, above all at the expense of third countries,*" that Chamberlain was not considering any kind of resistance to German expansion in Southeastern Europe, and that, on the contrary, he anticipated that all this would "*push Hitler into hostilities with the USSR*" (see Document No. 14). The Soviet Ambassador in France reported on October 29, 1938, that after Daladier's last speech "there is no longer any doubt that he is determined to come to terms with Germany and that to achieve that aim he is prepared to sacrifice the last vestige of collective security and the Mutual Assistance Pacts" (see Document No. 20).

At the 18th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, the report of the Central Committee, which was delivered on March 10,

1939, by J.V. Stalin, condemned the fascist aggressors and exposed the essence of the Munich policy which the Western Powers were pursuing under the cover of "non-intervention" and "appeasement." "The policy of non-intervention," the report said, "means connivance at aggression and war... In the policy of non-intervention one can see an attempt and a desire not to hinder the aggressors from doing their sinister work, not to hinder, say, Japan from becoming involved in a war with China or, better still, with the Soviet Union; not to hinder, say, Germany from becoming immersed in European affairs and getting involved in a war with the Soviet Union, to let all the belligerents sink deep into the quagmire of war, to spur them on in this on the sly, to let them weaken and exhaust one another and then, when they are sufficiently weakened, to come forward—of course, 'in the interests of peace'—with fresh forces, and dictate their terms to the weakened belligerents.

"A nice and easy way of doing things!" *

The report of the Central Committee warned the Munichmen: "The big and dangerous political game started by the proponents of the non-intervention policy may end very badly for them."**

Early in 1939, it became clear that the Munich policy of the Western Powers was misfiring. The first sign of this was the exacerbation of Franco-Italian relations. A second sign was the renunciation by the Hitlerites of their plans to create a vassal Carpatho-Ukrainian state, which was to have become a base for subversion against the Soviet Ukraine. Instead, Transcarpathia was handed over to Horthyist Hungary.

The report of the Central Committee to the 18th Party Congress noted these first failures of the Munich policy. "Some politicians and newspapermen in Europe and the USA, having waited in vain for a 'campaign against the Soviet Ukraine', are beginning to disclose the real meaning of the policy of non-intervention. They are now plainly saying and writing in so many words that the Germans have cruelly 'disappointed' them, since, instead of moving farther East, against the Soviet Union, they have, you see, turned to the West and are demanding colonies. It seems that a part of Czechoslovakia was given to the Germans as a price for

* *The 18th Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik). Stenographic report, Moscow, 1939, p. 13 (Russ. ed.).*

** *Ibid.*, p. 14.

starting a war against the Soviet Union and now the Germans are refusing to deliver the goods..." *

On March 15, 1939 the Hitlerites liquidated the Czechoslovak state. The seizure of Czechoslovakia was followed by predatory claims against Poland, that is, against another ally of France, and then by the seizure of Lithuanian Klaipeda, the denunciation of the Non-Aggression Treaty with Poland and the Naval Agreement with Britain, and claims for the return to Germany of her colonies that had been taken over by Britain and France under the Versailles Peace Treaty. All these predatory political acts of fascist Germany showed that the ruling circles of Britain and France, even at the price of betraying Czechoslovakia, had failed to obtain Hitler's guarantees of their interests and their security. It became obvious that the Anglo-German and Franco-German Declarations (see Documents Nos. 2 and 34), which were signed soon after the Munich Agreement and were tantamount to non-aggression treaties, were not taken seriously by Hitlerites. It may be recalled that on his return from Munich Chamberlain broadly advertised the significance of the bargain he had struck for the preservation of peace and security and the protection of the British interests. Thus, the aggressive actions of fascist Germany placed the British and French Governments in an awkward position before their own people and world public opinion. The broad masses in Britain and France, and even a sizeable part of the bourgeois circles in those countries were calling for renunciation of the policy of making deals with the aggressor and were for co-operation with the Soviet Union and a joint struggle against fascist aggression.

Such was the situation in the spring of 1939 when the British Government thought it necessary to establish some contacts with the Soviet Government and begin a political dialogue on important issues—a dialogue which failed to yield positive results because the Western participants in it had no real intention of abandoning their policy of collusion with the aggressor.

For its part, in the spring of 1939, as the threat of war increased, the Soviet Government continued to wage a vigorous struggle for the creation of a peace front. On March 18 the Soviet Union proposed *that a conference be held of representatives of the*

* *The 18th Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik). Stenographic Report, Moscow, 1939, p. 14 (Russ. ed.).*

USSR, Britain, France, Poland, Rumania and Turkey (see Documents Nos. 109 and 110). On April 17, 1939, the USSR proposed *the conclusion of a treaty of mutual assistance and a military convention between the USSR, Britain and France* (see Document No. 171). On May 10 the Soviet Government told the Polish Government that the "USSR would not refuse assistance to Poland if she desired it" (see Document No. 210).

There is hardly any need to give a summary of the Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations here—the relevant documents speak for themselves. But it may be useful to state the conclusion suggested by an analysis of the documents relating to these negotiations.

The Soviet and foreign documents included in this book prove beyond all doubt that the British Government did not want any genuine co-operation with the USSR. The French Government, though rather more perturbed by the German menace, nonetheless trailed in the wake of the British Government. The first British proposals were almost openly designed to drag the USSR into a war with Germany while preserving freedom of action for the Western Powers. Under the pressure of public opinion in their countries and at the insistence of the Soviet Government, Britain and France subsequently had to modify their position and agree to undertake certain obligations. Even so, however, the British and French Governments would not stop all the loopholes enabling them to avoid taking part in a war if it should begin with a German attack on the USSR, but not on Britain or France. The British Government refused to assume clear-cut and precise obligations in the event of fascist aggression in the Baltic region. Although Britain and France had undertaken to guarantee Poland and Rumania in the event of either direct or indirect aggression, they tried to avoid pledging assistance to the Baltic states and the USSR if the Germans should penetrate the Baltic region through indirect aggression. In shunning joint action with the USSR to repulse any form of fascist aggression in the Baltic region, the Munichmen were in effect showing the Hitlerites which strategic direction and what method for starting a war against the USSR they could resort to without making Britain and France abandon their neutrality and their role of onlookers.

Still more convincing evidence of British and French reluctance to co-operate with the Soviet Union in opposing aggression is provided by the negotiations between the military missions of the

three Powers in August 1939. The British and French missions arrived in Moscow led by persons without a mandate to sign any agreements. What is more, they had instructions not to enter into a discussion of the question of passage of Soviet troops through Polish and Rumanian territory; this means that the USSR, having no common frontiers with Germany, could not take part in military actions against her. It was obvious that the British and French representatives had arrived in Moscow without any serious intentions of reaching agreement on joint action in the event of German aggression.

All this became quite obvious to the Soviet Government already then, in the summer of 1939. Today we have ample documentary and other evidence of the decided unwillingness on the part of the British Government at that time to conclude a mutual assistance treaty with the USSR.

But it was not only that the British Government was unwilling to co-operate with the USSR. It is now beyond all doubt that the Government led by Chamberlain tried to use the negotiations with the USSR as a means of pressuring Hitler into a rapprochement with Britain. In the summer of 1939 there were reports in the press that simultaneously with the publicly announced negotiations in Moscow, secret Anglo-German talks were being held in London. Understandably, the Soviet Government could not remain indifferent to such reports (see Document No. 291).

Documentary material published after the war, an important part of which is included in this book, shows that Chamberlain's trusted aides (H. Wilson, R. Hudson and others) conducted secret negotiations with the Hitlerites at the same time that the Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations were taking place in Moscow. Far-reaching proposals for Anglo-German co-operation were communicated by the British negotiators to the Hitlerites. They envisaged the conclusion of an agreement on the division of spheres of influence between Britain and Germany on a world-wide scale as well as co-operation with a view to discovering new, and exploiting existing, world markets, with China and the USSR being listed by the British among the countries whose markets were to be covered by such "co-operation" (see Documents Nos. 289, 292, 293, 299 and others).

In short, Hitler was offered a scheme for a redivision of the world. Under this scheme Eastern and Southeastern Europe were to be handed over to Germany as her sphere of influence. Hitler

was also promised that if he would come to a serious agreement with Britain, Poland would be sacrificed and the negotiations with the USSR broken off (see Documents Nos. 289, 299 and others). Thus, for the British Government the negotiations with the Soviet Union and the "guarantees" given to Poland were nothing but a means of enhancing Britain's worth in the eyes of the Führer, of frightening him with the prospects of Germany's "encirclement," and of prodding him into taking a more favourable attitude towards a collusion with Britain.

Germany's Ambassador in London, von Dirksen, was not mistaken, when he wrote on August 3, 1939, that for the British ruling circles "the ties that had been formed in the last few months with other Powers were only a *subsidiary means* which would cease to be operative as soon as *agreement with Germany, the all-important objective worth striving for*, had been really attained." Even "the bringing in of France and Italy" would play "a secondary role" (see Document No. 302).

The "ties with other Powers" referred to by von Dirksen were, specifically, the guarantees offered by Britain to Poland, Rumania, Greece and Turkey. It follows that the British Government was prepared to hand over those countries to Hitler as a payment for a broad agreement with him on the redivision of the world which would serve the interests of British imperialism. And if Hitler had accepted this, London was prepared not only to break up negotiations with the USSR and give him Poland and Rumania, but also to betray its closest ally, France.

The secret Anglo-German talks in 1939 were not known to the Soviet Government in all their details and in all their truly monstrous perfidy. But the reports that were leaked to the press were sufficient to make the Soviet Government and the Soviet people still more vigilant in respect of the intentions of the British ruling circles. Together with the obvious reluctance of Britain and France to conclude an effective treaty on mutual assistance and joint military action to repulse German fascist aggression, the reports on secret Anglo-German talks revealed to the Soviet Government the full extent of the danger implicit in the obtaining situation. The Soviet Union had no grounds to hope that it would succeed in organizing, with Britain and France, an anti-Nazi front which would be aimed at defeating the fascist aggressor, and which would stand a good chance of preventing war altogether. The Soviet Government remained isolated in the face of Hitlerite

aggression that threatened at any moment to crush Poland, whose government, blinded by its class hatred of socialism, refused Soviet assistance thereby dooming Poland to seizure by Nazi Germany. For the Soviet Union, with its then existing frontier, the rout of Poland by the Hitlerites would mean that Nazi forces would quickly appear on the near approaches to Minsk and Vitebsk in the Moscow strategic direction. In case of a German attack in those conditions the USSR not only could count on no British and French assistance, but had to reckon with the possibility that the German fascists might be aided by the Western Powers, especially Britain.

And the Soviet Union was threatened from yet another quarter. It was faced with the menace of a war with militarist Japan. In fact, the war—though an undeclared one—had already started. In the summer of 1939 sizeable Japanese forces invaded the Mongolian People's Republic and carried on military operations in the area of Khalkhin Gol river against Mongolian armed forces and Red Army units that had come to the aid of the MPR in accordance with the Soviet-Mongolian Mutual Assistance Protocol of 1936.

In the Far East, as in Europe, the British, French and the US Governments were pursuing a policy of connivance at aggression. On July 22, 1939, Britain and Japan entered into the so-called Arita-Craigie Agreement (Arita was the Japanese Foreign Minister at that time and Craigie, the British Ambassador in Tokyo) under which Britain undertook not to countenance any acts or measures prejudicial to the attainment by Japanese forces of their objects in China. * With Japan conducting hostilities against the USSR and the MPR in the region of Khalkhin Gol river, the Arita-Craigie Agreement strengthened the position of Japan in general, and particularly the position of the Japanese forces in China, the springboard from which they were operating against the USSR and the MPR. In other words, the British Government was giving diplomatic support to Japan in her aggression against the MPR and its ally, the USSR, at a time when the Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations were proceeding in Moscow.

The United States also continued to adhere to a policy of connivance at aggression. In the summer of 1939 the US Con-

* *Documents on British Foreign Policy. 1919-1939*, Third Series, Vol. IX, p. 313.

gress debated the neutrality legislation and decided to retain in force, unaltered, the relevant laws passed by Congress in 1935-37. This meant that in the event of war the victims of aggression could not even count on being able to buy military supplies in the United States. In commenting on this congressional decision, the US Ambassador in Belgium, Davies, wrote:

"Fear has been expressed to me that the action of Congress might be the decisive factor in the next move of the aggressors which is feared to be imminent and that it might be a contributing cause to possible speedy hostilities."

It is noteworthy that although in the Far East the interests of the United States were more directly affected than in Europe, the USA gave China no help in the latter's struggle against Japanese aggression. On the contrary, the American monopolies supplied Japan with all she needed to conduct the aggressive war against China.

The only state to give effective political and military assistance to China in her struggle against Japanese aggressors was the Soviet Union. In 1938 two agreements were signed in Moscow under each of which the USSR would extend to China credits amounting to 50 million US dollars. An agreement signed in June 1939 provided for a new Soviet credit to China to the sum of 150 million US dollars. Under those agreements the Soviet Union supplied China in 1938-39 with approximately 600 aircraft, 1,000 guns and howitzers, over 8,000 machine guns, transport facilities, ammunition, and other military supplies. This could not but arouse greater hostility on the part of the Japanese militarists towards the USSR. The Japanese ruling circles were hoping that Germany would attack the Soviet Union and assured the Hitlerites that "*in the event of Germany and Italy starting war with the USSR Japan will join them at any moment without raising any conditions*" (see Documents No. 236 and others).

Thus, in August 1939 the Soviet Union found itself in an extremely dangerous situation: in the West there was the threat of Nazi armies appearing at the gates of Minsk and Vitebsk; in the Far East hostilities with Japan threatened to develop into a full-scale armed conflict. The Soviet Union was faced with the possibility of having to fight a war on two fronts against two powerful military states—and in complete international isolation.

Since attempts to create an effective front against the aggressor and in defence of world peace had failed owing to the negative

attitude of Britain and France, the Soviet Union was compelled to look for other ways of ensuring its security. In the meantime, Germany had approached the Soviet Union with a proposal to conclude a non-aggression pact. This meant that at least for a short time Hitler was inclined to live at peace with the USSR. The Nazis were aware that a war with the Soviet Union would involve Germany in enormous difficulties. Actually, the Hitlerites even then underestimated the strength of the USSR, but nevertheless they considered the Soviet Union sufficiently strong as to make it expedient for them to look for an easier prey and to strengthen their military and industrial potentials at the expense of other European countries. At that time the Hitlerites still showed a measure of realism in their thinking which they subsequently lost as a result of easy victories in the West.

For weeks the Germans dropped hints of their interest in normalizing to some extent Soviet-German relations, but the Soviet Government did not take them up until it had finally lost all hopes of achieving co-operation with the Western Powers. This was well understood by Schulenburg, the German Ambassador in Moscow and an experienced diplomat, who, in his dispatch of August 4, 1939, reported that the Soviet Government "is fully determined to conclude a treaty with Britain and France."*

This was, indeed, the state of affairs until the middle of August, when in the course of the negotiations with the British and French military missions the Soviet Government finally became convinced that the Western Powers had no intention of concluding an effective and equal treaty with the USSR. When the last doubts on this score had been dispelled the Soviet Government accepted Germany's proposal to sign a non-aggression pact. "The military negotiations with England and France were not broken off because the USSR had concluded a non-aggression pact with Germany," declared the People's Commissar for Defence, K. Y. Voroshilov, head of the Soviet military mission. "On the contrary," he continued, "the USSR concluded the non-aggression pact with Germany because, amongst other things, the military negotiations with France and England had reached a deadlock as a result of insurmountable differences of opinion" (see Document No. 348).

* *Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik. 1918-1945, Serie D, Bd. VI, S. 894.*

By concluding a treaty of non-aggression with Germany the Soviet Government secured a postponement of the war—for almost two years, as it turned out. Of course, the Soviet Government had never harboured any illusions that the Nazis would remain loyal to their pledge. It regarded their proposal to conclude a non-aggression treaty merely as a sign that in the immediate future Hitler preferred to avoid a war with the USSR. Thus, after the treaty was signed the Soviet Union did not reduce, but intensified its efforts to build up the country's defences, and carried out a series of measures to strengthen its economy, equip its army with more modern types of weapons, establish many new military formations and prepare the people politically for a possible military attack on the Soviet Union by the Hitlerites.

By concluding the non-aggression pact with Germany the Soviet Government thwarted the designs of the Munichmen who had sought to bring about a German-Soviet and Japanese-Soviet war which would place the Western Powers in the position of an arbiter and enable them once again to assume the role of masters of the world, a role which they had gained as a result of the imperialist war of 1914-18. In September 1939 the war started—but not in the way the Munichmen had wanted. They had wanted Germany and Japan to attack the USSR while they played the part of the complacent onlooker. In reality, the war broke out within the capitalist world, between two groups of imperialist powers.

By June 1941, when Nazi Germany attacked the USSR, the international situation had changed radically as compared with August 1939. Britain was in a state of war with Germany. The United States was soon afterwards to be embroiled in the war. In the summer of 1939 the USSR was isolated diplomatically, and faced with the threat of a war on two fronts, in the West and in the Far East. Now, by June 1941, objective conditions had appeared for the creation of a powerful anti-Hitler coalition. Britain, which had been reluctant to enter into co-operation with the USSR in 1939, now saw that only such co-operation could save her from defeat. The respite gained by the USSR in consequence of signing the non-aggression treaty with Germany had enabled it to avoid getting involved in a war in the extremely unfavourable international conditions that had developed in the summer of 1939.

The respite was not long enough, however, for the country to complete its preparations for war—especially since by that time

the Hitlerites had at their disposal the resources of almost the whole of Western Europe. Their military-industrial potential was greater than the Soviet Union's, despite the immense strides made by the USSR in the first five-year plan periods in industrializing the country. The USSR could not arm itself as swiftly as Germany had rearmed with the help of the industry of the entire West European continent. But nonetheless, the Soviet Union's defence preparations had advanced far enough to enable the heroic Soviet armed forces to achieve, in the extremely arduous initial phase of the Great Patriotic War, a result of paramount importance: they frustrated the strategic concept of the Nazi leadership—to effect a lightning-like rout of the Soviet Union. “The fighting in the initial period of the war already showed that the military adventure of the Hitlerites was doomed to failure. The rout of the Germans at the approaches to Moscow was the beginning of a turning point in the war.”*

The Soviet people have not forgotten the history of the outbreak of the Second World War, and in particular the perfidious attack by fascist Germany on the Soviet Union, or the first months of the Great Patriotic War against the Nazi invaders. History teaches many object lessons. It reminds the Soviet people of the following words said by Lenin, the founder of the Soviet state: “The first precept of our policy, the first lesson that emerges from our governmental activities..., the lesson which must be learned by all workers and peasants, is to be on the alert...”**

* * *

The documents included in this book cover the period from September 1938 to August 1939. Most of the documents herein are being published for the first time. The book includes a generous selection from the correspondence between the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the USSR and the Soviet Ambassadors in Britain, France, Germany, the United States and other countries; memoranda of conversations, and texts of notes and proposals addressed by the Soviet Union to foreign states or received by the Soviet Union from the latter, statements by Soviet

* *50 Years of the Great October Socialist Revolution. Theses of the CC CPSU*, Politizdat, Moscow, 1967, p. 19.

** Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 33, p. 148.

officials, TASS communiques and various material that was published in the Soviet press and that relates to the subject of this book. The book also includes dispatches of Soviet military attachés and the Soviet military intelligence concerning the aggressive plans of Germany, Japan and Italy.

A number of foreign documents, most of which have been taken from official British, American, German, Italian and Polish publications, are also included.

The documents in the book are presented in chronological order.

The texts of the Soviet diplomatic documents are for the most part reproduced in English translation from original documents repositied in the archives. This is indicated by the note "From the archives" immediately following the text. If a document has previously been published the title of the relevant publication is given after the text.

The foreign diplomatic documents included in this book are also followed by a reference to their source (publication or archives).

In the case of most of the documents included in this book, the full texts are given. The parts of a text that have been omitted are denoted by three dots in square brackets. The omitted parts either have no bearing on the subject of the book or else are devoted to inconsequential matters. The customary forms of personal address or complimentary phrases at the beginning and close of letters as well as various official marks on the documents are also omitted.

The titles indicate the type of document (telegram, letter, memorandum of a conversation, declaration and so forth), the sender, the addressee and the date. The names of the addressee and the sender (unless they appear in the text) are given in a footnote following the first mention of the persons concerned. The place from which a document was sent is not indicated.

All place names are given as they appeared in the originals. Where necessary, their present-day names are indicated in footnotes.

No. 1.
**AGREEMENT BETWEEN GERMANY, BRITAIN,
FRANCE AND ITALY ¹**

Munich, September 29, 1938

Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Italy, taking into consideration the agreement which has been already reached in principle for the cession to Germany of the Sudeten German territory, have agreed on the following terms and conditions governing the said cession and the measures consequent thereon, and by this agreement they each hold themselves responsible for the steps necessary to secure its fulfilment—

1. The evacuation will begin on the 1st October.

2. The United Kingdom, France and Italy agree that the evacuation of the territory shall be completed by the 10th October without any existing installations having been destroyed and that the Czechoslovak Government will be held responsible for carrying out the evacuation without damage to the said installations.

3. The conditions governing the evacuation will be laid down in detail by an international commission composed of representatives of Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Czechoslovakia.

4. The occupation by stages of the predominantly German territory by German troops will begin on the 1st October. The four territories marked on the attached map * will be occupied by German troops in the following order:

* Not included herein.

The territory marked No. I on the 1st and 2nd of October, the territory marked No. II on the 2nd and 3rd of October, the territory marked No. III on the 3rd, 4th and 5th of October, the territory marked No. IV on the 6th and 7th of October.

The remaining territory of preponderantly German character will be ascertained by the aforesaid international commission forthwith and be occupied by German troops by the 10th October.

5. The international commission referred to in paragraph 3 will determine the territories in which a plebiscite is to be held. These territories will be occupied by international armed forces until the plebiscite has been completed. The same commission will fix the conditions in which the plebiscite is to be held, taking as a basis the conditions of the Saar plebiscite. The commission will also fix a date, not later than the end of November, on which the plebiscite will be held.

6. The final determination of the frontiers will be carried out by the international commission. This commission will also be entitled to recommend to the four Powers—Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Italy—in certain exceptional cases minor modifications in the strictly ethnographical determination of the zones which are to be transferred without plebiscite.

7. There will be a right of option into and out of the transferred territories, the option to be exercised within six months from the date of this agreement. A German-Czechoslovak commission shall determine the details of the option, consider ways of facilitating the transfer of population and settle questions of principle arising out of the said transfer.

8. The Czechoslovak Government will within a period of four weeks from the date of this agreement release from their military and police forces any Sudeten Germans who may wish to be released, and the Czechoslovak Government will within the same period release Sudeten German prisoners who are serving terms of imprisonment for political offences.

Adolf Hitler
Edouard Daladier
Benito Mussolini
Neville Chamberlain

ANNEX TO THE AGREEMENT

Munich, September 29, 1938

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the French Government have entered into the above agreement on the basis that they stand by the offer, contained in paragraph 6 of the Anglo-French proposals of the 19th September, relating to an international guarantee of the new boundaries of the Czechoslovak State against unprovoked aggression.

When the question of the Polish and Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia has been settled, Germany and Italy for their part will give a guarantee to Czechoslovakia.

(Same signatures)

SUPPLEMENTARY DECLARATION

Munich, September 29, 1938

The four Heads of Government here present agree that the international commission provided for in the agreement signed by them today shall consist of the Secretary of State in the German Foreign Office, the British, French and Italian Ambassadors accredited in Berlin, and a representative to be nominated by the Government of Czechoslovakia.

(Same signatures)

SUPPLEMENTARY DECLARATION

Munich, September 29, 1938

All questions which may arise out of the transfer of the territory shall be considered as coming within the terms of reference to the international commission.

(Same signatures)

SUPPLEMENTARY DECLARATION

Munich, September 29, 1938

The Heads of the Governments of the four Powers declare that the problems of the Polish and Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia, if not settled within three months by agreement between the respective Governments, shall form the subject of another meeting of the Heads of the Governments of the four Powers here present.

(Same signatures)

No. 2.**ANGLO-GERMAN DECLARATION ²**

September 30, 1938

We, the German Führer and Chancellor and the British Prime Minister, have had a further meeting today and are agreed in recognizing that the question of Anglo-German relations is of the first importance for the two countries and for Europe.

We regard the agreement signed last night * and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement³ as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again.

We are resolved that the method of consultation shall be the method adopted to deal with any other question that may concern our two countries, and we are determined to continue our efforts to remove possible sources of difference and thus to contribute to assure the peace of Europe.

Adolf Hitler
Neville Chamberlain

From *Documents on British Foreign Policy. 1919-1939*,
Third Series. Vol. II, London, 1949, p. 640.

* See Document No. 1.

No. 3.**STATEMENT BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR * AT A SESSION OF
THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS COUNCIL***September 30, 1938*

I should like to assure the representative of China of our sympathy with, and appreciation of, his dissatisfaction with the report presented to us. I agree with him that the report does not correspond to what China had a right to expect of the League of Nations. Such reports will not contain the aggressors or check the aggression. The fact that we are compelled to limit ourselves to such reports is all the more regretful at the present moment, when so much is being done outside the League to encourage aggression and to help the aggressors achieve their ends. My Government would be prepared to go further than this report and to take part in collective measures that would enable the League of Nations to meet all its obligations to China. Individual measures can do little to halt aggression unless they are carried out by other members of the League. My Government would be prepared to participate in such a co-ordination of collective measures, but since other governments do not find it possible to do so, we shall have to vote for this report.⁴

From *Pravda*, No. 272 (7597),
October 2, 1938.

No. 4.**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
CZECHOSLOVAKIA** TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSA-
RIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***October 1, 1938*

I have learned from Foreign Ministry circles that at Munich the Czechoslovak observers told Chamberlain of their bewilderment over the fact that he, after having prompted Czechoslovakia to

* M. M. Litvinov.

** S. S. Alexandrovsky.

mobilize her army and having publicly stated, in no uncertain terms, that England and France would take joint action with the USSR against Germany if Hitler should use force to settle the Sudeten question, was now openly sacrificing the interests of Czechoslovakia and demanding the withdrawal and demobilization of the army that had just been mobilized. Chamberlain replied with cynical frankness that he had not taken all this seriously, and that it had merely been a manoeuvre to exert pressure on Hitler; in other words, it was a counter-bluff by Chamberlain. People are saying, citing Mastny, * that at Munich the Czechoslovak observers were treated rudely and in a humiliating fashion. Daladier being the most insolent of them all. Despite all that has happened, the Czechoslovak Government has been asking England and France for advice on the question of the Polish ultimatum, and seeking assistance in getting a postponement in the spirit of the Munich decisions, but it was rapped over the knuckles by France which bluntly told it to agree and obey. The Foreign Ministry is now debating whether or not to forestall the likelihood of a Hungarian ultimatum by offering to cede to Hungary certain portions of territory. Today, October 1, the so-called "twenty", made up of representatives of the coalition parties, met in Parliament. As a result of yesterday's demonstrations the Government of Syrový** has decided to resign but has postponed this step until the completion of the first phase of the transfer of the ceded territory. The protest resolution adopted by the "twenty" and the standing committee of parliament against the violence done to Czechoslovakia has been revised by Benes*** and turned into an innocuous appeal to the world public. It was decided to send a delegation to France and England to ask for assistance in establishing the areas of the plebiscite and in holding it. The delegation to England was to have been led by Hodza,**** but he left in haste for Slovakia and refused to have anything to do with the affair. They cannot find prominent politicians for this kind of missions. The Czech Social-Democrats suggested sending an unofficial delegation to Berlin to ex-

* Czechoslovak Minister in Germany.

** Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia, September 22 to November 30, 1938.

*** President of Czechoslovakia, 1935 to October 1938.

**** Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia, 1935 to September 22, 1938.

plore the possibility of signing a treaty of eternal friendship with Germany. The Agrarians were opposed to this for tactical reasons. There is no question in anyone's mind that the Mutual Assistance Pact with the USSR⁵ should already be regarded as nullified, and everyone is wondering whether Munich might not mean the abrogation of the Franco-Soviet Pact as well.⁶

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 5.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
CZECHOSLOVAKIA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSA-
RIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

October 1, 1938

At 11:45 today I learned from the President's office that the Government had given in to the Polish ultimatum too. The transfer of the Teschen area to Poland is to begin today. It seems that several Ministers handed in their resignations on the 28th in protest against the defeatist policy of the Government. Prague and the country are calm. The Council of Ministers is apathetic in view of a possible dissolution.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 6.

TASS ANNOUNCEMENT

October 2, 1938

In a report sent to New York by the United Press correspondent in Paris it is alleged that the Soviet Government had authorized Daladier on behalf of the USSR at the four-power Munich Conference. TASS is authorized to announce that the Soviet Government had not, of course, given such powers to M. Daladier and it had nothing to do either with the conference in

Munich or its decisions. The United Press report is a clumsy fabrication from beginning to end.

From *Izvestia*, No 230 (6697),
October, 2, 1938.

No. 7.

TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN* TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR

October 2, 1938

1. On the morning of September 30, when the terms of the Munich agreement became known in London, I called on Masaryk ** to express my deep sympathy for the peoples of Czechoslovakia and my profound indignation at the betrayal of Czechoslovakia by Britain and France. Masaryk—a tall, strong man, somewhat cynical in normal circumstances—fell on my breast, kissed me and burst into tears like a child. "They have sold me into slavery to the Germans," he exclaimed through his tears, "just as Negroes were once sold into slavery in America!"

2. Yesterday I had a long talk with Lloyd George ***, during which he told me, among other things, that about ten days ago, at the height of the crisis, Baldwin **** called on Chamberlain and told him: "You must avoid war at the cost of any humiliation." And then Baldwin spoke about Britain's unpreparedness for war, about the weakness of her armaments, about the organization of air defence, the glaring shortages of anti-aircraft guns, and the like. In conclusion Baldwin said: "If war begins and all these shortcomings come to light, the indignant public will simply hang us both from the lampposts." Lloyd George is convinced that the conversation with Baldwin played no small part in preparing the Munich capitulation.

* I. M. Maisky.

** Czechoslovak Minister in Britain.

*** Prime Minister of Britain, 1916-1922.

**** Prime Minister of Britain, 1935-1937.

3. Lloyd George is very gloomy about the immediate prospects. The Western "democracies" have sustained a cruel defeat. France had definitely become a second-rate power (Lloyd George regards Daladier as a weak man and Bonnet* as simply a traitor who maintains criminal ties with the German Government).

4. The League of Nations and collective security are dead. International relations are entering an era of the most violent upsurge of savagery and brute force and the policy of the mailed fist. Hidebound reaction is reigning in Britain, and the most conservative bourgeois circles, who fear communism above all else, are in power. Chamberlain, who has now realized his dream of a "Four-Power Pact" (Lloyd George told me about this over a year ago) and of playing the role of "appeaser" of Europe, will doubtless try to make a profit out of the political capital he has acquired. Therefore, new elections may be expected in the immediate future which, to judge by all the signs, will strengthen for another four or five years the domination of the most Black-Hundred-like elements of the British ruling classes.

The USSR remains the one and only bright spot against this gloomy background, and from now on progressive and democratic circles everywhere will be turning to it more than ever before.

Burn, whom I saw yesterday and today, says that during tomorrow's parliamentary debate on the Munich Agreement the Labour Party will definitely criticize the British Government and Chamberlain personally. There is information that the Government will also be opposed by Churchill, Emery**, probably Eden*** and some other Conservatives. On the other hand, Chamberlain's followers are planning to give him an ovation at tomorrow's session.

5. The mood in the country is slowly beginning to change. In the first two days common folk were elated over the successful avoidance of war, although the more responsible political circles, including Conservative ones, immediately voiced anxiety and apprehension with regard to the terms and the circumstances of the Munich Agreement. Curiously, the *Daily Telegraph* and the

* French Minister for Foreign Affairs.

** British Conservative Party Leaders, Members of Parliament.

*** British secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1935 to February 1938.

Beaverbrook* press adopted a sober and even critical tone from the outset. The entire "Left-wing" press (the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Daily Herald*, the *News Chronicle*, the *Economist*, and others) promptly attacked Four-Power Treaty with various degrees of vehemence. Now the man in the street is beginning to calm down somewhat, while doubts and protests among those more aware of things are mounting. Significant in this connection is the resignation of the First Lord of the Admiralty, Duff Cooper, prompted by his disagreement with Chamberlain's policies. Nonetheless there is not the slightest doubt at present that the Prime Minister has behind him not only the overwhelming majority of the Conservative Party but also the overwhelming majority of the voters. If new elections were held in the coming weeks, Chamberlain could count on retaining, or perhaps even increasing his present majority in Parliament.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 8.

TELEGRAM FROM A SOVIET MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER IN JAPAN TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE RED ARMY**

October 3, 1938

I have learned from the Military Attaché*** that after the Sudeten question has been settled the next problem will be the Polish, but that it will be settled in a friendly way between Germany and Poland in view of their joint war against the USSR.

Ramzai

From the archives.

* British newspaper magnate and a prominent Conservative.

** R. Sorge (Ramzai).

*** The German Military Attaché in Japan, Colonel Matzky.

No. 9.
TASS ANNOUNCEMENT

October 4, 1938

On September 30 the mouthpiece of the Czechoslovak Ministry for Foreign Affairs, *Prager Presse* carried a dispatch from its Paris correspondent under the heading "Paris-London-Moscow" which alleged that the Governments of France and England had been regularly informing the Government of the USSR about the Czechoslovak question and that, moreover, there had been lengthy discussions on that question between M. Bonnet and Comrade Surits,* and between Mr. Halifax** and Comrade Maisky. From this the *Prager Presse* correspondent drew the conclusion that the Munich Conference "was not simply a four-power pact."

TASS is authorized to state that the above-mentioned dispatch by the *Prager Press* correspondent is completely discordant with reality. TASS is authorized to state that during the meetings between M. Bonnet and Comrade Surits and between Mr. Halifax and Comrade Maisky which have taken place of late, both ambassadors of the USSR were only given information as was published in the daily press. There have not been any discussions, and still less so, any agreements between the Governments of the USSR, France and England concerning the destinies of the Czechoslovak Republic and concessions to the aggressor. Neither France nor England consulted with the USSR; they merely informed the Government of the USSR of accomplished facts. As already stated in the TASS announcement of October 2 of this year, the Soviet Government has had nothing to do either with the conference in Munich or its decisions.

From *Izvestia*, No 232 (6699),
October 4, 1938.

* Soviet Ambassador in France.

** British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

No. 10.**EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMIS-
SAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

October 12, 1938

In this letter I do not intend to dwell upon the various stages of the recent events. They are still too fresh in everyone's memory, and therefore there would hardly be any sense in reproducing them in their chronological order. It is far more important to try and to find out the causes that have brought France to her present Sedan.

Every Frenchman is now aware that France has lived through her second Sedan and that at Munich she sustained a terrible defeat.

Even those who but recently shouted themselves hoarse as they greeted Daladier at le Bourget and showered flowers on his triumphal procession to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier have by now realized several indisputable and rather unpleasant truths, namely, that:

1) Germany, with France's help, has increased her population by more than three million without firing a single shot, that is, to more than twice the population of France;

2) Germany has enlarged her territory by more than 27,000 sq. km;

3) Germany has received a gift of several well-equipped factories and plants and extremely important mineral resources;

4) Germany has now seized a line of fortifications that has always been regarded as the most serious barrier to German aggression in Central Europe; while at the same time France:

(a) has lost her most reliable ally in Central Europe,

(b) has lost an army which in time of war could have been brought to a strength of between one million and 1.5 million and, relying on fortifications now lost, could have held up a German army at least equal in size,

(c) has now lost all her allies, undermined her relations with the

USSR and, to a considerable degree, even in the eyes of Britain, has diminished her influence and her role as an ally. [...]

USSR Ambassador to France
Surits

From the archives.

No. 11.

**TELEGRAM OF THE US CHARGE D'AFFAIRES IN
FRANCE TO THE US SECRETARY OF STATE**

October 13, 1938

The Chief of the Far Eastern Division at the Foreign Office* said to me this afternoon that the Japanese invasion of South China which has begun with the landing of troops at Bias Bay** had been under consideration by the Japanese authorities for a long time. The Japanese Navy had always wanted to take this action but the Foreign Office had opposed it for fear of complications with foreign powers. With the fall of Ugaki*** and decline of Foreign Office influence, the navy view had prevailed.

Hoppenot believed the first Japanese objective will be to cut the railway in the section north of Kowloon and that for this purpose troops will be landed on the east bank of the Canton River in addition to those landed at Bias Bay. After this has been done he expects the Japanese to attack Canton but believes that in order to avoid the difficulties of an approach overland through the mountain and lake regions the Japanese will move troops on junks up the Canton River. He said that the force of some 35,000 men already landed at Bias Bay should be sufficient to cut the railway. A considerably larger force will be needed to capture Canton although his information indicates that the Chinese military at Canton are lukewarm about putting up a strong defense and that recently the best troops which had been stationed there have been moved to the north.

* Henri Hoppenot.

** An inlet of the South China Sea.

*** Japanese Foreign Minister in May-September 1938.

He believes that the Japanese, intend to set up an autonomous government in Kwangtung and that while they will be able to accomplish their objectives in this area, including cutting off of supplies going to Hankow from Hong Kong, this will have little effect upon the ultimate outcome of the conflict.

Hoppenot said that he did not like the looks of things. The Japanese are becoming "excited" and unpleasant in conversations in Tokyo between the Foreign Office and the French Embassy and between the Japanese Embassy and the Foreign Office here. The Japanese Embassy had protested because a few Chinese officers and soldiers in mufti had been allowed to cross Tonkin going from Kwangsi to Yunnan. The French Foreign Office had replied that they could not prohibit Chinese transiting Tonkin, that a few Chinese soldiers in civilian attire could not be distinguished from ordinary civilians and that in any case there was no declared war and France had no obligation to prohibit even Chinese troops from crossing Indo-China. The Japanese Embassy, however, maintained its point of view and insisted that the French should do something yeoman (*regarding?*) situation [sic]. Also the Japanese Counsellor (the Ambassador is quite ill) had lately protested a decree authorizing the authorities in Indo-China to prohibit the export of iron ore and manganese. Hoppenot had explained that this decree had been issued only in order to permit the prohibition of exports if it should appear in the future that these ores were needed in Indo-China and had pointed out that the decree had not been applied and that Japan was continuing to receive shipments of these ores. Japanese Counsellor nevertheless had insisted that Japan had the "right" to obtain these ores and had been unpleasant about the matter.

Hoppenot stated that there was a clear relation between recent events in Europe and the changing attitude of the Japanese. Throughout the month of September it had seemed as if the Japanese attitude in the Far East and the German attitude in Central Europe had been synchronized. The British had noted this as well as the French. Hoppenot expressed the opinion that the only hope of preventing the situation in the Far East from steadily deteriorating would be for the United States to express its views strongly to Japan on the necessity of reasonable behaviour by the latter. I asked if he felt that French interests were menaced by this new Japanese invasion. He said that he feared there would be difficulties concerning the French Concession at Canton and

also that the Japanese might seize Hainan. I asked what the French would do in this latter case. He said that France would protest. France would certainly not go to war with Japan over Hainan.

Hoppenot said that the Japanese had charged that shipments of war material to China were continuing to pass over the French railway in Indo-China. The French Government had replied that for the past two months not a single rifle had been carried on this railroad and had asked the Japanese Government to produce facts to substantiate its charges. The Japanese had insisted that shipments were going forward all the time and that it would be beside the point to present detailed information. I asked Hoppenot if it were really true that the French were not letting any shipments of war material go over the railway to Yunnan. Hoppenot said that this was absolutely true. I remarked that this was bad luck for the Chinese. He said that it was indeed bad luck but no matter how much the French might love the Chinese they could not risk war with Japan on their account.

I asked if the Russians were increasing their shipments of war materials to China. Hoppenot replied that they were. They also were sending large numbers of aviation instructors as well as a number of military experts to take the place of the German mission. With the cutting of the Canton-Hankow Railway, the shipment of Russian war material will have to be overland via Sinkiang since the Burma route is not yet in condition.

Wilson

From *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers. 1938*, Washington, 1954, Vol. 3, pp. 318-320.

No. 12.

**EXERPT FROM A LETTER
FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE
SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN**

October 17, 1938

Your conversations with representatives of the Opposition produce the impression that the latter is quite helpless. The imme-

diate future evidently belongs to Chamberlain, unless Hitler and Mussolini really go too far. Indeed, if the English and French were able previously to offer resistance but did not want to, the question now is whether they, having lost their positions, will be able to oppose, the onslaught of the aggressors even if they want to, and whether there really is any limit to their compliant attitude [...]

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 13.

**LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE**

October 19, 1938

Bonnet's latest statement made during his conversation with you about unchanging relations and so forth has as little significance as the British and French statement that "they do not intend to exclude us from the solution of European questions." There is no reason why they should have such intentions, and it may well be that they do not have them, for it is not they who will be solving the questions, but Hitler, whom they are not going to oppose on this matter anyway. There is no doubt that for the sake of reaching an agreement with Germany and Italy Chamberlain and Daladier-Bonnet will go to any lengths. Of course, it is not to their advantage to make a clean break with us right now, as they would then lose their trump card in negotiations with Berlin. They will turn to us only if no agreement can be wangled with Berlin and if the latter puts forward demands even they would find unacceptable.

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 14.**EXCERPT FROM A TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S
COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***October 19, 1938*

Today Beaverbrook told me the following:

1) Despite the experience of Munich and the criticism of the Munich Agreement in the country, Chamberlain remains convinced that a European peace can be achieved through diplomatic negotiations with Hitler and Mussolini, without resort to stronger measures. This is not surprising for Chamberlain is prepared to capitulate further to the aggressors, above all at the expense of third countries, and if it should prove unavoidable, even at the expense of the British Empire. Thus, according to Beaverbrook, the Premier is not considering any kind of resistance to German expansion in South-Eastern Europe and Turkey. On the contrary, he anticipates that the creation of "Middle Europe" will push Hitler into hostilities with the USSR. Chamberlain is, furthermore, ready to return to Germany her former colonies, perhaps with the exception of Tanganyika (which is of very great strategic importance for England) and South-West Africa (under the mandate of the Union of South Africa, which has categorically refused to part with it). The Premier is inclined to compensate Germany for this with the Portuguese colony of Angola and a part of the Belgian Congo. Though the question of returning the colonies to Germany would arouse great concern in the country, particularly among the Conservatives, Beaverbrook feels, nonetheless, that Chamberlain would be in a position to carry through this operation. [...]

No. 15.**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADORS IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE***October 20, 1938*

Our Embassy in Rome has learned from an absolutely trustworthy source that the Anglo-Italian talks have been com-

pleted and that the question is to be submitted for Parliamentary approval early in November. Chamberlain has again capitulated by agreeing to mere withdrawal of the Italian wounded. Insistent attempts by London to secure further withdrawal of volunteers and the removal of materials and aircraft were of no avail. The Italians merely promised to give favourable consideration to those demands after ratification of the Anglo-Italian Agreement. From another source, friendly to Italy, we have learned that of the 9,000 evacuated Italians 6,000 are wounded, sick and generally unfit for service. The remaining 3,000 are said to have been insisting on their return to their families. About 27,000 Italians and 6,000 Germans are to remain in Spain.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

No. 16.

**EXCERPT FROM A DIRECTIVE BY THE REICH
CHANCELLOR AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
OF THE ARMED FORCES OF GERMANY**

October 21, 1938

The future tasks of the Wehrmacht and the preparations for the conduct of war resulting from these tasks will be laid down by me in a later directive.

Until this directive comes into force, the Wehrmacht must at all times be prepared for the following eventualities:

1. Securing the frontiers of the German Reich and protection against surprise air attacks.
2. Liquidation of the remainder of the Czech State.
3. The occupation of Memelland.*

[...]

LIQUIDATION OF THE REMAINDER OF THE CZECH STATE

It must be possible to smash at any time the remainder of the Czech State, should it pursue an anti-German policy.

* Klaipeda region.

The preparations to be made by the Wehrmacht for this eventuality will be considerably less in extent than those for Operation "Green,"⁷ on the other hand, as planned mobilization measures will have to be dispensed with, they must guarantee a continuous and considerably higher state of preparedness. The organization, order of battle, and degree of preparedness of the units earmarked for that purpose are to be prearranged in peace time for a surprise assault so that Czechoslovakia herself will be deprived of all possibility of organized resistance. The aim is the speedy occupation of Bohemia and Moravia and the cutting off of Slovakia. The preparations must be so made that the defense of the western frontier (Grenzsicherung West) can be carried out simultaneously.

The following are the individual tasks of the Army and Air Force:

A. Army

The units stationed near the Czech frontier and certain motorized formations are to be detailed for surprise attack. Their number will be determined by the forces left to Czechoslovakia; quick and decisive success must be assured. The deployment and preparations for the attack must be worked out. Forces not required are to be kept in readiness in such a manner that they either can be used for securing the frontier or can follow up the attacking army.

B. Air Force

The rapid advance of our Army is to be assured by the early elimination of the Czech Air Force.

For this purpose the rapid move of the formations near the frontier from their peace stations is to be prepared. Whether even stronger forces will be required for this purpose can only be seen from the development of the military and political situation in Czechoslovakia.

In addition, the simultaneous deployment of the remainder of the offensive forces against the west must be prepared. [...]

Adolf Hitler

Certified correct: *Keitel**

From *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. IV, pp. 99-100.

* Chief of the High Command of the German Armed Forces.

No. 17.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***October 22, 1938*

Today the Chinese Ambassador, Quo Tai-chi, came to see me and, probably under the fresh impressions of the defeat at Canton and the bad news from Hankow, began speaking in a rather panic-stricken way about the critical situation that has taken shape in China. Unless China was immediately rendered more effective support, he was afraid that the tendency towards "peace" among leading Chinese circles and among the broad masses of the Chinese people would prevail, and the Chinese Government would have to accept "peace" with Japan, with all the ensuing consequences. To this day the British had actually not moved a finger to help China. Throughout the duration of the war the Chinese had received from them only 36 aircraft of medium quality, plus a certain amount of ammunition and chemical products, all for cash payments. The Chinese Government had received not a penny from London even though the Chinese Government had in this regard brought pressure to bear on the British Government in every possible way open to it. France had acted and was acting no better. The USA was rendering assistance to China indirectly, through purchases of Chinese silver, through the unofficial ban on sales of aircraft to Japan, through sales of weapons and aircraft to China and so forth. This was valuable but insufficient. The only country that had been, and was seriously helping China with arms, aircraft and other things was the USSR. For this China was extremely grateful to us, especially since our planes were first-rate. They were better than both the British ones and those that China was getting from the USA. Quo Tai-chi had heard such comments on more than one occasion, and coming from different quarters, the last time was from a recent visitor of his, the former Aide de Camp of the German General Falkenhausen who had worked for a long time as military adviser to Chiang-Kai-shek.* Nonetheless the situation in China had now become so critical that this was no longer

* Commander-in-Chief of the Chinese Army and leader of the Kuomintang.

enough. Could we do something more effective? Were there no prospects for a new Hasan? In reply I said to Quo Tai-chi that the general line of our policy towards the Sino-Japanese war was known to him and that I had not heard of any changes in that line. Then Quo Tai-Chi castigated Munich and especially the British Government in very strong language, and began asking me whether the rumours being disseminated in the press and among political circles to the effect that the USSR was "withdrawing" from an active foreign policy and switching to a policy of isolation were true. I replied that the Soviet Government was studying the situation that had come into being as a result of Munich and was in no hurry to draw conclusions. In any event, whatever conclusions the Soviet Government might in time arrive at, our friendly attitudes to China, which was fighting for its independence and freedom, would remain unchanged. Quo Tai-chi seemed to be somewhat reassured.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 18.
EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM
THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN
TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF THE USSR

October 25, 1938

[...] 2. What line is the Premier going to take? Once again, summarizing all the material in my possession, I am coming to the very definite conclusion that Chamberlain's "general line" will be aimed not at resistance but at a further retreat in the face of the aggressor. You already know of Chamberlain's capitulation to Mussolini on the Spanish question. No serious attempts by Chamberlain to oppose German expansion in South-Eastern Europe are to be expected. On the contrary, it was from his entourage that I heard this remark: "What sense is there in feeding a cow which Hitler will slaughter anyway?" Even on the question of colonies Chamberlain is taking a plainly, defeatist stand. I have already communicated to you Beaverbrook's opinion on this sub-

ject. Since then I have obtained confirmation of this view from various sources. I know that Chamberlain has recently appointed a special committee to work out a plan, or plans, to meet Germany's colonial claims. It is still too early to speak of the committee's conclusions, but from what I have heard, the committee is thinking along the lines of the draft elaborated last autumn by Schacht and Goering in their conversation with Halifax during the latter's well-known meeting with Hitler. The essence of the draft is that Germany will create for herself an "African Empire" made up of Togo, Cameroons, Angola and most of the Belgian Congo. I do not know to what extent Hitler would now be content with such a gift, but this very draft is what his English benefactors have in mind at present. There is, of course, not the slightest doubt that, having obtained the colonies, Hitler will denounce the Anglo-German Naval Treaty³ (if he will not have done so before), but Chamberlain is prepared to capitulate on this point too, in the belief that a big navy is not built in a day and that at least in this field Great Britain is assured of an unquestionable advantage for a long time to come. The current theory in circles close to the Premier is that Germany is being "truculent" only because she has an "empty stomach". When that "stomach" becomes a bit fuller, Germany will quiet down. In this connection I recall that as early as last spring the well-known Horace Wilson,* who plays such an important role under Chamberlain, had intimated to me that with the formation of "Middle Europe" attenuating influences" would come into play, and that the belligerency of the German beast "must considerably abate." [...]

Ambassador of the USSR in
England
I. Maisky

* Chief Industrial Adviser to the British Government.

No. 19.

LETTER FROM THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN GERMANY TO THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF POLAND*October 25, 1938*

In a conversation on October 24, over a luncheon at the Grand Hotel, Berchtesgaden, at which M. Hewel* was present, M. von Ribbentrop put forward a proposal for a general settlement of issues ... between Poland and Germany. This included the reunion of Danzig with the Reich, while Poland would be assured the retention of railway and economic facilities there. Poland would agree to the building of an extra-territorial motor road and railway line across Pomorze. In exchange M. von Ribbentrop mentioned the possibility of an extension of the Polish-German Agreement by twenty-five years and a guarantee of Polish-German frontiers. As a possible sphere for future co-operation between the two countries, the German Foreign Minister specified joint action in colonial matters and the emigration of Jews from Poland, and a joint policy towards Russia on the basis of the Anti-Comintern Pact.⁸ M. von Ribbentrop asked me to communicate his suggestions to you. He would like to discuss these matters with you, with my participation.

In my reply I referred him to the Chancellor's declaration on the Danzig question, made to me on November 5, 1937, and repeated to you in Berlin on January 14, 1938.

I also pointed to the importance of Danzig as a port to Poland, and repeated the Polish Government's principle of non-interference in the internal life of the German population in the Free City, where complete self-government is established.

Finally, I said that I wished to warn M. von Ribbentrop that I could see no possibility of an agreement involving the reunion of the Free City with the Reich. I concluded by promising to communicate the substance of this conversation to you.

After the conversation M. von Ribbentrop invited me again to call on him and, mentioning the issue of the union of Sub-Carpa-

* Permanent Liaison Officer of the German Foreign Ministry attached to the Reich Chancellor.

thian Ruthenia with Hungary, put to me the question whether I was raising it with the German Government as a Polish postulate. He added that, if the Polish Government agreed to the German conception regarding Danzig and the Motor Road, the question of Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia could be solved in accordance with Poland's attitude to the matter. I answered that my only task was to inform the German Government of Poland's attitude in regard to Hungary's postulate in Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, as Poland had also done to the Italian Government.

From Official Documents Concerning Polish-German and Polish-Soviet Relations. 1933-1939, London, 1939, pp. 47-48.

No. 20.

TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR

October 29, 1938

After Daladier's speech⁹ there is no longer any doubt that he is determined to come to terms with Germany and that to achieve that aim he is prepared to sacrifice the last vestige of collective security and the Mutual Assistance Pacts. This is clearly evidenced not only by his passionate appeals to Germany but also by his statement that the objective of France's foreign policy should be confined to protecting "her own national interests". This is exactly what Hitler has been striving for all along, in proposing direct negotiations and bilateral agreements. The domestic policy appears to be in full keeping with such a foreign policy line: the Popular Front must be done away with, war must be declared on the Communists, the Parliamentary majority must be altered and the workers must be rigidly held in check. The timid opposition put up in Marseilles by the Left-wing (Herriot*

* President of French Chamber of Deputies.

has not yet spoken up) is explained by fears of losing the Socialists and finding themselves in the embraces of the Rightists alone.

Yesterday I saw Mandel*. He is now in a far less rebellious mood than before. He is inclined to place a certain share of the blame for the capitulation on the Czechs themselves. That the Czechs would surrender without a struggle was something "he had not expected". In his thinking he had proceeded from the certainty that the Czechs would fight and thereby thwart the Chamberlain-Bonnet game. To begin now to restore what had been lost and to revive the system of collective security would not be easy. This would in any event require the most "radical internal political measures" (he did not say what kind).

As far as he knows, François-Poncet** has brought back no concrete proposal from Hitler. So far nothing more than probing and generating a "favourable atmosphere" is under way. At the moment the question of the colonies is next on the list. Here the Rightists will be against concessions, but the Socialists may give in.

From the military point of view the most vulnerable colonies are Tunis and Indo-China. As regards the Far East, the experts differ in their opinions. Some still believe the war will be a protracted one, but the majority feel that the Japanese will soon come to terms with the Chinese ("the moderates who have strengthened their positions there") and will then most likely set upon the USSR. As for Spain, Mandel does not doubt that preparations are afoot to recognize Franco and that the first result of François-Poncet's appearance in Rome will be the complete blockage of transit.

Ambassador

From the archives.

* French Minister for Colonies.

** French Ambassador in Germany (1931-38) and in Italy (1938-40).

No. 21.

LETTER FROM THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GERMANY*October 31, 1938*

Subject: The British Government's intentions regarding the commencement of talks with Germany.

Thanks to invitations for the last two week ends I have had the opportunity of having detailed exchanges of views with two members of the Cabinet—the Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, and the Minister of Transport, Burgin; these conversations were supplemented by conversations with other people in political life closely acquainted with the Prime Minister. I draw from this the following picture of the attitude of the British Government towards Germany:

I

Chamberlain has complete confidence in the Führer. The taking over of the Sudeten-German territories without a hitch and the demobilization of the German Army have strengthened his conviction that the course he took, leading up to the Munich decisions, was the proper one. Now Chamberlain intends to take new steps shortly to bring about a settlement with Germany. As a result of the settlement of the Czech-Sudeten-German problem and also of the Führer's declaration that Germany had no further territorial claims to enforce in Europe, basic obstacles in the way of an Anglo-German settlement had also, in his view, been simultaneously removed. The Munich protocol* had laid the foundation for a reshaping of Anglo-German relations. A lasting rapprochement between the two countries is regarded by Chamberlain and the British Cabinet as one of the chief aims of British foreign policy, because world peace can be secured in the most effective manner by this combination.

In the opinion of authoritative political circles, to which Sir Samuel Hoare also gave expression, no time is so favourable as

* See Document No. 2.

the present one for bringing about such a settlement; in Chamberlain the British Government possesses a statesman for whom the attainment of the objective of an Anglo-German rapprochement was simultaneously dictated by the head and by the heart. As a result of the part which Chamberlain had played in the September crisis, his position was extraordinarily strong among the British public. The Conservative majority was unassailed. A general election to be held in the not too distant future would stabilize it for a number of years. The present mood of the public was favourable for an Anglo-German settlement, despite the intrigues of the Opposition which are conditioned by domestic politics.

From the mood prevailing in Government circles it can be expected that Chamberlain will shortly make proposals to the Führer for a continuation of the policy initiated at Munich.

II

For such talks, agreements on the armaments question and the humanizing of war are to be regarded as those subjects which interest the British most. In particular, an exchange of views on questions of air warfare is naturally regarded as urgent here. What questions are to be put forward in detail cannot be established at present with complete certainty. One thing only is certain, namely, that the ministries concerned are at present occupied in examining the proposals which might be submitted to the German Government.

According to statements made to me by Sir Samuel Hoare, they will apparently involve two sets of subjects:

(1) Questions of humanizing air warfare (ban on poison gas and bombing of cities).

(2) Discussions on compiling definite guiding rules for the construction of bomber aircraft with a view to opposing the excessive extension of their range caused by technical progress.

Sir Samuel Hoare stated in this connection that during his 7 years as Air Minister he had been able to observe how technical progress had tended to slip from human control.

The great difficulties facing German agreement to quantitative limitation are appreciated here. Britain therefore understands that all discussions on limiting air armaments will have to be carried out with Germany simultaneously keeping an eye on Soviet air power. At least, in answer to my statements regarding this, Sir

Samuel Hoare let slip the observation that, after a further rapprochement between the four European Great Powers, the acceptance of certain defense obligations, or even a guarantee by them against Soviet Russia, was conceivable in the event of an attack by Soviet Russia.

III

The colonial question was not broached in my conversations with official personages. From information I have received from friendly persons about the attitude of Chamberlain and other members of the Cabinet towards this question and from the treatment of the colonial question in the press here, the general attitude of the British Government can nevertheless be established with certainty.

The British Government is fully aware that satisfaction of Germany's legitimate colonial claims is a prerequisite for a complete Anglo-German settlement. It is even possible that it will take the initiative. The press, too, is already discussing the colonial problem in detail.

Reports from the City point to equally intense preoccupation with the colonial problem and here they are concerned with the question how Germany could pay compensation for capital invested in our former colonies since the end of the war; the heavy fall in many gold shares is likewise to be traced back to the discussion of the colonial question. The fact also deserves to be emphasized that anxiety about colonial demands by Poland prevents a positive attitude from being adopted towards our colonial claims.

It is pointed out in political circles that a thorough and lengthy preparation of British press and public opinion is a prerequisite for a favourable settlement of the colonial question; in contrast to the leading political circles (Parliament, etc.) the average elector does not correctly understand the cession of overseas territories under British rule. There is a certain unmistakable tendency in the press to draw attention to impending changes of territory by pointing out the difference between colonies and those mandated territories ceded to Britain for temporary trusteeship only. They have already gone so far as to recognize Germany's theoretical claim to the removal of the degrading terms of the dictated Treaty of Versailles and to the return of the whole of her colonial possessions; in actual practice, the demand for the return of what was

formerly German East Africa for the time being still meets with strong opposition in certain circles; matters are not substantially different in the case of German Southwest Africa.

IV

Consideration is likewise being given here to the technical implementation of the discussions envisaged with Germany. Chamberlain is considering the question whether he should make proposals for such discussions at once or whether it would be more expedient to wait until the German Government has completely settled the urgent domestic and foreign problems which have arisen through the cession of the Sudeten-German territories to the Reich and the reorganization of Czechoslovakia's relations with her neighbors.

This much can be regarded as certain concerning the general attitude of Chamberlain or of the British Cabinet: for the British Government a satisfactory solution of the armaments question, which would allow it in particular to save face at home, is the starting point for the negotiations vis-à-vis the public; the British Government would prefer to reach its objectives by means of direct and bilateral discussions with Germany. If these direct bilateral Anglo-German discussions should not lead to this objective, the attempt would probably be made from the British side to include Italy and France in quadripartite negotiations.

V

I confined myself for the most part to listening when the arguments described above were discussed. To statements on the question of the limitation of armaments, I replied on the lines of the guiding principles laid down by the Führer. Whenever I was asked about the colonial question, I expressly pointed out that, as a logical consequence of the shameful provision of the dictated Treaty of Versailles, Germany's claims to their return included the total extent of her former colonies.

v. Dirksen

No. 22.**EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM
THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
TO THE SOVIET CHARGE D'AFFAIRES IN THE USA***November 14, 1938*

[...] We shall be marking the fifth anniversary of the establishment of relations in a very modest way in our press. It is difficult to comment on the significance of that event without mentioning the reasons why there is no desired political effect. And those reasons are to be found in the complete passivity of the American Government which has in fact long been practising Isolationism. Despite its President's Sermons on the Mount about peace, America cannot deny her share of responsibility for the present international situation. [...]

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 23.**EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM
THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR
IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA
TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***November 17, 1938*

[...] Referring to his ties with the Sudeten Germans and through them with the democratically-minded Germany, Skrach* repeatedly assured me that he regarded Czechoslovakia's capitulation as the greatest of misfortunes precisely because the Hitlerite regime in Germany was thoroughly rotten and would not have

* Chief custodian of the personal papers of the former President of Czechoslovakia, T. Masaryk.

withstood even the shortest of wars—even against Czechoslovakia alone. Without any prompting on my part Skrach drew the conclusion that Czechoslovakia had been sacrificed precisely because all the participants in that tragedy were horribly afraid of the collapse of the Hitlerite regime, afraid of perishing under the ruins of that colossus, afraid of the inevitable revolution which would then have affected not only France but also Britain, and the whole of Europe for that matter. According to Skrach's information, it was only for the benefit of the outside world that Hitler was assuming a strident tone and an arrogant stance. In conversations with Chamberlain he had allegedly put it to the former quite bluntly that it was not only war that would signify an early social revolution, but that a mere setback for Hitler would, in the final analysis and in the very near future, lead to the collapse of the National-Socialist system and to the triumph of Bolshevism in Europe. This had allegedly coincided with Chamberlain's assessment: hence his zeal in saving Hitler and his regime. Skrach is certain that France, as well as the ruling upper crust in Czechoslovakia herself, had been quickly led to the same conviction. The French betrayal is therefore understandable and natural, and it is also beyond question that there was the betrayal inside Czechoslovakia. In terms of socio-political groupings it is quite clear who had directly inspired that betrayal and who had perpetrated it. These were the Agrarian Party, the Right-wing of the People's Socialists and undoubtedly some of the leaders of the Social-Democratic Party. The purely fascist groupings probably did not take part since their role was negligible and they were remote from the affairs of government. Skrach does not directly suspect Benes but he is strongly suspicious of Benes's closest associates. [...]

Ambassador of the USSR in
Czechoslovakia
Alexandrovsky

From the archives.

No. 24.**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
COUNSELLOR OF THE GERMAN EMBASSY IN
POLAND* AND THE VICE-DIRECTOR OF THE POLIT-
ICAL DEPARTMENT OF THE POLISH MINISTRY FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS***November 18, 1938*

Kobylanski said: "The Minister cannot speak as openly as I can. The question of Carpathian Ruthenia is of decisive significance for us. You see the unrest this question has stirred up in our Ukrainian regions. We have been suppressing and will go on suppressing that unrest. Do not make it impossible for us to pursue our policy. If Carpathian Ruthenia is incorporated into Hungary, Poland would agree subsequently to join forces with Germany in a campaign against the Soviet Ukraine. But if Carpathian Ruthenia remains a hotbed of unrest, you will be making such action impossible for us. Understand what this means!"

From the archives.

No. 25.**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE USSR AND THE FRENCH CHARGE D'AFFAIRES IN
THE USSR***November 20, 1938*

Payart asked me what I thought of the present international situation and its future development. I replied that the new situation had been created by the Munich Agreement, and it seemed to

* Rudolf von Schelihah, Counsellor of the German Embassy in Warsaw. Born into a well-known aristocratic family, he detested Hitler and the Nazis, regarding them as upstarts. He supplied information about Germany's aggressive plans to a German businessman whom he took for an intelligence agent of a Western country but who in reality transmitted the information to Soviet military intelligence (*Pravda*, July 1, 1967).

me that we should be addressing that question to England and France: how did they perceive the consequences of the Agreement? Payart then said that he approached me not on instructions from his Government but in a personal capacity. Since he considered himself an advocate of collective security he wanted to know whether I still believed a collective security policy was possible. To this I said the following.

We consider the Munich Agreement to be an international misfortune. England and France will now hardly succeed in retreating from the policy they have charted which amounts to the unilateral satisfaction of the demands of all three aggressors, Germany, Italy and Japan. They will present their claims in turn, and England and France will offer them one concession after another. I believe, however, that they will reach the point where the peoples of England and France would have to stop them. Then they will probably have to return to the old path of collective security, for there is no other way to organize the peace. England and France will certainly come out of this greatly weakened, but even then the potential forces of peace will be superior to the potential forces of aggression.

To Payart's question whether I felt it possible to get Poland and Rumania also to join in such a collective security policy I replied that at present this would hardly be possible, particularly in so far as Poland was concerned, for she, and to a lesser extent Rumania, were especially mistrustful of English and French policy. First, the Great Powers must unite, and when they proved by deeds their ability to pursue a firm and consistent policy, other countries would begin to group around them and US support would be assured.

Payart declared that in his view we ought to be interested in seeing a strong French Government, even a Right-wing and anti-Soviet one, for only such a government could offer resistance to an aggressor. This, however, was not in line with the Comintern Manifesto in which he discerned an appeal for the overthrow of the present Governments of England and France. At this point he showed me the relevant passage in the *Communist International*, where it is indeed proposed that governments of treachery and betrayal be overthrown. I remarked to Payart that if the Chamberlain and Daladier Governments identified themselves with the definition in the Manifesto, they could have a grudge against the Comintern. We, however, were not responsible for the Comintern.

The Comintern and the Soviet state had certain parallel interests but they were not connected. I could not imagine a French Government declaring itself to be strong (such declarations were meaningless) and being believed by others to be strong unless it had the support of friends. France alone could not resist the onslaught of Germany, Italy and Japan. I did not think, therefore, that an anti-Soviet government would create the impression of strength. I likewise doubted whether in democratic countries a government could be strong if it were opposed by the working class.

Payart thanked me for the clarification of views and expressed agreement with my remarks. I do not think, however, that in his heart he really agreed with me.

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 26.

**LETTER FROM THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN THE
USA TO THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
POLAND**

November 21, 1938

The day before yesterday I had a long talk with Ambassador Bullitt who is spending his vacation here.

At the start of our conversation he told me he had established very cordial relations with our Ambassador in Paris, Lukasiewicz, and that he was always glad to see him.

Bullitt had regularly informed President Roosevelt about the international situation in Europe and particularly about Soviet Russia, and President Roosevelt as well as the State Department had treated his reports with great attention. Bullitt is a very colourful and interesting raconteur, for during the conversation he takes into account all aspects of the complex European problems, but, as a rule, his conclusions are negative; his attitude to European events reflects the opinion of a journalist rather than that of a politician.

In his conversation with me Bullitt displayed considerable pessimism, declaring that the spring of 1939 would undoubtedly again be very troublesome and that the situation would be aggravated by the constant likelihood of war and threats from Germany and by the complexity of European relations. He agreed with me that the gravity centre of the European problem had shifted from the West to the East, for the capitulation of the democratic states at Munich had revealed their weakness *vis-à-vis* the German Reich.

Then Bullitt told me of Great Britain's complete unpreparedness for war and of the impossibility of gearing British industry to the mass production of war material, especially aircraft. As regards the French army, he referred to it with great enthusiasm, adding, however, that the French air force was obsolete. To judge from what the military experts had told Bullitt during the crisis of last September, the war would last at least six years and, in their view, it would end with the complete disintegration of Europe and the triumph of Communism in all states, which ultimately Soviet Russia would doubtless take advantage of.

As regards Soviet Russia, Bullitt spoke of it with disdain, pointing out that the latest purges, particularly the removal of Blyukher* had brought about complete disorganization in the Red Army, which was incapable of any active military operations. In general, he said, Russia was at present "the sick man of Europe" and he compared it to the pre-war Ottoman State.

Of the German Reich and Chancellor Hitler he was sharply critical and spoke with great abhorrence saying that only the use of force and, ultimately, war could stop the frenzied expansion of Germany in the future.

When I asked him how he saw that future war he replied that, first of all, the United States, France and England should quickly rearm to counter Germany's might. Only when the proper moment had come, Bullitt continued, should decisive action be taken.

I asked him how that decisive action could be launched if, say, Germany did not first attack England and France, and [I said]

* Marshal of the Soviet Union and commander of the Special Far Eastern Army.

that in that case I simply could not see the starting point of that entire combination.

Bullitt replied that the democratic states would undoubtedly need at least another two years to rearm themselves completely. In the meantime the German Reich would probably direct its expansionist drive towards the East, and for the democratic states it would be desirable that there, in the East, matters should reach the point of war between the German Reich and Russia. Although the potential strength of the Soviets at present was still unknown, it was quite likely that, operating far from its bases, Germany would be compelled to wage a protracted and exhausting war. Only then, said Bullitt, could the democratic states attack Germany and force her to capitulate.

To my question whether the United States would take an active part in such a war he replied that there was no doubt about it, but only after England and France had acted first. Public opinion in the United States, he said, was so strongly opposed to Nazism and Hitler that already then American society was overcome by the same psychosis as in 1917, just before the United States declared war on Germany.

Then Bullitt asked about Poland and about our situation in Eastern Europe. He agreed that Poland was another state that would take up armed resistance should Germany violate its borders. "I fully understand," he said, "the problem of having a common frontier with Hungary. The Hungarians are also a courageous people, and if they acted jointly with Yugoslavia, a solution to the question of defence against German expansion would be considerably facilitated."

Then Bullitt spoke of the Ukrainian problem and of German encroachments on the Ukraine. He asserted that Germany had a fully prepared and manned Ukrainian Staff which in future was to assume power in the Ukraine and establish an independent Ukrainian state under the aegis of Germany. Such a Ukraine, Bullitt continued, would, of course, pose a great danger for Poland since it would have a direct influence on the Ukrainians in Eastern Poland. "Even today," he said, "German propaganda is being conducted completely along Ukrainian nationalistic lines. The base for all these actions in the future is to be Ruthenia in whose existence Germany is doubtless interested mainly from the strategic point of view."

Bullitt showed himself to be not particularly well informed

about the situation in Eastern Europe and his thoughts on the subject were superficial.

Ambassador of the Polish Republic
Jerzy Potocki

From the archives.

Published in *Polnische Dokumente zur Vorgeschichte des Krieges*,
Auswärtiges Amt, Erste Folge, Berlin, 140, S. 8-9.

No. 27.

**MEMORANDUM TRANSMITTED BY THE HUNGARIAN
LEGATION IN GERMANY TO THE MINISTRY FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GERMANY**

November 21, 1938

The basic principle of Hungarian foreign policy since the formation of the Berlin-Rome Axis¹⁰ has always been association with this Axis, and in the implementation of the Vienna Award this association is assuming an even more complete form.

On the basis of this consideration the Hungarian Government deems it necessary for the purpose of strengthening its relations with the German Reich to enter into negotiations with the Reich Government in both the political and the economic fields.

As far as political questions are concerned, the Hungarian Government has in mind first of all the common fight against Bolshevism. Hungary was perhaps the first state which never deviated from its course in the fight against Communism and which was never open to any sort of settlement or compromise with Bolshevism.

The anti-Bolshevist attitude of the Axis Powers has always found understanding and approval among us, and if the Axis Powers consider it important, we should be prepared to *adhere to the Anti-Comintern Pact*.⁸

In the economic field there are new possibilities, and Hungary, which has carried on a considerable part of her foreign trade with the Axis Powers in the past, too, would be prepared not only to cultivate economic relations still further, but to *intensify* and give

them greater stability and develop them practically in a mutually complementary way.

We believe that in this manner we should come closer to the goal of consolidating our relations with the Axis Powers and thereby creating a situation which would be well adapted to serve the interests of the Axis Powers as well as those of Hungary.

From Documents on German Foreign Policy. 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. V, pp. 336-337.

No. 28.

TELEGRAM FROM THE DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR

Ankara, November 24, 1938

Yesterday I talked with Inonu* in the presence of Terentiev and Sarajoglu**. The conversation lasted about an hour and a half. I began by reminding Inonu of the invariability of the foreign policy of the USSR which steadfastly strove for peace and actively supported any initiative aimed at securing that peace and impeding attempts by aggressors to violate it, and which has victoriously rebuffed all encroachments on its rights and interests, and showed the entire world an example of loyalty to treaty obligations. Illustrating what I said with facts, notably from the sphere of our relationships with Czechoslovakia and Japan, I told Inonu that Turkey could rest assured of the invariability of our friendship. For our part we too saw in Inonu's election as President of the Turkish Republic genuine guarantees of the stability of Turkey's friendly co-operation with the USSR in future. Nonetheless in the present situation, which was giving rise to the danger of major upheavals and causing a realignment of international forces, it would be useful for us to know how Inonu himself regarded future Soviet-Turkish relations.

Inonu responded with a lengthy statement whose gist was as

* President of Turkey.

** Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey.

follows. He was touched by the attitude of the USSR to Turkey's national grief¹¹ and to his own election as President of the Republic. In letting us know of his appreciation, he noted that he attached exceptional significance to our reaffirmation of the invariability of Soviet-Turkish friendship, which he had regarded and continued to regard as the basis of Turkey's foreign policy. He would instruct Sarajoglu to report my statement to the Council of Ministers and it would doubtless give the Turkish people a feeling of calm confidence in the immutability of friendship between the USSR and Turkey which had already waged a joint struggle against foreign interventionists. Such confidence was particularly necessary in the present tense situation which was threatening the world with great upheavals. Inonu assured us that if those upheavals broke out, Turkey would never be in the camp hostile to the USSR. If an attempt was made to attack the USSR, Turkey would bar the aggressor's way on its side and would not let him through to our frontiers. Inonu declared this most explicitly and requested that his statement be brought to the attention of the Soviet Government. On more than one occasion the Turkish Government had asked itself whether the treaty relations existing between the USSR and Turkey should not be broadened. At present Inonu believed that those relations, which had withstood the test of almost twenty years' time, were stronger and more reliable than treaties such as the USSR had with Czechoslovakia or France. Turkish-Soviet relations were more than friendly. They were in effect an alliance of the USSR and Turkey. The significance of that alliance was in no way lessened by the fact that Turkey used the resources of imperialist countries which offered credits, provided her with arms and supplied her industry with equipment. This did not impose any political obligations on Turkey. To this day neither England nor Germany had by a single word attempted to draw Turkey into their foreign policy orbit or to wrest Turkey away from the USSR. They knew only too well that this was impossible. If, however, anyone were to try and lead Turkey onto that path, the Turkish Government would most vigorously declare that this it would never accept. Inonu wanted the Soviet Government to know this and to believe his word which was weighed, considered and firm. The Soviet Government itself had maintained and continued to maintain economic relations with countries hostile to it. This Turkey was doing, too, for the sake of strengthening herself in the economic and, particularly,

the military field. The Turkish Government would prefer to use the resources of the USSR alone for that purpose. It was hoping that the Soviet Government would be quite objective and would understand the position of Turkey which was compelled to seek the means to strengthen herself everywhere. Considering the close friendship between the USSR and Turkey, the Soviet Union could not be indifferent to the strengthening of the latter. Inonu regarded mutual confidence as the basis of that friendship. Whenever doubts or misunderstandings arose between the USSR and Turkey it was necessary immediately to remove them through frank and forthright discussions. Turning to the domestic situation in Turkey, Inonu wished to inform the Soviet Government that there was complete order in the country, and that the Turkish Government would never forget that it had itself been created by the people in a great national revolution. In conclusion Inonu very cordially requested us to convey his greetings to the Soviet leaders and to assure them that the friendly welcome accorded to him in the USSR would forever remain in his memory.

Potemkin

From the archives.

No. 29.

**EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S
COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

November 25, 1938

[...] After Munich it is becoming ever more plain that Chamberlain's main objective is not a genuine "Four-Power Pact", but a "Two-Power Pact" (England and Germany) formally decked out as a "Four-Power Pact". In accordance with Chamberlain's "philosophy", France and Italy must from now on merely play the part of "junior partners" under Great Britain and Germany.

For the time being, however, Chamberlain is seeking to clear the ground for his future "appeasement" measures and to do all he can to win Hitler's goodwill. It is most significant, for instance, that despite the Munich decisions England (and France) has in

the last two months taken no part whatever in resolving the fate of Czechoslovakia. Germany and Italy have been given complete freedom of action in determining the boundaries of Czechoslovakia, her economic policy, her internal regime and so forth. Official circles here make no more mention of England and France guaranteeing Czechoslovakia's boundaries. It is my impression that Chamberlain is laying the groundwork for a refusal to fulfil that obligation and is merely seeking a suitable form in which to do so. [...]

Ambassador of the USSR in Britain
I. Maisky

From the archives.

No. 30.

**MEMORANDUM OF THE GENERAL STAFF
OF THE GERMAN ARMED FORCES—"NOTES FOR
WEHRMACHT'S DISCUSSIONS WITH ITALY"**

November 26, 1938

1. Nature of Negotiations

Negotiations will be initiated by the Reich Foreign Minister in conjunction with the Chief of Staff of OKW. The further negotiations to be conducted by the Wehrmacht departments except in the case of questions which are being dealt with by the OKW [text illegible] in OKW (cf. paragraph 5).

2. Basic Principle of the Negotiations

No local joint warfare under unified command but allocation of special tasks and theatres of war for each state, within which areas it will act independently.

3. Military-Political Basis for the Negotiations

War by Germany and Italy against France and Britain, with the object first of knocking out France. That would also hit Britain, as she would lose her bases for carrying on the war on the Continent and would then find the whole power of Germany and Italy directed against herself alone.

Combined with:

Strict neutrality of Switzerland, Belgium and Holland.

Benevolent neutrality towards Germany and Italy: Hungary and Spain. Doubtful attitude: Balkans and Poland.

Hostile attitude towards Germany and Italy: Russia.

The non-European powers can be left out of the picture at the beginning.

4. Outline of Allocation of Tasks

(a) *Germany*

General. Concentrate all land, sea, and air forces on the western front.

By strict observance of Belgian and Dutch neutrality the extension of this front would be prevented and the enemy probably also compelled to observe the neutrality of those countries.

War on Land. Concentrated German attack against France between the Moselle and the Rhine in a southwesterly direction, the eastern flank on the western escarpment of the Vosges.

(Break-through of Maginot Line perfectly possible. Proved by experimental bombardment of the Czech fortifications, which are modeled on the Maginot Line. We have available the most modern means of attack and long-range artillery with armoured protection within our own fortifications. Reasons for this opinion will be given orally in greater detail.)

War at Sea. Action against the British and French sea communications in the North Sea and the Atlantic. Details as to the definition of the limits of naval theatres of war and questions of mutual assistance (supplementing of fuel and equipment, dockyards, etc.) will be matters for decision in the discussions between the two navies.

War in the Air. Simultaneous offensive air warfare against Britain and northern France. Cutting off of British sea communications in collaboration with the Navy.

(b) *Italy*

General. Maintenance of Balkan neutrality (common supply base), increase of pressure of Spain, occupation of Balearic Islands (no passage for troops or aircraft by France). Threaten British and French spheres of influence in North Africa, Egypt, Palestine, and the East. Active encouragement of the insurgent movement in Morocco. By a concentration of all these means, to disperse the British naval and air war effort.

War on Land. Tying down of largest possible French forces on the Italian Alpine front.

Prevention of threat to Germany on her eastern and southeastern frontier by sending Italian forces (in conjunction with Hungarian forces) against Poland, if the latter adopts a threatening attitude.

Attack against French North Africa and capture of Corsica.

War at Sea. Operations against the British and French sea communications in the Mediterranean, especially against France's communications with North Africa. Elimination of Gibraltar. Regarding delimitation of naval theatres of war, see 4(a).

War in the Air. Air war against France south of the line from Lake Geneva to La Rochelle, against the North African colonies, and the French sea communications in the Mediterranean.

5. Wehrmacht Questions in General

(a) Participation by Italy in all active and passive defense measures by Germany.

(b) Exchange of intelligence between departments of the armed forces.

(c) Participation by Italy in war censorship as regards foreign countries.

(d) Collaboration in propaganda warfare and economic warfare.

(e) Collaboration in the sphere of raw materials and armament production.

(f) Collaboration in the sphere of communications.

From Documents on German Foreign Policy. 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. IV, pp. 530-532.

No. 31.

TASS COMMUNIQUE ON SOVIET-POLISH RELATIONS

November 27, 1938

A series of conversations recently held between the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Comrade Litvinov, and the

Ambassador of the Polish Republic, M. Grzybowski, has revealed that:

1. Relations between the Polish Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics remain founded as hitherto on all the existing treaties in their full scope, including the Non-Aggression Pact signed in 1932; this Pact, concluded for five years and extended until 1945, has a sufficiently broad basis, guaranteeing the inviolability of peaceful relations between the two states.

2. Both Governments will take a favourable attitude to the expansion of mutual trade.

3. Both Governments are agreed as to the necessity of a positive settlement of several current questions arising out of their mutual treaty obligations and in particular of questions still outstanding, and of the liquidation of the frontier incidents that have occurred recently.

From *Izvestia*, No. 275 (6742),
November 27, 1938.

No. 32.

COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY THE PRESS DEPARTMENT OF THE POLISH MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO GERMAN CORRESPONDENTS IN POLAND

November 28, 1938

The following comments are of a confidential nature and they are being issued only to German correspondents. They are to be used without reference to the source.

In the last months tension between Poland and the Soviet Union rose to a level of which the public could not have been fully aware since it had been preoccupied with the Czechoslovak crisis. Signs of dangerous tension in Soviet-Polish relations were to be found in Litvinov's statement to Grzybowski in September¹² and the large-scale concentration of Russian troops on Poland's eastern border. The Polish-Soviet Declaration* just published is aimed merely at normalizing relations. In her foreign policy Poland has always been of the view that the Soviet Union's

* See Document No. 31.

participation in European politics is needless. Today as before it upholds that view. For that matter, the Soviet-Polish Declaration was issued on a Soviet initiative.

From the archives.

No. 33.

EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN

December 4, 1938

1. I was glad to see from your last report that you are not overrating the successes of the English Opposition. The outcome of the by-elections indicates that in the event of new elections at the present moment we could expect merely a reduction in the votes for, and in the number of, pro-Chamberlain members, but on no account the defeat of Chamberlain. Even the anti-Jewish pogroms, despite the emotions they have aroused in England, would not have changed those results. The aforementioned emotions are undoubtedly of a temporary nature and will soon subside.

The further implementation of Chamberlain's appeasement plans could be impeded only by France, if, having strengthened herself with a German-French Declaration, she wanted to put up serious opposition to the Italian aggression and if she were to resolutely resist the granting to Franco of belligerent rights. It would be too optimistic to count on that, however. The French will, most likely, yield on the Spanish question too, in exchange for a temporary suspension of Italian agitation in respect of Savoy, Corsica, etc.

2. I trust you are under no illusions about Anglo-Soviet relations and that you are not overrating the significance of the favourable attitude of Government members to your luncheon invitations. It is frequently the case that attempts are made to compensate a substantial covert deterioration of relations by minor overt manifestations of correctness, which is taking place in this case too.

3. A new rise of tension in our relations with Japan may be expected in the very near future. Although she could hardly have

hoped that a new fishing convention would be signed, she was evidently certain nonetheless that we would at least, as in the previous two years, extend the existing temporary agreement for another year. A day or two ago, however, I said to the Japanese Ambassador that we would refuse even to begin negotiations about a new fishing convention until Japan fulfilled her guarantee in respect of Manchukuo's payment for the Chinese Eastern Railway. I intimated to him, however, that we would be prepared at best to conclude an agreement for one year but on new terms, namely by putting sections up for sale, though we were excluding about forty sections completely from Japanese exploitation for strategic and fishery protection considerations. You are probably aware of the role played in our relations with Japan by the fisheries question, and you could therefore imagine her reaction to our statement.

Incidentally, Goering recently told the Japanese Ambassador, Oshima, that there would be no peace in Europe and that in German-English relations there could only be a step forward and a step backwards, but that in the final analysis the interests of the two countries could not be harmonized. From this Goering drew the conclusion that it was necessary to achieve further rapprochement among Germany, Japan and Italy and expressed regret over Mussolini's vacillation. [...]

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 34.

FRANCO-GERMAN DECLARATION¹³

December 6, 1938

M. Georges Bonnet, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the French Republic, and M. Joachim von Ribbentrop, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the German Reich, acting in the name and by order of their respective Governments, have agreed on the following points at their meeting in Paris on December 6, 1938:

1. The French Government and the German Government fully share the conviction that pacific and neighbourly relations between France and Germany constitute one of the essential

elements of the consolidation of the situation in Europe and of the preservation of general peace. Consequently both Governments will endeavour with all their might to assure the development of the relations between their countries in this direction.

2. Both Governments agree that no question of a territorial nature remains in suspense between their countries and solemnly recognize as permanent the frontier between their countries as it is actually drawn.

3. Both Governments are resolved, without prejudice to their special relations with third Powers, to remain in contact on all questions of importance to both their countries and to have recourse to mutual consultation in case any complications arising out of these questions should threaten to lead to international difficulties.

In witness whereof the Representatives of the two Governments have signed the present Declaration, which comes into force immediately.

Executed in duplicate in the French and German languages at Paris, on December 6, 1938.

Georges Bonnet
Joachim von Ribbentrop

From the archives.

No. 35.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN AND LLOYD
GEORGE**

December 6, 1938

On December 6 Lloyd George invited me for lunch at Parliament. As always, he was brilliant, witty and interesting. He talked mostly about Hitler's future plans. In Lloyd George's opinion, Hitler is bound to act soon. But where, in what direction? The colonies? Right now that is out of the question. The whole of Britain would rise, as one man, against the cession of colonies to Germany. The same goes for France. Switzerland? Not likely, for it is a mountainous and, in itself, a poor country, with unfertile soil, and devoid of valuable minerals. It is far more likely, there-

fore, that Hitler will turn to the East. Where exactly? Lloyd George believes that Lithuania (Memel) is far too small a job for Hitler (though of course he will take Memel too). Poland is another matter. In the last months Polish-German relations have deteriorated considerably. Not for nothing is Poland now trying to improve her relations with the USSR. Hitler's plan boils down to taking back the "Corridor" and Silesia and wresting from Poland her Ukrainian part, uniting the latter with Subcarpathian Ukraine and turning both into a vassal Ukrainian state of the Czechoslovak type. Such is the immediate task. In the more distant future Hitler may perhaps contemplate action against the Soviet Ukraine, but just now he will not risk it. He is not strong enough. His army is far from being as excellent as it is thought to be. There is great discontent in the country. In this connection Lloyd George was interested in our views concerning the European situation. In particular, he was preoccupied with this question: would we calmly watch Hitler carry out his Polish plan or intervene in one way or another in the course of events? I evaded making any predictions, stating that the principal line of our foreign policy was sufficiently well known to Lloyd George, while its application in this or that specific case depended on a great many circumstances which it was difficult to take into account in advance.

Ambassador of the USSR in England
I. Maisky

From the archives.

No. 36.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN AND THE CHIEF
DIPLOMATIC ADVISER TO THE BRITISH FOREIGN
SECRETARY**

December 8, 1938

On December 8, Vansittart and his wife had lunch with us. They had only just returned from a six-weeks' holiday in the south of France. Vansittart made no secret of his sharply critical

attitude to Chamberlain's policy. He was particularly indignant over the Premier's forthcoming visit to Rome which will take place despite the aggravation of Franco-Italian relations. He was inclined to believe that the Tunis claim was serious and that Mussolini would insist on it. Having once begun such agitation he would have to go further and further for considerations of prestige if for no other reason. It was known furthermore that Mussolini had long since been clamouring for a "prize" for the assistance he had rendered Hitler on the Austrian and Czechoslovak questions. Perhaps the moment for the presentation of the Tunis claim did not fully coincide with Hitler's plans, but that was a minor point. Essentially, Hitler would of course support Mussolini. At the same time Vansittart noted that neither England nor France would agree to the transfer of any colonies to Hitler or Mussolini. Most of all Vansittart was concerned over what Hitler was going to do in 1939. According to his information, Hitler did not intend to rest on his laurels for very long. In the coming months he might be expected to launch some new campaign. In which direction? According to Vansittart, a widespread view among British government circles was that Hitler would strike the next blow in the East, specifically, against the Soviet Ukraine. He personally had not yet reached a definite conclusion on this question. Here Vansittart began asking me about our views on the subject. I described our position in detail. Vansittart expressed satisfaction over the improvement of Polish-Soviet relations and emphasized the importance of improving relations with Rumania. At the end of our talk he came to the conclusion that the government position probably required serious revision. Vansittart asked me to call on him in a day or two, when he would be better familiarized with the state of affairs, for an exchange of views on current questions.

Ambassador of the USSR in Britain
I. Maisky

From the archives.

No. 37.

**LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE***December 10, 1938*

1. There is probably no need to write and tell you that we are treating Bonnet's communication about his discussions with Ribbentrop with considerable scepticism. It remains unclear what prompted Hitler to accept the Declaration. Even the Anglo-German Declaration was issued at the request—and evidently a very insistent one at that—of Chamberlain. It was important for Hitler to strengthen Chamberlain's position by gilding the pill of the Munich capitulation. What is more, the temporary improvement of Anglo-German relations is an integral part of Hitler's plans. It is difficult, however, to believe that Hitler would agree, without any compensation, to a Franco-German Declaration as well, which Bonnet had probably begged him for, particularly at a time when this was bound to provoke the strongest displeasure on Mussolini's part. Hitler could hardly have made such a sacrifice merely for the sake of strengthening the positions of Daladier and Bonnet. One is forced to conclude therefore that a certain compensation on the part of France—and probably a very big one—was included in the secret part of the talks or even in a secret agreement. I would be inclined to think that this compensation is not exclusively in the political sphere, or even in the financial and economic sphere. It is your task to try by different means to ascertain all the details of the Franco-German negotiations and agreements.

2. Your information about the backstage solicitations of the Poles sheds new light on the Polish Ambassador's unexpected approach to us concerning improvement of Soviet-Polish relations. Aware of the intrigues against him due to discontent with his foreign policy orientation, which has placed Poland face to face with a very real danger, Beck probably decided to make a little adjustment in his line in our favour. I feel that at present Bonnet will not undertake to revive the Franco-Polish Pact¹⁴ particularly since this now implies the need for France to take action in defence of Poland. Bonnet's line is absolutely clear:

complete renunciation of any interference in European affairs and concentration of defence—whether diplomatic or any other kind—solely on the borders of the Empire.

3. François-Poncet told Comrade Shtein a day or two ago that the latest happenings in the Italian Chamber of Deputies¹⁵ have dispelled all illusions about chances for an improvement of Franco-Italian relations. On the eve of those happenings Mussolini told François-Poncet that the Spanish question had come between Italy and France. After the demonstration in the Chamber Poncet allegedly told Ciano: "How can you want us to yield to you on the Spanish question when, after Spain, Tunis, Corsica, Jibuti, Nice and Savoy will be placed on the order of the day? In these circumstances we prefer not to talk at all." Of course, we should on no account believe that Poncet really said that, but his communication does reflect concern—both his own and his Government's. It is interesting to note that Poncet is now expressing dissatisfaction over the Italophile attitude of Lord Perth.* Poncet is furious because Perth, who had instructions from London to make a demarche to Ciano over the demonstration in the Chamber, first called on Ciano to fix a date for Chamberlain's visit to Rome and only several hours later made his demarche. Poncet is anticipating further development of anti-French action in Italy so that by the time Chamberlain arrives a threat of war will have been generated which will prompt Chamberlain (perhaps jointly with Hitler) to act as mediator and demand concessions from France for the sake of preserving the peace. Poncet believes that the problem of the Mediterranean is entering a decisive stage and that a collision is unavoidable. According to him, France will display firmness and determination in this matter.

If you recall Poncet's behaviour in Berlin, where he tried to create the same sort of panic in respect of Germany in order to justify making every possible concession in her favour, you will of course see that Poncet is pursuing the same goal in Rome by deliberately laying it on thick and creating a new panic.

4. *Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga* has been informed by *Achette* that *Journal de Moscou* has been banned in France. At a convenient opportunity—and such an opportunity should be speeded up as far as possible—you will have to talk about this in

* British Ambassador to Italy.

the Ministry, with a view to getting the ban lifted. As a preliminary step I would suggest that you find out whether any German or Italian newspapers have ever been banned in France. As far as I remember, there was a time when, in response to the ban on the importation of French newspapers into Italy, France instituted some reprisals. But if German newspapers which have been waging a harsh campaign against France have always been, and still are, freely admitted, it will be easier for you to point out the groundlessness of the ban on *Journal de Moscou*.

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 38.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN
THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND THE BRITISH
MINISTER IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA ***

December 10, 1938

The Minister called on the Foreign Minister to deliver a Note expressing the British views on our circular telegram in which the Prague Government had drawn attention to the fact that we had fulfilled the Munich supplementary protocol, which was a prerequisite for the guarantee of the frontiers. On the instructions of his Government, the Minister said that the British Government would strongly welcome a statement from us of our views on the question of a guarantee and, particularly, of how we saw that guarantee. British government officials had discussed the question of a common guarantee in Paris, but they had arrived at no agreement.

England had in mind a kind of general guarantee by the Munich Powers. The English refuse to offer a guarantee which they could not fulfil, and they would be very grateful if it could be made known to them what sort of a guarantee Prague had in mind. From Berlin they had learned that Germany and Italy were thinking of giving a guarantee separately. This would of course pose great difficulties for the English who would willingly support

* B. Newton.

the desire of the Prague Government to promote the co-operation of the Four Great Powers, for England feared that the Axis Powers would undermine the co-operation of the nations of Western and Central Europe. The English could not offer any effective guarantee against the Central Powers, but they would be prepared to offer a guarantee if at least three out of the Four Powers came out in Czechoslovakia's favour. England would on no account want to give an individual guarantee; she wished to give a guarantee only jointly with two other Great Powers (three out of four), as the British were not going to place themselves in the position that France had found herself in last October.

The Czechoslovak Minister replied:

(1) Any form of guarantee would be desirable; the more extensive, the better;

(2) We should like to have the guarantee as soon as possible;

(3) Replying to Newton's question about a possible guarantee by states other than those that had participated in Munich, the Minister said that the Czechoslovak Government had not yet examined that possibility, but that the question would immediately be considered after the Munich Powers settled the question of guarantees by mutual agreement.

Further on in the conversation the English Minister several times and with insistence emphasized the possibility of Czechoslovakia contenting herself with a guarantee by Germany alone, which, in his view, was the most important one, for Prague was probably well aware how unwillingly England gave guarantees in cases where British interests were not directly affected, and still less willingly where, as in this case, she had grounds to doubt that her guarantee would be at all useful for us.

From the archives in translation from the German.
Published in *Documents and Materials on the Eve of the Second World War*, Vol. I, November 1937-1938, Moscow, 1948, pp. 336-340.

No. 39.

TELEGRAM FROM A SOVIET MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER IN JAPAN TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE RED ARMY*December 10, 1938*

German Ambassador Ott has received a communication from the leaders of the National Socialist Party to the effect that very soon a tripartite military pact will be concluded between Japan, Italy and Germany.¹⁶ It will allegedly be directed against the Comintern, but in fact it will be directed against the USSR, though it will also envisage pressure against other countries.

Ramzai

From the archives.

No. 40.

MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF ITALY AND THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR IN GERMANY**December 15, 1938*

I accompanied the Japanese Ambassador in Berlin, General Oshima, on his visit to the Duce. This visit had been recommended by Ribbentrop because, like himself, Oshima is a zealous advocate of transforming the Anti-Comintern Pact⁸ into a pact of a tripartite alliance.¹⁶ Outwardly Oshima looks like one of those samurai as they are depicted in ancient paintings and on Japanese chinaware. An interesting face with harsh features. Short and stocky. An extremely proud bearing. When he started to speak I realized why Ribbentrop likes him so much. They are of the same type: enthusiasts and oversimplifiers. I do not wish to say they

* The memorandum was drawn up by the Italian Foreign Minister, Count Ciano.

are superficial. He attacked Russia and said Japan intended to dismember her into several states so as to make any thought of revenge futile and absurd; he said Japan wanted to eliminate all British influence in China and in the Pacific zone generally. He depicted in a tragic light the position of the English in India. The Duce repeated the usual arguments on the need to postpone the transformation of the Pact and mentioned the period between mid-January and mid-February as the period when he would make his decisions.

From M. Toscano, *Le origini del patto d'acciaio*, Firenze, 1948, pp. 43-44.

No. 41.

TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET CHARGE D'AFFAIRES IN GERMANY TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR

December 15, 1938

I paid my first call on the French Ambassador, Coulondre. Referring to conversations with his colleagues, he spoke of the intense stirring up of the Ukraine question here. According to him, this question is the main topic of discussion in German circles, notably in the army. It is his impression that it is not so much a question of a military attack as of creating internal troubles in the Soviet Ukraine. He feels that at present the Germans are working hard on the Poles to try and bring them over to their side in this matter.

He has not heard anything on this subject directly from the Germans. The Germans say they have no claims in the West and that Germany seeks expansion in the East, without specifying precisely what sort of expansion is meant. Coulondre believes the Germans have decided to stir up the Ukraine problem in order to divert attention from domestic difficulties and to improve the food situation. According to his information, the Germans are negotiating with Prague about an economic and currency *Anschluss*. Such agreements would give the Germans an opportunity to make purchases for Marks in Czechoslovakia, and subsequently in the

Ukraine as well. In this he sees indirect confirmation of the aforesaid rumours.

Chargé d'Affaires

From the archives.

No. 42.

EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF POLAND

December 16, 1938

In view of the very abrupt changes that have taken place in the international situation and the reaction of certain States to these changes, to form any general conclusions is at the present moment a risky and thankless undertaking. Nevertheless, I consider it my duty to make the attempt, even if very sketchy, primarily with the object, Mr. Minister, of giving you a picture of the situation as one sees it from this local observation post. The only risk I take is that the picture, observed from a different angle, may seem tendentious or onesided, or even just superficial or banal.

The post-Munich situation is assessed here as a state of neither war nor peace. Premier Chamberlain's assertion that a new era had come guaranteeing peace to "our generation" is considered by all to be an illusion, which contact with reality is causing swiftly to fade away. It must be admitted that Mr. Chamberlain is adhering very stubbornly and consistently to his chosen course, which is to lead to a four-power pact and the realization of the projects for a "new organization of Europe", based in one form or another on this pact. He continues to believe (honestly, I am assured) in the effectiveness of the method of personal contact between the responsible leaders of the partner States in the combination he has envisaged, and it is with this idea in mind that he is preparing for his next visit to Rome.

However, it is more than obvious that what is most attractive to the Englishman—"organization of Europe"—is not to the liking of Berlin, and that the realization of the rest of the Premier's program is proceeding very haltingly. So far the reply to his "active peace policy" has been three rude speeches by Hitler, the

accentuation of the anti-Jewish course, as well as a new program of Italian claims, supported by Berlin.

One would think that, in view of such numerous disappointments, Mr. Chamberlain should be encountering increasing dissatisfaction and opposition not only in Parliament (where the opposition, thanks to party discipline, would not be so very effective), but above all among the British public. There is opposition, but, *mirabile dictu*, it apparently shows no signs of growth since Munich. I hear less about the likelihood of a Labour Party comeback than I did a year ago. True, from time to time there is talk of the formation of a real "National Government", to include both oppositions, but, as ever, without conviction.

For all this there are various reasons, of which two seem to me the most important.

First: *The general opinion is that "Munich" was the most correct, if not the only, way out of a desperate situation.**

I recently heard some characteristic remarks from a high official in the Foreign Office, who is known for his critical attitude towards the Premier's policy. This gentleman agreed with the above opinion, only with the reservation that the Premier made a big mistake when he said that peace purchased at such a price was a "peace with honour". For that matter, the Premier himself is said to regret this expression, which he used under the stress of deep emotion.

(Furthermore, my informer asserted that the Western States were able to wriggle out of an extremely difficult situation without war thanks to the decision of the Czechs to capitulate without a fight...)

Second: The conviction that the Premier (to draw a not very exact parallel with the field of sports) blocked the British goal, and thus carried the game into the East of Europe. Whatever happens, the fact remains that time has been gained. And adjournment is no less popular in this home of political empiricism than in Geneva.

It is hard for me to fathom what the Premier is thinking, and whether he is less naive, or less sincere, than they say he is. But on the other hand I do know, on the basis of long observation, the reaction of the folk here. It is as vital, spontaneous, uniform, almost physiological, as the reaction of ants and bees, and is inde-

* Underscored in the original.

pendent of the phraseology with which public opinion here is regularly fed. Notwithstanding all the talk of the active elements of the opposition, a conflict in Eastern Europe which threatens in one way or another to embroil Germany and Russia is *universally and subconsciously regarded here as a "lesser evil" capable of deferring the menace to the Empire and its overseas components for a longer period.**

Chamberlain's attitude to the Soviets continues to be cold. The truth is that he is extremely consistent and quite frankly avoids everything that might serve as an excuse or pretext to his political partners to decline to collaborate. But the truth also is that the Premier officially is particularly careful to avoid doing anything to oppose Germany's designs in the East. [...]

Meanwhile, I must note that for some time there has been something in the nature of an organized campaign among the public and the press here, using lurid news stories and even downright gossip and insinuation to represent Polish-German relations in an unfavourable light.**

This state of affairs gives rise to alarm and pessimistic opinions as to Poland's political position. The above-mentioned "drive"—if one may speak of a drive in this case, of which there is no clear evidence—is primarily developing around the problem of Transcarpathian Rus and the claims on the Ukraine, but at the same time it is extended to other possible causes of friction, such as Danzig, and lately (*Daily Express* and even the *Times*), even Teschen Silesia, from which, through Prague or Moravská Ostrava, serious disturbances were reported in the press.*** It is difficult here to counteract the press, unless you meet with overt misrepresentations of the facts which can be denied (as we are, of course, constantly doing). A more effective method might be to operate with positive facts "from the spot" which would... refute the circulated gossip. It need not be said that such machinations are prejudicial to our political prestige and credit here, especially

* Underscored in the original.

** In order to be exact, I must emphasize that Rumania is the subject of perhaps even more alarmist comments. Incidentally, the Rumanians here are very uneasy about it.—*Raczynski's note.*

*** This latter gossip is perhaps a countermeasure on the part of Prague in revenge for Transcarpathian Rus.—*Raczynski's note.*

just now, when England is only gradually beginning to throw off the fetters of defeatism.

Eward Raczyński

From the archives.

No. 43.

MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN AN OFFICIAL OF THE DANZIG SENATE AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE*

December 16-17, 1938

Greiser:

Recently the Führer told me that Germany will need Poland for about two years more. In accordance with the Führer's desire, it is necessary throughout this period to preserve German-Polish mutual understanding and to do nothing that might lead to an open rupture of German-Polish relations. The foreign policy of Germany in the coming two years, the Führer told me, will be directed primarily at establishing a new order in her relations with the West. Only after the achievement of that goal, in the Führer's words, can the great German plan for Eastern Europe be carried out. Here, too, Danzig will attain its rights, as the Polish question will also be solved within the framework of Germany's Eastern Plan. It should not be assumed that the establishment of a new order in the East will be limited to Poland alone.

From the archives.

No. 44.

EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE

December 19, 1938

The more I think about the significance of the Franco-German Declaration, the stronger is my bewilderment as to the kind of

* A. Greiser.

compensation that Germany derived from it. It is hard to believe that Ribbentrop's visit and the Declaration, which Hitler regards as being worth their weight in gold, are a free gift or are merely designed to strengthen the position of Daladier and Bonnet. I feel the answer should be sought not in the sphere of any formal agreements but in the sphere of some secret assurances and promises obtained by Ribbentrop from Bonnet, who might have given them even without the knowledge of the Government or at least of all the members of the Cabinet. This question requires further clarification.

Corbin* told Comrade Maisky that Chamberlain had made no attempts to bring pressure to bear on the French concerning the Spanish question, limiting himself to the statement that the English Government was keeping to its old positions, i. e., the granting of belligerent rights to Franco in accordance with the plan of the London Committee. Thus, Bonnet told the Spanish Ambassador a plain untruth. Corbin further said that the question of the Franco-Soviet Pact had not been raised but was merely mentioned, and that there had been no talk of the Ukraine. According to Corbin's information, there have been no changes in Franco-Polish relations after Munich, but Beck is expected to resign. It is desirable to explore further as regards the rumours about approaches by Poland to Paris and even to London.

We have been informed from Rome that on the 16th the Italian press was given a directive "to conduct an anti-French campaign on the sly." The rebuff meted out to the Italian demands by French politicians and the French press has evidently had its effect. Not counting on his demands being met as easily as they were at Munich, Mussolini has evidently decided to soften his line. The campaign will of course be continued until Chamberlain's visit, and then the latter will come out with a compromise by recognizing as legitimate and correct Mussolini's demands in respect of Suez, Jibuti, and the expansion of Italian rights in Tunis. France will yield to her "friend", while Mussolini will make a gesture by accepting those concessions as an advance payment so as to raise new demands at an appropriate moment. The Earl of Perth is already saying that such demands as of porto-franco in Jibuti or the cessation of the railway, and the granting of rights to the Italians in governing the Suez Canal, and

* French Ambassador in Britain.

the extension of self-government rights to the Italians in Tunis, would not be a violation of the *status quo* in the Mediterranean, and therefore all this is negotiable. That stubborn old man, Chamberlain, will continue his Munich policy despite his public admission of disappointment. Halifax has asked Masaryk*, who is setting off for America, to inform Roosevelt on behalf of Chamberlain and himself that they harbour no illusions about Germany. Chamberlain, like Daladier and Bonnet, is now probably basing his calculations on the assumption that, having somewhat improved Franco-Italian relations, it will indeed become possible for those in the West to calm down in anticipation of action by Hitler in the East, in the direction of the Ukraine. [...]

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 45.

**REPORT FROM THE COUNSELLOR OF THE GERMAN
EMBASSY IN POLAND FOR THE INTELLIGENCE
SERVICE OF A WESTERN POWER**

December 20, 1938

A "German-Czechoslovak Protectorate Treaty" is at present being drafted in the Foreign Ministry in Berlin. It is not known here whether this is a purely German initiative or whether talks about a "protectorate" have already taken place between Berlin and Prague. In any case, the drafting of a "Protectorate Treaty" is a new indication that Berlin believes that the present settlement in Czechoslovakia cannot last. This viewpoint is shared by our Legation in Prague. Several days ago it informed Berlin that the vast majority of the people resolutely reject the present leaders of Czechoslovakia (Beran,** Hacha,*** Chvalkovsky and others).

For the Berlin politicians these and similar reports merely con-

* Czechoslovak Minister in Britain.

** President of the Czechoslovak National Council, December 1938-March 1939.

*** President of Czechoslovakia, November 1938-March 1939.

firm the viewpoint they have held since the time of Munich. We are convinced that the Bohemian cauldron remains a hotbed of resistance and that its real rout is still to come. Events in the Czechoslovak sector cannot therefore be regarded as over. They are, rather, still in the initial stage. According to the view prevailing in official Berlin circles, the first wave of German expansion in 1939 will have the aim of completely suppressing Bohemia.

[*R. von Scheliah*]

From the archives.

No. 46.

TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR

December 22, 1938

Economics Minister Patenotre came to see me yesterday. He attributed his visit to a concern, shared by him and his friends, "advocates of close co-operation with the USSR", for the fate of Soviet-French relations, and said that he had come to seek information as to how "Moscow now regards those relations." From the conversation that followed it became clear that Patenotre was in fact interested in one question: is Moscow going to denounce the Pact? He said he had received "reliable" information that Moscow, disenchanted ("And with good reason," Patenotre added) with the Daladier-Bonnet policy, intended to "abandon France", which "would be tantamount to a disaster for France". To this I replied that our Pact with France had until now been ignored and weakened not by us but by the French, and that we had always treated it as one of the elements of collective security, and that it was now unclear and unknown to us whether France had finally departed from that path. In particular, it was not clear to us what was behind the Franco-German Declaration and what further surprises might be expected after Chamberlain's visit to Rome. I said that my country was forcing its friendship on no one and that I could not but be surprised that members of the Cabinet as Patenotre, who professed to cherish that friendship so much,

were continuously attacking the USSR, thus naturally provoking great resentment and irritation. It would not be hard for me, on Patenotre's request, to prove this by citing several undeniable facts.

The Minister of Marine,* who lunched with me yesterday, also spoke of our relations. He told me that a group of persons holding the same views as he intended to raise the question of "enlivening the Franco-Soviet Pact". Like Patenotre, he was gloomy about the future and felt war was inevitable.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 47.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
COUNSELLOR OF THE GERMAN EMBASSY IN POLAND
AND THE POLISH MINISTER IN IRAN**

December 28, 1938

Karszo-Siedlewski, the newly-appointed Polish Minister in Teheran, said that the difficulties existing at present in relations between Germany and Poland should not be regarded as particularly serious, especially since German-Polish relations had successfully withstood several such crises-fraught periods in the past. The political prospects for the European East were clear. In several years' time Germany would be fighting the Soviet Union while Poland, voluntarily or under compulsion, would be supporting Germany in that war. It would be better for Poland to be quite definitely on Germany's side before the conflict began, since Poland's territorial interests in the West and Poland's political aims in the East, above all in the Ukraine, could be secured only through a Polish-German agreement arrived at in advance. He, Karszo-Siedlewski, would subordinate his activities as Polish Minister in Teheran to the realization of that great eastern concept, as it was necessary at last to persuade and prompt the Persians and the Afghans also to play an active role in the future

* C. Campinchi.

war against the Soviets. He would devote his activities in Teheran throughout the coming years to the fulfilment of that task.

[*R. von Scheliah*]

From the archives.

No. 48.

**REPORT FROM THE COUNSELLOR OF THE GERMAN
EMBASSY IN POLAND FOR THE INTELLIGENCE
SERVICE OF A WESTERN POWER**

Not earlier than December 28, 1938

It became known even before December 26 that on January 6 Beck would meet at least with Ribbentrop but possibly also with Hitler. On December 28 a document entitled "Directives for Ribbentrop's Conversation with Beck" and prepared at the centre was received at the Embassy for study. Basically, the content of the document is as follows:

During the conversation scheduled for January 6 it is necessary first of all to state that present-day Germany, particularly after the creation of the Great German Reich, constitutes in relation to Poland a force quite different from the Germany of past years. From the German point of view, there exists at present for Poland only one Great Power with which she can side, and that is Germany. It must be made quite clear to Poland that she can no longer expect any help from France, especially after the conclusion of the German-French Non-Aggression Pact. In this connection Poland should realize that, considering the more distant future and taking Germany into account, she will have to alter her relations with France.

Danzig. Since Beck had promptly rejected the proposal for the return of Danzig and the easing of transit through the Corridor, there is at present no interest on the German side in raising that question. It could be put aside until such time when it will be automatically resolved within the framework of a broad general settlement in the East. It is therefore recommended not to mention this subject at all on our part. If Beck should refer to it, it should be discussed in general terms.

Memel. Poland must take note of the fact that very soon the Memel Region will be completely transformed according to the National Socialist principle. All the economic interests of Poland, notably the interests of Polish shipping, will be respected. In any event, it is desirable that Poland should give up all attempts to establish her influence in Lithuania, since Lithuania is regarded as an area under German influence.

The minorities. There must be fundamentally new rules for the treatment of the German minority in Poland. This relates first of all to the following areas (there follows a long roster: language, school, church, economic rights and so forth).

Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia. Since Germany and Italy have based their actions on the ethnic principle, this principle should also be applied to Hungary, whose territorial claims could not therefore be fully met. A revision of the Vienna Award which Hungary and Poland have been seeking was impossible because there were no grounds for a revision and because the ruling could not be subjected to a review a mere several days after it had been passed. Poland's fears lest Germany turns Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia into an embryo of a Great Ukrainian State are groundless. Germany has already issued appropriate instructions so as not to create such an impression. Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia will retain her independence within the framework of Czechoslovakia and will play no role in international politics.

[*R. von Scheliah*]

From the archives.

No. 49.

**EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COM-
MISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE
SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE**

December 31, 1938

I have not yet had time to familiarize myself with the bag that has come in today from Paris. If there is anything in it requiring a reply I shall do so by bag on the 4th.

Yesterday I read the editorial in *Le Temps* about the Franco-Soviet and Franco-Polish Pacts.¹⁴ There can be no doubt that

the editorial was inspired by Bonnet. Evidently an artillery preparation is beginning for a possible further agreement with Germany. Bonnet himself can hardly be clear about the kind of basis on which such an agreement can be reached. Probably neither he nor Chamberlain is hoping to break the "axis"; so it can only be a question of an agreement between the four the possibility of which will be explored during Chamberlain's visit to Rome. Bonnet, however, decides in advance that an unavoidable part of such an agreement will be the liquidation, in one form or another, of the Pact with the USSR, and perhaps even with Poland. He may, however, be mistaken in his calculations, for Hitler will now hardly pay anything for the so-called freedom of action in the East.

Actually the agitation over the Ukrainian problem is not so much the work of the German press as of the press of other countries, notably France and England. Possibly, the whole campaign is being directed from Berlin. But I do not think that Hitler and his associates really regard the Ukrainian question as an urgent political problem. Astakhov has informed us that Hitler has allegedly expressed surprise to his close associates over the agitation, saying that the Ukrainian question will be solved in five or six years' time, at the earliest, and without a war. Even if he did not say this, he probably believes so. The motives of this campaign, in so far as Germany is involved in it, have been pointed out in a leading article in the latest issue of *Journal de Moscou*. Possibly, however, it is the followers of Bonnet and Chamberlain who are fanning the campaign and prompting Hitler to make a subversive move against the East.

Of course, Bonnet is by no means sure that in Rome, or after Rome, it will really prove possible to come to terms with the "axis". The disappointments, which Chamberlain could not conceal in his speeches, are probably being felt by Bonnet too. He is therefore keeping in mind the possibility of pursuing an opposite policy, namely, the further strengthening of ties with the USSR and Poland.

The outward signs of Poland's rapprochement with the USSR could not fail to produce a proper effect on politicians of Bonnet's type. In so far as it indicates a real possibility of Polish-Soviet cooperation, this rapprochement should raise the value of the Soviet-French Pact in the eyes of the French. One of the major arguments against the Pact has been that Germany lacks a

common frontier with the USSR and that it is impossible for the latter to attack Germany in the event of her clashing with France. This argument will be considerably weakened or even demolished given the possibility of joint Soviet-Polish action. On the other hand, the danger posed by the Franco-Polish Pact and the possible need for France to come to Poland's aid are lessened if we can be expected to help Poland. I feel it is these considerations that account for the tone of both Bonnet and the Minister for the Marine in their last conversations with you.

We are faithfully fulfilling our part of the agreement with Poland. Most of the questions that could lead to conflicts have been resolved. On Poland's part, except for a certain change in the tone of the press, we can discern no other signs of rapprochement. In their conversations with the Germans, Italians and Japanese the Poles are doing their best to minimize the significance of the joint communique, mentioning only the removal of the misunderstanding that had arisen between us and Poland at the time of the Czechoslovak crisis, when we announced the possibility of the Soviet-Polish Pact¹² being denounced. It would of course be difficult for Beck to switch to a different policy, for that would amount to an admission that his entire former foreign policy concept had been wrong. Through another rejection of rapprochement with us he is probably hoping to buy some concessions from Hitler. Logically speaking, it is hard to believe that there could be a serious German-Polish agreement since Poland had nothing to offer Germany by way of payment for Germany's renunciation of her claims to Danzig, the "Corridor," Silesia or Lithuania. It will also be difficult for Germany to completely give up the Ukraine action, even if it has been started with a view to intimidating Poland, for that action cannot concern the Soviet Ukraine alone. It would appear therefore that the logic of events should drive Poland quite far down the road of co-operation with us. But then, events do not always follow logic. [...]

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 50.**EXCERPT FROM THE DIARY OF THE ITALIAN
FOREIGN MINISTER***January 1, 1939*

[...] In conclusion, he * communicated to me his decision to accept the proposition of von Ribbentrop to transform the anti-Comintern pact into an alliance.¹⁶ He wants the pact signed during the last ten days of January. He considers more and more inevitable a clash with the occidental democracies, and therefore he wishes to effect a military alignment in advance. During this month he plans to prepare the acceptance of his views by public opinion, about which he doesn't give a damn. [...]

From *The Ciano Diaries. 1939-1943, p. 3.*

No. 51.**EXCERPT FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION
BETWEEN THE REICH CHANCELLOR OF GER-
MANY AND THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
POLAND***January 5, 1939*

By way of introduction, Colonel Beck emphasized the fact that during the September crisis German-Polish relations had stood the test in every way. If in the last few months a certain decline from the high level of the September days had perhaps become noticeable, an attempt should be made by both sides, in the opinion of the Polish Government, to eliminate the causes of some of the difficulties which had recently arisen. Beck mentioned the Danzig question as one of these difficulties and emphasized that this concerned not only the German and Polish Governments but third parties also, among others, the League of Nations. For example, what was to happen in case the League of Nations should sometimes withdraw from its role in Danzig? There were also some other questions in which existing misun-

* Mussolini.

understandings should be eliminated, among others, that of guaranteeing the Czechoslovak border; was this guarantee to be given immediately, or when, if at all, was it proposed to do so?

The Führer replied that for a settlement of all existing difficulties it was first of all necessary to go back to the basic orientation of German-Polish relations. On the part of Germany he could state emphatically that there had not been the slightest change in Germany's relations with Poland as based on the nonaggression declaration of 1934. Germany would under all circumstances be interested in maintaining a strong nationalist Poland, quite irrespective of developments in Russia. Regardless of whether Russia was bolshevist or czarist, or something else, Germany's attitude towards that country would always be one of the greatest caution and for that reason she was decidedly interested in seeing Poland's position preserved. Purely from the military point of view the existence of a strong Polish Army meant a considerable easing of Germany's position; the divisions which Poland stationed at the Russian frontier saved Germany just so much additional military expenditure.

The Führer referred to the aims imputed to Germany by the world press in connection with the Ukraine and declared that Poland did not have the slightest thing to fear from Germany in this respect. Germany had no interest beyond the Carpathians and it was a matter of indifference to her what the countries interested in those areas did there. Similarly, she was not directly interested in the Mediterranean, but would in any case always be found on Italy's side. Moreover, it was necessary to distinguish between Germany's political spheres of interest and her economic aspirations, which were aimed solely at maintaining extensive commercial relations with all countries that could be considered as economic partners. There were countries, such as the United States, for example, which because of their economic structure were less suitable as partners for Germany, since they themselves produced the industrial products with which alone Germany could pay for her imports of raw materials and food. On the other hand, other countries, including Poland, could import all the industrial products that they needed from Germany and in return sell to her food and raw materials. With these countries Germany wished to expand her commercial relations as far as possible; this applied in particular to economic intercourse with Poland.

The attitude taken by Germany in the Ukrainian question in connection with the Vienna Award—an attitude which had perhaps led to certain misunderstandings in Poland—was explained by the historical development of this problem as it related to the attitude of Hungary during the September crisis. [...]

As for the details of German-Polish relations, he wished to repeat once more that since 1934 there had been no change in the German attitude towards Poland. In order to arrive at a definite settlement of the questions still pending between the two countries, one ought not to confine oneself to the rather negative agreement of 1934, but should try to bring the individual problems to a definitive settlement by treaty. From the German point of view the remaining problem in direct German-Polish relations, outside of the Memel question, which would be settled in the German sense (it appeared that the Lithuanians intended to cooperate towards a sensible solution), was that of the Corridor and Danzig, which was psychologically very difficult for German sensibilities. In his opinion it was necessary to depart from old patterns here and seek solutions along entirely new lines. Thus, for example, in the case of Danzig there might conceivably be a settlement by which this city would be brought into the German political community again in accordance with the will of its population; naturally the Polish interests, especially in the economic field, would have to be fully protected. This was after all in the interest of Danzig as well, for Danzig could not live economically without Poland, either, and so he, the Führer, was thinking of a formula by which Danzig would come into the German community politically but remain with Poland economically.

Danzig is German, will always remain German, and will sooner or later become part of Germany. He could give the assurance, however, that no *fait accompli* would be engineered in Danzig.

With regard to the Corridor, which, as stated, was a difficult psychological problem for Germany, the Führer pointed out that it was of course completely absurd to want to deprive Poland of her outlet to the sea. If Poland were bottled up in this manner, she might, in view of the tension that would thereby arise, be likened to a loaded revolver whose trigger might be pulled at any minute. Thus, the necessity for Poland to have access to the sea definitely had to be recognized. In the same way, however, having a connection with East Prussia was a necessity for Germany; here too, by using entirely new methods of solution one could perhaps do justice to the interests of both.

If it should be possible on this rational basis to bring about a definitive settlement of the individual problems, which would of course have to do justice to both sides, the time would have come to supplement in a positive sense, in the manner of the agreements with France, the rather negative declaration of 1934 by a German guarantee of Poland's frontiers clearly laid down in a treaty. Poland would then obtain the great advantage of having her frontier with Germany, including the Corridor, secured by treaty. The Führer emphasized again the psychological difficulty of this problem and the fact that only he could bring about such a solution. It was by no means easy for him to guarantee the Corridor in this way, and he would undoubtedly be widely criticized for it, especially by bourgeois circles. But as a realistic statesman he still believed that such a solution was the best. When Germany had once given such a guarantee, as little would be heard about the Polish Corridor as was being said today about the South Tyrol or Alsace-Lorraine.

Polish Foreign Minister Beck thanked the Führer for his comprehensive exposition of Germany's position and declared that Poland would absolutely adhere to the attitude she had adopted *vis-à-vis* Germany heretofore. At the time of the September crisis, relations with Soviet Russia had been exceedingly tense.¹² The situation had been more serious than had been apparent to the outside world. The Russians had brought several army corps into position on the Russian-Polish frontier, in some places up to the very border line, and the Poles had taken corresponding countermeasures on an extensive scale, which then had made it possible, to act so quickly *vis-à-vis* Czechoslovakia. Since Russia was, after all, a neighbor of Poland, the Poles had tried to reduce this extraordinary tension to normal proportions again. They were therefore trying, quite naturally, to find an acceptable *modus vivendi* with their Russian neighbors. Poland would, however, never enter into a dependent relationship with Russia and would continue to follow an independent policy, as she had already done in previous years, when the attempt was made to induce Poland to ally herself more closely with Russia through an eastern pact. Poland was indeed not so nervous as France with regard to increasing her security and had no use for the so-called "security systems", which had been completely discredited after the September crisis—a fact that signified a turning

point in history. But she was quite able to appreciate the German attitude as expressed again in the statement just made by the Führer. She, too, for her part adhered to the old policy toward Germany.

Regarding the Ukraine he recalled an expression of Pilsudski's about the "Balkanization of Central Europe". In the agitators who were active in the present Carpatho-Ukrainian territory Poland recognized old enemies and feared that the Carpatho-Ukraine might some day develop into such a seat of unrest for Poland that the Polish Government would find itself called upon to intervene, and from this further complications might then arise. This was the main reason why Poland had been striving for a common frontier with Hungary. Poland, too, had used her influence with Hungary in the direction indicated by the Führer himself and had advised her to take energetic action. From his trip to Rumania he (Colonel Beck) had brought the Hungarians the assurance that Rumania would not attack them, and the President of Poland had told foreign diplomatic circles that if war came Poland would support Hungary. But in spite of these assurances the Hungarians had unfortunately not taken any initiative. He remarked incidentally that the population of the so-called Carpatho-Ukraine (the Ruthenians) had nothing in common with the population of the Ukraine proper. "Ukraine" was a Polish word and meant "eastern march." For decades the Poles had used it to designate the areas on the Dnieper situated east of their territory.

As for German-Polish relations, he took cognizance of the wishes expressed by the Führer. The Danzig question, however, seemed to him extremely difficult. It was especially necessary to take into account public opinion in Poland. In this connection he was completely ignoring the attitude of the "coffee-house opposition." During his 7-year tenure of office he had not paid the slightest attention to coffee-house opinion, and he was still in office. But he did have to consider the real opinion of the people and here, to be sure, he saw very great difficulties in the way of a solution of the Danzig question. He would, however, like to think the problem over at leisure.

Colonel Beck did not go into the other German-Polish questions brought up by the Führer, but concluded his statements with the renewed affirmation that in her general attitude Poland would, as heretofore, remain true to the line followed since 1934.

Submitted herewith to the Foreign Minister in accordance with instructions.

Dr. Schmidt
Minister*

From Documents on German Foreign Policy.
1918-1945, Series D, Vol. V, pp. 152-158.

No. 52.

EXCERPT FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR

January 7, 1939

[...] In reply to my question why there had been no meeting in France between Beck and Bonnet or Daladier, Grzybowski said that France clearly wished to have nothing to do with affairs bearing on Central and Eastern Europe. In those conditions there was no reason for Beck to try and arrange a meeting with representatives of the French Government. They themselves had displayed no initiative in this direction. [...]

V. Potemkin

From the archives.

No. 53.

EXCERPT FROM THE DIARY OF THE ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

January 8, 1939

[...] Then with the Duce we examined at length the action to be taken: Triple Alliance Pact.¹⁶ Closer relations with Yugoslavia, Hungary, Rumania, and possibly Poland, for the purpose of insuring raw materials. Alliance with Spain as soon as the war is

* Hitler's interpreter who recorded the conversation.

won. Settling the account with France. No Nice, no Savoy, for they are outside the Alpine range. Corsica: autonomy, independence, annexation. Tunisia: the status of the Italians, autonomy of the Bey, Italian protectorate. Jibuti: free port and railroad, administration in common with France, annexation. Suez Canal: strong participation in the administration, liquidation of Albania by agreement with Belgrade, eventually favoring Serbian settlement in Salonika. [...]

From The Ciano Diaries. 1939-1943, p. 8.

No. 54.

LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE

January 11, 1939

1. In the coming days the world press will devote its main attention to the discussions in Rome. I consider the results of those discussions to be a foregone conclusion. Mussolini will forget about his territorial claims for a time, while Chamberlain will force Daladier—with Bonnet's assiduous help—to yield to the remaining Italian demands. This may not happen all at once. Further meetings of the two, or of the three or the four may be required, but this is where things are going. Daladier and Bonnet will hardly have enough resolution to make their concessions contingent at least on Mussolini's renunciation of his other claims against France.

2. We are more interested in Beck's negotiations with the Germans, however. Unfortunately, the Poles can keep their diplomatic secrets as well as the Germans; so we know nothing about their negotiations except for the speculative comments in the newspapers to which I attach no significance. Beck, in so far as it will depend on him, will, as before, try to preserve his freedom of action by manoeuvring between us and Germany without binding himself too strongly to either side. But will Hitler allow him to do that? Will he not confront Poland with the dilemma of either completely obeying the orders of Berlin and associating herself with its policy or else subjecting herself to Hitler's wrath with all

the ensuing consequences? Hitler has sufficient means for bringing pressure to bear on Poland. What is more, he will take into account the predicament of Beck himself, for whom it will not be too easy to abandon his former policy and form close ties with us. In this Hitler is also being aided by Bonnet with the latter's brusque treatment of Poland.

A great many points at issue between Germany and Poland have, of course, been accumulated, and a stable and lasting agreement is hardly possible. Conceivable at this stage, however, is an agreement based on Polish concession on the question of joining East Prussia to the rest of Germany by a corridor through the "Polish Corridor", the factual renunciation by Poland of her privileges in Danzig without the formal incorporation of the latter into Germany, and the letting up on the persecution of the minorities.

As regards the Ukrainian problem, Hitler may be able to convince Beck that it is not urgent or that action against the USSR will be taken through Rumania, which Hitler is now also trying to bring under his sway. I am asking you to do all you can to obtain information on this question.

Ambassador Grzybowski, who returned from Poland the other day, assures us of the stability of the rapprochement and of the existence of prospects—a conviction he has formed, he says, on the basis of conversations he has had with high-ranking officials in Poland. Even if he is telling the truth, his conversations took place prior to Beck's visit to Berchtesgaden; so the Ambassador is still ignorant of the outcome of that visit.

The French continue to show great interest in Soviet-Polish relations. Payart enquires about them every time he sees an official of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. The French Embassy at Warsaw is also trying to obtain information on this matter from our Embassy there. The curious thing is that the French Embassy is trying to heighten our mistrust of Poland by describing the latter's treachery and unreliability in relationships with France. A French journalist in Warsaw, who may have been sent by the Embassy, told our Embassy officials that Bonnet deliberately went off to the Alps for a holiday to avoid meeting with Beck, and that Bonnet even pursued the aim of assuring a meeting between Beck and Hitler.

In the French journalist's view, England and France are doing their best to encourage aggressive actions by Germany, together

with Poland, against the USSR. The fact that France and England would like to prod Germany to take action against the East is quite understandable and is well known. If it is also true, however, that they would like to direct the aggression exclusively against us, so that Poland should not be affected, this can be explained in the following way. Firstly, Poland's co-operation with the USSR can provide a new and unassailable argument for those who are against Bonnet's present policy and in favour of preserving France's ties with Eastern Europe. Secondly, a German attack on Poland and the USSR, with French non-interference, would put France in the very awkward position of being a violator of the two pacts at once. That is why Bonnet would like to isolate us from Poland. Editorials in *Le Temps*, *Le Figaro* and other newspapers against the French Pacts in the East have undoubtedly been inspired by Bonnet and are clearing the ground for a scaling down of relations both with us and with Poland. The same French journalist said that France intended to hold up the last instalment of the military loan to Poland. [...]

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 55.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN**

January 15, 1939

As is known, Italy has until recently been evading the signing of the contemplated Japanese-German-Italian Treaty of Alliance¹⁶ for fear of jeopardizing Chamberlain's visit to Rome. However, as soon as the trip was finally decided on, Ciano and Mussolini, a few days before the arrival of Chamberlain and Halifax, began to hurry the newly arrived Japanese Ambassador, insisting on the Treaty being signed some time in January. They explained their haste by a desire to neutralize, in public opinion, the effect of the Chamberlain's visit, to which an exaggerated significance was being attributed, and to reaffirm the strength of the Axis.

Japan suggested limiting the effect of the Treaty to the Soviet

Union, pointing out that she was completely dependent on England and America for her military imports and might therefore find herself in a disadvantageous position, but Mussolini argued that Italy and Japan were in the same situation with regard to England and that the Treaty should be extended to cover America as well, as she was joining forces with England. In diplomatic circles Ciano has been giving out as the reason for Chamberlain's visit the story that at Munich Mussolini jokingly told Chamberlain that as a journalist he had frequently enjoyed England's hospitality and would be ready to repay that hospitality, and Chamberlain hastened to express willingness to go to Italy.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

No. 56.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
REPRESENTATIVE * AT THE SESSION OF THE LEAGUE
OF NATIONS COUNCIL**

January 15, 1939

Remind Wellington Koo** that England as well as France has been unwilling to apply any sanction against Japan, citing as their reason the need for American participation in them. To offset that objection the Chinese, prior to the Council's decision, should seek clarification in Washington as to the position of the American Government after Roosevelt's message and as to its attitude to the convening of the suspended Brussels Conference.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

* Ya. Z. Surits.

** Chinese Ambassador to France and representative of China at the Session of the League of Nations Council.

No. 57.**FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE REICH CHANCELLOR OF GERMANY AND THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF HUNGARY**

January 16, 1939

Count Csaky conveys greeting from the Regent* who has instructed him to tell the Führer that so long as he stands at the head of Hungary, Germany can rely on Hungary as a most devoted friend. This message is the principal purpose of his visit. [...]

From Documents of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Germany, First Edition, German Policy in Hungary (1937-1942), Moscow, 1946, p. 84.

No. 58.**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN A GERMAN JOURNALIST AND THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE GERMAN SOCIETY FOR EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES**

January 19, 1939

Dr. Markert said that in November and December 1938 an inimical attitude to Poland was predominant in official Berlin circles. Influential organs felt that the time had come for a final showdown in German-Polish relations and for making it clear to the Polish Government that in future Poland must in every sense respect Germany's status as a Great Power, accordingly submit to the concepts of German foreign policy, and in both home and foreign policy matters do nothing that ran counter to the German position on the question of relations between Warsaw and Berlin. This tough German stand as regards Poland reflected a desire of influential German organs at all events to precipitate a collision with Moscow and to that end to secure Poland as an ally against the Soviet Union. At the time Hitler was almost entirely under the influence of Ribbentrop and Rosenberg who were both in favour

* M. Horthy.

of a war against the Soviet Union, with the use of the Ukrainian question as a pretext. Those circles which, proceeding from political and military considerations, were sceptical about the likely outcome of a military collision between Germany and the Soviet Union were paid almost no heed.

A definite shift in the appraisal of the political situation and of the chances in a war in Eastern Europe seems to have taken place sometime around Christmas. After a long stay at Obersalzberg Hitler declared that the Eastern questions did not require an urgent solution and that time was needed for its sound preparation. This shift did not occur by chance. The feeling in Berlin was that a serious view should be taken of the fact that Mussolini was raising the Mediterranean question and that in this connection a conflict with the Western powers was quite possible. Such a situation, in which Germany would co-operate with Italy, required security in the East and consequently the pursuit of a line aimed at reaching an accommodation with Poland. Thus, in accordance with Hitler's instructions, Ribbentrop decided to conduct the meetings with the Polish Foreign Minister, scheduled for January 5 and 6 at Berchtesgaden and Munich, in such a tone and in such a form as would ensure the maintenance of normal and friendly relations between Berlin and Warsaw.

In a two-hour-long monologue Hitler outlined the European situation to the Polish Foreign Minister, with special emphasis on German interests in respect of Poland. In that conversation Hitler did not refer either to the Danzig question or to the position of the German national group in Poland. At the same time Hitler stressed the colonial issue which, after Italy's move, he regarded as urgent and ripe for solution.

It was only in Beck's conversations with Ribbentrop in Munich that all the problems which had been complicating German-Polish relations in the last months were broached. In an extremely courteous manner Ribbentrop pointed, as an example, to the intolerable situation arising from the Polish policy towards the German national minority. Beck replied to this with absolutely non-committal statements. On the whole it may be said that in the talks at Berchtesgaden and Munich the German side, for tactical reasons, left all the problems of German-Polish relations open and unresolved. On the German side the fear that under massive German pressure Poland might be forced into the arms of the Soviet Union and France may also have played a part. In this

respect the Polish-Soviet Declaration of November 27, 1938 had had a strong impact on influential Berlin organs.

The initiative concerning Ribbentrop's visit to Warsaw came from the Polish side. While at Berchtesgaden and Munich, Beck repeatedly noted how useful for him and for his policies would be a visit to Warsaw by the German Foreign Minister. Without enthusiasm and with no sign of interest, Ribbentrop agreed after that to go to Warsaw on January 25, 1939. It is well known in Berlin that the Warsaw meeting will have no great political significance. However, to demonstrate to the world public the further normalization and deeping of German-Polish relations, Ribbentrop intends to take with him to Warsaw the draft of a German-Polish agreement on cultural matters which is now being prepared in Berlin. The agreement is to be signed in Warsaw by Ribbentrop and Beck.

From the archives.

No. 59.

STATEMENT BY THE SOVIET REPRESENTATIVE AT THE SESSION OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS COUNCIL

January 20, 1939

The moving speech made by the representative of China at the previous meeting prompts me once again to present the views of my Government on this important question which is adversely affecting international relations and world peace.

First of all, I associate myself with the requests set forth by the Chinese Government; these requests are indeed in strict accord with the letter and the spirit of the League of Nations Covenant. Whether it is a question of rendering genuine assistance to a member State of the League that is a victim of aggression, or of taking measures to forestall aggression, we are in any event faced with the obligations incumbent upon all of us.

It is our duty to do all we can to carry out the resolutions of the Council and the Assembly which recommend sympathetic consideration of such requests as may emanate from the Chinese Government in accordance with already adopted resolutions. We have all grounds, in conformity with the spirit and the letter of the

resolutions adopted here, to do everything to render assistance to China in her heroic resistance.

In the case we are now considering, the question concerns a great nation with a thousand-year-old civilization, a member of the League of Nations which maintains peaceful, normal and friendly relations with other members of the League, a country which is suffering from an unjust war waged against her and in respect of which the community of peaceful nations has until now failed to do its duty.

It is not a question of expounding abstract ideas, expressing platonic wishes or putting forward utopian plans. It is a question of picturing to oneself the horrors to which China is being subjected, and the damage that this does to this peace-keeping organization, and of realizing that this constitutes a rejection of those fundamental ideas for whose sake the League was established and for whose sake it must exist.

All too often it gives some people pleasure to contrast what is termed "realistic" policy with what is referred to as "League of Nations theories". Yet those theories have come into existence as a result of several wars and, in particular, are based on the realities of the last war, a terrible war a repetition of which we wish to prevent. That objective will be attained not through condescension, inaction or fear. It is true enough that there are among us States which have been less directly subjected to the effects of recurrent wars than others, but their present passivity may tomorrow turn them into victims of aggression unleashed as a result of such passivity.

Unfortunately, the draft resolution we have before us does not go far enough in solving the principal problems I have just mentioned, but it does constitute a certain step forward compared with previous decisions and my Government considers it possible to associate itself with it.

In expressing here once again its unbounded and deep sympathy for the Chinese people who are staunchly fighting for their independence, my Government again declares that it is ready, as in the past, to fulfil any decision of the League aimed at safeguarding the collective security of the peoples, a security which has been so greatly devalued, but which must be ensured if we are really to ever achieve an honourable and just peace for all.

No. 60.

TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR*January 20, 1939*

Today I had a conversation with Vansittart about which I shall note the following:

1. Vansittart's general mood is one of great anxiety. He is highly dissatisfied with the state of affairs both in England and in France, and he was quite outspoken in his criticism of the Premier's policy. In his view, 1939 will be the decisive year. Hitler and Mussolini, encouraged by their latest successes, now regard themselves as the masters of Europe. In particular, Hitler (according to Vansittart's information) is setting himself the goal of establishing world domination and believes that the present moment is quite favourable for taking the decisive step in that direction (Hitler's presuppositions are: "inadequacy of armaments" and "internal strife" in England and France, and "isolationist sentiments" and "internal weakening" in the USSR). To that "ideological" line of Hitler's should be added the growing economic problems which Vansittart described as "desperate". Consequently, an "explosion" is to be expected in the very near future, most probably in the West (though Vansittart does not altogether rule out the "Eastern direction").

If the Spanish Government is toppled, Mussolini is sure to present at once his bill to France at gunpoint and he will probably be backed by Germany which will also present her own demands connected with the colonial question. Then the decisive moment will have arrived for England and France. In Vansittart's opinion, the reaction of both countries will be negative and, if Hitler and Mussolini attempt to use force, war is likely. In this connection Vansittart began to elaborate on the theme that the interests of England, France and the USSR are identical and that Hitler's tactics are to crush one country after another separately, as an artichoke is eaten leaf after leaf.

2. I observed that Vansittart was addressing his arguments to the wrong person. The USSR had all along been upholding the principle of collective security, while London and Paris had been

systematically undermining it (Vansittart agreed with this). There were no signs indicating a favourable change of mind in leading circles of England and France. The signs were of an opposite nature. Replying to Vansittart's question, I cited as an example the fuss over the question of denouncing the Anglo-Soviet Commercial Agreement which had been raised by influential circles of British industrialists and merchants with the blessings of the President of the Board of Trade. Vansittart, who seemed uninformed about the matter, was greatly perturbed by what I said. He asked me for details and finally declared that regardless of what one thought about the claims of the British businessmen, denunciation of the Anglo-Soviet Commercial Agreement at a time of mounting tension in Europe would be a misfortune and that every effort should be made to prevent it. I replied that the campaign against the treaty was not started by us and that it was for the English to "make every effort". We, on our part, regarded the prospects of Anglo-Soviet trade with complete calm and equanimity, convinced that the balance of forces in this field was at present more favourable for us than for the English.

3. Then the subject of Spain came up. Vansittart told me, among other things, that in Rome Mussolini had plainly told Chamberlain that it was impossible for him to withdraw his troops before Franco's victory had been assured and that in the event of any attempts by the French Government to render assistance to the Republic he would be compelled to step up his intervention in Spain. On the other hand, Mussolini readily reiterated his previous promises about the evacuation of forces and the integrity of Spanish territories after the "end of the war". In reply Chamberlain merely remarked that in that case it would be impossible to grant Franco belligerent rights, but in no way did he protest Mussolini's statements about intervention. Personally Vansittart considers the threat to step up intervention in the event of French interference to be nothing but the usual Italian bluff.

4. Vansittart categorically denied that Halifax in his conversation with Bonnet in Geneva or that Phipps* in his conversation with Bonnet in Paris had brought pressure to bear on the French Government to keep the Spanish border closed. On the contrary, in his words, the British representatives had merely given an

* British Ambassador in France.

objective account of the Rome discussions and had then declared that they were leaving the question of the Spanish frontier entirely to the discretion of the French Government. In reply to my repeated and insistent questions, Vansittart several times confirmed that the British Government's position was indeed "non-partisan": it did not encourage, but neither did it consider it possible to prevent the opening of the Spanish frontier. The rumours being spread by Bonnet about the pressure that had allegedly been brought to bear on the French Government from London were a downright lie. This was not surprising for Bonnet was a liar, a shady character and a man ready to do anything for the sake of his personal interests (these were Vansittart's exact words). He hoped that Bonnet would soon vanish from the Quay d'Orsay. His presence there was a misfortune not only for Spain but also for France herself, for Bonnet was an opponent of the Franco-Soviet Pact and France would perish as a Great Power without close co-operation with the USSR. Vansittart also expressed the hope that in England the policy of "appeasement" would soon come to a deservedly inglorious end.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 61.

EXCERPT FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER AND THE PRIME MINISTER OF YUGOSLAVIA

January 18-23, 1939

[...] *Albania*. Several days ago I had already dropped a hint to Minister Christic* about the situation in Albania and I therefore found Premier Stoyadinovic prepared for a conversation on this subject. I told him that Albania's internal problems, the increasing hatred against the person of the King and a great many features that had made themselves felt in the policies of Zog** himself had compelled us to regard Albania's future with some

* Yugoslav Minister in Italy.

** King of Albania.

concern. And our concern had increased owing to our considerable interests which had gradually taken shape in that country, some of them, as the oil wells for instance, being of substantial importance for fascist Italy. Therefore we did not intend to leave those interests to the mercy of fate but would want to follow the development of the situation with the utmost attention. Since we regarded the Albanian problem as being an exclusively Italian-Yugoslav problem and since we were convinced that no other power could, or would want to, interfere in that question, I confirmed that the Duce did not intend to take even the smallest step without prior consultation with friendly Yugoslavia. Stoyadinovic told me that his own informants too had been reporting to him about the increasing discontent of the Albanian people, and he referred to the person of Zog in extremely contemptuous terms, giving me to understand that only very recently the latter had made advances to Belgrade suggesting that Albania be kept by Yugoslavia against us. He told me that in his opinion Zog would really be capable, provided he was well paid, of serving France and Britain at a critical time for Italy. Our apprehensions were therefore well founded. In his opinion, two solutions were possible: (1) to replace Zog with a worthier person, but he added that he could not say with whom; (2) to begin the division of Albania between Italy and Yugoslavia along the lines that had once been discussed. He added, however, that at this point he was not ready to enter into a serious discussion of this question as he was not familiar with the problem in detail. I answered by saying that I too did not believe it was necessary to discuss the matter immediately and felt that at this moment the establishment of the present contact was sufficient. At a suitable moment we could get in touch with each other directly and take the appropriate decisions. Stoyadinovic agreed with this and said that he would like such discussions to be conducted not through the usual diplomatic channels but through confidential and personal aides, and we named as our aides Plenipotentiary Minister Anfuso* and Stoyadinovic's own brother. Stoyadinovic also expressed concern over the possible reaction of other powers, but finally he admitted that unless Germany put forward any objections (he is convinced that in their heart the Germans will strongly resent our territorial seizures in Albania) the operation would prove to be a relatively

* *Chef de cabinet* of the Italian Foreign Ministry.

easy one. I mentioned to him the advantages which Yugoslavia could gain in such an event: (1) an agreement on the demilitarization of the boundaries with Albania; (2) a military alliance with Italy which would at that moment become possible and justified, as far as Germany was concerned, by the fact that we too would have become a Balkan power; (3) some substantial rectifications of the boundaries in Northern Albania; (4) elimination of the Albanian national centre which was continuously fanning unrest in Kossovo; (5) and finally, a promise of Italian support on the day Yugoslavia decided to secure an outlet to the Mediterranean by occupying Salonika.

I evaded any specific discussion with Stoyadinovic about which zones might be occupied by Yugoslavia and which by Italy. And when he spoke of the division of Albania, I would invariably speak of rectifying the boundaries. Be that as it may, however, favourable solutions to the problem seem likely: Stoyadinovic himself, who also seems to be enticed by the thought of his country's deriving real advantages through territorial expansion asked me to drop a hint about this question to Prince Paul. * The latter also accorded me a favourable reception. What is more, he indicated that he was less interested than Stoyadinovic in the size of the territory that would be ceded to Yugoslavia. "We already have so many Albanians on the border," he said, "and they are giving us so much trouble that I have no desire to increase their number." As a result of these conversations the ice that has been surrounding the Albanian problem has been broken and I believe that when the Duce feels the situation is right, the question can be finally resolved. And I do not think we will encounter too much difficulty on the question of delimiting the frontiers: because for one thing I do not believe the Yugoslavs have any excessive claims and, for another, I do not think it is a matter of exceptional importance for us whether to have 1,000 sq. km. more or less of Albanian territory; the first and foremost thing for us is to finally occupy a strategic position on the Balkan Peninsula. [...]

From *L'Europa verso la catastrofe*, Roma, 1948, pp. 409-412.

* Regent of Yugoslavia.

No. 62.**TELEGRAM FROM A SOVIET MILITARY
INTELLIGENCE OFFICER IN JAPAN
TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE RED ARMY***January 23, 1939*

I have information that the military have split into three main groups:

The first group is calling for a blitzkrieg with China until the whole of China is seized and all foreign powers are expelled from China.

The second group, representing the Kwantung Army, is calling for peace with China and concentration on a war with the USSR.

The third group, to which belong Itagaki,* Terauchi,** and others, wants to discontinue operations in South and Central China, and retain only North China and Mongolia as a base for prosecuting the war against the USSR. Also in this group are Hiranuma*** and other members of the Government. The main difficulty is the resistance of the radical groups which fear a revolt might break out if the seizures in China were abandoned. It is believed that the only way to avoid internal clashes is to divert the attention of the radical groups to the USSR.

Ramzai

From the archives.

No. 63.**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
FOREIGN MINISTER OF GERMANY AND THE FOREIGN
MINISTER OF POLAND***Warsaw, January 26, 1939*

1. Referring to the conversation with him in Munich on January 6, I again brought up with M. Beck the German proposal he

* Japanese Minister of War.

** A general, member of the Supreme War Council of the Japanese Army.

*** Prime Minister of Japan, January-August 1939.

knew of (reincorporation of Danzig with a guarantee of Poland's economic interests there and creation of an extraterritorial road and railway connection between the Reich and its province of East Prussia, in return for which Germany would guarantee the German-Polish frontier); I explained once more that it was the Führer's desire to arrive at a comprehensive peaceful settlement of German-Polish relations by a treaty on these lines. M. Beck surely must realize that the German wishes were extremely moderate, for the transfer of very valuable German territory to Poland by the Treaty of Versailles was still felt by every German as a great injustice, which had been possible only at a time of extreme German weakness. If 100 Englishmen or Frenchmen were asked, 99 would concede without hesitation that the reincorporation of Danzig and of at least the Corridor as well was a natural German demand.

M. Beck appeared to be impressed by my statements, but again pointed out that strongest internal political opposition was to be expected for which reason he could not view the matter optimistically; nevertheless, he intended to give our suggestion further careful consideration.

I arranged with M. Beck that if the League of Nations should withdraw from Danzig before a treaty had been made between us and Poland that would include Danzig as well, we would get in touch with him in order to find a solution to bridge over this situation.

2. I then spoke to M. Beck once more about the policy to be pursued by Poland and Germany towards the Soviet Union and in this connection also spoke about the question of the Greater Ukraine and again proposed German-Polish collaboration in this field.

M. Beck made no secret of the fact that Poland had aspirations directed towards the Soviet Ukraine and a connection with the Black Sea; but at the same time he called attention to the supposed dangers to Poland that in the Polish view would arise from a treaty with Germany directed against the Soviet Union. With regard to the future of the Soviet Union, moreover, he held the view that the Soviet Union would either disintegrate as a result of internal decay or, in order to avoid this fate, would first gather all its strength and then attack.

I condemned the passivity of M. Beck's attitude and stated that it was more expedient to anticipate the development he had

predicted and to take action against the Soviet Union by propaganda. In my opinion no dangers to Poland could arise from an adherence to the anti-Comintern powers; on the contrary, if Poland sat in the same boat as we, she could only gain added security.

M. Beck promised that he would give further careful consideration to this question, too.

I instructed Ambassador Moltke to follow up with M. Beck the questions treated under (1) and (2).

3. I again complained to M. Beck about the treatment of the German minority and arranged with him that the discussion between leading officials of the two Ministries of the Interior, which had been planned for a long, should be started immediately.

Ribbentrop

From Documents on German Foreign Policy. 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. V, pp. 167-168.

No. 64.

NOTE FROM THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF FRANCE TO THE EMBASSY OF GREAT BRITAIN IN FRANCE

February 1, 1939

Through its aide-mémoire of January 29 the Embassy of Britain was good enough to inform the French Government of the concern aroused in His Britannic Majesty's Government by certain reports of a political and military nature giving cause for fear that an act of force by Germany against the Western Powers might take place by the end of February. The Embassy set forth various hypotheses concerning the possibility of a more or less early attack, either preceded by an ultimatum or not, which would be unleashed by Germany or by the other signatories of the anti-Comintern Pact.⁸

Referring more specifically to the case of an unprovoked invasion of Holland by Germany, His Britannic Majesty's Govern-

ment believe that in view of the strategical importance of that country and her colonies the German attack should be considered "as a direct threat to the security of the Western Powers"; they declare that they "are accordingly disposed to think that they would have no choice but to regard a German invasion of Holland as a *casus belli* assuming that Holland resisted invasion."

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has the honour to make known to the Embassy of Britain that the French Government have for their part received reports which cause them similar concern to that experienced by His Majesty's Government. These reports, though so far unconfirmed, do give one grounds to believe that action by Germany directed at first against eastern Europe could be turned, either by her own decision or in support of the Italian claims, against the West, that is against Great Britain, France, Belgium, Holland and Switzerland. It is necessary to follow with the greatest attention this development whose outcome could be hastened owing to considerations of prestige, the economic and financial crisis and the colonial demands of the two totalitarian countries.

The French Government believe that the danger to which the Western Powers are thereby exposed is the same for all those Powers and should be treated as indivisible. They consider that the security of those Powers would be directly threatened regardless of the initial direction of the German or Italian attack against any one of them, and they feel it is impossible to foresee the localities of the conflict which would inevitably affect all of their possessions. Therefore this situation does indeed create a common danger which must logically lead to genuine solidarity in the face of any unprovoked attack by Germany or Italy.

Proceeding from this general concept which is fully shared by the British Government, the French Government could agree with the British Government and regard henceforth as a *casus belli* the eventuality of an invasion of Holland, even though that fact in itself does not affect any contractual responsibilities of France and any action that she might take jointly with Great Britain to oppose it would moreover be of a preventive character.

The French Government would, on the other hand, like to be assured that an invasion of Switzerland as well as an invasion of Belgium would also be regarded as constituting a direct menace to the security of the Western Powers, and would, in the same

way as an invasion of Holland, henceforth be regarded as a factor justifying and leading to the decision envisaged by the British Government.

Finally, the British memorandum adds that His Majesty's Government, having carefully considered the situation in the light of the reports received, "have decided to accelerate as far as possible the preparations of their defensive and counter-offensive measures."

The French Government, who are today themselves making a considerable effort in all fields to increase and improve their armaments, express satisfaction with this decision whose implementation constitutes under the present circumstances a particularly important guarantee of the common security of Western Europe. The gravity of the situation, in the face of the dangers referred to in the British memorandum, requires, on the part of all the nations concerned, the immediate and unhesitating adoption of all measures to facilitate an increase in the manpower and material resources which they may already have at their disposal. For their part, the French Government are ready for such joint efforts and sacrifices which in the face of truly common responsibilities would make Franco-English collaboration fully effective, both materially and morally. From this double point of view the introduction of conscription would appear to be essential for the effective participation of England in the organization of common defense of the Continent.

The above considerations have been confidentially brought to the knowledge of the Belgian Government upon receipt of the British communication of January 29.

Translated from the French as it appears in *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939*. Third Series, Vol. IV, London, 1951, pp. 72-73.

No. 65.

TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR*February 1, 1939*

Yesterday Bonnet acquainted me with a telegram from Noël * about the Ribbentrop's visit. Beck assured Noël that:

(1) The visit merely strengthened the desire of the two Sides to preserve good-neighbourly relations on the basis of the 1934 Agreement;

(2) The visit "did not move those relations beyond the limits of the Agreement," and nothing new was signed;

(3) The visit introduced no changes in either Polish-Soviet or Polish-French relations;

(4) A large part of the conversation was devoted to questions of direct interest to Germany and Poland, and "here considerable results were achieved." Noël himself adds that according to his information the main topic of the discussion was Danzig but Beck disclosed no details concerning that subject. Noël also reports that Ribbentrop told him in a personal encounter that "Bonnet's statement concerning the USSR had been a surprise for him." When Bonnet read that out to me I asked him how a statement about the Franco-Soviet Pact remaining in force (and there was in fact nothing more to Bonnet's parliamentary speech than that) could possibly have been a surprise for Ribbentrop, if according to Bonnet himself he had made the same sort of statement to Ribbentrop during his visit to Paris. Bonnet was at a loss for a reply and probably regretted having read out that part of Noël's telegram.

Ambassador

From the archives.

* French Ambassador in Poland.

No. 66.**MINUTE FROM THE COUNSELLOR OF THE GERMAN
EMBASSY IN FRANCE TO THE GERMAN AMBASSA-
DOR IN FRANCE***February 1, 1939*

In both minutes of the Government on the question of expanding economic relations between Germany and France the final clause provides for the practical co-operation of German and French business groups in building large-scale projects in third countries. In conversations with the head of the department, Comte de la Baume,* the following was discussed as possible areas of such co-operation:

- the extension of South-American harbours,
- the construction of roads and bridges in the Balkans,
- the construction of railways and harbours in Africa, etc.

The question now arises whether or not an attempt should be made right now to take the initiative in organizing such co-operation also in the rehabilitation of Spain. In the fulfilment of that task Germany and France would successfully complement one another. Germany, which maintains good relations with the Franco Government, can offer technical experts who are already there, and use the available organizations; France, on the other hand, could offer long-term credits in cash and, where needed, manpower as well.

We are interested in presenting an appropriate initiative to France as soon as possible, because after the fall of Barcelona business circles in France are ever more insistently calling for speeding up the establishment of normal relations with Franco. Business and financial circles in the country want to participate in the rehabilitation of Spain, which in their view must definitely fall to their lot if account is taken of the liquidity of the market of French capital and also of the close personal and family ties maintained across the border. The Government has so far been hesitant in making a sharp turn, but in the final count it is merely looking for a suitable opportunity whereby it could establish relations with Franco without incurring an unduly great loss of pres-

* Head of Economic Department of the French Foreign Ministry.

tige. An initiative from the German side on establishing Franco-German co-operation in the rehabilitation of Spain and the ensuing practical interests and ties of the French business and financial circles with nationalist Spain would therefore, besides the great economic benefit, also have a political advantage by promoting the early recognition of nationalist Spain by France.

I have the honour to report the above to Herr Ambassador.

Campe

From *Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik, 1918-1945*,
Serie D, Bd. IV, Baden-Baden, 1951, S. 437.

No. 67.

TASS COMMUNIQUE ON THE CLOSURE OF THE SOVIET DIPLOMATIC MISSION IN BUDAPEST

February 2, 1939

TASS has been apprised that the Hungarian Minister in Moscow, M. Jungerth-Arnothy was informed yesterday by the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Comrade Litvinov, of the Soviet Government's decision to close down its Embassy in Budapest and of the expected closure of the Hungarian Legation in Moscow.

As TASS has learned from authoritative sources, the said decision of the Soviet Government is connected with the fact that following the Munich Agreement Hungary has of late been subjected to strong pressure by certain states. The policy of the Hungarian Government shows that it is readily yielding to that pressure and has to a considerable extent forfeited its independence. In particular, it is pointed out that the decision of the Hungarian Government to join the so-called Anti-Comintern Pact⁹ cannot be justified by the interests of the Hungarian state itself, which by no means coincide with those aggressive aims that are pursued under the cover of the Pact by its participants, first and foremost Japan, and that this decision has consequently been imposed upon the Hungarian Government from without. Hungary's position no longer warrants the preservation of diplomatic relations with her by the Soviet Government through special missions in the capitals of the two states, and these relations can

henceforth be maintained through the representatives of the two states in the capital of a third state.

From *Izvestia*, No. 27 (6797),
February 3, 1939.

No. 68.

**SOVIET PRESS REPORT ABOUT CLASHES
ON THE SOVIET-MANCHURIAN BORDER**

February 2, 1939

Of late incidents involving the crossing into Soviet territory of Japano-Manchurians accompanied by unavoidable clashes have once again become more frequent. The biggest clash occurred on January 31 near the frontier post of Kailastuyevsky, when a Soviet frontier detail of five soldiers under Junior-Lieutenant Kostinyuk suddenly came under rifle and machine-gun fire from an 18-man group of Japano-Manchurian soldiers positioned on USSR-owned island No. 279 on the Argun River at the mouth of the Guran channel, five kilometres south of the village of Kailastuyevsky. The frontier detail was compelled to engage in a skirmish with the Japano-Manchurians, and with the help of timely reinforcements they succeeded in expelling from the island the Japano-Manchurians who carried away seven of their wounded. On the Soviet side Section Commander Kalitin suffered a slight wound.

The Chargé d'Affaires of the USSR in Tokyo has been instructed to lodge a strong protest with the Japanese Government pointing out the increased frequency of incidents involving violations of the border by the Japano-Manchurians and warning of the possible consequences (TASS).

From *Izvestia*, No. 26 (6796),
February 2, 1939.

No. 69.**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
FOREIGN MINISTER OF ITALY AND AN UNOFFICIAL
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT***February 2, 1939*

[...] I received M. Baudouin. * He strikes me as being a quiet and well-mannered person. He tells me that he had a conversation with Daladier and Bonnet on Sunday and he speaks for them. Naturally, he does not commit either Paris or Rome; his visit can be denied at any moment if we so choose. In conclusion, Daladier does not intend to make any open territorial concession; if we asked for territories there would be war. However, he is ready to make the following concessions: a large free zone in Jibuti; a share in the administration of the port; cession to Italy of the railroad in Ethiopian territory; support of our demands with regard to Suez; revision of the agreements of 1935 concerning Tunis, provided Tunisia is not made into an "Italian Sudetenland". I made clear that with regard to Tunis we ask but one thing: the right of the Italians to remain Italians. I reserved the right to give him an answer only after having spoken to the Duce.

From *The Ciano Diaries. 1939-1943*, pp. 20-21.

No. 70.**TELEGRAM FROM THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN
BRITAIN TO THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF GERMANY***February 4, 1939*

Yesterday's speeches by Lord Halifax and Hudson** emphasize anew the great importance for the further development of Anglo-German relations attached by the British Government to an Anglo-German economic agreement. In view of this I should be

* Director of the Banque de l'Indo-Chine in Paris.

** Parliamentary Secretary, British Department of Overseas Trade.

grateful if an early visit by Minister of Economics Funk could be arranged. Should this not be possible during February, a definite promise for a future date is most desirable in order to activate further the Anglo-German commercial questions already under discussion.

I request telegraphic instructions.

Dirksen

From *Documents on German Foreign Policy. 1918-1945*,
Series D, Vol. IV, pp. 398-399.

No. 71.

**STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF BRITAIN IN
THE HOUSE OF COMMONS**

February 6, 1939

It is impossible to examine in detail all the hypothetical cases which may arise, but I feel bound to make plain that the solidarity of interest, by which France and this country are united, is such that any threat to the vital interests of France, from whatever quarter it came, must evoke the immediate co-operation of this country.

From *Documents on British Forcing Policy. 1913-1939*,
Vol. IV, p. 90.

No. 72.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

February 6, 1939

As an indication of Chamberlain's present mood highly curious indeed are the thoughts that were expressed to me today by one of Chamberlain's closest followers, Transport Minister Burgin (he lunched with me).

Burgin feels that Hitler's last speech holds out nothing good, that Hitler has promised Italy support under any conditions (and not only if she is attacked, as some local professional "optimists"

are trying to make it appear), that the next four or five months will be particularly dangerous and that never before has British public opinion been so anti-German, as at present.

However, when I began to question Burgin about the position of the British Government if Hitler and Mussolini were to press the question of the colonies, he had to admit that in his opinion such questions as the status of the Italians in Tunis, priorities for the Italians in Jibuti (porto-franco, the renting of port areas, priority rights as regards the railway and the like), a place on the administration of the Suez Canal, lower payments for the passage of ships through the canal and so forth were quite negotiable. Burgin stated, furthermore, that sooner or later the colonies would have to be returned to Germany (not Tanganyika and not New Guinea, however) although at present a discussion of this question was impeded by the "unfavourable atmosphere". In short, despite his statement in the House today about solidarity with France, Chamberlain is psychologically prepared for a second Munich. Only Hitler and Mussolini themselves can prevent him from capitulating by asking too high a price, which, however he may wish to, Chamberlain will not be able to pay.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 73.

**EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE POLISH
AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE MINISTER FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF POLAND**

February 1939

A week ago, after a three-month holiday in America, W. Bullitt, the Ambassador of the United States, returned to Paris. In this time I had two long conversations with him which enable me to inform you, M. Minister, as to his views on the international situation and the policy of Washington.

1. Foreign policy of the United States based on a constant desire for direct participation in the development of relations in Europe does not exist and cannot exist, as it would not be accepted by the American public, which in this respect has not

changed its isolationist positions. At the same time the American public is taking a considerably greater interest in the situation in Europe, an interest which exceeds even the interest in domestic questions and in those matters with which it usually concerns itself. Official circles believe that the situation in Europe is fraught with a serious threat of armed conflict. The competent organs feel that if things should go so far as war between England and France, on the one hand, and Italy and Germany, on the other, and if England and France should sustain a defeat in that war, Germany would become a direct threat to the vital interests of the United States on the American continent. For this reason, in the event of war the question of the participation in it of the United States on the side of France and England is a foregone conclusion, naturally with a certain time lag after its outbreak. As Ambassador Bullitt put it, "if war breaks out, we will definitely not take part in it at the outset but we will end it."

In the opinion of Ambassador Bullitt, the above-stated position of competent organs in Washington is devoid of ideological considerations and stems solely from the need to protect the vital interests of the United States which in the event of an Anglo-French defeat will find themselves under a serious and direct threat simultaneously from the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans.

While declaring as untrue reports that President Roosevelt had said that "the frontiers of the United States lie in France", Ambassador Bullitt was certain, however, that the President definitely said he was selling aircraft to France because the French army was the first line of United States defences; this was fully in accord with his views.

2. Italy's claims against France are completely lacking in any grounds or any arguments which could at least in some measure justify them. Therefore France would not and should not make any concessions or even the semblance of such. Any French concessions would undermine her prestige in Africa and therefore the possibility of a compromise at the expense of French interests should be ruled out.

From a theoretical viewpoint, there may be the danger that Britain, perhaps together with Germany, will, at some tense moment, attempt to impose upon France a compromise which runs counter to her interests. In that case, however, France could count on powerful support from Washington. In its relations with England the United States has at its disposal diverse

and extremely effective means of pressure, the threat of whose application would be sufficient to stop England from pursuing a policy of compromise at the expense of France.

It has to be taken into account that as a result of the events in the Far East and of the Munich Conference England's prestige has dropped considerably in American public opinion, and that at the same time the American public realizes to what a great extent England today depends on co-operation with the United States and on its support.

Under these circumstances it may be supposed that Hitler and Mussolini will not risk an open conflict with France and England over the Italian claims against France.

The weak point in the position of the United States is of course the fact that although it is now defining its stand in a possible armed conflict, it cannot simultaneously take an active part in the positive solution of European problems because the American public with its isolationist tendencies would not allow that. [...]

J. Lukasiewicz

Ambassador of the Polish Republic

From *Polnische Documente zur Vorgeschichte des Krieges*,
Auswärtiges Amt, Erste Folge, Berlin, 1940, S. 23-24.

No. 74.

TELEGRAM FROM THE US AMBASSADOR IN JAPAN TO THE US SECRETARY OF STATE

February 8, 1939

Japan has entered into negotiations with Germany and Italy for a definite alliance, both military and political.¹⁶ The questions under present consideration concern the exact scope of the understanding: that is, whether it is to be aimed only at Russia or against other nations also. The above is based on reliable reports. Germany and Italy are said to be asking for the broad application while Japan wishes to restrict the scope of the alliance.

Apparently the Germans, and to a less extent the Italians, are seeking an arrangement recognizing and giving effect to the superior strategic position which they hold as compared with the Japanese should a conflict arise between Russia and any member of the

alliance. We are reliably informed that the Germans and Italians consider Japan a natural ally because they feel sure that Japan would seize the opportunity to attack Russia should that power become engaged in war with either Germany or Italy or with both of them. That is why they do not wish to make commitments to come to the aid of Japan if only Japan comes into conflict with Russia.

Important moderate influences are in operation to keep the Japanese Government from joining itself completely with the Rome-Berlin Axis.¹⁰ However, strong pressure is being exerted on the other side; the younger army officers are especially keen for this tie-up. It is thought that Foreign Minister Arita favors making the alliance. It was he who sponsored the Anti-Comintern Pact.

I have acted through informal channels to convey to Arita the idea that Japan would do well to consider, before taking an irrevocable step, what would be the possible effects upon relations with the United States of such an alliance. My British colleague feels that it would be useful for me to seek an interview with Arita on this question but I am not convinced that a direct approach is desirable. It is my belief that the best course would be to limit myself, should future conversations with Arita bring up this question naturally, to stressing the view that if her ultimate welfare is to be served Japan must cultivate and maintain friendly relations with all nations, and that friendly relations with the United States and Great Britain are of especial value because Japan's rapid development economically and industrially would have been impossible without the liberal American and British trade policies. It seems to me that the principal benefit to which we can invite Arita's attention as an offset to whatever the Japanese expect to gain from an arrangement with the Axis is the value to Japan of British and American markets. No matter what a government's policy may be, a government cannot necessarily control moral sanctions by the people.

The Department can determine better than I the advisability of approaching the Foreign Minister directly on this matter and whether such an approach, if made, should be under instructions or on my own responsibility.

Grew

*From Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of
the United States, Japan, 1931-1941,
Vol. II, Washington, 1943, pp. 161-162.*

No. 75.

**SOVIET PRESS REPORT ABOUT A CLASH ON THE
SOVIET-MANCHURIAN BORDER***February 9, 1939*

At 5 p.m. on February 6, 1939, a Soviet frontier detail of the Novo-Tsurukhaitui frontier post, under the command of Post Commander, Lieutenant Yushko, positioned on the USSR-owned Island No. 227 on the Argun River, one-and-a-half kilometres east of the village of Novo-Tsurukhaitui, came under rifle fire from a group of Japano-Manchurian soldiers. Lieutenant Yushko's detail returned the fire and forced the Japano-Manchurians to withdraw to their own cordon, four kilometres south-east of the village of Novo-Tsurukhaitui. On the Japano-Manchurian side up to five men were killed or wounded. On the Soviet side there were no losses.

At 4:0.5 p.m. on February 7 the Japano-Manchurians positioned on their territory opened fire on Lieutenant Yushko's detail with heavy machine-guns.

At 5:20 p.m. the Japano-Manchurians who had concentrated on Island No. 227 up to 40 men mounted an attack on Lieutenant Yusho's group under the covering fire of two heavy machine-guns and 50 riflemen positioned on Manchurian territory. Lieutenant Yushko's group, with the help of reinforcements sent from the frontier post, beat off the attack, and the Japano-Manchurians were dislodged from the island and withdrew to their own territory. In the battle, on the Japano-Manchurian side about 10 men were killed or wounded, including one officer. On the Soviet side one Red Army man was killed and two wounded.

The Soviet Chargé d'Affaires in Tokyo has been instructed once again to lodge a protest with the Japanese Government pointing out the continuing provocative actions of the Japano-Manchurians despite the warning given to the Japanese Government only several days ago.

The Tsitsihar Treaty of November 25, 1911, between China and the Former Russian Empire explicitly states that Island No. 227, as well as Island No. 279 on the Argun River, on which the clash of January 31 occurred, belong to Russia (TASS).

From *Izvestia*, No. 32 (6802),
February 9, 1939.

No. 76.

EXCERPT FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR*February 9, 1939*

After a few preliminary words customary for a first meeting, Naggiar asked me how the USSR's relations with Poland and Rumania were shaping up at the present time. Following my brief reply, the Ambassador stated that the French Government was highly gratified to note the signs of Poland's rapprochement with the USSR, and Rumania's desire to live at peace with the USSR. In the opinion of the French Government this situation promoted the stabilization of peaceful relations in Eastern Europe and constituted an important factor in the preservation of world peace.

I replied to the Ambassador that in my opinion the French Government could do more than limit itself to the role of a mere observer of developments in the eastern part of Europe. Only recently there was the closest possible political co-operation between France, on the one hand, and Poland and Rumania, on the other. At present, as far as I knew, the French Government was not conducting an active policy as regards both aforementioned countries, and furthermore was leaving them to their own fate, devoting all its attention to its relationships with England, Germany and Italy. Judging by the French press, as well as by the statements of some French politicians, the French Government's indifference to its former allies and friends in Central and Eastern Europe was far from being accidental. The Treaty of Alliance with Poland¹⁴, co-operation with the Little Entente¹⁷ and the Franco-Soviet Pact all now seemed to be regarded as bygone phases of French foreign policy, almost the property of history.

Naggiar very vigorously objected to such a conclusion which appeared to him to be premature. Of course, a struggle between various political trends could be observed in France. He was not denying that some French political circles had exhibited and continued to exhibit a negative attitude to France's co-operation

with the USSR. But it would be most regrettable if the significance of that fact was overrated in Moscow and a conclusion was drawn therefrom prematurely. The Ambassador could state that before his departure for the USSR he had had long talks about Franco-Soviet relations with the President of the Republic, with Daladier, Bonnet, Edouard Herriot and several other prominent French politicians. They had all spoken in favour of the Franco-Soviet Pact and in favour of France's co-operation with the USSR. The best evidence of the existence of such sentiments was the recent statement by Bonnet in the Chamber of Deputies.

I said to the Ambassador that if he was setting himself the task of maintaining and developing France's co-operation with the USSR, he could count on meeting full assistance in Moscow. [...]

V. Potemkin

From the archives.

No. 77.

EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE

February 10, 1939

On his first visit the new French Ambassador, Naggiar, naturally had many pleasant things to say about French sentiments towards the USSR, and he referred to his conversation with Daladier. I listened to his assurances with restraint, merely observing that some time back we had offered the Western Powers our co-operation in which, as events had shown, they were more interested than we. We were ready to continue genuine co-operation, if it was desired by others, but we could get along even without it, and therefore we were not going to beg for it. [...]

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 78.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR
IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***February 10, 1939*

As far as I can see, the panic caused here earlier by the Italian claims has considerably abated. The French, who but a month ago had been predicting a repetition of the September days (threats worked up to a "five-minutes-to-war" pitch), are now convinced that Mussolini will not risk following Hitler's example and they believe the struggle is going to be a long-drawn-out and protracted one. Bonnet's plan to find, with the help of England and, naturally, Germany, safe ground for "a reasonable discussion" about an agreement with Italy, while giving Germany satisfaction "in the East" and distracting her as much as possible from the Western and Mediterranean directions, is also becoming more and more clearly defined. To this end Bonnet is resorting mainly to informal channels. This, in particular, was the ultimate aim of Baudouin's last visit to Rome and of de Brinon's* visit to Berlin. The latter has also been charged with the mission of prompting the Germans to take the initiative in inviting Bonnet to Berlin. In conversations with close friends Bonnet is no longer denying that "sacrifices in the East cannot be avoided", that "German expansion must be given an outlet," that "the granting to her of a food and raw materials base is dictated by necessity," and so forth. As regards a "reasonable" concession to Italy, Bonnet, besides the cession of Jibuti (he told a friend of his the French were playing a dog-in-the manger role here), apparently in contrast to Daladier, is not averse to yielding in the Tunis question too.

Ambassador

From the archives.

* Editor-in-Chief of *L'information* and Vice-President of the "France-Germany" Society.

No. 79.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN A
GERMAN JOURNALIST AND THE GERMAN AMBASSA-
DOR IN POLAND**

February 13, 1939

Moltke asked for my views about the state of German-Polish relations after Ribbentrop's visit to Warsaw. The following conversation took place.

I. I feel that German-Polish relations leave much to be desired. Poland is plainly taking advantage of a moment when German eyes are turned towards the West to intensively pursue an anti-German policy in various spheres, for instance, in regard to the question of national minorities. I believe that from our viewpoint there will be no progress in German-Polish relations in the future. Even Ribbentrop's visit does not seem to have produced any results in this regard.

Moltke. The Reich Minister for Foreign Affairs came to Warsaw with no specific program. Neither did he have any definite intentions. In view of this it would be wrong to expect his Warsaw visit to open a new stage in German-Polish relations.

I. This may be so, yet the Reich Foreign Minister's Warsaw visit provided an opportunity to invigorate German-Polish relations. For instance, from what the Minister told the representatives of the German press I had the impression that the question of Poland joining the Anti-Comintern Pact⁸ had been raised, or at least hinted at, and that Minister Beck has expressed himself on that question in the negative.

Moltke. You are mistaken. The Reich Foreign Minister made no reference whatsoever to that question in conversations with Beck. Besides, the Polish position in respect of the fight against communism is clear.

I. Will that clear Polish position be sufficient also in the event of a collision between Germany and Russia? In my view, on November 27, 1938, when complications in the East seemed to become focal, Poland intimated in the Polish-Soviet Declaration that she was not going to actively support Germany against the Soviet Union.

Moltke. The Declaration of November 1938 is of no consequence, and it is understood in this sense in Berlin also. The situa-

tion is absolutely clear. We know that in the event of a German-Russian conflict Poland will be on our side, that is quite definite.

From the archives.

No. 80

**TELEGRAM FROM THE GERMAN LEGATION
IN RUMANIA TO THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF GERMANY**

February 14, 1939

Promptly upon his arrival Ministerialdirektor Wohlthat* was received by the King, who made reference to his conversation with Field Marshal Goering in Leipzig. The possibilities of close economic co-operation were discussed at great length. The King declared himself as favoring an extensive reliance on Germany for Rumanian economic development. It developed that the outlines of an economic program had been prepared by Foreign Minister Gafencu, Economics Minister Bujoiu, Minister of Armaments Slavescu and Finance Minister Constantinescu, with the King presiding.

In Wohlthat's further conversations with Foreign Minister and the Minister of Economics the intention to undertake long-range collaboration with Germany was again confirmed: "Germany generally shall regain the position of economic predominance in Rumania which she had before 1914." In view of such Rumanian willingness the following economic program should be drawn up in an "agreement for the promotion of economic relations between the two countries":

I. For the purpose of promoting and securing German imports from Rumania:

(1) the authorities and commercial organizations on both sides shall establish regular contacts for adapting Rumanian production to German requirements, especially in the agricultural field;

(2) investments and capital participation shall be undertaken to develop a German-Rumanian petroleum industry;

* Commissioner of the Four-Year Plan in the German Ministry for Economic Affairs.

(3) Rumanian mineral resources shall be explored and exploited in common;

(4) a timber management plan shall be drawn up and Germany shall participate in the exploitation of forests (elimination of Jews from the lumber business).

II. Rumania is prepared:

(1) to expand Rumanian industry and co-operate with German industry while respecting German export interests;

(2) to expand and standardize Rumanian armament, especially of the air force, with German aid;

(3) to develop her armament industry along German lines;

(4) to co-operate in matters of communication, especially in the construction of roads and waterways (group garbled).

Germany would be reimbursed from export proceeds.

If this goal is attainable, Germany will indeed achieve predominance in Rumania. Since the Government commission is aware of this fact and therefore considers the attainment of this goal in the interest of the country, such a favorable opportunity of tying this country to us should, in our opinion, be exploited. By such a close economic association between the two countries Rumania will be more and more removed from the influence of the Western Powers and the Soviets, and thereby from the Jews, and the general atmosphere between us will be improved.

I request prompt consideration and instruction as to whether Wohlthat may prepare and sign an agreement on the basis given.

*Wohlthat
Fabricius*

*From Documents on German Foreign Policy. 1918-1945,
Series D, Vol. V, pp. 392-394.*

No. 81.

TELEGRAM FROM THE GERMAN LEGATION IN RUMANIA TO THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GERMANY

February 17, 1939

Wohlthat's further conversations with Minister of Economics Bujoiu, Minister of Armaments Slavescu, Minister of Finance

Constantinescu and... (group garbled) confirm the unanimous stand of the Rumanian Government in favor of orienting the Rumanian economy towards Germany. The prospects for the plans reported seem more and more favorable; their materialization depends on co-operation with the Rumanian authorities whose leaders are conducting the negotiations alone and are prepared to promote the plans wholeheartedly.

A "business organization" is not planned; rather, only the offices designated by the Governments on both sides are to be brought into contact with each other, for the purpose, among other things, of obtaining the official material and securing Government support.

A possible fall of the Government or a change in the regime would in all probability return to power circles less favorably inclined towards us, who would like to work with the democracies. This would severely injure our economic interests.

*Wohlthat
Fabricius*

*From Documents on German Foreign Policy. 1918-1945,
Series D, Vol. V, p. 397.
397.*

No. 82.

**EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COM-
MISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE
SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN**

February 19, 1939

[...] Your letter has not convinced me that Hitler and Mussolini may confront Chamberlain with the unavoidability of war already this year. I believe that both Chamberlain and, still more so, the French have decided to avoid war, at least in the coming years, at all costs, and I would even say at any price. It is incorrect to think that the resources of concessions have run out or are running out. Bonnet is himself prepared to go very far towards meeting the Italian demands. François-Poncet has confirmed to our Chargé d'Affaires the fact of Baudouin's talks with the Italians. Concessions in respect of French Somaliland, a free harbour in Jibuti, the

railway and the Suez Canal have already been offered by him. With pressure from Chamberlain the concessions could be considerably broadened. As for the German appetites, not to mention the English purse which is ready to open up for Hitler at any minute, there are still the Portuguese, the Dutch, and finally the French colonies whose cession is quite acceptable to Chamberlain. England is likely to cede some of her own possessions if she can convince people that she will thus buy herself out of a war.

So far Hitler has been pretending not to understand the Anglo-French hints about freedom of action in the East, but he may understand them if, in addition to the hints, something else should be offered to him by England and France at their own expense or else if he is promised, in the event of a conflict in the East, not only neutrality or even sympathetic neutrality, but also some active assistance, which I on no account consider to be ruled out. The Polish and Carpatho-Ruthenian direction seems to be closed, for Poland is still dreaming of having her own sphere of influence in the Ukraine. She will, however, be prepared, if necessary, to sacrifice her dreams and to acquiesce in a campaign by Hitler through Rumania. One cannot count too much on resistance by Carol.* Neither would Poland object to a campaign by Hitler through the Baltics and Finland, so that she herself could take action against the Ukraine, synchronizing all this with the policy of Japan.

As you see, Chamberlain still has a fairly vast scope for manoeuvres. But perhaps you fear that Hitler and Mussolini may go too far and present the West with demands which it will be impossible to meet. Let me remind you, however, that both Hitler and Mussolini have enough friends in England and all sorts of reliable sources through which they can be sufficiently well notified in advance about the limits of concessions. During the Czechoslovak episode Hitler advanced his maximal demands, gradually raising them as he obtained information about their acceptability for Chamberlain. At that time he was absolutely sure of his aim and ran almost no risk. The same thing will happen now. Both Mussolini and Hitler, who do not at all relish the prospect of war, will go no further in their demands than the line beyond which, according to the reliable information they have, even Chamberlain's and Bonnet's tractability can come to

* King of Rumania.

an end. Of course, I am making no claims that my prognosis is absolutely correct. Any surprises are possible but they must be reduced to a minimum. [...]

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 83.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE USSR AND THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN THE
USSR**

February 19, 1939

Seeds came to inform me that the English Government had decided to send the Parliamentary Secretary of the Department of Overseas Trade and the Foreign Office, Hudson, on a trip to the northeastern countries, namely to Moscow, to Warsaw and to Helsingfors,* in late March or early April. The purpose of the visit was not negotiations but the establishment of contact with leading figures and discussion of possibilities for trade. Hudson expected to spend two or three days in Moscow. Seeds did not know exactly Hudson's itinerary, but he was willing to assume that if his route should lie through Berlin he would stop over and perhaps have dinner with somebody there. Information about the trip had already reached yesterday's evening papers and questions in Parliament were expected tomorrow. Chamberlain would like to have an opportunity to give an affirmative reply to the question but he could not do so without having our reply. Seeds was therefore asking that we let him know of our opinion, if possible, today. I replied that I had no doubt that my Government would welcome Hudson's visit but since he would probably have to get in touch with Comrade Mikoyan** primarily, I would have to ask the latter if the dates scheduled by Hudson were acceptable to him. I would try to clarify this today and convey the response to the Ambassador by telephone.

* Helsinki.

** Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, People's Commissar for Foreign Trade of the USSR.

For some reason Seeds thought it necessary to emphasize the significance of the discussions which Naggiar has had with us and which should considerably improve our relations with France. Seeds expressed his displeasure at the tone of our press which continued to comment on England's capitulationism whereas completely different sentiments were taking shape in that country. In particular, Seeds complained about the editorial comment in *Krasnaya Zvezda* in connection with Kuznetsov's article. The paper pointed out that Kuznetsov had mistakenly exaggerated the defense capacity of England which in actual fact was militarily very weak.

I answered that we could of course influence our newspapers, but that we never gave them advance instructions as to what they were to write about the policy of other governments. We left that to the free judgement of our citizens and journalists. Generally, our press devoted little attention to foreign policy questions and limited itself to publishing reports from abroad. I indicated to the Ambassador that so far I could see no signs of any change in the line that had taken form at Munich. For the sake of illustration I cited the examples of Spain and Hainan. We only saw that France and England, being unwilling and considering it unnecessary to put up any resistance to the demands of the aggressors, were endeavouring to justify or blur those demands. A great deal was being said, for instance, about the inevitable withdrawal of Italian forces from Spain. I did not know when that withdrawal would take place. Each day Italy was naming new dates. But even if it were assumed that the evacuation was going to take place, would this change anything for England and France if Franco had concluded or would conclude a military alliance with Germany and Italy? After all, Franco had promised to join the anti-Comintern Pact⁸ as soon as he had English and French recognition. Furthermore, England and France had been trying to minimize the significance of the occupation of Hainan, which was a threat both for Indochina and for Hongkong and Singapore, by pointing to the purely military and the temporary nature of the occupation. But it was quite plain that in so far as Japan planned to take possession of the whole of China, she would also be in possession of the Island of Hainan where she would do whatever she pleased. After the war with China ended it would be even more difficult than now for England and France to prevent Japan from taking possession of the Island. All these were questions that had no

bearing on us, but surely our press could have its own judgement about the policies of other States. As regards the comment made by the newspaper's editorial board about Britain's defense capacity the English press too had said a great deal about the weakness of the Red Army, the deficiencies of our air force, about our command and so forth. Why then could not our press also talk about the weakness of the British Army?

Seeds said that of course he understood the feelings that Munich had evoked in us. He was by no means justifying that policy. In the past, as High Commissioner on the Rhine, he had objected to the withdrawal of allied forces from the area, predicting that this would lead to the strengthening of Germany, and therefore he could agree with much of what I had said. He was convinced, however, that at present England was talking in a completely different tone and was fully determined to defend her positions.

I answered that I was happy to hear of the new mood among the ruling circles of England but would be even happier to see it in action.

Litvinov.

From the archives.

No. 84.

TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR

February 20, 1939

1. Today Halifax, who was my dinner guest, said that after our conversation on January 27 he had taken a closer look at the state of Anglo-Soviet trade relations, had convinced himself that much of what I had told him was correct and finally had arrived at the conclusion that denunciation of the Trade Agreement was undesirable. Since, however, on the English side there was some displeasure over the present state of Anglo-Soviet trade, he felt the most expedient way of solving that question would be a visit by a relevant Minister to Moscow for talks on this subject. This visit could prepare the ground for a revision of the Trade

Agreement or else for some other measures which, with due regard for the interests of both sides, could remove the cause of the present displeasure of the English at the state of trade between the two countries. Furthermore, Halifax believed that at this particular time such a visit could have a desirable political effect. The British Government had agreed with his thinking on the subject and the result was the decision on Hudson's trip. Halifax asked me to call on him one of these days for a more detailed conversation on this topic.

2. Hudson is the Secretary of the Department of Overseas Trade. This Department is a very curious office in a distinctly English style. Despite its name it is not quite subordinated to the Board of Trade, but constitutes something like a small ministry for foreign trade matters and enjoys great independence (for instance, questions on foreign trade are usually answered in Parliament by the head of the Department directly, not by the President of the Board of Trade). The Secretary of this Department is subordinated at one and the same time to two ministries, the Board of Trade and the Foreign Office, and his rank is equal to that of a junior minister.

Hudson is personally one of the most influential representatives of the young Conservatives, a man with a strong character. Before Christmas he led the "mutiny" of junior ministers against Inskip and Hore-Belisha * over the armament question. As a result of the "mutiny" Inskip was transferred from the post of Minister for Co-ordination of Defence to that of Secretary of State for the Dominions (a purely decorative office). In his youth Hudson was in the diplomatic service (at one time in Petersburg, I believe) and speaks a little Russian. In mid-March, Hudson, together with the President of the Board of Trade, Stanley, is going to Berlin at the invitation of the Germans to attend a dinner (and probably make an appropriate speech) which is being arranged there on the occasion of the visit of a delegation of the Federation of British Industry for talks with German industrialists about the possibility of forming international cartels designed to offset acute trade competition.

Stanley and Hudson will undoubtedly see various leading figures in Berlin. From Berlin Stanley will probably return to London, while Hudson will proceed to Warsaw, Moscow and

* British Secretary of State for War.

Helsinki. This is merely my assumption, however, for the time being. Hudson has expressed a desire to see me soon and then I shall be in a position to communicate to you at once more details about his plans and intentions.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 85.

**EXCERPTS FROM A SURVEY OF BRITISH FOREIGN
POLICY IN 1938 PREPARED BY THE SOVIET AMBASSA-
DOR IN BRITAIN**

February 25, 1939

1. *Main points.* The year 1938 will no doubt go down in the history of British foreign policy as a year that passed entirely under the hallmark of Chamberlain's policy of "appeasement". Neither the author of that policy nor any of his followers have so far attempted to give a more precise definition of that concept. However, the pursuit of the "policy of appeasement" throughout the past year leaves no doubt that it consists essentially of two points: (1) peace at all costs, and (2) collusion with the aggressors at the expense of third countries by way of granting the aggressors concessions without reciprocity.

The origin of that policy can be traced back to the middle of 1937, when Chamberlain was appointed Prime Minister. It was in June of that year that he made his first foreign policy speech in Parliament which immediately indicated that a major change in foreign policy was being planned. In late July Chamberlain exchanged personal letters with Mussolini about improving Anglo-Italian relations, thereby initiating a system of "direct contacts" between heads of State which, in his view, was the best method of undoing the Gordian knots of present-day international relations. It was not until 1938, however, that Chamberlain's new policy was developed to the full. [...]

4. *After Munich.* The "policy of appeasement" inevitably increases the arrogance and appetites of the aggressors. This was most clearly revealed in Anglo-German relations after Munich. Chamberlain, and with him the majority in government circles,

believed that for all its shortcomings Munich would have one very important positive result for them, namely: it would "satisfy" Hitler for a considerable period of time in so far as Western Europe was concerned, and would thus create a basis for establishing the "Four-Power Pact", the Prime Minister's long cherished dream. The top Conservative leaders willingly granted Hitler "a free hand" in Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe in exchange for a certain stabilization of "Western security".

Immediately after Munich, the English (and French) press began to play up rumours and reports to the effect that Hitler would now go east and that his immediate major objective was the Ukraine. The same suppositions were debated for all they were worth in public and political circles. It is beyond doubt that quite a few prominent figures (including some cabinet members) had been whispering the idea of such an eastern adventure into Hitler's ear, promising him at least sympathetic neutrality on the part of the "Western democracies". But Chamberlain and his followers were in for a big disappointment. Hitler, who has been doing his utmost to avoid a really big war and who understands perfectly well that any action against the Soviet Ukraine is bound to lead to a big and, for him, hopeless war, revealed no desire to go east (although for a time he deemed it to his advantage to spread rumours to that effect). Actually, right after Munich Hitler began putting pressure on the West. This pressure assumed highly diverse forms. Frenzied attacks on "democracy" by the German press and the leaders of National Socialism; threats levelled at England if men like Churchill, Eden, Duff-Cooper and others should come to power in that country; attempts to "intimidate" the British Government and get it to slow down the rate of rearmament; proclamation of a programme of naval construction designed to frustrate the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935³; the extreme intensification of trade competition with England on the world market; the boycott of Chamberlain's speech at the foreign press dinner in London on December 13—all this, and much else besides, harped on one and the same theme.

Despite the declaration of September 30 * signed by Hitler and Chamberlain, German fascism after Munich continued to brandish its fist at England. The Jewish pogroms which swept Germany

* See Document No. 2.

in November worsened relations between the two countries still further. The resignation of Schacht, which was viewed in London as a heightening of aggressive and anti-British tendencies in German policy, clouded the atmosphere to an even greater extent. And the support that Germany was openly giving Italy's anti-French demands made even the most optimistic advocates of Chamberlain's tendencies have second thoughts about the possibility of an early realization of the "appeasement" of Europe. All these facts and events could not fail to have some influence not only on public opinion in Great Britain but also on government circles. It was for a good reason that the Cabinet was compelled to present Parliament with a bill calling for vigorous support for British exporters in the struggle against German competition on the world market. It was also for a good reason that Chamberlain on several occasions publicly spoke about his "disappointment" and about the need for Hitler and Mussolini to make "their contribution" to the cause of bringing peace to Europe.

It must be said nonetheless that the "policy of appeasement" remains as before Chamberlain's principal line and that lately he has been carried away by some half-mystical conviction that he has been specially "chosen" for the cause of "appeasing" mankind. From what has been said by quite a few people well acquainted with the Prime Minister I know that he regards himself as one charged with a "divine mission" of saving the human race from war. [...]

9. *England and the League of Nations.*

Throughout 1938 the British Government has advanced at a still faster pace than before along the road of undermining the principles of the League of Nations and of collective security. The most vivid evidence of this was the position of the British delegation at the September session of the League where it fully supported the proposals of the "Oslo group"¹⁸ calling for the factual conversion of Article 16 of the Covenant of the League (concerning sanctions) into an optional one. There are reasons to believe that the proposals of that group had in fact been inspired by London.

Also, during the September crisis the British Government made not the slightest attempt at least in some measure to involve the League of Nations in its discussions or settlement. Disregard of the League of Nations by the British Government can also be seen, by the way, in the fact that ever more frequently England

has been represented at the meetings in Geneva by second- and third- rank officials.

For instance, Foreign Secretary Halifax did not go to the September session of the League at all, and England was represented there by the Lord Privy Seal, de la Warr, and the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Butler. What is more, de la Warr spent more time travelling between London and Geneva than in Geneva itself (during the session he flew to London several times). As for Halifax, he spent only one day at the January session of the League Council in 1939 on his way back from Rome, and then handed everything over to Butler.

10. *Anglo-Soviet relations.* Despite the fact that since the end of 1936, owing to Spain and other circumstances, an increasing coolness came to be felt in Anglo-Soviet relations, before Eden's resignation some efforts to check or at least to slow down the process of their further freezing had been in evidence on the British side. Shortly before his resignation Eden, who was an advocate of a London-Paris-Moscow "Axis", had had several conversations with me which indicated his desire as far as possible to co-ordinate England's policy with that of the USSR.

However, as soon as Chamberlain became his own foreign minister, the cooling process picked up speed. Being a highly class-conscious bourgeois, Chamberlain is profoundly hostile towards communism and the USSR. It is utterly beyond his capability to overcome that hostility for the sake of building a united front of the peace-loving Powers, even for the purpose of defending the British Empire. What is more, he believes that German and Italian fascism may still serve the English bourgeoisie as a battering ram in the struggle against the "communist menace" from the East. That is why his entire foreign policy line is based not on resisting the aggressors, but on striking a bargain with the aggressors at the expense of third countries, and if possible, at the expense of the USSR as well. As a result, since February 21, 1938, the British Government has been conducting a kind of diplomatic boycott of the Soviet Union. My meetings with the Foreign Secretary have become rare, irregular and superficial. Mutual information and the reciprocal exchange of views on international questions which the two Governments had agreed on during Eden's visit to Moscow in March 1935 have now ceased. The British Government has described Comrade Litvinov's proposal for urgent consultations among all the peace-

loving Powers after the annexation of Austria as "untimely".¹⁹

We learned from the press about the Anglo-French demarche in Berlin on May 21 and about Runciman's journey to Czechoslovakia. During the September crisis the British Government maintained no contact with the USSR (with one small exception), on the contrary, together with the French Government, it zealously spread false and slanderous rumours about the unwillingness and incapability of the Soviet Government to meet its obligations under the Soviet-Czechoslovak Pact. This was needed to justify its own position of capitulation in those critical days. After Munich one member of the Cabinet, Lord Winterton, had the impudence to repeat in his public speeches the same vile fabrications, against which I made an official protest to Halifax on October 11. As a result of the protest, and under the pressure of attacks upon him in Parliament and in the press, Winterton was compelled to apologize to me for his statement and to retract it in the House of Commons. Chamberlain did the same in Parliament on behalf of the Government.

After the closing down of the British Consulate in Leningrad the Foreign Office in reprisal refused to issue visas in Moscow to Soviet citizens travelling to England. The result was a "visa war" between the two countries which began last March and has not yet ended. Soviet citizens now get their British visas in one of Britain's Consulates in Europe (primarily in Brussels), while British nationals receive Soviet visas also in one of the Soviet Consulates in Europe (primarily in Paris). Neither in Moscow nor in London are visas issued. Meanwhile, economic relations between the two countries became considerably aggravated. Supported by the Board of Trade, certain groups of English industrialists began waging a strong campaign calling for the denunciation of the 1934 Trade Agreement.

It was only some pressure on my part (conversations with Halifax, Butler, Vansittart * and the President of the Board of Trade, Stanley), against the background of a slightly changed international situation at the beginning of 1939, that obviated the danger of the denunciation of the 1934 Trade Agreement and compelled the British Government to look for other ways to settle disputed economic questions. The result was the decision to send a special

* See Document No. 60.

trade mission to Moscow headed by the Secretary of the Department of Overseas Trade Hudson.* However, here I am somewhat getting ahead of myself.

Summing up Anglo-Soviet relations in 1938, I must state outright that throughout this year they have been steadily deteriorating, becoming ever cooler or more strained. There were no particularly dramatic episodes, such as an embargo, or big anti-Soviet campaigns in the press or the like. Outwardly everything was calm but the temperature of relations kept falling. In the obtaining world situation the British Government could not afford the luxury of an open quarrel with so powerful a factor in international relations as the USSR is today. However, it openly tried by every means to drive it home to us that Britain and the USSR were no fellow travellers. True, at the very beginning of 1939 there were several signs of a certain change of mood in British ruling circles (the most important of these was the aforementioned decision on Hudson's journey to Moscow), but past experience concerning the general line of Chamberlain's policy does not warrant any particular optimism in this respect.

11. *Conclusions.* Despite isolated instances of zigzags and vacillations due to various temporary considerations, the general line of British foreign policy throughout 1938 remained unchanged; peace at all costs and a deal with the aggressors at the expense of third countries. There is no question that in the process of carrying out that policy quite large sections of the governing upper crust came to realize that it was increasingly difficult to satisfy the appetites of Hitler and Mussolini (Halifax, for instance, is now showing great scepticism about the policy of "appeasement"), and hence, by the way, the strong pressure to build up British armaments. Nonetheless, in the present historical situation, given the English bourgeoisie's fear of the "spectre of communism" and also in view of the profound cachexia of the Labour Opposition which is mortally afraid of coming to power at so difficult a moment, there are all grounds to believe that Chamberlain's line (perhaps with some partial modifications) will go on being the "general line" of British foreign policy.

From the archives.

* See Document No. 80.

No. 86.**LETTER FROM THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN GERMANY TO THE STATE SECRETARY OF THE GERMAN MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

February 25, 1939

In his speech at Blackburn on February 22nd, Mr. Neville Chamberlain said: "I agree with the words spoken by Herr Hitler last month when he said that co-operation between our peoples in full confidence with one another would be fortunate for the whole world."

It may interest you to know confidentially that the Prime Minister wrote to me personally to say that he had specially made this reference because the Duke of Coburg had quoted these words in his speech at the *Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft* and because he (the P.M.) believed that part of the Duke's speech was inspired from on high.

I do not know whether it was, but nevertheless in might be useful for you to know this and possibly even still more useful if you could confirm to me, confidentially also, whether it was in fact so inspired.

Nevile Henderson

From *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*,
Series D, Vol. IV, p. 421.

No. 87.**REPORT BY THE HEAD OF THE GERMAN ECONOMIC DELEGATION TO RUMANIA TO THE COMMISSIONER FOR THE FOUR-YEAR PLAN ***

February 27, 1939

*REPORT ON THE CONVERSATIONS OF FEBRUARY
13 TO 22, 1939, WITH THE RUMANIAN
GOVERNMENT IN BUCHAREST*

The reason for the journey was the wish expressed several times by the King and the Rumanian Ministers that the conversations

* H. Goering.

which the King had with the Field Marshal * at the end of November 1938 in Leipzig be continued.

The mission assigned by the Field Marshal was to tie the Rumanian economy closer to Germany, whereby an attempt was to be made to improve and secure the deliveries of Rumanian petroleum products to Germany by participation in the oil industry.

The reception by the King and the Ministers was in keeping with the realization that Greater Germany is indisputably the first Power in Central Europe. The King had given instructions that the conversations were to be conducted only by the Ministers in person. On the basis of identical instructions from the King, all the Ministers endeavoured to bring about close economic co-operation with Germany and willingly showed secret material from their Ministers concerning data and projects. Compared with my negotiations in Bucharest in the spring of 1935, at which time the French influence was still dominant, the reception by the King during the audience on the day of my arrival and on the occasion of the gala concert in honor of the Balkan Conference showed a definite turn in favor of Germany.

The result of the conversations may be summarized as follows: Rumania is prepared to sign an "agreement for the promotion of economic relations between the German Reich and the Kingdom of Rumania." This agreement would be in addition to the Trade Agreement of 1935 and the Agreement on Trade and Payments of 1935-37, and would form the basis for large-scale, carefully planned co-operation over a long period of time.

The co-operation of the authorities on both sides is to cover the following in particular:

1. Adaptation of Rumanian agricultural production to German needs.

(a) Increased cultivation of fodder with protein content (barley, maize, alfalfa, oil seed).

Long-term contracts, using German seeds.

(b) Increased cultivation of oleaginous plants (soybeans, linseed, rapeseed, sunflowers).

(c) Promotion of hog and sheep raising.

(d) Development of fiber plants (cotton, hemp, flax).

* H. Goering.

(e) Exploitation of fishing resources.

2. Adoption of long-term projects for the Rumanian lumber and forest industry with consideration for German needs.

3. Prospecting and utilization of mineral resources.

(a) Manganese, copper, and chromium ores.

(b) Lampblack produced from methane.

(c) Byproducts of gold mining.

(d) Aluminium production.

(e) Chemical industry based on petroleum, gas, and coal.

(f) Investigation of whether helium production is possible (proposal by Economics Minister Bujoiu).

4. Development of a German-Rumanian oil industry. Capital participation in the only great national Rumanian enterprise in contrast to British, American, French, and minor Italian participation in the greater part of the Rumanian industry.

Use of the refining process with a capacity of 400,000 tons according to German needs, especially as regards gasoline. German importation of oil products from Rumania:

1937 435,000 tons

1938 628,000 tons

5. Agreements on the development of Rumanian industry. Limitation to the basic industries so as to secure to Germany her exports of consumer goods. Agreement on supplementing industrial production on both sides.

6. Establishment of export industries in free zones on the Danube for delivery to third markets (Near East; favorable situation for transportation by freighter to the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal).

7. Delivery of war matériel and army equipment. Standardization of the air corps by purchase of German airplanes; completion of an airplane factory. It may be expected that orders totalling 10 billion lei will be placed in Germany in the course of the next few years. This would mean that the weapons and armaments of Rumania will correspond to German standards.

8. Communication and transportation system.

Building of roads. A canal between Cernavoda and Constantza to shorten the sea route via the Danube estuary by 300 kilometres (British circles are also interested in this project). Construction of hydraulic power stations for electrification of railroads and industrial areas.

9. Establishment of enterprises under public ownership such as

municipal power, gas, and water works, and slaughter and refrigeration plants.

10. Financing by co-operation between German and Rumanian banks.

Influence to be exerted by the Deutsche Bank on the Banque de Credit (pool agreement with Rumanian group with which the royal houses in Bucharest, Belgrade, and Athens are also connected).

Orienting the Rumanian economy towards Germany by joint planning over a number of years will secure Germany the dominant position in Southeastern Europe.

If the treaty with Rumania is concluded, treaties with Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Turkey, adapted to the special conditions in each case, could be anticipated. It is less important to us to tie Greece to us, since she is decidedly a Mediterranean power.

The proposed agreement with Rumania will mean a decisive step forward in the development of German economic policy in Southeastern Europe; production within our European sphere of influence will be increased with the participation of German capital. Because of long-term commitments, the unsettling policy which has been followed in the past by the individual national banks must be changed in our favor. The participation of Southeastern Europe in German foreign trade increased from approximately 9 per cent in 1933 to about 15 per cent in 1938 and it will probably be possible to achieve a further increase to about 25 per cent in a number of years.

The proposed policy will secure us a predominant influence with specifically German methods without our having to revert to the old type of trade policy with unconditional most-favored-nation treatment and the gold standard. The stabilizing of exchange rates between the reichsmark and the national currencies involved opens new possibilities for the international prestige of the reichsmark. The financing of the harvests and the production of Southeastern Europe by directing foreign capital, especially from the London market, via Berlin would open further possibilities for expanding the German transit trade. The raising of the living standard in Southeastern Europe would come about in direct relations to Greater Germany. The German position in the conflict with the economic interests of the British Empire and North America would be strengthened. The political development

of the national states in Southeastern Europe will follow the German pattern to an increasing extent, while the influence of the Western European democracies and the Soviet Union would be eliminated.

The conclusion of the agreement with Rumania and the realization of the anticipated co-operation will be greatly influenced by the political atmosphere prevailing between the two countries. I should like to refer in this connection to my oral report on the King's remarks and Foreign Minister Gafencu's intention to pay a visit to Berlin in connection with his journey to Warsaw, before getting in touch with London and Paris. During the negotiations now being conducted with Germany, Minister Gafencu rejected feelers from London, Paris, and Moscow in order to give expression to the earnest desire of the Rumanian Government to reach an understanding with Germany first of all. Other members of the Rumanian Government as well are prepared to create the atmosphere of mutual confidence necessary to carry out the plans by visiting and conferring with the corresponding German Ministers.

Wohlthat

From *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. V, pp. 404-407.

No. 88.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE GERMAN MINISTER IN
RUMANIA TO THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF GERMANY**

February 27, 1939

Foreign Minister Gafencu told me Sunday evening of his own accord that he and Markovic* had agreed at the Balkan Conference that.

- (1) The Little Entente¹⁷ no longer existed.
 - (2) The Balkan Entente should in no circumstances become an instrument which was in any manner directed against Germany.
- Quite the contrary, the Balkan Entente must realize that Germany's *Drang nach dem Osten* was a natural phenomenon

* Cinkar-Markovic, Yugoslav Minister for Foreign Affairs.

which would increase in strength to the extent that colonial questions were left unsolved. The Balkans must meet this impetus, however, by co-operating closely with Germany, especially in the economic field. That was the view of the Rumanian Government, and Markovic, Metaxas,* and Sarajoglu had concurred in it.

The Russian proposal for a Black Sea pact had never been mentioned, and neither Rumania nor Turkey had any intention of discussing such a pact.

Fabricius

From Documents on German Foreign Policy. 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. V, p. 403.

No. 89.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN A
GERMAN JOURNALIST AND THE MILITARY ATTACHE
OF GERMANY IN POLAND**

February 27, 1939

On February 27, 1939, I had a conversation with the Military Attaché of the German Embassy in Warsaw, Colonel Himer, about the Danzig events. During the conversation Himer related that recently, together with other military attachés, he had been received by Hitler in Berlin. From Hitler's remarks about the general political situation and Germany's intentions he, Himer, had carried away the impression that Germany, together with Italy, was planning to take action against the Western Powers. Unlike in the case of the Czech action of last year, Hitler was not talking about his present plans. In this way he wanted to avoid a situation where a many-month-long open discussion of German plans would cause nervousness among the population of Germany, where the outside world would step in prematurely, and finally, where the knowledgeable and the unknowledgeable would come out with their doubts, warnings and counter-proposals. Such things would only impair Germany's striking power. Hitler

* Greek Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs.

would announce the forthcoming action only when he was in a position to deliver the blow on the very next day.

From the archives.

No 90.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE US AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE
TO THE US SECRETARY OF STATE**

February 28, 1939

Last night Bonnet asked me to call on him so that he might show me a telegram which he had just received from Coulondre, French Ambassador in Berlin, in which the French Ambassador expressed the opinion in strong terms that the United States should send the American Ambassador back to Berlin at once. I read the telegram in Bonnet's office this evening.

Incidentally it gave a clear idea of the intense effort the French Government is making to reach an understanding with Germany. Coulondre said that he was doing his best to improve relations and that the atmosphere at the present moment was good. He also stated: "As you know the British Government has been redoubling its efforts recently to reach an understanding with Germany".

Coulondre went on to say that the American Embassy had been co-operating in the effort to achieve understanding between Germany, France, and England and that he felt the death of Chargé d'Affaires left a hole in the ranks of the democracies in Berlin which should be filled as soon as possible by the return of the Ambassador. It was his opinion that the chance of understanding between Germany, France, and England would be greatly increased if there should be an American Ambassador in Berlin working for reconciliation.

Bonnet said that he was not so sure this evening as he had been last night that Coulondre was right. It was most valuable to France and England in their efforts to achieve reconciliation with Germany to have the United States as an unreconciled potential threat in the background. The comparatively conciliatory line which the Germans were taking was in his opinion due to the fact that they were afraid of the United States.

It would certainly be valuable to have an American Ambassador in Berlin co-operating closely with Coulondre, and Neville Henderson, but this might be less valuable than the position which it was now possible for the French and British to take in Berlin; to wit: that they were much more reasonable in their attitude towards Germany than the Government of the United States.

After thinking it over he was therefore of the opinion that from the point of view of reconciliation it might be advisable not to have the American Ambassador return to Berlin until after the crisis which he anticipated would arise from Italian demands after the election of the Pope.

I replied that from his point of view there appeared to be said much on both sides of the question; and that the Government of the United States had its own point of view.

Bullitt

*From Foreign Relations of the United States.
Diplomatic Papers, 1939, Vol. 1,
Washington, 1956, pp. 25-26.*

No. 91.

LETTER FROM THE STATE SECRETARY OF THE GERMAN MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN GERMANY

March 1, 1939

I am very much obliged to you for your letter of February 25.* The information you gave interested me greatly.

As I can confirm to you—also confidentially—it is correct that, before his speech at the annual dinner of the Anglo-German Society, the attention of the Duke of Coburg had been specially drawn to the sentence you mention in the speech by the Führer

* See Document No. 86.

and Chancellor on the value of collaboration and mutual trust between Germany and Britain.*

From *Documents on German Foreign Policy. 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. IV, p. 423.

No. 92.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE EXECUTIVE YUAN OF CHINA TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS OF THE USSR

March 1, 1939

Since China took up armed resistance against the Japanese aggression, your Government has been extending to us very generous and valuable assistance in the form of credit loans amounting to 100,000,000 American dollars for the purchase of war planes and other military supplies. We have thus been able to wear down the enemy's aggressive strength and to maintain a prolonged struggle. For this the Chinese Government and the Chinese people have been deeply grateful. I, as President of the Executive Yuan and the Minister of Finance, am particularly grateful for this assistance as it has given a substantial relief to our financial stringency. Please accept my sincerest thanks for your active sympathy and genuine friendship.

As Comrade Sun Fo is going to Moscow again as our Ambassador Special and Plenipotentiary, I am asking him if he would be so kind as to bring to you this letter conveying my best regards. Although I did not have the pleasure of meeting you personally, your outstanding achievements have long commanded my highest respect. In view of the revolutionary alignment of our two countries, I avail myself of this opportunity to say a few words about the credit loans for your esteemed consideration.

With regard to the deliveries of commodities for the repayment of the First and Second Credit Loans, I regret very much that

* The original draft of this letter ended with the sentence: "This indication was given by the Foreign Ministry," but this sentence was deleted by the State Secretary before dispatch (Note by the editor of *Documents on German Foreign Policy. 1918-1945.*)

these deliveries have been at times behind schedule. This is due to transportation difficulties, which have been further aggravated by the loss of Canton and Wuhan. As I am directly responsible for the Sino-Soviet trade transactions, I am deeply sorry about the deficiency with regard to deliveries. We are now making every effort to increase our transportation facilities and to improve the process of purchasing and storing commodities. We shall do our utmost to carry out these deliveries by giving them priority over everything else. It is the general practice of China to honour her international commitments no matter how difficult the situation may be. With regard to our obligations incurred through your most cordial and sympathetic assistance, we shall make special efforts to fulfil them.

Now Comrade Sun Fo is empowered to negotiate for the Third Credit Loan, the details of which he will discuss with your Government. In view of our increasing financial stringency and transportation difficulties, I wish to make only one suggestion. It would be desirable to prolong the repayment as far as possible and to arrange for the first few instalments to be as moderate as possible. I sincerely request that you lend your sympathetic support to my appeal in order to enable my country to steer through the present difficulties to final victory. In doing so you will not only lay the unshakable foundation for future economic co-operation but will also cement the unbreakable ties between our two countries.

With assurance of my best wishes I remain,

Yours sincerely,
Kung Hsian-hsi

From the archives.

No. 93.

EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN

March 4, 1939

1. In your telegram of the 2nd you correctly determined the motives that have prompted the Chamberlain Government to

make a certain kind of gestures towards us. I consider the principal motive to be a desire to placate somewhat the Opposition at a moment when recognition of Franco would have struck a new blow at Chamberlain's popularity in certain English circles. It is not excluded, however, that even in Chamberlain's own heart there is a creeping fear lest the insatiability of the aggressors should force England and France to take up arms, and in anticipation of that eventuality it would not be amiss to extend a feeler towards the USSR. As to giving the Germans a fright, this has less to do with the industrial talks than with increasing efforts to urge Hitler to go eastwards: go east, they say, or else we shall join forces with it against you. I would not be surprised if in reply the same kind of gestures are made to us by Hitler. In any case, we are dealing only with gestures and tactical manoeuvres, not with any genuine desire on Chamberlain's part to co-operate with us.

2. We do not know whether Hudson is planning to raise any political questions here, apart from a general discussion of the international situation. I cannot even imagine what proposals Hudson could put to us in this field. Seeds has hinted to me at some very serious proposals, but they must surely be in the field of economic relations. They may propose not only measures to increase trade, but also credit and financial measures involving the settlement of old claims. It is possible that these claims are being dragged out of the archives in order to render impossible in advance any genuine agreement and to shift onto us a responsibility that will be understood by the City. Therefore, while treating the English gestures with a sufficient dose of scepticism and mistrust, I do nevertheless consider them to be far from useless, particularly in view of the aggravation of our relations with Japan. [...]

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 94.**TASS REPORT ON THE RECALL OF THE USSR REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE NON-INTERVENTION COMMITTEE***March 4, 1939*

In view of the fact that the London Non-Intervention Committee has long ceased to function and has lost its *raison d'être*, on March 1 of this year the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR decided to recall its representatives from the Non-Intervention Committee.

From *Pravda*, No. 62 (7747), March 4, 1939.

No. 95.**EXCERPT FROM A REPORT OF THE BRITISH MILITARY ATTACHE IN GERMANY TO THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN GERMANY***March 6, 1939*

[...] The Polish Government have definite information of an agreement reached last year between Germany and Japan by which Germany recognises 'Japan's right to expansion as far west as Lake Baikal, in return for Germany's right to expansion as far as the Caucasus'. The Japanese Embassy in Warsaw is continually endeavouring to sound the Poles as to when they propose to take joint action with Germany against Russia, and is always striving to prevent bad blood between Poland and Germany. [...]

F. N. Mason-MacFarlane, Colonel,
Military Attaché

From *Documents on British Foreign Policy. 1919-1939*,
Third Series, Vol. IV. London, 1951, p. 185.

No. 96.**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN ESTONIA * TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***March 7, 1939*

There is information that Estonia has concluded a secret treaty with Germany on the passage of German troops through Estonia. In this connection a reorganization of the direction of Estonian railways is being carried out.

The struggle between Päts** and Eenpalu*** is becoming more acute. Päts is persistently looking for someone to replace Eenpalu. And Eenpalu is in a hurry to pursue his gendarme policy.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 97.**REPORT ON THE SPEECH BY THE REICH CHANCELLOR OF GERMANY AT A MEETING OF GERMAN MILITARY, ECONOMIC AND PARTY REPRESENTATIVES***March 8, 1939*

On Wednesday March 8th a conference was held at the Führer's which was attended by personalities from the army, economic circles and the party. "Austria" was represented by Gauleiter Bürkel in addition to those mentioned above.

Certain economic and labor problems were discussed first. Then the Führer spoke. First he declared that the four-year plan was a last resort. The real problem for the German people was to assure for itself the sources from which could be obtained the raw materials necessary for its well-being. In addition in order to

* K. N. Nikitin.

** President of Estonia.

*** Prime Minister of Estonia.

enjoy this well-being enemies of the German people must be exterminated radically: Jews, democracies and the "international powers". As long as those enemies had the least vestige of power left anywhere in the world they would be a menace to the peace of the German people.

In this connection the situation in Prague was becoming intolerable. In addition Prague was needed as a means of access to those raw materials. Consequently orders have been issued to the effect that in a few days not later than the 15th of March Czechoslovakia is to be occupied militarily.

Poland will follow. We will not have to count on a strong resistance from that quarter. German domination over Poland is necessary in order to assure for Germany Polish supplies of agricultural products and coal.

As far as Hungary and Rumania are concerned they belong without question to Germany's vital space. The fall of Poland and adequate pressure will undoubtedly bring them to terms. We will then have absolute control over their vast agricultural and petroleum resources. The same may be said for Yugoslavia.

This is the plan which will be realized until 1940. Even then Germany will be unbeatable.

In 1940 and 1941 Germany will settle accounts once and for all with her hereditary enemy: France. That country will be obliterated from the map of Europe. England is an old and feeble country weakened by democracy. With France vanquished Germany will dominate England easily and will then have at its disposition England's riches and domains throughout the world.

Thus having for the first time unified the continent of Europe according to a new conception, Germany will undertake the greatest operation in all history: with British and French possessions in America as a base we will settle accounts with the "Jews of the dollar" (dollar juden) in the United States. We will exterminate this Jewish democracy and Jewish blood will mix itself with the dollars. Even today Americans can insult our people, but the day will come when, too late, they will bitterly regret every word they said against us.

Among those present, some were very enthusiastic while others seemed much less so.

*From Foreign Relations of the United States.
Diplomatic Papers. 1939, Vol. 1,
Washington, 1956, pp. 672-673.*

No. 98.

**EXCERPT FROM A TELEGRAM FROM THE BRITISH
AMBASSADOR IN GERMANY TO THE BRITISH
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS***March 9, 1939*

[...] 12. Two years ago my predecessor summed up Hitler's immediate (and from a German point of view comprehensible) objectives under three headings as follows:

(1) Absorption of Austria and other Germanic people (*e.g.*, the German fringe of Czecho-Slovakia).

(2) Expansion in the east.

(3) Recovery of colonies.

13. Hitler largely achieved the objectives under the first heading last year and probably sooner than even he anticipated. It seems inevitable that in the course of time Memel and Danzig, and even, possibly, some other minor fringes will be re-attached on the basis of self-determination to the Reich. The most that we can hope for is that this will happen without sabre-rattling and by means of constitutional forms or peaceful negotiation. The question of colonies is one which requires careful preparation and a far better atmosphere than is likely to be obtained during the present year. The less, therefore, said about them for the moment, the better.

14. There remains the heading of expansion in the east, and the principal immediate question therefore is what are Hitler's ulterior, legitimate or illegitimate, objectives in that direction? '*L'appétit vient en mangeant,*' but the correct answer will probably be somewhere between the fears of the pessimists and the hopes of the optimists. Germany is a mighty big country, and 80 million industrious and disciplined Germans will always be a troublesome factor in European politics and economics. For that, at least, we must be fully prepared. Since human actions are at the mercy of chance occurrences, the rest is largely hypothetical. Nevertheless, I feel constrained to observe here that most of the talk about German advances into Holland and Switzerland, the Ukraine and Roumania must be regarded as, to say the least, very premature. It must not be forgotten that a principle of Nazism in its present form is purity of race. Austria and the Sudeten lands,

where all were pure Germans, and where, even in the former case, the majority of the inhabitants were, in principle, in favour of Greater Germany, is one thing, and countries in which such a majority is non-existent quite another. One is too apt to believe that, because the one happened, the other must equally be contemplated. There are extremists in every country, and while it is inevitable that in the first fine frenzy of German unity there should be talk here of Switzerland and Holland, I hold any aggression in respect of them in present circumstances as too hypothetical for more than passing consideration. So far as Roumania is concerned, it is understandable that Germany should wish to assure to herself a preponderating share of the products of the Roumanian oilfields. It seems hardly possible for us to take exception to this so long as any arrangements which she may make to this end are freely negotiated with the Government of that country. As regards the Ukraine, while I regard the idea of conquest as inconceivable, it seems to me inevitable that Germany should wish to endeavour to detach that rich country from the vast Russian State, which she regards as her ultimate enemy. She would in her own interests naturally prefer the Ukraine to be independent and to constitute a buffer State between her and that enemy, and it is obvious that she would like to exercise a predominating economic and political influence therein. I cannot see the USSR meekly submitting to German intrigues to such an end, and it seems to me that the less we take sides in such a conflict the better.

15. In my opinion, where we have failed since the war is in our inability or unwillingness to take account of the reality of Germany. However unpalatable to us and inconvenient for the rest of Europe, it was no ignoble desire on Hitler's part to seek to incorporate Germans—be they Austrians or Sudetens—in Greater Germany. We were rightly horrified at the form in which the two incorporations took place, but in themselves they were but the consummation of a longing which had been present in the mind of all German thinkers for centuries.

16. Another point which we fail to realize is that beneath all the bumptiousness of the Nazi régime there still lies an inferiority complex and a deeply rooted nervous uncertainty. We cannot appreciate what Germany suffered as the result of the blockade in the war and of the terms of the Versailles Treaty. More than anything else to-day is the apprehension of a recurrence of these

sufferings present in all German minds and the policy of Hitler is largely affected thereby.

17. Hitler made it very clear in *Mein Kampf* that '*Lebensraum*' for Germany could only be found in expansion eastwards, and expansion eastwards renders a clash between Germany and Russia some day or other highly probable. With a benevolent Britain on her flank, Germany can envisage such an eventuality with comparative equanimity. But she lives in dread of the reverse and of the war on two fronts which was equally Bismarck's nightmare. The best approach to good relations with Germany is therefore along the lines of the avoidance of constant and vexatious interference in matters in which British interests are not directly or vitally involved and the prospect of British neutrality in the event of Germany being engaged in the east. I say 'along the lines of,' since it is self-evident that we cannot blindly give Germany *carte blanche* in the east. It is not out of the question, however, that an agreement with Hitler could be reached, provided it be limited to provisions by which Hitler may reasonably be expected to abide.

[...]
[...] 20. Briefly I would sum up Germany's immediate objectives (i.e., within the next year or two) as follows: Memel, Danzig and colonies, and the complete subordination of Czecho-Slovakia politically and economically to Germany. We may dislike the latter, but geographically speaking it is inevitable.

21. Further than this I would not like to go, beyond drawing a distinction between the illegitimate aim of political domination and the legitimate one of trade development. Where one begins and the other ends is the difficulty. Hitler regards himself as the chosen leader destined to lead Germany to the greater space ('*Lebensraum*') under the sun to which he, in common with all Germans, regards her as entitled. That certainty means economic and political predominance in Central and Eastern Europe. Potentially Germany possesses such predominance already and a certain degree of recognition of that fact is essential if we desire an understanding with her. If the effect of our policy after 1938 is to hem Germany in economically, as she was territorially after 1918, we must face the prospect of a perpetuation of the arms race with the probability of disappointment at the end of it. Moreover it must be borne in mind that if Germany's pretensions prove exaggerated, the disease carries with it its own remedy. The pursuit of 'world dominion' or even the hegemony of Central and

Eastern Europe means world hostility or at least the enmity of every neighbouring European country; and no State, however powerful, could in the end prevail against such a combination.

22. I confess that it always seems to me misleading lightly to talk of Germany as seeking 'world dominion'. Presumably this comprehensive word means predominance not only in Europe but in Africa, Asia and America as well. Some Germans may well have such wild fancies, but I believe Hitler to be still far too sane to cherish such a chimera. Up to the Napoleonic era the master of Europe might aspire to be master of the world. But that conception in the 20th century is a thing of the past. It has been made impossible by the growth of the power of the United States of America and Japan, which have been allowed to develop unhindered behind the shelter of the British fleet.

23. That is why, as I said above, I would place Germany's objectives as somewhere between the exaggerated fears of the pessimists and the equally exaggerated delusions of the optimists. It is, in my opinion, as futile in considering British policy to be guided by the idea of a Germany seeking world dominion as it would be imprudent to foretell the limits which Hitler or Germany's subsequent rulers may set to the place under the sun which they fondly believe to be Germany's due. All depends on circumstances and opportunity, on the development of events, on the resistance which Germany will encounter and, in Hitler's case, possibly on his voice, i.e., the inspiration by which he believes himself to be guided from above. And admittedly '*Lebensraum*' is a sufficiently vague phrase to be capable of almost any interpretation. Some solution of the colonial question is indispensable ultimately if Great Britain and Germany are to live amicably side by side. But otherwise Germany's continental future lies eastward and it is probably not unfortunate that it should be so. The '*Drang nach Osten*' is a reality, but the '*Drang nach Westen*' will only become so if Germany finds all the avenues to the east blocked or if western opposition is such as to convince Hitler that he cannot go eastward without first having rendered it innocuous.

Nevile Henderson

P.S.—The above despatch was written before the present crisis in Czecho-Slovakia became acute and is consequently to that extent academical for the moment.

N.H.

From *Documents on British Foreign Policy. 1919-1939*, Third Series, Vol. IV, London, 1951, pp. 213-217.

No. 99.

TELEGRAM FROM THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN JAPAN TO THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF POLAND

March 10, 1939

By a Note Verbal * I apprised the Foreign Minister of our point of view in which he expressed great interest and asked that his warm gratitude be conveyed. I am noting the wonderful effect of our step, particularly at this moment.

Stipulating the need for the strictest secrecy, the Foreign Minister informed me that in connection with the absence of progress in the present negotiations in Moscow, which will continue until the very last moment, the Japanese Government, discerning in the fisheries question not only material advantage but above all a matter of state prestige, had taken a decision at yesterday's meeting to carry out vigorous steps, which I believe will be of a military nature, after the 15th of this month if no agreement is reached. What these steps will lead to depends on the reaction of the USSR, but the Foreign Minister told me that in the final analysis Japan was prepared even for military conflicts, though of course she did not desire them.

I assured him that I would observe secrecy and asked him to maintain contact with us on this matter.

Furthermore, the Foreign Minister explained to me that the Japanese Government had not yet taken any definite decision on the question of expanding the Anti-Comintern Pact. ¹⁶

From the archives.

* The document has not been found.

No. 100.

EXCERPT FROM A BRIEF REPORT BY THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN GERMANY ON THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN GERMANY IN 1938*March 11, 1939*

[...] *Implementation of the Munich Agreement.* The month of October passed under the hallmark of the implementation of the Munich Agreement and the development of all the opportunities it offers to Germany. The tractability of the Berlin Ambassadors' Commission which accepted all German demands in their entirety, gave Hitler an opportunity to overstep the limits of the Munich Agreement and to carry out almost completely the Godesberg programme.²⁰ Not content with territorial acquisitions, Berlin began to impose on Czechoslovakia demands relating to economic and domestic policies, and to securing the rights of the German minority remaining within the new boundaries and so forth. Chvalkovsky's visit on October 13 gave Hitler an opportunity to dictate to Prague his wishes which would tend to make Prague co-ordinate all branches of its policy with the desires of Berlin.

Besides the incorporation of Zone V, which had rendered superfluous the plebiscite stipulated at Munich, on November 21 Berlin reached an "understanding" with Prague on the incorporation of several new sectors under the pretext of improving transport links. Of the several acts which formalized the enslavement of Czechoslovakia it is worth noting the agreement of December 19 on an exterritorial zone in Bohemia for the construction by the Germans of the Breslau-Vienna autobahn. The changes made by Prague in its domestic (and foreign) policy under Berlin's pressure are well known. All these concessions made by Prague to date are not regarded as sufficient, however, and Berlin continues gradually to advance new demands. One of the questions that may at any moment be raised by Berlin is the situation of the Germans in Czechoslovakia who, according to Berlin's official explanation, are still considered to be under Germany's protection and in effect constitute a State within a State.

Expansion in the South-East and Subcarpathian Ruthenia. In October Germany to a certain extent helped Hungary which was pressuring Czechoslovakia. But already then Berlin's special line

on the question of Carpathian Ruthenia was beginning to take shape. No longer in need of Polish-Hungarian support, Berlin began openly to oppose the division of Carpathian Ruthenia between Poland and Hungary. All the efforts of Ambassador Lipski to obtain Hitler's consent to this division, reportedly in exchange for several concessions on the question of the "Corridor" and on economic matters, were to no avail. Having become the arbiter in the dispute between Prague and Budapest on November 2, Berlin together with Rome (where Ribbentrop had travelled on October 27 to reach an understanding on this subject with Mussolini) mapped out a new Hungarian-Czechoslovak boundary keeping Carpatho-Ukraine within Czechoslovakia, and thus preventing the establishment of a common frontier between Hungary and Poland. This led to a markedly chilly attitude to Berlin in Hungary.

These actions gave rise to a spate of rumours about Berlin's new aggressive plans *in the East*. There was talk of imminent pressure on Rumania, of the further fascistization of Hungary, of plans to create "an independent" Ukraine out of the Carpathian part, incorporating parts of Poland and Rumania, and of further expansion towards the USSR. Rumours about the Ukraine were bruited about with particular intensity by the French. Berlin's increasing interest in the economic resources of the countries of South-East Europe was reflected in Funk's tour of the Balkan countries and Turkey. There were reports about the revision of the four-year plan and the inclusion in the new version the building up of an industry which could fully meet the import requirements of those countries. The same tone was adopted by the propaganda media in connection with the construction of the *Danube-Rhine* Canal and the resultant prospects of Germany gaining an outlet to the Black Sea.

Germany's political agitation to spread her influence over South-East Europe did not make much progress in 1938 and even came up against unforeseen obstacles. The process of Hungary's fascistization was slowed down, and there were growing signs of anti-German sentiments in connection with Hungarian displeasure over the arbitration decisions. The reprisals against the "Iron Guard" resulted in a sudden chill between Berlin and Rumania and in the mutual departure of their Ministers. The incipient resistance in Poland over the question of the Ukraine also compelled Berlin to approach that question with greater caution. It is

doubtful that Berlin was then contemplating any immediate serious steps as regards the Soviet Ukraine. This was most likely a case of the French wanting to see German expansion directed eastwards. Anyhow, these rumours, like the rumours about the detachment of the Polish Ukraine, received no confirmation and were subsequently refuted by Hitler in his conversations with Csaky and Beck in January 1939.

On the other hand, the *colonial* aspirations of German policy were becoming more and more obvious. Propaganda in favour of the return of the colonies to Germany was increased. The compromise proposals of the South African Defence Minister, Pirow, who visited Germany at the end of November and explored the possibility of solving the colonial problem by granting Germany a compact territory made up of former German as well as Portuguese and Belgian possessions, failed to meet with the Führer's approval. The latter's position is: the return to Germany of all her former colonies is a question of honour and justice in which there is no room for bargaining.

The gradual shift of emphasis of German policy to the westerly direction was seen in the acceleration of the construction of fortifications on the Western frontier. In addition to what had been built in the summer, an announcement was made about the start of work to fortify the terrain near Aachen and the Belgian frontier. All this work was broadly advertized and was motivated by the intensification of military construction in England and France. [...]

From the archives.

No. 101.

MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN A GERMAN JOURNALIST AND A COUNSELLOR OF THE GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S OFFICE

March 13, 1939

I had a talk about Czechoslovakia with an official in Ribbentrop's office, Councillor Dr. Kleist.

Kleist said that on March 6, 1939, Hitler had taken a decision to liquidate the remaining part of Czechoslovakia. During the

following days the appropriate measures were carried out towards this end. In taking the decision Hitler was guided by two considerations of overriding importance:

1. The solution of the Czechoslovak question adopted at Munich had been regarded from the very outset as unsatisfactory from the standpoint of the Reich's policy. The detachment of Sudetenland was to be followed, at a suitable opportunity, by the liquidation of the remaining part of the Czechoslovak State.

2. The political situation in Eastern and Central Europe after the Munich Agreement showed that Germany's position in this geographical region was by no means as secure and strong as Berlin would have liked to see it. It became clear that the political weight of Greater Germany was insufficient to make the States neighbouring on Germany in the East and South-East voluntarily and automatically place themselves under Berlin's command. New manifestations of the will to resist German policy became evident in Prague. In Hungary and Rumania developments were not what Berlin had expected. Finally, the external and internal political developments in Poland assumed forms that were completely undesirable from the standpoint of Berlin's policy. This state of affairs had to be remedied if the forthcoming action against the West was to be carried out in alliance with Italy and with an absolutely secure East. Since the first phase of co-ordinated German-Italian action against the West had been scheduled for as early as May 1939, it was necessary, by liquidating the remaining part of Czechoslovakia, to create as quickly as possible a situation in Eastern and Central Europe which would completely eliminate all sources of danger for Germany in anticipation of the coming clash in the West.

The action against Czechoslovakia is primarily aimed at creating, through territorial alterations (the incorporation of Czechia into Germany, the creation of Slovakia under exclusive German influence), a situation that would place Germany's neighbours under a threat, thus enabling Germany, by coercion, to influence them and carry through her expansion, a situation that would rob them of the possibility of pursuing an anti-German policy in any form. When the contemplated territorial alterations will have been made, we shall have in our hands Hungary, Rumania and Yugoslavia. The military threat to Poland from the Slovak side will also rule out Polish retaliation in the event of military complications in the West. Future German access to Hungarian wheat

and Rumanian oil will have been guaranteed. It is quite possible that certain measures will be taken to guarantee Germany's security in the North-East. As a result of the incorporation of Memel into the Reich it would also be possible to bring Lithuania under control and gain a firm foothold in the Baltic as well. In the opinion of the political leadership of the Reich, the stabilization of the East along these lines will result in the creation of a protected rear for a clash in the West.

Thus, the measures in the East and South-East, which are at present being worked out, merely serve to prepare the action against the West. A colonial campaign by Germany and Italy against France will begin in May. Berlin is hoping to break France, doing this by stages and, if possible, peacefully, and thereby to achieve German predominance in Europe.

In the process of the further implementation of German plans, war against the Soviet Union remains the last and decisive task of German policy. If Berlin had previously been hoping to win Poland over to its side as an ally in the war against the Soviet Union, at present Berlin is convinced that from the standpoint of her present political state and territorial make-up Poland cannot be used against the Soviet Union as an auxiliary force. Obviously, Poland must first be territorially divided (the detachment of areas which formerly belonged to Germany and the formation of a Western Ukrainian State under German protectorate) and politically organized (the appointment as leaders of the Polish State of men who are reliable from the German point of view), before a war can be started against Russia with Polish assistance and through Poland. And from this standpoint territorial alterations in connection with the action against Czechoslovakia are of paramount significance.

Kleist further said that while working in Ribbentrop's office as a special consultant on Ukrainian problems, he had spent a week (March 6 to 11), on Ribbentrop's instructions, preparing materials for Hitler on Ukrainian problems in connection with the action against Czechoslovakia.

In my memoranda and reports to Hitler, said Kleist, I resorted to every possible device to save Carpatho-Ukraine. I pointed to the importance of Carpatho-Ukraine in connection with German plans in the East. I drew attention to the fact that the Ukrainians would surely deeply resent it if Germany gave Carpatho-Ukraine to Hungary. Finally, I pointed out that we could not break with

the Ukrainians all of a sudden, after we had previously, particularly as a result of the formation of Carpatho-Ukraine, awakened in them the greatest hopes for German assistance and support. These arguments made no impression on Hitler. Ribbentrop told me that Hitler's only response to all this was: "This is tragic but inevitable." According to Ribbentrop, Hitler also rejected the view that he had already committed himself as regards the Ukrainian affair. Hitler reportedly said: "If I had involved myself with the Ukrainians and their political plans, an award making Carpatho-Ukraine unviable would not have been made in Vienna."

Replying to my question whether Hitler had not let the Ukrainian card out of his hand altogether by taking up such a position, Kleist said: "Hitler obviously intends to reintroduce the Ukrainian card in the German game later, during the implementation of German plans in the East. He probably believes the Ukrainians will again join us, as in any circumstances they are dependent on German aid." This interpretation of Hitler's words is corroborated by the following fact. I appended to a memorandum for Hitler a map taken from a Ukrainian atlas on which the future empire of Greater Ukraine was designated. Hitler, as Ribbentrop told me, put the map aside with the words: "These are still only dreams." When he says "still" he probably believes that one day they will become a reality.

From the archives.

No. 102.

TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN GERMANY TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR

March 14, 1939

According to information from foreign correspondents, including French correspondents, the introduction of German troops into Czechoslovakia is expected within the next few days. In Prague a Government will be formed under Gayda* with

* Leader of the fascist party in Czechoslovakia.

German support. English and French non-interference is regarded as assured. According to eye-witness accounts, troops have actually been moved up to the frontiers, and the public and the press are being prepared.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 103.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

March 15, 1939

Bonnet is protesting that the Slovak events came as a complete surprise for him and that he still does not know what role Poland has played in them. He is willing to believe that the Germans, after having learned of Rumania's decision to support the Polish demand for a common frontier with Hungary, speeded up the events in Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia and confronted the Poles and Hungarians with a *fait accompli*. But neither does he rule out the possibility of a collusion with the Poles. In his words, London is refusing to interfere in all these affairs and the French "alone have to make a representation to Berlin." Bonnet earnestly requests that you give your assessment of the events.

For the second time Bonnet has talked to me about the desirability of improving our relations. Doubtless under the pressure of certain circles (Herriot, Jeanneney * and others), which are taking advantage of the English sentiments, he asked me whether I considered it useful for the French Government also to send a trade delegation to us including in it a representative of the war industry. I said that in order to normalize our relations it was necessary, first of all, to put an end to all the difficulties that the French had been causing us.

From conversations with some prominent Frenchmen (the Air Minister, and the Governor of Paris) I have gained the definite impression that the ever growing opinion here is that the principal

* President of the French Senate.

direction of German aggression is the West and that all that is happening in Eastern and Central Europe is merely a preparation for an offensive against the West. In this respect Stalin's speech has made a very strong impression.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 104.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE USSR AND THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN THE
USSR**

March 16, 1939

Grzybowski came on Beck's instructions to establish contact in connection with the latest international events, to explain the position of Poland and to sound out ours. In the process Grzybowski made the important qualification that his instructions had been sent to him from Warsaw some time during the night of the 14th to the 15th, when it was not yet known that Czechia and Moravia had become German provinces, and therefore they were based on what Warsaw had known at the time, namely that the Czech Government was still in existence while Slovakia had been detached. In the light of the new developments the Polish position was liable to change. Slovakia's independence, even under the protectorate of Berlin, called forth no objections from Poland which had taken a position of sympathetic neutrality. Poland was of course interested in the Carpathian area, for she still wished to see the incorporation of that area into Hungary and the establishment of a Polish-Hungarian frontier. This was the only point in which Poland was actively interested.

Grzybowski informed me that today he had been listening to the French radio which had broadcast that General Prchalo had addressed Budapest, in his capacity of representative of the German Reichswehr, with the demand that the advance of Hungarian troops towards Carpatho-Ukraine be stopped immediately, to which Budapest had replied that it was technically impossible to meet that demand. According to Grzybowski's information, the Hungarian troops were expected to reach the Polish frontier

yesterday while the Rumanians had occupied that part of Carpatho-Ukraine which they were interested in.

I told the Ambassador that Beck's public statement as well as the conduct of the Polish press compelled one to think that Poland had not only assumed a posture of sympathetic neutrality towards the declaration of Slovakia's independence, but had even welcomed that event as being desirable and pleasant for Poland. Perhaps the Ambassador could explain to me what Poland gained from that independence of Slovakia? It ought to be clear to Beck that Slovakia would not be independent and that the sole masters there would be the Germans. Grzybowski went into a muddled explanation to the effect that even previously, before the September events, there had been a very strong German influence in Slovakia and that she had maintained close contact with Hlinka's party, that this influence had lately become even stronger, but that Poland preferred an overt influence to a covert one.

I expressed my bewilderment at the explanation, pointing out that if Germany, wishing to dismember Czechoslovakia, had established contact with the Slovak separatists, this did not at all mean she had gained influence on Slovakia or on the Slovak people, and that, whatever German influence there had been, it stood no comparison with the presently established direct government by Germany of the entire domestic and external life of Czechoslovakia, and that therefore I still failed to understand why Poland was rejoicing over that development. Grzybowski had to agree with me, admitting that in effect Poland was presented with an accomplished fact and, desirous of retaining the sympathies of the Slovaks, she could not come out against their independence. Did that mean that Poland was putting a good face on a bad job, I asked. Grzybowski replied that even if this were so, it could not be said officially. When I asked whether Poland's joy was not caused by the fact that the detachment of Slovakia facilitated the transfer of Carpatho-Ukraine to Hungary, Grzybowski replied that much as Poland wanted to have a common frontier with Hungary, she would not have agreed to pay the price of handing Slovakia over to the Germany.

In reply to my question how, in the Ambassador's opinion, Poland would react to subsequent events involving the absorption of Czechia and Moravia by Germany, Grzybowski said he did not know but believed that Warsaw was clearly aware of the consequences arising out of Germany being strengthened by extremely

valuable Czech arms as well as gold, though on the other hand Germany would be weakened by the loss of the homogeneity of her population. In answer to my further questions Grzybowski vigorously denied the possibility of any advance deal between Poland and Germany in connection with the Czech events. To prove his point, he referred to the statement by Beck, who, in the event of a deal, would at least have said nothing about relations with Czechoslovakia.

I said to Grzybowski that we were strongly in favour of the self-determination of peoples, but the declaration of Slovakia's independence in the circumstances known to us had nothing in common with that principle. We had likewise always been in favour of the voluntary unification of small nations, particularly those that were as closely related in terms of language, culture and history as the Czech and Slovak peoples. It was hard for the small nations to uphold their independence, but it was far easier to do so when they voluntarily formed part of a stronger state entity. We regarded the formation of a united Czechoslovak State as being quite natural. We regarded the breakaway of Slovakia as the complete destruction of her independence and her conversion into a puppet state of the Manchukuo type. In effect, little had changed, for even previously Czechoslovakia, which had accepted Berlin's orders and had adapted its domestic life to those orders, could not be regarded as an independent State. However a change in form also meant a great deal and, unlike Poland, we certainly could not rejoice at the strengthening of Germany.

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 105.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE USSR AND THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN THE
USSR**

March 17 and 18, 1939

Late in the evening I called in Grzybowski and told him that by way of maintaining contact about which he had talked to me the

day before, I was informing him of our intention to respond to the German Notes by not recognizing the legality of the annexation of Czechia and that we should like to know what position Poland would take in the matter.

Grzybowski promised to get in touch with Warsaw. He expressed some concern about the indefinite situation of Slovakia. It seemed that Slovakia was remaining independent under the protectorate of Germany, and retaining her army, whose command, however, was obeying the Reichswehr. German currency was being introduced there.

On the following day Grzybowski informed me of Beck's reply. Poland would limit herself to acknowledging the receipt of the German Notes, without touching upon their substance. Of course, Poland did not approve of the German methods, but, in accordance with her traditions, she was refraining from protests when they could not be followed up by any action.

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 106.

NOTE FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR

March 18, 1939

Herr Ambassador,

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your Note of the 16th and your Note of the 17th of this month notifying the Soviet Government of the incorporation of Czechia into the German Reich and the establishment of a German protectorate over it.

Considering it impossible to pass over in silence the aforesaid Notes, a silence which might be erroneously construed as indifference to the Czechoslovak events, the Soviet Government finds it necessary to reply to the aforesaid Notes in order to state its attitude towards the above-mentioned events.

1. The politico-historical concepts cited in the introductory part of the German Decree to support and justify it, and particularly the references to Czechoslovak statehood as a source of

continuous unrest and threats to European peace, to the Czechoslovak State being non-viable and to the resulting necessity for the German Reich to assume special responsibilities cannot be recognized as valid or in conformity with universally known facts. In reality, of all the European States the Czechoslovak Republic has been, after the First World War, one of the few States where internal tranquillity and an external peace-loving policy were genuinely assured.

2. The Soviet Government knows of no State constitution empowering the head of State to abolish its independence without the consent of the people. It is difficult to believe that any people would voluntarily consent to the cancellation of its independence and to its incorporation into another State, especially a people that has fought for its independence for centuries and has enjoyed an independent existence already for 20 years. In signing the Berlin decree of the 15th of this month,²¹ the Czechoslovak President, M. Hacha, who had not been authorized to do so by his people, acted contrary to paragraphs 64 and 65 of the Czechoslovak Constitution and contrary to the will of his people. Consequently, the above-mentioned decree cannot be regarded as having legal force.

3. The principle of self-determination of peoples, which the German Government not infrequently invokes, presupposes the free expression of the people's will, which cannot be replaced by the signature of one or two persons, no matter how highly placed. In this case there was no free expression of will by the Czech people, not even in the form of plebiscites, such as, for instance, were held for the determination of the destinies of Upper Silesia and the Saar.

4. In the absence of any freely expressed will of the Czech people, the occupation of Czechia by German troops and the subsequent actions of the German Government cannot be considered otherwise than arbitrary, violent and aggressive.

5. The foregoing observation applies with equal force to the change in the status of Slovakia which was carried out along the lines of subordinating the latter to the German Reich and which was not based on any freely expressed will of the Slovak people.

6. The actions of the German Government were a signal for the brutal invasion of Carpathian Ruthenia by Hungarian troops and for the violation of the elementary rights of her people.

7. In view of the above the Soviet Government cannot recog-

nize the incorporation of Czechia and, in one form or another, also of Slovakia into the German Reich as legal and as being in conformity with universally recognized standards of international law and justice or with the principle of self-determination of peoples.

8. In the opinion of the Soviet Government the actions of the German Government not only have not removed any threat to universal peace but, on the contrary, have created and increased such a threat, violated the political stability in Central Europe, increased the elements of alarm which already existed in Europe and struck a new blow to the people's striving for security.

I have the honour to request you, Herr Ambassador, to bring the above to the notice of your Government and to accept the assurances of my highest respect.

Litvinov

From *Izvestia*, No. 66 (6836), March 20, 1939.

No. 107.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADORS IN GERMANY, BRITAIN, FRANCE AND
CZECHOSLOVAKIA**

March 18, 1939

Today I sent the German Ambassador a Note* in reply to his notifications about the Czech-German agreement in Berlin and about the Decree providing Bohemia and Moravia with a new statute. In the reply I question all the German propositions and show that the Berlin agreement was illegal and that the inclusion of Czechia in the German Reich was an unlawful and, in respect of us, an aggressive act. Our Note is sharply worded. We shall publish it tomorrow.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

* See Document No. 106.

No. 108.**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADORS IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE***March 18, 1939*

Today the English Ambassador requested an urgent meeting. The Rumanian Minister had officially informed Halifax about the German ultimatum and asked what the position of the British Government would be in the event of an attack on Rumania. Before answering Rumania, Halifax had decided to ascertain the position of Moscow and Paris. I replied that my Government might also feel the need, before answering Seeds' question, to know the position of other States, notably England, yet Halifax's inquiry contained no indications on this score. I also expressed surprise that it was England that was inquiring about our aid, not Rumania which had not approached us and might not even want it.

I promised to report the matter to the Government.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

No. 109.**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADORS IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE***March 18, 1939*

Late tonight I called in Seeds and informend him that we were proposing the immediate convocation of a conference of representatives of the USSR, England, France, Poland, and Rumania. I explained that nothing would come of posing questions by various Governments about the position of others and, therefore, a joint consultation was needed. The venue of the conference was of no consequence, but it would be best of all to meet in Rumania, which fact would immediately strengthen her position. Seeds told me that he had just received a copy of a telegram

sent to London by the British Minister in Bucharest, who asked that all action be suspended. Seeds does not understand what this means and thinks that the Rumanian Minister in England may have got something confused.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

No. 110.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADORS IN FRANCE AND BRITAIN**

March 19, 1939

Familiarize Bonnet with the communication I sent you yesterday about the exchange of views with the English Ambassador and about the proposal that we made to him* I omitted Turkey as a necessary participant in the conference.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

No. 111.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRI-
TAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

March 19, 1939

Today I informed Halifax of your reply to Seeds on the question of our attitude to the German ultimatum.* He was already aware of it through Seeds, but Seeds must have sent a very brief telegram, because some of the details (for instance, what you said about the time-consuming nature and complexity of negotiations carried on between the various capitals) were news for him. Halifax informed me that he had already consulted the Premier

* See Documents Nos. 108, 109

on the question of the conference you were proposing and they had concluded that such action would be premature, for it was risky to convene a conference without being assured of its success. Therefore, for the time being they wanted to suggest as the first step that we, France and Poland issue a joint declaration to the effect that all the above-named Powers were interested in safeguarding the integrity and independence of the States in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. A draft of the declaration was being elaborated, and would be approved by the Cabinet today, and probably tomorrow it would be communicated to us. Halifax emphasized the importance of issuing the declaration as soon as possible. The next step after this should, in his view, be as follows: Turkey, Rumania, Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and other allegedly peace-loving States would be invited to join in the declaration and in this connection a conference of all the above-named Powers and the initially listed four could be held.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 112.

TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR

March 19, 1939

1. In the same conversation * Halifax informed me that Tilea had notified him of the ultimatum in the evening of the 17th; in the morning of the 18th the English Minister in Bucharest, Hoare, had seen Gafencu and the latter had denied receiving an ultimatum. It was after this Hoare had sent Seeds the telegram asking him to suspend all action in Moscow. Halifax added that yesterday, the 18th, Beck had told the English Ambassador in Warsaw that he knew nothing about an ultimatum. Halifax was inclined to believe that the reason why there had been no Rumanian demarche in Moscow was that the Rumanian Government had probably received no ultimatum. In this connection Halifax said

* See Document No. 111.

he was puzzled by Tilea's demarche of March 17. I acquainted Halifax with the text of our Note on the annexation of Czechoslovakia,* which he liked very much, particularly that part where Hitler's action was qualified as aggression. In conclusion Halifax once again, and very insistently, requested me to keep in the closest possible touch with him.

2. Although the question of the reality of the German ultimatum remains unclear, the British Government seems to be seriously discussing the further direction of its foreign policy. Proof of this is the fact that notwithstanding the sacred "week-end," the Cabinet has been meeting almost continuously: there was one meeting yesterday, Saturday, after lunch, a second one this morning and a third began today at 4 p.m.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 113.

EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN

March 19, 1939

The Czechoslovak events seem to have aroused public opinion both in England and in France, and in other countries too. Nonetheless, if in the immediate future Hitler does not commit any new acts of expansion and perhaps even makes a new peace gesture, Chamberlain and Daladier will again start defending the Munich line. They have by no means surrendered yet. The mood built up in government circles in favour of co-operation with the USSR cannot therefore be considered a lasting one. Even if the Czechoslovak events and the ultimatum to Rumania have somewhat alarmed Chamberlain and Daladier as guarantors of Hitler's words of honour and pledges, they fit in completely at the same time with their favourite concept of Germany's movement to the East.

* See Document No. 106.

A great deal will, of course, depend on the feelings which Hudson carries with him when he returns from here. I am by no means sure that he will succeed in dispelling the suspicions and mistrust that exist here. The question of having conversations with him on political subjects has not yet been discussed and I shall be raising it after the Congress has ended. It is, however, obvious from all your dispatches that Hudson is not empowered, nor does he have any intention, to make any concrete proposals but wants to hear our proposals. I feel that no such proposals will be made to him. For five years in the foreign policy field we have been making suggestions and proposals for the organization of peace and collective security, but the Powers have been ignoring them and acting in defiance of them. If England and France are really changing their line, let them either make known their views on our previously advanced proposals or else make their own proposals. The initiative must be left to them. For that matter, the reply I gave Seeds yesterday * contains a concrete proposal which, with some modifications, can be applied in other cases too. Thus, the talks will probably be limited to an exchange of assurances of readiness for co-operation while the business of co-operation itself will remain where it is. [...]

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 114.

**EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE FRENCH
AMBASSADOR IN GERMANY TO THE MINISTER FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF FRANCE**

March 19, 1939

On the morrow of the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia by the Reich, and the passing of Slovakia into German tutelage, I should like, after the violent changes wrought in the map of Europe, to try and determine in which directions German dynamism may turn, to see if we may still hold that it is aimed only at the East, and to draw certain practical conclusions for our guidance.

* See Document No. 109.

A direct challenge to world opinion by the treachery, the cynicism, and the brutality it shows, the "coup" by which Germany has just wiped Czechoslovakia off the map cannot simply be dismissed as a break in the general political line taken by Germany since last autumn, nor even as a deviation from this line. On the very morrow of the Munich Agreement, it was clear that beyond the Rhine this Agreement was taken to imply a free hand for Germany in Central and Eastern Europe, and, as a corollary relative renunciation of their interests in these regions by the Western Powers. Germany had understood, or pretended to have understood, that at Munich France and England had wished above all to prevent recourse to force, but that for the rest they were resigned to Germany's will prevailing in countries in which neither Paris nor London could effectively intervene.

The Munich Agreement, completed by the Anglo-German and Franco-German declarations, * meant in Germany's eyes the right for the Reich to organize Central and South-Eastern Europe as she wished, with the tacit approval or at least the complaisance of the great Western Powers. For months this version found daily expression in the great German newspapers, officially inspired, as the reports from the Embassy have often shown. I myself have more than once noted the same state of mind in Herr von Ribbentrop and Herr von Weizsäcker, both of whom have expressed a certain astonishment whenever I have drawn their attention to the fact that France, as a great European Power, intends to be consulted in all that pertains to Europe, and that on this point there must be no mistake or misunderstanding. And yet, this misunderstanding did in fact exist. The Nazi leaders did not fail to stress on every occasion that, as the Führer said in his speech of January 30, "Central Europe was a region where the Western Powers had no concern."

In this respect, the German seizure of Bohemia and Moravia, with the subsequent inclusion of Slovakia within the German orbit, is in line with the policy of eastern expansion of which Germany has not only made no secret since last autumn but which she has openly proclaimed.

During the last six months, the tendencies of German foreign policy may be summed up as follows: a purely defensive attitude in the West and the orientation towards the East of Nazi aims and

* See Documents Nos. 2, 34.

ambitions. The German attempt to occupy the whole of Slovakia and even Sub-Carpathian Russia shows even more clearly than the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia in which direction lie German thoughts, and the German thrust.

Though we have no reason whatever to be surprised at this new advance of German influence in the East, on the other hand we have every right to condemn the unspeakable methods used by the Reich to achieve it. It is these methods which, properly speaking, constitute the break in the policy of appeasement begun at Munich, and which found expression in the declarations of September 30 and December 6. France and Britain were entitled to expect that in the event of fresh Central European difficulties they would be consulted by the Reich; the German Government, moreover, could not be unaware that the French and British Cabinets were ready for such an exchange of views. France and Great Britain also had the right to assume that Germany would not reject the racial principle which at Munich had guided the settlement of the German-Czech crisis, nor that, having invoked the rights of nationalities, Germany would violate them so wantonly. Paris and London could hope that having renounced the use of force at Munich, Germany would not again have recourse to threats of the wholesale massacre of civil populations by her air force in particularly odious circumstances. France and Britain were also entitled to expect that the rulers of the Reich would not treat as purely negligible the agreements reached at Munich and the declarations which followed them, and that they would not simply throw into the waste-paper basket documents on which the signature of the head of the German State was hardly dry.

But this is in fact what has happened. The Munich Agreements no longer exist. The psychological grounds on which the potentialities of the declarations of September 30 and December 6 might have borne fruit have been destroyed. Various German papers are already interpreting as a denunciation of the Anglo-German and Franco-German declarations the *démarche* by which Britain and France made it known on March 18 that they could not recognize as legal the position in Central Europe which had been brought about by the Reich.

We find ourselves faced, therefore, with an entirely new situation. Germany has not been content to consolidate and extend her political influence over the nations living in the Reich's orbit. She has revealed desire to absorb them, if not to annihilate them.

From a policy of expansion she has gone on to a policy of conquest, the claims of common race giving way henceforth to military imperialism.

This brutal confession of a lust of conquest, which the Third Reich had hitherto been at pains to conceal, could not fail to arouse deep feeling throughout the world. [...]

Coulondre

From *Documents Diplomatiques. 1938-1939.*
Ministère des Affaires Etrangères. Paris, 1939, p. 104-111

No. 115.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR
IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

March 20, 1939

I informed Bonnet of your reply. * He expressed his gratitude and asked me to let you know that in principle he agreed with your proposal, but would have to consult London and Bucharest. As regards the prospective participants, he would consider it desirable, apart from those you have suggested, to recruit Yugoslavia as well.

Bonnet gave me an account of his conversation with Tatarescu** and Lukasiewicz. While denying the existence of an ultimatum, Tatarescu emphasized the exceptional gravity of the threat looming over Rumania and raised the question of French aid. Bonnet replied that France alone could not render such aid and that it was necessary to ascertain the position of the other interested countries, including the USSR. To this Tatarescu replied that in the first instance influence should be brought to bear on Poland and Hungary. As for the USSR, "in view of the role played by Russia in the past and the role of the USSR as an exponent of Communism," the involvement of the USSR in this matter

* See Documents Nos. 109, 110.

** Rumanian Ambassador in France.

should be approached "with particular caution." Then Bonnet asked whether that should be taken to mean that Rumania did not want Soviet aid. Tatarescu replied that such a conclusion should not be drawn and that he was speaking merely of the need for caution. Bonnet asked that for the time being all this be kept secret. I personally think that Bonnet, who is far from being delighted by the prospects of fighting for Rumania and who would probably have preferred to receive a more evasive reply from us too, is deliberately trying through such communications to "cool" us and increase our mistrust of Rumania. But it is, of course, possible that this time he was not lying. As for Lukasiwicz, in Bonnet's own words, he "was exceptionally reserved" and kept stressing the point that the Polish obligation in respect of Rumania merely concerned the eventuality of a war with the Soviet Union. ²²

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 116.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN**

March 20, 1939

I assume that until the draft Declaration * is handed to us as promised, no reply is required from us. I am doubtful about Poland's acceptance. I told Seeds today that in listing the countries that should be invited to the conference in Rumania I had forgotten to mention Turkey and asked him to correct that omission. I believe Turkey would be more willing to sign a declaration than Poland.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

* See Document No. 111.

No. 117.

**EXCERPT FROM A TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S
COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE USSR***March 20, 1939*

Summing up the information I have about the political effect in England of the events of the past week, I can say the following. The annexation of Czechoslovakia has undoubtedly had a tremendous effect on all sections of the population. Disenchantment with Munich and indignation against Germany are universal, even among the circles represented by *The Times*. In the minds of the broad masses the policy of "appeasement" is dead. What Chamberlain tried his hardest to avoid has occurred: a deep political and moral-psychological breach has appeared between England and Germany, and it will not be easy to close it. No negotiations are possible between London and Berlin in the immediate future. Even the agreement just concluded between the English and German industrialists, which the English side considers to be advantageous to England, has in effect been annulled.

Concern about the future has increased tremendously and there is growing awareness of the need for a collective rebuff to the aggressors. Hence the fairly abrupt turn towards the USSR. We are now very much in fashion here, and this is manifested in a variety of ways and on a variety of occasions. One consequence of this is that in recent days a great many diplomats, politicians and statesmen want to meet and talk with me. In contrast to the September days, the press is now trying to play up all kinds of reports about the might of the USSR and its armed forces. Today, for instance, the *Evening Standard* published an article about the USSR having 18 million trained reservists and 40,000 planes. Thus, it is beyond all doubt that the anti-German wave has at present reached a higher point than ever before and that the widespread desire for co-operation with the USSR and for the formation of a bloc of peaceful nations is very great. It would, however, be dangerous to overestimate the significance of all these favourable factors.

Firstly, the present mood may gradually change, especially if

no new acts of aggression by Hitler or Mussolini follow in the immediate future.

Secondly, and still more important, as long as Chamberlain remains at the head of the Government, any substantial change in the British foreign policy line is not to be expected. [...]

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 118.

**EXCERPT FROM A REPORT BY THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN TURKEY ON A CONVERSATION
WITH THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN TURKEY**

March 21, 1939

On March 21, Massigli came up to me at a reception given by the Iraqis and spoke with great alarm of the danger that was spreading through Europe with every passing day and that emanated first and foremost from fascist Germany. Massigli spoke critically of the half-hearted measures of his Government which "unfortunately has still not taken any concrete measures to combat the aggressors, but which ought to take the path of active co-operation not only with England but also with the Soviet Union."

The French Ambassador referred with admiration to the Note of the Soviet Government handed by comrade Litvinov to the German Ambassador in Moscow.* [...]

Ambassador of the USSR in Turkey
Terentyev

From the archives.

* See Document No. 106.

No. 119.**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES
IN THE USA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***March 21, 1939*

The Note we handed to the Germans * has made a very big impression here and has been widely publicized, as have the comments of *Izvestia*. From recent private conversations at receptions with representatives of both Parties and political figures of various shades of opinion, including Pittman, Moore, ** and Assistant Chief of Staff Beck, and with Republican Senators, I can see that in the last few days there has been tremendous growth of our prestige and of interest in us. However, the illusions about a "Ukrainian campaign" are very persistent and it is hoped that it will be possible to shift the centre of gravity to our guaranteeing Rumania.

Chargé d'Affaires

From the archives.

No. 120.**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE USSR AND THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN THE
USSR***March 21, 1939*

The English Ambassador requested an urgent meeting today, and I made an appointment with him for 2 :30 p.m.

First of all he told me that just before leaving for the meeting he had received a telegram from the English Minister in Bucharest informing him that in view of the well-known misunderstandings over the *démarche* of the Rumanian Minister in London *** he

* See Document No. 106.

** Democratic member of the US Senate, 1935-1938.

*** See Documents Nos. 108, 109, 112.

had, on Foreign Office instructions, approached the Rumanian King personally for clarification. The latter had confirmed that actually there had been no ultimatum but that Germany had presented completely inadmissible demands. The King had said that Rumania was resisting the German pressure but that she would not be able to do so for very long unless she was promised outside assistance.

Seeds further related that in connection with the obtaining situation the English Government was of this opinion: "Though the accuracy of rumours concerning the German ultimatum to Rumania is raising doubts, it is nonetheless clear to the British Government that the German absorption of Czechoslovakia shows that the German Government is resolved to go beyond its hitherto avowed aim, that is, the consolidation of the German race. Now that the German Government has extended its conquests to another nation, no European State can fail to regard itself as being directly or ultimately threatened, if the recent German action should prove to be part of a definite policy of domination. Under those circumstances the British Government considers it necessary to proceed without delay to the organization of mutual support by those Powers that realize the necessity of protecting the international community from further violation of the fundamental laws on which it rests." (I wrote this down verbatim from the Ambassador's own words).

Referring to Halifax's statement to Comrade Maisky, * the Ambassador gave me a copy of the draft Declaration which the British Government was proposing for signature on behalf of the four States: Great Britain, the USSR, France and Poland (draft Declaration appended).**

The Ambassador explained that this was not a counter-proposal replacing our proposal, which was by no means being rejected, but whose implementation would probably have to be put off until some time after the signing of the Declaration. In Halifax's opinion such a Declaration would have a sobering effect on Germany.

I said I would of course communicate the English proposal to my Government without delay, but I felt that even in the case of declarations it was highly desirable to have preliminary consulta-

* See Document No. 111.

** See Document No. 121.

tions during which a text acceptable to all the participants could promptly be worked out and decisions could promptly be taken if any of the States should refuse to join in the declaration.

Seeds replied that the Declaration had been phrased in such an unbinding and concise manner that there could hardly be any serious objections. Of course, amendments were possible, and the British Government would not object to them, unless they ran counter to the main purpose of the Declaration. Seeds was anticipating no objections from France or ourselves, but if Poland refused to sign the Declaration he personally saw no reason why the Declaration should not come from the three Great Powers. Seeds confirmed the communication made to Comrade Maisky that immediately after the signing of the Declaration by the four Powers Halifax intended to invite other interested smaller nations to accede to the Declaration. The next step would be a general conference of those that had signed or acceded to the declaration. He expressed the hope that there would be no objections on our part at least, for even now our position, he said, was being subjected to various misinterpretations. For instance, Comrade Stalin's statement at the Congress about our readiness to help the victims of aggression was taken to mean that we did not want to prevent war and were speaking of assistance only after the outbreak of war.

I expressed extreme surprise at such an erroneous interpretation of Comrade Stalin's statement, and I reminded the Ambassador of our many statements about the convening of peace conferences and pointed out that we had always emphasized the need for measures to prevent war. The Ambassador said apologetically that he by no means agreed with the aforesaid interpretation and asked that we give him our reply as soon as possible.

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 121.**DRAFT DECLARATION OF GREAT BRITAIN, THE USSR, FRANCE AND POLAND SUBMITTED BY THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***

March 21, 1939

We, the undersigned, duly authorized to that effect, hereby declare that, inasmuch as peace and security in Europe are matters of common interest and concern, and since European peace and security may be affected by any which constitutes a threat to the political independence of any European State, our respective Governments hereby undertake immediately to consult together as to what steps should be taken to offer joint resistance to any such action.

From the archives.

No. 122.**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADORS IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE**

March 22, 1939

At 8 p.m. today I made the following statement to Seeds:

"We express our solidarity with the British Government's position and accept the wording of its draft Declaration. ** The representatives of the Soviet Government will sign the Declaration without delay as soon as France and Poland have accepted the British proposal and promised their signatures. To make the act especially solemn and binding we suggest that it be signed by the Prime Ministers and the Foreign Ministers of all four States."

* Published herein in English translation from the Russian.

** See Document No. 121.

I went on to suggest that an invitation to adhere to the Declaration be made not only to the Balkan countries, mentioned by Halifax, but also to our neighbouring countries, Finland and the Baltic countries, and to the Scandinavian countries.

I notified Seeds that we were going to release our reply to the press tomorrow.

The Declaration could be signed separately in all four capitals and handed over to the English Ambassadors there.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

No. 123.

TASS ANNOUNCEMENT

March 22, 1939

The foreign press has been spreading rumours to the effect that the Soviet Government recently proposed aid to Poland and Rumania in the event that they became victims of aggression. TASS is authorized to state that rumours are utterly without foundation. Neither Poland nor Rumania has appealed to the Soviet Government for aid or has informed it of any danger threatening them. The fact is that on the 18th of this month the British Government, having informed the Soviet Government that there were serious reasons to fear an act of violence against Rumania, enquired as to what position the Soviet Government would take in such an eventuality. In its reply to that enquiry, the Soviet Government proposed that a conference be convened of representatives of the more directly interested States, namely Great Britain, France, Poland, Rumania, Turkey and the USSR. Such a conference, the Soviet Government believes, would best provide an opportunity for appraising the true state of affairs and for ascertaining the position of each of the participants. The British Government, however, thought that the time was not ripe for such a conference.

From *Izvestia*, No. 68 (6838), March 22, 1939.

No. 124.**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***March 22, 1939*

Bonnet told Aras that the centre of European events is shortly expected to shift to the Mediterranean area, but added that the French were now engaged in discussions with Mussolini (probably through Laval) and he was not losing hope that the disputed issues would be "settled" peacefully. Bonnet even went so far as to say that the chances of a settlement were 50-50. Bonnet is hoping that in this way it will prove possible to ease present tension and gain time, at least until autumn when the most dangerous moment will allegedly have passed. The English are encouraging France's attempts to come to terms with Italy. In short, despite all the talk about turning over a new leaf, the old policy of giving in to the aggressors is continuing.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 125.**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET CHARGE D'AFFAIRES IN LITHUANIA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***March 22, 1939*

At 12:10 midnight I was called in by Lozoraitis* who communicated to me the following: Ribbentrop had said to Urbsys ** that the incorporation of Klaipeda into Germany was vital and urgent for the Klaipeda Germans. Unless the Lithuanian

* An Official of the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry and until December 1938 the Foreign Minister.

** Lithuanian Foreign Minister.

Government gave up Klaipeda voluntarily, riots would immediately break out there, making it necessary for the Reichswehr to intervene. Should one German be killed in the riots, the Reichswehr would go into Greater Lithuania. Ribbentrop suggested that Urbsys promptly get in touch with Mironas * and take a decision over the telephone. Urbsys promised to give a reply immediately after his return to Kaunas. As soon as Urbsys arrived on March 21 the German Minister called on him to say that a Lithuanian delegation was expected in Berlin not later than March 22. The Cabinet decided, Lozoraitis said, to yield to force and took a decision to transfer Klaipeda to Germany. A delegation headed by Urbsys is leaving for Berlin today. Along with the German Minister, the French, English and Italian Ministers have also been notified of the Cabinet's decision.

Chargé d'Affaires

From the archives.

No. 126.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN**

March 23, 1939

Germany, Italy, Japan and Spain have agreed on the text of a protocol on Spain's accession to the Anti-Comintern Pact. The protocol will be signed soon, although at Franco's request the announcement of the accession will be put off for some time.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

* Prime Minister of Lithuania.

No. 127.**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET CHARGE D'AFFAIRES
IN LITHUANIA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***March 23, 1939*

In a private conversation the head of the Cabinet office related that the English Minister had been openly indignant when the Lithuanian Government had hinted at resistance in Klaipeda, while the Polish Minister had warned that in that case Poland would not lift a finger.

Official circles had expected worse terms of the agreement. Having signed the agreement they were relieved but wary. They say that either this is a screen concealing a trap or else Hitler will soon violate the agreement. In general, there is little belief in the stability of the situation created by the agreement. They are also uneasy at Poland's behaviour, considering the above-noted statement of the Polish Minister, and also at rumours about the concentration of Polish troops at the corner which cuts into Lithuania near the East Prussian frontier (the Bialystok military district). Fear of a German-Polish collusion at the expense of Lithuania and Latvia is giving rise to speculations in Lithuania that Hitler will now want to eliminate the "corridor" and incorporate Danzig into Germany.

Rumours persist here that Berlin has called for an economic union with Latvia and for control over her ports. Nothing is known about this in Lithuanian government circles.

Chargé d'Affaires

From the archives.

No. 128.**STATEMENT BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE BRITISH
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT
OF OVERSEAS TRADE***March 23, 1939*

Five years ago we already realized the danger fascist aggression posed for the cause of peace. We had no grounds to fear that this

aggression would be primarily directed against us. On the contrary, we were confident that above all it would be directed against the creators of the Versailles and St. Germain Pacts and against the states that had come into being and expanded on the basis of those Pacts. We believed, however, that the fascist aggression was a common danger and that common efforts and co-operation of all non-aggressive nations were necessary to combat it. To that end we joined the League of Nations, regarding it as an instrument for effecting such international co-operation and for the collective organization of security. For five years we did not cease to make various proposals to strengthen the League and give it effective power. We proposed a system of regional pacts, regional conferences, the application to the aggressors of the sanctions envisaged by the League Covenant and we were prepared to, and did, take part in carrying out such sanctions regardless of whether our own interests were affected by the various cases of aggression. After the annexation of Austria it became clear to us that Germany would soon set upon the other Central European states and we therefore proposed an immediate conference of the interested states.¹⁹ At the height of the Sudeten conflict we addressed a proposal to France and Czechoslovakia that a conference be called of general staffs and clearly stated our readiness to meet our obligations to Czechoslovakia in accordance with the terms envisaged by the Treaty, that is, on condition that France, too, rendered aid to Czechoslovakia.¹

All our proposals were ignored by Britain and France, which, rejecting the principles of the League, took the path of solving separate problems individually, and not by resisting aggression but by surrendering to it. In the face of existence of a clearly defined bloc consisting of Germany, Italy and Japan, Britain and France declined to participate in any conferences of the peace-loving nations under the pretext that this might be interpreted by the aggressive countries as a bloc against them. This policy pursued by the British and the French culminated in the Munich capitulation that created the present situation in Europe which, it seems, is not to Britain's liking either.

The Soviet Union, more than any other country, is capable of providing for the defence of its own frontiers, but even now it is not renouncing co-operation with other countries. In its view such co-operation can only exist on the lines of a genuinely common

resistance to the aggressors. The basis for such co-operation must be the recognition of aggression as a problem for all which calls for common action regardless of whether in this or that case it affects the interests of one participant in the co-operation or another. It must be recognized that aggression as such, whether in Europe, Asia or on any other continent, requires common measures of struggle against it. With the existence of an aggressive bloc, the need for meetings and conferences and agreements between the anti-aggressive states, must not be denied. We are against conferences that are non-obligatory and unbinding, which can only serve as an instrument in the diplomatic game of this or that State, and which engender nothing but mistrust. According to our conception, co-operation can either take place within the framework of the League, or outside it should there be League member-states which impede the struggle against the aggressors or should the need arise to involve the USA which is not a member of the League. Since our many previous proposals have failed to yield results, we do not now intend to advance any new proposals and are waiting for an initiative from those who must in some way indicate that they are ready to take measures to ensure collective security. In particular, we have always been, and are, ready to co-operate with Great Britain. We are prepared to examine and discuss any concrete proposals based on the above-indicated principles.

From the archives.

No. 129.

STATEMENT BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE MINISTER OF LATVIA IN THE USSR *

*March 28, 1939***

The Soviet-Latvian Peace Treaty of August 11, 1920, and the Non-Aggression Treaty of February 5, 1932, assume the attainment by the Latvian people and the preservation by them of

* F. Kocins.

** On the same day a similar statement was made by the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR to the Minister of Estonia in the USSR, Rei.

complete autonomy and independent statehood, as conforms to the will of the Latvian people. It was with this assumption, too, that the Soviet Government proceeded in putting into force the Briand-Kellogg Pact ahead of time, in extending the Non-Aggression Treaty for 10 years, and also in assuming obligations under the Covenant of the League of Nations.

The Latvian Government is aware of the efforts the Soviet Government has made throughout the last 15 years, again guided by the same assumption, to assure the inviolability of the frontiers of the Latvian Republic. It follows from the above that the Soviet Government has invariably attached, and continues to attach, immense importance to the preservation of the complete independence of the Latvian and of the other Baltic republics, which meets not only the interests of the peoples of those republics but also the vital interests of the Soviet State. It should thus also be clear that any agreements, whether concluded voluntarily or under external pressure, that would result in even the derogation or restriction of the independence and autonomy of the Latvian Republic, in permitting the establishment in the Latvian Republic of political, economic or other domination by a third state, in granting to it any exclusive rights or privileges, whether on the territory of Latvia or in her ports, would be regarded by the Soviet Government as intolerable and incompatible with the conditions and the spirit of the above-mentioned treaties and agreements on which its relations with Latvia are presently based, and even as a violation of those agreements with all the ensuing consequences.

The present statement is being made in a spirit of sincere goodwill towards the Latvian people, with a view to strengthening their feeling of security and confidence that the Soviet Union is prepared by deeds, if necessary, to prove its interest in the preservation by the Latvian Republic of its sovereignty and political and economic independence, and to making it clear that it is impossible for the Soviet Union to look on with indifference at attempts, whether overt or covert, to destroy that sovereignty and independence.

From the archives.

No. 130.**EXTRACT FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE RUMANIAN MINISTER IN THE USSR***March 29, 1939*

I called in Dianu and told him that we were not satisfied with the meagre information we had received from him about the German-Rumanian agreement. He should realize that we could not fail to be interested in Rumania's relationships with aggressive Germany. We could not remain indifferent if an aggressive country were to establish its domination in Rumania or be provided with bases near our borders or in Black Sea ports. [...]

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 131.**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***March 29, 1939*

Cadogan told me a very interesting thing about the present state of negotiations with the other Powers. In his words, the Poles quite categorically, and Rumanians somewhat less decisively, have announced that they will not join any combination (be it in the form of a declaration or in any other form) that will also include the USSR. Moreover, they have made it clear that a "consultation" in no way satisfies them, and that they can join a peace bloc only if there are definite military commitments by England and France.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 132.**EXTRACT FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE FRENCH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN THE USSR***March 29, 1939*

[...] Then Payart touched upon the following questions:

1. Had we made Poland's participation a condition for the signing of the Declaration,* and were we prepared in general to co-operate with Poland? I replied that we had made no conditions but that we considered co-operation with Poland, which we had always offered her, very important. It was my feeling that until Poland received a direct blow from Germany it would hardly be possible to change Beck's line. At that point I told Payart that according to information we had received, Bonnet had tried in London to persuade the English to promise Poland assistance so that it should not be necessary to involve the USSR in the common cause. [...]

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 133.**FROM THE DIARY OF THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF ITALY***March 29, 1939*

[...] I had two meetings with the Duce for the purpose of making decisions regarding Albania. Since he is leaving for Calabria, and will return on Saturday, he insisted on bringing the matter up to date: (1) The Army, Navy, and aviation continue their preparations. They will be ready on Saturday. (2) Jacomoni** must, in the meantime, exert his diplomatic pressure on the King, reporting its effects. (3) At a certain point, unless he gives up

* See Document No. 121.

** Italian Minister in Albania.

before this, we shall send our ships into the territorial waters of Albania and present an ultimatum. (4) If he persists in his refusal we shall raise the tribes in revolt, publish our declarations, and land. (5) Having occupied Tirana, we shall gather the Albanian chiefs into a constituent assembly, over which I should preside, and offer the crown of Albania to the King of Italy. [...]

From *The Ciano Diaries. 1939-1943*, pp. 54-55.

No. 134.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

March 30, 1939

This morning Chamberlain called in Greenwood and told him that the British Government had received definite information about German intentions of attacking Poland and that he, Chamberlain, considered it necessary forthwith to warn Germany that in this case Britain could not remain an indifferent observer of events. With a view to discussing the obtaining situation Chamberlain is convening an emergency meeting of the Cabinet. The conversation took place before the meeting. At 11 a.m. a Cabinet meeting did take place, but so far I do not know what decision has been taken.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 135.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

March 31, 1939

Today Bonnet called me in and, having informed me of England's readiness to give guarantees concerning Poland, began

talking a lot of nonsense about co-operation with the USSR. From his words it followed that even if she received a guarantee, Poland still would not sign the Declaration of the Four,* and that England and France had apparently reconciled themselves to this, yet at the same time he began to ask me once again to find out from you what our position would be if Germany attacked Poland and Rumania, etc. When I expressed bewilderment as to what precisely I was to find out after three weeks of dawdling, after we had made our position known quite clearly,** and after London and Paris were now themselves going back on their own original draft, Bonnet began singing a different tune. It was not yet known whether Poland would refuse; but even if she did, he was all for co-operation with us, but did not know in what form it could be carried out. He would be quite willing to have us suggest the form, and he closed the conversation rather abruptly: "You know, let us wait until tomorrow."

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 136.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

March 31, 1939

This morning Halifax again postponed our meeting and it was not until 1 p.m. that he invited me to see him. He began by apologizing for having been obliged to postpone my visit several times, explaining that in the last two days there had been frequent meetings of the Cabinet or the Foreign Policy Committee (it is made up of five or six of the most responsible Ministers) and that an immense amount of time and effort had been spent on elaborating the text of the statement which the Premier is to make at 3 p.m. today in Parliament. It can be concluded from Halifax's words that the preparation of this document had been a very painful

* See Document No. 121.

** See Documents Nos. 122, 123.

process. Thus, the existence of differences over foreign policy within the Cabinet is once again confirmed. Halifax then read out to me the text of the statement, which you probably know about already from reading the newspapers, and asked me what I thought of it. Halifax emphasized that the consultations and talks of a more general nature on the question of creating a united front of peace-loving Powers against aggression begun two weeks ago remained fully in force, and the English Government intended to continue them with maximum vigour (though, in Halifax's opinion, the Declaration proposed by the English on March 20 hardly had any chance, and now other forms of collective action should be sought, but the extreme aggravation of German-Polish relations had compelled the British Government, pending the solution of the aforesaid general question, to take emergency measures specially in respect of Poland. Hence today's statement by the Premier, which, Halifax hopes, may still stop Hitler. I replied that since according to Halifax's statement the English Government was not going to renounce its intention of creating a united front of the peace-loving Powers, on the whole the statement that had been read out to me constituted a certain step forward compared with previous declarations of the English Government on questions of the struggle against aggression. I felt, however, that the wording of the statement was not definite enough and allowed of different interpretations. As an example I noted the part saying that the English Government would "lend the Polish Government all support in their power." For some time Halifax and I argued over this point, but finally Halifax admitted that the Germans probably could read into the cited statement not quite the same meaning that the Cabinet had intended.

Halifax then asked me whether in reading his statement in Parliament the Premier could say that it had the approval of the Soviet Government. This would be very important in order to prevent internal disputes and disagreements in Britain herself (a hint at the insistent demand of the Opposition for close contact and co-operation with the USSR). In these critical times it was necessary to show maximum internal unity in the face of Germany. I replied that I fully appreciated Halifax's feelings, but could not agree with his proposal. As far as I knew, the English Government had consulted Paris and Warsaw about this document, but it had not consulted Moscow. The Soviet Government was not familiar with the text of the document. Even I who was here, had not seen it

until the last moment. Regardless of how we would evaluate the statement in substance, how could the Premier, under such circumstances, report to Parliament that the Soviet Government had given his declaration its blessings? Halifax, somewhat confused, agreed that this was probably so, and began arguing at length that the absence of consultations with the Soviet Union in this specific case was by no means due to any unwillingness of the English Government, but solely to the opposition of the Poles to the USSR participating in any joint combination with them. According to Halifax, the Poles had been advancing the argument that the participation of the USSR would cause such a reaction in Germany as would make an open conflict between Poland and Germany inevitable. Then Halifax asked whether the USSR would be prepared, in the event of a German attack on Poland, to render the latter assistance, for instance in the form of supplying the Poles with arms, ammunition and so forth. I answered that the general fundamental line of the Soviet Government was already known to Halifax through our previous conversations with him: the USSR renders aid to the victims of aggression fighting for their independence, but of course the concrete forms of such aid are determined by the concrete circumstances in each separate case. In this case there was a very important concrete circumstance which had to be taken into account, and it was Poland's own overt unwillingness to avail herself of our support, as Halifax had only just told me. The USSR had no desire to force its aid on anyone. Therefore, at present we naturally could not take any other position than that of an attentive observer of events as they developed. There were no grounds to discuss the forms of Soviet support for Poland. Furthermore, I had not been empowered to do so by my Government. Halifax remarked that he fully appreciated our position. He went on to say that during Beck's stay in London he would mention to Beck the subject of Polish-Soviet relations. Halifax ended by expressing a desire to maintain the closest possible contact with me.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 137.**STATEMENT BY THE BRITISH PRIME MINISTER ON
GUARANTEES TO POLAND***March 31, 1939*

As I said this morning, His Majesty's Government have no official confirmation of the rumours of any projected attack on Poland and they must not therefore be taken [...] as true.

I am glad to take this opportunity of stating again the general policy of His Majesty's Government. They have constantly advocated the adjustment, by way of free negotiation between the parties concerned, of any differences that may arise between them. They consider that this is the natural and proper course where differences exist. In their opinion there should be no question incapable of solution by peaceful means and they would see no justification for the substitution of force or threats of force for the method of negotiation.

As the House is aware, certain consultations are now proceeding with other Governments. In order to make perfectly clear the position of His Majesty's Government in the meantime before those consultations are concluded, I now have to inform the House that during that period in the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence, and which the Polish Government accordingly considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish Government all support in their power. They have given the Polish Government an assurance to this effect.

I may add that the French Government have authorised me to make it plain that they stand in the same position in this matter as do His Majesty's Government.

*From Documents on British Foreign Policy. 1919-1939,
Third Series, Vol. IV,
London, 1951, p. 553.*

No. 138.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***March 31, 1939*

Yesterday, after making his statement* in Parliament, Chamberlain invited Lloyd George for an exchange of views on international questions. During the conversation Lloyd George bluntly asked about the participation of the USSR in a bloc of peace-loving Powers, to which the Premier had replied that in principle he was fully in agreement with this, but the position taken by Poland and Rumania so far made the actual involvement of the USSR somewhat difficult. Then Lloyd George asked why, under such circumstances, Chamberlain had risked making his statement threatening to involve Britain in a war with Germany. The Prime Minister objected, saying that according to information at his disposal neither the German General Staff nor Hitler would ever risk war if they knew that they would have to fight simultaneously on two fronts—the West and the East. Lloyd George then asked just where this “second front” was. The Prime Minister answered: “Poland”. Lloyd George burst into laughter and began to jibe Chamberlain, noting that Poland had no air force to speak of, an inadequately mechanized army, worse than mediocre armaments, and that Poland was weak internally, economically and politically. Without active help from the USSR, therefore, no “Eastern front” was possible. In conclusion Lloyd George said: “In the absence of any definite agreement with the USSR, I consider your statement of today an irresponsible gamble which can end up very badly.”

Ambassador

From the archives.

* See Document No. 137.

No. 139.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE USSR AND THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN THE
USSR***April 1, 1939*

Without explaining the purpose of his visit, Seeds began talking about the Hudson communiqué, expressing regret that the last moments of the guests as well as his own had been spoiled, for which, of course, he blamed the Foreign Office. I told him that we had not needed the communiqué, that we could have managed without it, but since the English press had made so much noise over Hudson's allegedly political mission, it was hard to say nothing at all about the political discussions which he had after all conducted with us on the instruction of his Government.

Seeds then asked what I thought of Chamberlain's statement.* He believed we should welcome the statement as a manifestation of the new English policy directed towards achieving collective security. He was therefore expecting us to express understanding and appreciation of the statement.

I first expressed bewilderment that, after Britain had on her own initiative approached us with a proposal for a joint declaration,** and after we had given our affirmative reply,*** there had been no further official word concerning the fate of that project. Once, in talking with Comrade Maisky, Cadogan had made a passing remark about Poland's negative stand on the matter, but we did not know whether this venture should be considered as having finally fallen through, or whether Chamberlain's statement was to be taken as a condition of Poland's acceptance of the declaration. Seeds replied that, as far as he knew, both Cadogan and Halifax had familiarized Maisky with the situation and that he, Seeds, believed that the question of a declaration no longer existed. He again began asking about my impression of Chamberlain's statement. I replied that we did not quite understand the meaning of the Statement. Had England really decided to take the

* See Document No. 137.

** See Document No. 121.

*** See Document No. 122.

path of fighting aggression generally, wherever it occurred, or were we dealing with an agreement between England, France and Poland, or even Rumania, prompted by special considerations and interests? In any event, we had given our replies to all of Britain's official proposals; Britain's venture had failed, and we considered ourselves to be free of any commitments.

"Does this mean that henceforth you do not intend to help the victims of aggression?" Seeds asked.

I replied that on some occasions we might help, but we did not regard ourselves as being bound in any way and we would act in accordance with our own interests.

Seeds began complaining that Britain's actions always came in for criticism from some quarter and that whatever Britain did, someone was always displeased. It had been very unpleasant for him to find me so cool towards Chamberlain's statement which, the Ambassador felt, deserved a better reception.

I had indeed received the Ambassador very coldly, expressing this through my behaviour rather than my words, and I avoided continuing the conversation.

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 140.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE USSR AND THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN THE
USSR**

April 1, 1939

I told Grzybowski, whom I had asked to call on me today, that I wanted to talk to him about a subject that had already been touched on in the Ambassador's conversation yesterday with Potemkin, namely the Polish motives for rejecting the joint declaration.* Potemkin had talked with him on the basis of newspaper reports, but we had since received a dispatch from our Ambassador in London to the effect that Permanent Under-Sec-

* See Document No. 121.

retary of State for Foreign Affairs Cadogan had told him of Poland's unwillingness to participate in any combinations that included the USSR (I read out the relevant passage from Comrade Maisky's telegram).^{*} In view of such official confirmation of the newspaper reports, my Government had instructed me to enquire of the Polish Government whether Poland's position was in accord with the communication of the Foreign Office, and what were the motives and reasons behind it.

At first Grzybowski expressed his displeasure at our having addressed the enquiry to him, instead of directly to Beck through our Chargé d'Affaires. I explained to him that M. Beck rarely or almost never received our Chargé d'Affaires and it was not proper to discuss such things with subordinates.

Grzybowski then said that the communication from London was new to him though he found it quite logical. The Polish Government took the firm position of not entering into any agreements with one of its strong neighbours against the other, that is, either with Germany against the USSR or with the USSR against Germany, since otherwise, depending on the circumstances, it would have to seek the support of either the USSR or Germany, and Polish policy would then be subjected to constant fluctuations. Poland would not budge from that position *unless she was forced to*. To take one example, during the September days, when Soviet troops were being pulled up to the Polish frontier²³ and about 190 aeroplanes had been flying over Poland, she had not asked Germany for support, had she? Though Poland had then taken action against Czechoslovakia in order to get back lands that had previously belonged to her, she had not co-ordinated her actions with Germany,²⁴ which was proved by the seizure of Bogumin. Generally speaking, Poland was very grateful to Chamberlain for his statement,^{**} but she did not intend to rely on outside assistance and had no need for protectors in general. Guarantees by other States were always a very delicate matter, especially the guarantees by strong neighbours. If Poland wanted to avoid such a situation, this should not be treated as a demerit.

After some reflection, Grzybowski again asked me to release him from having to transmit our enquiry or else to permit him to

^{*} See Document No. 131.

^{**} See Document No. 137.

communicate to Warsaw only our conversation. I reminded the Ambassador that only just now he himself had expressed doubts about the English version. Therefore he should ask Warsaw whether that version was true. It only remained for him to add that he was making the enquiry on our initiative. Grzybowski agreed with this.

On the substance of Grzybowski's observation I said I would refrain from any comments pending receipt of a reply from Warsaw, especially since the Ambassador had expounded his views on his own personal behalf and had not been speaking with the authorization of his Government. By way of a theoretical discussion I could say, however, that I did not find the Ambassador's arguments to be invulnerable. If one were to speak in the abstract, outside the realm of time and space, the proposition that an agreement with one strong neighbour against another had its inconveniences might perhaps be true. But if one were to reason on a political and concrete plane, the proposition would be true only in the event that both neighbours were equally peace-loving or equally aggressive. But when there were no doubts about one neighbour being aggressive and the other peace-loving, other propositions invited themselves. Germany's aggressiveness, which had so far given rise to doubts in the minds of politicians such as Chamberlain, who mistakenly believed that Hitler was interested merely in restoring the justice that had been violated at Versailles and in uniting the German race, was now universally recognized. Furthermore, up to now it had not been a question only of the agreement with a neighbour but of an international action. The theory of the inadmissibility of blocs or of the so-called encirclement of Germany could hardly be considered valid after the formation of a bloc of aggressive countries—Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain and Hungary—in which Czechoslovakia and other countries had now been involved. And if united action was indeed necessary, it was ridiculous to talk about keeping out "neighbours" who could render the most substantial assistance. Was not the Anglo-French bloc based on the two countries being neighbours? And finally, the explanation offered by the Ambassador did not quite coincide with the communication from Cadogan, and it was not uninteresting for us to know what explanation for its position the Polish Government had given London and Paris, and did not the Ambassador feel that in any case it would have been more correct for Poland to communicate its reply and its

explanations directly to us, so that we should not have to learn of them through London? As for the reference to the September events, while leaving in doubt the facts about troop movements, overflights, etc., which the Ambassador had cited and which were not known to me as I had been in Geneva at the time, it should not be forgotten that Czechoslovakia had then been under a German threat, against which we had undertaken to render Czechoslovakia assistance. A Polish attack on Czechoslovakia at that moment would have compelled Poland to participate together with Germany in joint military action against Czechoslovakia and consequently against us, and we had to take measures of self-defence.

Grzybowski avoided further discussion of this subject, merely recalling Catherine the Great in the role of guarantor of Poland, and then began protesting that relations between us and Poland could be trustful and good, but they should be built up over a long time. He was fully aware of his country's predicament. He was greatly concerned over the situation of Lithuania after the occupation of Memel and over the information he had thereafter received about the forthcoming announcement of a Protectorate over Hungary. In reply to my question as to whether Poland would then still be satisfied with obtaining a common frontier with Hungary, Grzybowski said that the desire for a common frontier had been correct, but things had not turned out as they had been expected to. "So the desire had not been correct but mistaken?" I asked. "Yes, then it was mistaken," answered Grzybowski.

Grzybowski foresaw Polish-Soviet contact in many areas in the future. By way of example he mentioned a possible German thrust to the northeast, and if that should lead to a conflict between us and Germany, Poland would be on our side in view of the immense importance Poland attached to the Baltic Sea. If, in general, things should ever go badly for Poland, she herself would probably seek co-operation with the USSR, but so far there had been no need to create additional causes of tension. The setting up of an anti-German bloc would push Italy and Germany into a still closer alliance.

I asked whether the Ambassador had been expressing his personal opinion or the viewpoint of his Government when he spoke just now of complications in the Baltic area. I reminded Grzybowski that on more than one occasion we had sought contact with Poland on this matter; we had proposed the signing

of a joint declaration with Poland in 1934, then a regional pact, and so forth. Grzybowski replied that he had of course been expounding his own point of view, but on the basis of discussions in the Polish press and in Parliament.

In conclusion he promised to inform me of Beck's reply as soon as he received it.

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 141.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE USSR AND THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN THE
USSR**

April 2, 1939

Today Grzybowski informed me that his enquiry of yesterday had crossed paths with instructions which he had received from Beck today. He believed, however, that what Beck had instructed him to tell me contained an indirect reply to yesterday's enquiry. Beck had instructed the Ambassador "on occasion" to tell me that "in talks with the Western Powers Poland always declares that she is satisfied with the positive development of relations with the USSR. However, Poland remains opposed to multilateral combinations directed against Germany." This we ought to be able to understand for we knew that Poland was also refusing to enter into combinations directed against the USSR, such as the Anti-Comintern Pact. On his own behalf Grzybowski added that from the aforesaid it was quite clear to him that Poland could not have given the English the wording which Cadogan had communicated to us, and that Poland had undoubtedly spoken with English in the same spirit in which today's communication had been drawn up. Grzybowski therefore believed we should not expect a reply to yesterday's enquiry.

I disagreed with the Ambassador indicating that we could not be guided by deductions, conjectures and guesses, but had to proceed from precise facts. The English had informed us of Poland's reply which completely failed to coincide with the communication the Ambassador had made to me today. Indeed,

the communication spoke of Poland's unwillingness to participate, in general, in multilateral combinations directed against Germany, regardless of the make-up of such combinations. If that was so, then the English communication of the Polish reply had been a complete distortion, as it spoke of Poland's unwillingness to participate in combinations that included the USSR and said nothing at all about combinations directed against Germany.

Reddening, Grzybowski re-read his piece of paper (Beck's instructions) and said that it, too, spoke of combinations "jointly with the Soviet Union." I pointed out that there was still a divergence in wording. It was one thing not to participate in combinations that included the USSR against Germany and quite another not to participate, in general, in any combinations that included the USSR, as had been set forth by the English. It was quite obvious that the matter called for elucidation. The Ambassador had expounded to me the Polish position and, naturally, he had not wished to tell us that Poland was rejecting co-operation with us, but in England the Poles could have set forth their position quite differently, as indicated by Cadogan's communication. In reply to the Ambassador's remark that this was an English intrigue, I said that it was then all the more necessary to expose that intrigue. If it was stated to me officially that the English had misrepresented the Polish reply to the declaration, we would ask them for an explanation.

Grzybowski again began saying that he did not doubt that the English had been given the same reply as he had communicated to me today, and that there was no need for any new enquiry, and so forth. However, I insisted that I could not accept as a reply the conjectures of the Ambassador. The Polish Government could refuse to reply to our enquiry and we would draw our conclusions, but I insisted on an official reply.

Turning to the question of the Polish position, I said that if Poland had proposed that we form a combination against Germany, against her interests, against the German people, we too would have rejected such a proposal. However, it was not this that had been contemplated but a combination for struggle against German aggression, and this was quite a different matter. Furthermore, yesterday the Ambassador had explained Poland's unwillingness to participate in combinations by a fear that this would lead to tension in relations with Germany and rouse her wrath, but today it appeared that Poland was nonetheless ready

to join even combinations directed against Germany, without fear of her wrath, if only the USSR was not included. This point also required explanation. I asked whether Poland had expressed readiness to sign the English declaration * if the USSR were excluded and whether Germany continued to put pressure on Poland. Grzybowski replied that, as he saw it, Poland was rejecting the declaration altogether, and talks with Germany seemed to have been suspended. In the event of his receiving a reply to my enquiry of yesterday he would of course communicate it to me without delay. He felt, however, that in view of Beck's departure for London tomorrow the reply might be held up.

From both yesterday's and especially today's conversation it is quite clear to me that Grzybowski does not want to give us an official reply to the enquiry, knowing that the Poles had spoken with the English precisely along the lines of Comrade Maisky's dispatch. And also, he had tried to cheat today by omitting from Beck's communication the phrase that was unpleasant for us.

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 142.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

April 2, 1939

I am communicating the following curious facts. On the morning of March 31, immediately after the Cabinet meeting which finally approved the text of the declaration,** Beaverbrook instructed his newspapers to say that the guarantees of the Polish frontiers did not apply to Danzig and the "Corridor."

Beaverbrook based his instructions on the information he had received that though formally the Cabinet had in no way limited its guarantees, nonetheless the Premier had some "mental reservations" about the "Corridor" and Danzig. Having learned of

* See Document No. 121.

** Ibid.

this the Foreign Office was greatly perturbed. Vansittart got in touch with the Premier's secretariat and said that such rumours and speculations in the papers could undermine all confidence in the Government action. In response the secretariat gave the strongest possible reassurances, emphasizing that in the Premier's opinion, it was not the place (Danzig or not Danzig) where aggression was committed, but the very fact of aggression that was important. Despite this, in the evening of March 31, Reuter's News Agency sent abroad a dispatch which said, *inter alia*, that the guarantees did not apply to Danzig and the "Corridor". This dispatch reached Warsaw around midnight. Beck was furious. He immediately summoned the British Ambassador, Kennard, getting him out of bed, and demanded explanations. Kennard was in a state of utter bewilderment, as Reuter's dispatch ran counter to the instructions he had received from the Foreign Office. Returning to the Embassy, Kennard telephoned to London. Halifax was awakened in the middle of the night. The latter could not understand where Reuter's dispatch had come from either, and he gave Kennard reassurances. Nonetheless, on the morning of April 1 *The Times* as well as Beaverbrook's newspapers carried editorials which made it plain that the statement did not apply to Danzig and the "Corridor". Later in the morning of April 1 foreign journalists, especially Americans, besieged the Foreign Office press department clamouring for explanations for the editorials carried by *The Times* and the *Daily Express*. However, officials of the press department could say nothing coherent in reply. It was only after lunch on April 1 that the Foreign Office issued the report which has, of course, been transmitted to you by TASS, and which offered a weak and rather vague refutation of the editorials in *The Times* and the *Daily Express*. These developments have given rise to the opinion among local political and journalistic circles that despite the solemn assurances about the complete unity of the Cabinet, the struggle between the Premier's group (Chamberlain, Hoare, Simon) and the Foreign Office over the general line of British foreign policy is continuing. Unless in tomorrow's parliamentary debate Chamberlain quite explicitly dissociates himself from the advocates of "appeasement", the Government will find itself in an awkward situation.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 143.**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN***April 3, 1939*

According to absolutely trustworthy information, on March 27 Japan, Germany, Italy and Spain signed at Burgos a Protocol on Spain's accession to the Anti-Comintern Pact. On Franco's wish, the signing is so far being kept secret but Germany is persistently seeking to get the Protocol published as soon as possible.

From the archives.

People's Commissar

No. 144.**DIRECTIVE BY THE CHIEF OF THE HIGH COMMAND
OF THE GERMAN ARMED FORCES***April 3, 1939*

Subject: Directive for the Wehrmacht, 1939-40.

The "Directive for the Uniform Preparation for War by the Wehrmacht" for 1939-40 is being issued afresh.

Part I ("Frontier Security") and Part III ("Danzig") will be issued in the middle of April. They remain basically unchanged.

Part II ("Operation White") is attached herewith. * The signature of the Führer will be appended later.

For "Operation White" the Führer has issued the following additional directives:

- 1) Preparations must be made in such a way that the operation can be carried out at any time as from September 1, 1939.
- 2) OKW** is charged with drawing up a precise time-table for "Operation White" and is to arrange for synchronized timing between the three branches of the Wehrmacht through discussions.

* "Operation White"—see Document No. 159.

** The High Command of the German Armed Forces.

3) The plans of the branches of the Wehrmacht and the details for the time-table must be submitted to OKW by May 1, 1939.

The Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht,

Keitel

From *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. VI, pp. 186-187.

No. 145.

EXCERPTS FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN

April 4, 1939

[...] 6. It is possible that by his unexpected readiness to come to the aid of Poland and Rumania Chamberlain is prompting Hitler to direct his aggression to the northeast. Chamberlain is counting on us to resist occupation of the Baltic area and expecting that this will lead to the Soviet-German clash he has been hoping for. But Poland too can hardly take a calm view of Germany's thrust into the Baltic area, even if she gets Lithuania as a compensation. It will therefore be most interesting to find out whether Beck, while in London, sought to persuade the English to take measures against the northeastern direction of German aggression.

7. Of course we cannot be content with the explanations given by the English and their references to Poland, for the legitimate question arises as to why Britain should be so considerate with regard to Beck's doubts and objections. So far it seems to be a question of assistance not to Britain, but to Poland; so it is up to Chamberlain and Daladier, not Beck, to have the last word. This is not the first time Britain is addressing to us proposals for co-operation and then taking them back, pointing to the real or possible objections of first Germany, then Japan, and now Poland. One need only recall the Brussels Conference, during which not Chamberlain but even Eden wanted at one point to exclude us from the committees that were about to be formed, fearing Japan's displeasure. It is intolerable for us to be in the situation of the man who is invited to a party and then asked not to come because the other guests do not wish to meet him. We

would prefer to be crossed off the list of guests altogether. Since Chamberlain is sending us invitations under the pressure of public opinion and is trying to play upon general statements about consultations, upon conversations with the Soviet Ambassador and the like, you should not help him in this and should ignore Vansittart's hypocritical reproaches that you, as he puts it, visit the Foreign Office too infrequently and so forth. The English should be given to understand that we do not wish to accept such "consultations" and "close co-operation".

8. In so far as we are concerned, France seems to have completely retired into the wings, leaving Britain alone to conduct even conversations with us. In all this time Bonnet only once, namely on March 31, unexpectedly addressed himself to Comrade Surits with the question of what our position would be in the event of an attack on Poland and Rumania *. Of course, in so doing he was quite lavish in general statements about the intention not to ignore the USSR, but to co-operate with it and so forth. [...]

From the above you will understand our present and, possibly, also our future restraint in respect of all kinds of Britain gestures.

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 146.

EXCERPTS FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR

April 4, 1939

Crzybowski came to see me today on his own initiative. He began by saying half reproachfully that he had had to carry out the functions of our Ambassador by transmitting our enquiries to the Polish Government. This had the disadvantage that he might not always transmit our statements quite accurately.

* See Document No. 135.

Grzybowski had received a reply from Warsaw and he could now tell me officially that Cadogan's version of the Polish reply was correct, but that there was the additional point that it related to combinations directed against Germany. Warsaw did not know whether that omission had been made by Cadogan or by the Polish Ambassador, to whom an enquiry had now been sent.

Returning to the question I had asked him on the previous occasion as to whether Poland had mentioned in her reply to England that she was also refusing to participate in combinations directed against the USSR, Grzybowski, reading the instructions he had received from Warsaw, showed me several quotations from *le Temps* and *The Times* which said that Germany had presented three demands to Poland: 1) about Danzig, 2) about the building of a motor road through the "Corridor", 3) about Poland's accession on the Anti-Comintern Pact⁸, all of which had been rejected by Poland.

When I asked whether these newspaper reports were true, Grzybowski, as usual, did not give a straightforward answer, but said that these newspapers were generally well informed. And he added that Poland's negative attitude to the Anti-Comintern Pact was well known to the Western European States and to the members of the Pact. I enquired whether this was also known to them through the newspapers, and Grzybowski answered that this had been made known to them by the Polish Government. When I asked what had been Poland's reply to the German demands, Grzybowski said that the response had been mobilization in Poland and that Poland had refused even to conduct negotiations on those demands.

Grzybowski then voiced his displeasure over the polemic conducted in our press against the Polish policy of balance. [...]

But, after all, when it should prove necessary, Grzybowski noted, Poland will turn to the USSR for assistance. To this I said that she might do so when it will be too late and that the status of a common automatic reserve was hardly acceptable to us. Clarity in relations was necessary now as never before, and the press was doing its best to help bring about such clarity, so there were no grounds to take offence. [...]

From the archives.

Litvinov

No. 147.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***April 4, 1939*

A member of the Cabinet told me that at one of its last meetings the Council had discussed the practical forms of French assistance to Poland and Rumania in the event of a German attack on them. Daladier said that in so far as Poland was concerned, the only form would be the immediate declaration of war on Germany. When one of the Ministers asked whether in that case the USSR was obligated under the Pact⁶ to intervene, Bonnet replied that "formally" it was not. "Are you conducting any talks with the USSR on this subject?" asked another. Bonnet answered that he was "going to". Then another Minister, doubting that the USSR had assumed such unilateral undertakings, asked whether the English and French had now secured Polish consent to the signing of the Four-Power Declaration. Bonnet replied that this question would be finally clarified after Beck's visit, but according to available information, even if they received special guarantees, the Poles would not accept the Declaration and would agree at the most to conclude a pact with Rumania against a German offensive. Apart from her unwillingness to enter into an alliance with the USSR, Poland's negative attitude to the Declaration was also attributed by Bonnet to the nature of the proposed Declaration. "You," the Poles say, "are laying us open to a German blow, while offering in exchange consultations involving completely unbinding promises." It was as a result of those objections that the decision was taken to grant Poland special guarantees. Then Bonnet was asked a new question: was it not possible, instead of the declaration on consultations, to conclude a four-Power pact of mutual assistance involving concrete military obligations? Daladier took that up and said that he had been of the same opinion from the very start, that he did not doubt that the USSR would agree to this, but he was not sure about Poland. Then other members of the Cabinet, belonging to the Right wing, asked whether it

was not possible to get by without a joint pact and to achieve the same objective through parallel pacts (France and Britain would conclude pacts of mutual assistance with Poland and Rumania which would likewise conclude similar pacts with the USSR). Most of the members of the Cabinet were doubtful that anything would come of this.

The upshot of the debate was that Bonnet was asked, after reaching a preliminary agreement with London, to begin sounding us out along all three directions:

1. Revision of the Franco-Soviet Pact so as to make it effective also in the eventuality of France meeting her allied commitments to Poland and Rumania.

2. Our attitude to a four-Power mutual assistance pact.

3. A mutual assistance pact between the USSR, Poland and Rumania.

My informant is naturally in favour of the second variant. He believes it to be the most effective one as well as the most acceptable one for the USSR. I do not doubt the accuracy of the information. I shall see what Bonnet tells me. Will he venture to suggest the first variant as well?

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 148.

COMMUNIQUE ON TALKS BETWEEN THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF POLAND AND THE PRIME MINISTER OF BRITAIN IN LONDON ON APRIL 4-6, 1939

April 6, 1939

The conversations with M. Beck have covered a wide field and shown that the two Governments are in complete agreement upon certain general principles.

It was agreed that the two countries were prepared to enter into an agreement of a permanent and reciprocal character to replace the present temporary and unilateral assurance given by His Majesty's Government to the Polish Government.*

* See Document No. 137.

Pending the completion of the permanent agreement, M. Beck gave His Majesty's Government an assurance that the Polish Government would consider themselves under an obligation to render assistance to His Majesty's Government under the same conditions as those contained in the temporary assurance already given by His Majesty's Government to Poland.

Like the temporary assurance, the permanent agreement would not be directed against any other country, but would be designed to assure Great Britain and Poland of mutual assistance in the event of any threat, direct or indirect, to the independence of either.

It was recognised that certain matters, including a more precise definition of the various ways in which the necessity for such assistance might arise, would require further examination before the permanent agreement could be completed.

It was understood that the arrangements above mentioned should not preclude either Government from making agreements with other countries in the general interest of the consolidation of peace. [...]

From Documents on British Foreign Policy. 1919-1939, Third Series, Vol. V, London, 1952, pp. 35-36.

No. 149.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

April 6, 1939

Today Halifax familiarized me with the text of the statement on the Anglo-Polish talks which the Premier had made in Parliament today,* and then partially on his own initiative and partially in response to my questions, he clarified the following points.

1. No treaty, even a temporary one, was signed by Beck and Halifax in London. The only document on talks with Beck is the published Communiqué (read out by the Premier in the House),

* See Document No. 148.

which was agreed upon by the two sides. It is contemplated in future to conclude a final bilateral mutual assistance pact, but Halifax could not indicate even approximately when this would take place.

2. Paragraph 4 of the Communiqué states that the obligation to render mutual assistance enters into force in the event of any threat, direct or indirect, to the independence of either party. By way of deciphering this rather vague formula I asked: was England under an obligation automatically to come to the aid of Poland if, for instance, Germany attacked Lithuania and Poland came to Lithuania's assistance? Or was Poland under an obligation to do likewise if, for instance, Germany attacked Holland, and Britain came to Holland's assistance? To this direct question Halifax did not give me a definite reply, merely remarking that this question was to be clarified in the future. To my second question as to who was to judge whether any actions by Germany threatened, directly or indirectly, the independence of Poland or Britain (only the Polish Government or only the British Government) Halifax could not give me a clear answer either. Obviously, this important point was not made sufficiently clear in the talks either.

3. As regards the paragraph of the Communiqué concerning a more precise definition of the various ways in which the necessity for assistance might arise, Halifax said that this implied mainly Poland's relations with Rumania and Hungary, and the Polish Government was now going to address itself to the task of settling the problems existing between them. For that matter, Halifax assumes that this paragraph in its further development may also include concrete talks between the military Staffs of the interested States.

4. Halifax laid special emphasis on that paragraph in the Communiqué which granted each side full right to conclude separate agreements with other countries in the interest of the consolidation of peace. This paragraph, he said, was included in order to assure the British Government of an opportunity to draw the USSR into participation in the system of security. However, Halifax himself said nothing about the form of such involvement, and I did not ask him about it. In this connection Halifax said that in the negotiations Beck had, as hitherto, insisted that Poland could not participate in any bloc or agreement that included the USSR as (a) this would run counter to the basic line of Polish

policy, which was to take a "neutral" stand between Germany and the USSR and (b) the Poles did not consider it possible under any circumstances to allow the presence of the Red Army on their territory.

5. As regards Rumania, the present situation is as follows: some time ago the British Government had asked the Rumanian Government whether Rumania believed she was threatened by aggression, whether she was in need of assistance by Britain, precisely what kind of assistance and so forth, but so far it had not received a definite reply from Bucharest. On his return to Warsaw, Beck was going to address himself directly to these questions and to endeavour to get a clarification of the Rumanian position as soon as possible. However, Halifax denied newspaper reports to the effect that Britain was going to conclude a treaty with Rumania along the lines of the Anglo-Polish agreement. In so doing he observed, that a line of distinction had to be drawn between Poland and Rumania, for Poland was a big Power with relatively big resources, which could not be said for Rumania. Halifax could be understood as implying that Britain and France were finding it difficult to assume the same obligations towards Rumania as those they had assumed towards Poland, and they were evidently counting on some additional combination with other Powers before guaranteeing the Rumanian frontiers.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 150.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

April 7, 1939

Bonnet phoned this morning and asked me to come and see him on a "very urgent matter." He began the conversation by saying that the situation was becoming ever more acute, that military experts were convinced that a German attack was imminent, that it was impossible to know in advance, of course, against

whom the major blow would be struck, but most probably Germany would try to seize Rumania and possibly part of Poland before she attempted a decisive confrontation with the USSR or France. The best way to counteract this would, of course, be the organization of collective resistance. This, in fact, had been the main import of the declaration* "inspired by France", but the implementation of that plan had come up against the opposition of Poland. Considering the obtaining situation and believing that the USSR, too, could not be indifferent to the seizure of Rumania and Poland, Bonnet felt it desirable to begin immediately negotiations between the USSR and France to determine what measures they should take in the event of Germany attacking Rumania and Poland. Bonnet made but a fleeting reference to our pact,⁶ but it is quite obvious that without saying it in so many words, he had in view variant No. 1** with which we are already familiar. The only thing I ventured to tell him was that such a proposal would have been understandable during the Czechoslovak crisis, since both our countries were linked with Czechoslovakia through a Mutual Assistance Pact, but it was somewhat strange in respect of a country which, in his own words, did not want our assistance. To this he replied that the more confident were Poland and Rumania of their security, in which France and the USSR were equally interested, the less would they fear collective co-operation. I promised to transmit his proposal to you.

Yesterday Daladier dined with me and railed at Poland in a most abusive manner. He said he had told Lukasiewicz that the Polish policy would in the long run lead Poland to ruin. Daladier ascribes to himself a considerable role in the change in England's line towards the USSR.

Ambassador

From the archives.

* See Document No. 121.

** See Document No. 147.

No. 151.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***April 8, 1939*

Today General Gamelin called on me. He imputed his visit to a wish to apologize for not having come to dinner together with Daladier, but it is quite obvious that he did not call on me just for this. And, indeed, from the very outset he initiated a political conversation. He touched upon almost all the painful issues. He considers the situation in the Mediterranean after Franco's accession to the Anti-Communist Pact (which he regards as Spain's joining the Axis) and after the seizure of Albania by the Italians to be extremely dangerous. Relegating the decisive role to Germany (he called Italy her vassal), he admits of the possibility of another war. He thinks that in exerting pressure on Poland, Rumania, and now on Yugoslavia as well, Germany is seeking mainly to neutralize those countries and erect a strong barrier between the East and the West. Noting that he was not a politician, he said he believed that even now it was not too late to oppose Germany with a front of "peaceful countries." He touched upon the mistakes of the past, though in a very cautious way. He spoke of the first "lost opportunity" in the occupation of the Rhineland (which in part he explained by the position England took at the time), he spoke with evident disapproval of the policy of "non-intervention" and he quite definitely disassociated himself from Munich. He welcomed the fact that the English had at last taken an interest in the affairs of Eastern Europe, and dropped, as if parenthetically, that since Poland and Rumania were Germany's approaches to the USSR, Moscow doubtless had an interest in strengthening those countries' "will to resist" and their security. He made no secret of the fact that he did not particularly trust Beck, but he felt that the military men in Poland were otherwise disposed. Before leaving he said to me: "As a soldier I am not familiar with all the conversations conducted between the diplomats and I am unaware, in particular, of all your talks with

Bonnet, but I personally believe the time has come to rally all the forces able and ready to fight aggression."

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 152.

TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR

April 9, 1939

Italy's actions in Albania have completely spoiled the Easter holidays for the British Ministers. Today Chamberlain returned from Scotland where he had expected to go fishing, and meetings and conferences have been in progress at his residence all day. As far as could be ascertained from the incomplete information at my disposal, the question of offering Greece and Turkey the same guarantees as had been given to Poland was discussed.* The dispatch of an English squadron to Corfu is contemplated.

In contrast to the alacrity with which, it seems, the British Government is going to act in respect of the two above-named countries, the negotiations with Rumania are being delayed. It is my impression that the British Government is seeking some plausible pretext to make impossible, or at least to delay as long as possible, any guarantees to Rumania, and thus leave Hitler a free "corridor" through Hungary and Rumania to the borders of the USSR. Chamberlain and Bonnet evidently have not yet given up hopes of prodding Hitler towards the Soviet Ukraine. I know that on more than one occasion Simon has upheld in the Cabinet the view that the line of defence of British interests should pass through Turkey, Egypt and so forth, but not through the Balkans.

Ambassador

From the archives.

* See Document No. 137.

No. 153.

**EXCERPTS FROM A LETTER FROM THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S
COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***April 9, 1939*

1. About a month has passed since the occupation of Prague, and it can now be said quite definitely that the wave of anti-German sentiments caused by that act in England is running high and strong. I am referring here to the broad masses of the people, notably the broad masses of the conservative party. There is much evidence of this wherever one looks, but particularly significant are the statements of people like Beaverbrook who, while being principled advocates of isolation and opponents of "assuming obligations" on the Continent, are nonetheless compelled to admit that the man in the street no longer wants to have anything at all to do with politics, generally so dear to their heart. Why is this so? All of the more responsible men with whom I have had occasion to discuss this (Eden, Vansittart, Lloyd George, Sinclair,* Beaverbrook, Dalton, Churchill and others), are unanimous in believing that Hitler has at present awakened in England the old and powerful political passions which at the beginning of this century were aroused by the Kaiser, and at the beginning of the 19th century by Napoleon. For already four centuries the basic principle of British policy in Europe has been a life-or-death struggle against any Power seeking hegemony over the Continent. Philipp II of Spain, Louis XIV, Napoleon, the Kaiser—these are the historical figures whose names are linked with such attempts and whose actions had provoked implacable enmity in England. This has become a national tradition, and traditions, as is known, play an immense role on the British Isles. A far more important point, however, is that this line of policy has been, and is, in keeping with the state interest of the country as it has been understood by the ruling classes of Great Britain. The occupation of Prague and the annexation of Czechoslovakia, coming as they do, in the wake of a whole series of acts of aggression and violence on the part of German fascism,

* Prominent member of the British Liberal Party.

have finally convinced the broad masses in this country that Hitler has set himself the goal of achieving domination over Europe, and possibly over the whole world. This has caused a sharp and almost sudden reaction in the country. The mass sentiments have crystallized into the spontaneous "Germany is the enemy!"

2. But how is the general historical principle of fighting any Power seeking hegemony on the Continent being reflected in the concrete situation of today? Here again, summing up all that I have had occasion to observe and hear from the more responsible representatives of political and public circles, I do not doubt for an instant that if England were firmly convinced that Hitler intended to set out and conquer the Soviet Ukraine, the sentiments in this country would be quite unlike what they are at present. But the point is that there is no such confidence. [...]

It is, of course, quite possible that Chamberlain now feels resentful of Hitler, who has through his actions placed Chamberlain in a rather ridiculous situation. [...] But all that I know about Chamberlain's mood leads me to think that the Premier is essentially the same man he used to be and that all his new "gestures" in the field of foreign policy have been made under the pressure of public opinion which he is following very reluctantly, resisting wherever possible, at every step. Nonetheless, as leader of his Party and the Government, Chamberlain realizes that in order to avoid a catastrophe for his Cabinet he must now, at least to some extent, take cover behind the mood of the masses, while playing for time until circumstances allow him (if they do) to return to his policy of "appeasement", even if only in a somewhat modified form. Still less can one trust information about the "conversion" of people like Simon or Hoare. [...]

I. Maisky

From the archives.

No. 154.**TELEGRAM FROM A SOVIET MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER IN JAPAN TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE RED ARMY***April 9, 1939*

Oshima once again raised the question of a military pact¹⁶ and demanded a reply from the Japanese Government. After a long discussion, Japan has decided to agree to a military pact directed solely against the USSR.

Some groups of military men insisted on a pact directed also against the democratic countries but they remained in the minority.

Germany and Italy insisted on a military pact against England, but Japanese naval circles close to the Throne resolutely opposed this.

Ambassador Ott has learned in the foreign ministry that the Japanese will not risk finally losing America's goodwill by agreeing to accede to a pact against the democratic countries.

Ambassador Ott believes Japan will nevertheless be forced to join the pact.

Ramzai

From the archives.

No. 155.**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE***April 10, 1939*

Tell Bonnet that in response to his proposal* you have been instructed to state the following. In connection with the grave position of Rumania, the Soviet Government responded in its time to the communication of the British Government with a proposal to call a conference,** which failed to take place through

* See Document No. 150.

** See Document No. 102.

no fault of the Soviet Government. The Soviet Government also responded affirmatively* to the British Government's concrete proposal for a joint four-Power declaration** but the declaration, again through no fault of the Soviet Government, was not signed. Although Poland and Rumania have not appealed to the Soviet Government for aid and the USSR is free from any obligations in respect of assistance to those two States, the Soviet Government is ready, as before, to hear and study any concrete proposals. For your part, tell him you are ready to transmit his concrete proposals to Moscow.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

No. 156.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN**

April 10, 1939

When you talk with Halifax ask him sometime whether he had talked with Beck about Latvia and about possible seizure by Poland of a Latvian port. He will, of course, deny it, but it is the tone of the denial that is important.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

No. 157.

**EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S
COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE**

April 11, 1939

It appears to us that, like Halifax, Bonnet is talking to you from time to time about the political situation mainly in order to

* See Document No. 121.

** See Document No. 122.

be able to reply to the Opposition that he is "in contact and in consultation with the USSR." Bonnet is no more inclined to assist Poland, Rumania or anyone else in Eastern Europe than he was inclined to help Czechoslovakia some time ago, and in talking with us he is also pursuing the aim of securing an opportunity to speak of our unwillingness to participate in assistance. It is therefore necessary to answer him in such a way that he would not be able, as he was in September, to refer to our replies in justification of his own passivity and his capitulation position. It does not follow from this, however, that we are obliged to respond to his vague hints with any concrete proposals or by disclosing our position. Indeed, in their discussions with us after the episode of the joint declaration,* the British and the French have not hinted at any kind of concrete proposal or any kind of treaty with us. If we analyse these discussions, it becomes clear that what they want is to get some kind of binding promise from us without entering into any agreement with us and without undertaking any commitments in respect to us. We are to undertake, before the whole world and more formally in respect of England and France, to assist Poland and Rumania at their first request and in whatever forms they should themselves indicate to us. But why should we undertake such unilateral commitments? We are told that it is in our interests to protect Poland and Rumania against Germany. But we shall always be aware of our own interests and will do whatever they require us to do. Why then should we commit ourselves in advance, without deriving any advantage from those commitments?

All the benefits of the latest Anglo-French fuss have so far gone only to Beck, who can now take stronger stand in negotiations with Hitler and strike a bargain at the expense of Lithuania and the Baltic area. What kind of a struggle with aggression is this, when the predatory appetites of both Germany (the winning back of the Corridor and Danzig) and Poland will be satisfied at one and the same time? What is more, having pledged herself to render assistance to Poland without any reservations, England has in fact concluded a treaty with Poland also against us. True, we do not intend to attack Poland, but nonetheless by strengthening Poland's positions vis-à-vis the USSR, the agreement with England cannot fail to be an inimical act.

* See Document No. 121.

I have sent you a telegram today about the statement made by the Rumanian Minister in Ankara. Unfortunately, in the process of being transmitted from one place to another the statement has evidently become distorted. But if we accept the version communicated to us by the Secretary of the Turkish Embassy, it will appear that England and France are prepared to associate themselves with the Rumanian-Polish Treaty, concluded, according to Poland's own assertions, solely against the USSR. Even if the Treaty is now extended to cover Germany as well, it still means that Rumania has acquired allies against us, and her position on the Bessarabian question has been strengthened. Such are the results of English and French "co-operation" with the USSR.

Bonnet's statement about his readiness to sign a three-Power declaration with us and England but without Poland is devoid of significance. It is easy for Bonnet to make such generous statements, knowing that England will not accept this, and presuming that the declaration will be unacceptable for us either. [...]

As for the new problems that have arisen in connection with the occupation of Albania, the only thing we know is that contrary to newspaper reports, the British Government has as yet given Greece no guarantees. It has merely stated that it cannot take the attitude of an indifferent onlooker if Corfu and other Greek islands are occupied. According to another version, it has stated that it would consider such occupation to be a hostile act.

François-Poncet is conducting the same tactics from Rome as he had done previously from Berlin. Striving towards an early agreement with Italy, he is trying to intimidate the French Government in his dispatches, definitely overrating the Italian military preparations.

We have information from Turkish sources that Italy has suggested that France should give up her Syria mandate and withdraw so that Syria could then be attached to Italy. France has rejected this proposal. It would be interesting to find out how true this is.

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 158.**EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S
COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR
TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN***April 11, 1939*

I wish to draw your attention to my letter of today's date to Comrade Surits,* a copy of which is being dispatched to you as well, where I note the, so to say, anti-Soviet character which England's agreement with Poland and Rumania may assume. On occasion you may cautiously enquire of Halifax whether this aspect of the matter has been taken into account and whether England is consciously entering into agreements formally directed against us, or whether she is being drawn into this by others. We can on no account be reassured by the argument that we, as they say, do not intend to attack Poland and Rumania and therefore should have nothing to worry about. I feel it is possible that Beck's consent to English assistance has to do with the anti-Soviet character of the agreement. Particularly inadmissible would be England's association with the Polish-Rumanian Treaty, because for one thing the treaty was concluded openly against the USSR, and for another, it affects the Bessarabian problem. Since the question of aid arose in connection with Germany's contemplated aggression, we were entitled to expect that in pledging her assistance, England would specifically indicate that this was a question of aid against Germany. [...]

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 159.**PLAN OF GERMANY'S ATTACK ON POLAND
("OPERATION WHITE")***April 11, 1939*

The present attitude of Poland requires, over and above the plan "Frontier Security East" the initiation of military preparations, to remove if necessary any threat from this direction for ever.

* See Document No. 157.

1.) Political Requirements and Aims

German relations with Poland continue to be based on the principles of avoiding any disturbances. Should Poland, however, change her policy towards Germany, which so far has been based on the same principles as our own, and adopt a threatening attitude towards Germany, a final settlement might become necessary in spite of the Treaty in force with Poland.

The aim then will be to destroy Polish military strength and create in the East a situation which satisfies the requirements of national defence. The Free State of Danzig will be proclaimed a part of the Reich territory at the outbreak of hostilities, at the latest.

The political leaders consider it their task in this case to isolate Poland if possible, that is to say, to limit the war to Poland only.

The development of increasing internal crises in France and resulting British restraint might produce such a situation in the not too distant future.

Intervention by Russia, if she were in a position to intervene, cannot be expected to be of any use to Poland, because this would mean Poland's destruction by Bolshevism.

The attitude of the Baltic States will be determined wholly by German military superiority. [...]

Germany cannot count on Hungary as a certain ally. Italy's attitude is determined by the Rome-Berlin Axis.¹⁰

2.) Military Conclusions

The great objectives in the reconstruction of the German Wehrmacht will continue to be determined by the antagonism of the Western Democracies. "Operation White" constitutes only a precautionary complement to these preparations. It is not to be looked upon in any way, however, as the necessary prerequisite for a military conflict with the Western opponents.

The isolation of Poland will be all more easily maintained, even after the outbreak of hostilities, if we succeed in starting the war with sudden, heavy blows and in gaining rapid successes.

The overall situation will require, however, that in all cases precautions be taken to safeguard the western frontier and the German North Sea coast, as well as the air above them.

Against the Baltic States—Lithuania in particular—security measures are to be carried out in case of a Polish march through this country.

3.) Tasks of the Wehrmacht

The task of the Wehrmacht is to destroy the Polish Armed Forces. To this end a surprise attack is to be aimed at and prepared. Camouflaged or open general mobilization will not be ordered earlier than the day before the attack and at the latest possible moment. The forces provided for "Frontier Security West" (section I, "Frontier Security") must not be employed for the time being for any other purpose.

All other frontiers are to be kept under observation only; the Lithuanian frontier is to be covered.

4.) Tasks for the Branches of the Wehrmacht

a) Army

The operational objective in the East is the annihilation of the Polish Army.

For this purpose the German Wehrmacht, on the southern flank, may enter Slovak territory. On the northern flank, communication between Pomerania and East Prussia must be established quickly.

The preparations for the opening of operations are to be made in such a way that, even without waiting for the planned deployment of mobilized units, positions can be taken up by the troops immediately available. A camouflaged assembly of these units just before the day of attack may be provided. I reserve for myself the decision in this matter.

Whether the forces provided for "Frontier Security West" will be deployed there in their entirety, or whether part of them will be available for some other employment, will depend upon the political situation.

b) Navy

The tasks of the Navy in the Baltic Sea are as follows:

- 1) Destruction and/or elimination of the Polish Naval Forces.

2) Blockade of all sea-lanes to the Polish naval bases, especially Gdynia. The neutral shipping in Polish harbours and in Danzig is to be given a time limit for sailing at the beginning of the invasion of Poland. After its expiry, the Navy will be free to take blockade measures.

The disadvantages for the conduct of naval warfare caused by this time limit must be accepted.

3) Suppression of Polish maritime trade.

4) Securing of the sea-route between the Reich and East Prussia.

5) Protection of German sea-communications to Sweden and the Baltic States.

6) Reconnaissance and protection, as far as possible in an inconspicuous manner, against intervention by the Soviet Navy from the Gulf of Finland.

Suitable naval forces are to be provided for defence of the North Sea coast and its approaches.

In the southern part of the North Sea and in the Skagerrak such measures are to be taken as are deemed advisable as precautions against surprise intervention in the conflict by the Western Powers. These measures are to be restricted to the absolute minimum. Their inconspicuousness must be assured. It is of decisive importance to avoid here any sort of action which might aggravate the political attitude of the Western Powers.

c) Luftwaffe

The luftwaffe, except for necessary forces left in the West, is to be used for a surprise attack on Poland.

Besides destruction of the Polish Air Force in the shortest time possible, the tasks of the German Luftwaffe are principally as follows:

1) Interference with Polish mobilization and prevention of planned strategic concentrations by the Polish Army.

2) Direct support of the Army, especially support of the spear-heads starting immediately after the crossing of the frontier. A possible transfer of air units to East Prussia, before the beginning of operations, must not endanger the element of surprise.

The first crossing of the frontier by air is to be synchronized with the operations of the Army.

Attacks against the harbour of Gdynia may be undertaken only

after expiry of the sailing period for neutral ships (see number 4b).

Strong points of air defence are to be set up above Stettin,* Berlin and the Upper Silesian industrial district including Mor. Ostrava and Brno.

From *Documents on German Foreign-Policy. 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. VI, pp. 224-227.

No. 160.

DECLARATION BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT ON GUARANTEES TO GREECE AND RUMANIA **

April 13, 1939

His Majesty's Government attach the greatest importance to the avoidance of disturbance by force or threats of force of the *status quo* in the Mediterranean and the Balkan Peninsula. Consequently they have come to the conclusion that, in the event of any action being taken which clearly threatened the independence of Greece or Roumania, and which the Greek or Roumanian Government respectively considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Greek or Roumanian Government, as the case might be, all the support in their power. We are communicating this declaration to the Governments directly concerned, and to others, especially Turkey, whose close relations with the Greek Government are known. I understand that the French Government are making a similar declaration this afternoon.

From *Documents on British Foreign Policy. 1919-1939* Third Series, Vol. V, London, 1952, p. 197.

* Polish, Szezecin.

** The Declaration was announced by Prime Minister Chamberlain in the House of Commons.

No. 161.

**DECLARATION OF THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT ON
GUARANTEES TO GREECE, RUMANIA AND POLAND***April 13, 1939*

The French Government attaches exceedingly great importance to the avoidance of any alteration by force or threats of force of the *status quo* in the Mediterranean and in the Balkan Peninsula. Considering the particular alarm touched off by the events of the last few weeks, the French Government has offered special guarantees to Rumania and Greece that in the event of any action being taken which clearly threatened the independence of Rumania or Greece, which the Rumanian or Greek Government considered it vital to resist with their national armed forces, the French Government would feel itself bound at once to lend them all the assistance in its power. The British Government has taken the same position.*

The French Government was, on the other hand, happy to learn that mutual obligations had been undertaken by Great Britain and Poland which had decided to render each other support in order to protect their independence if it should be directly or indirectly threatened.** The Franco-Polish alliance¹⁴ has, on the other hand, been reaffirmed by both the French and the Polish Government in the same spirit.

France and Poland are offering each other immediate and direct guarantees against any direct or indirect threats that might be detrimental to their vital interests.

Translated from the French in *Documents on International Affairs, 1939-1946*, Vol. 1, London, 1951, p. 202.

* See Document No. 160.

** See Document No. 148.

No. 162.**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN***April 13, 1939*

With reference to what Halifax told you about England being seriously interested in rendering assistance to Greece and Rumania, tell him that we, too, are not indifferent to Rumania's fate and would like to know how England envisages the forms of her assistance as well as of the assistance to be rendered by other interested Powers, and that we are prepared to take part in giving such assistance.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

No. 163.**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRI-
TAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***April 14, 1939*

Today I called on Halifax and gave him the message you asked me to convey.* Halifax was very pleased and said he would immediately inform Chamberlain of my communication.

He went on to say that just before my arrival he had dictated a telegram to Seeds instructing the latter to enquire of Litvinov whether the Soviet Government would consider it possible to offer a simultaneous guarantee to Poland and Rumania, and perhaps also to certain other States, as England and France had done in regard to Greece and Rumania.** (I understood Halifax as implying the limitrophe States but I am not absolutely clear on this point). In this way it would be possible to avoid the difficulties which had wrecked the "four-Power declaration."***

* See Document No. 162.

** See Documents Nos. 160, 161.

*** See Document No. 121.

Halifax believed that my communication did not conflict with the aforesaid instructions to Seeds, and he would therefore send off his telegram, merely adding that after it was dictated he had received from the Soviet Government the communication I had made. Halifax enquired about my opinion of his proposal, but I evaded making any comments, indicating that I had no instructions on this subject. Halifax expressed the hope of receiving a reply from Moscow not later than the 17th as the moment was very critical and it was necessary to act swiftly.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 164.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

April 14, 1939

Today Bonnet handed to me his "concrete" proposal for transmission to you. It boils down to an exchange of letters in the following terms: "In the event that France should find herself in a state of war with Germany as a consequence of her rendering assistance to Poland or Rumania, the USSR would render France immediate assistance and support. In the event that the USSR should find itself in a state of war with Germany as a consequence of its giving aid to Poland or Rumania, France would give the USSR immediate assistance and support. Both Governments shall without delay decide on the forms of such aid and shall take every measure to guarantee its full effectiveness."

These letters are to supplement our existing Pact.⁶ The handing over of this "proposal" was accompanied by a torrent of words, already familiar to you, about the tragic nature of the present moment, about our interest in not allowing the Germans to destroy Poland and especially Rumania, about the need to act swiftly and to "prepare the ground for broader co-operation in the future" and the like. Bonnet himself undoubtedly realizes that his "proposal" of today is not a serious one, that it is one-sided

(an attempt to give it a voluntarily bilateral character has something comic about it) and that there is no chance of our accepting it. It was not accidental, therefore, that he kept repeating that he himself did not consider the proposal to be "ideal", but that he could not think of anything else at the moment and hoped that Moscow would come to his assistance by suggesting something itself, and that he was, allegedly, prepared in advance to do all that depended "on France" to secure effective co-operation with the USSR.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 165.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE USSR AND THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN THE
USSR**

April 15, 1939

After a short introduction in which he repeated past statements about a decisive and irreversible change in British policy, and about the difficulties raised by certain States, Seeds referred to yesterday's conversation between Halifax and Comrade Maisky* and then formulated as follows the question which the English Government was addressing to the Soviet Government: "Would the Soviet Government agree to make a public declaration (perhaps repeating Stalin's recent statement about the Soviet Union supporting nations which were victims of aggression, and referring to recent statements by the British and French Governments) that in the event of any act of aggression against any European neighbour of the Soviet Union, which resisted such an act, the assistance of the Soviet Government would be available, if desired, and would be afforded in such a manner as would be found most convenient."

(The above is a verbatim translation).

Seeds observed that in his view the greatest danger was now threatening Rumania, not Poland, in view of Hitler's desire to

* See Document No. 163.

obtain Rumanian oil, and that Britain would probably also include Turkey among the States to be guaranteed.

I promised to bring these proposals to the notice of my Government, limiting myself to the remark that I did not find in it a reply to the question we had asked Halifax through Maisky as to how the British Government envisaged its own aid and the aid to be rendered by us, and that the English Government evidently preferred abstract declarations of principle to more precise commitments to previously co-ordinated forms of assistance.

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 166.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE USSR
COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS TO THE SOVIET
CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN TURKEY**

April 15, 1939

Convey this to the President of the Turkish Republic, M. Inonu, personally:

Molotov has authorized me to state to you the following:

We believe that in connection with the new situation taking shape in the area of the Balkans and the Black Sea it would be expedient to have reciprocal consultations between representatives of Turkey and the USSR and to map out possible measures of defence against aggression.

If the Turkish Government also finds such a move to be expedient time and place of the meeting of representatives should be agreed upon. We for our part would suggest Tbilisi or Batumi. It is desirable not to put the matter off but to carry it out as speedily as possible. We shall be waiting for a reply.

V. Molotov

From the archives.

No. 167.**TELEGRAM FROM A SOVIET MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER IN JAPAN TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE RED ARMY***April 15, 1939*

The Second Secretary of the German Embassy has returned from Berlin where he took part in several conferences at the Foreign Ministry. The conferences were attended by Ribbentrop. The Secretary has said that in the coming year or two Germany's policy will be concentrated exclusively on the French and British questions with due regard for all matters connected with the USSR.

Germany's main objective is to attain such political and military might as to compel Britain to recognize without a war Germany's claims to hegemony in Central Europe and to yield to her colonial demands.

Only on this basis will Germany be prepared to conclude a lasting peace with England, even at the cost of disavowing Italy, and to start a war with the USSR.

The Secretary feels that the most dangerous development of events in Europe is to be expected very shortly as Germany and Italy have to hurry to gain the upper hand over England, for they know that in another two years it will be too late in view of England's great reserves.

Ramzai

From the archives.

No. 168.**TELEGRAM FROM A SOVIET MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER IN JAPAN TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE RED ARMY***April 15, 1939*

Ott has received information about the military Anti-Comintern Pact¹⁶: in the event of Germany and Italy starting war with

the USSR Japan will join them at any moment without raising any conditions. But if the war should be started with the democratic countries Japan will join only if the attack should occur in the Far East or if the USSR should join the democratic countries in the war.

If things turn out differently, another conference will be convened to decide whether or not Japan will join the Pact.

Ramzai

From the archives.

No. 169.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADORS IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE**

April 16, 1939

I called in Seeds today and told him that in his communication of yesterday,* we did not find a reply to the question you had put to Halifax, namely: how did England envisage her own assistance, and the assistance of the USSR and other States concerned. Before assuming formal obligations we should like to know more precisely what the matter was all about. We were therefore still waiting for a reply from the English Government to our questions.** Seeds was not pleased with our reply but promised to transmit it to London.

Communicated for your information.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

* See Document No. 165.

** See Document No. 162.

No. 170.**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR***April 17, 1939*

Seeds came to see me at 10 p.m. and made no secret of his displeasure at my having summoned him from the theatre without letting him see the play to the end. At first, therefore, he reacted rather coldly to my proposal.* But as he listened, he became more and more attentive, and finally said he found the proposal to be very interesting and would immediately transmit it to London. On the subject of the French proposal** Seeds said that, as Payart had told him, the French had supported the English proposal.*** I observed that it was also Payart who had told us in connection with the English proposal that his Government was not withdrawing its own proposal. In respect of the individual clauses of our proposal I gave Seeds the following explanations in answer to his questions:

Clause 2. Bonnet had himself suggested to us a mutual assistance obligation. And the English proposal had mentioned guarantees for all our Western neighbours. Furthermore, we had taken into account the statement made in Parliament by Sir John Simon, in reply to a question from a member of the House, that the English Government would not reject a proposal for a military alliance with the USSR.

Clause 3. Experience has shown that mutual assistance pacts not reinforced with a corresponding precise definition of military commitments, are often ineffective. The absence of such definitions in the pacts between the USSR, France and Czechoslovakia undoubtedly played a negative role in what happened to Czechoslovakia.

Clause 4. Chamberlain's statement in Parliament about assistance to Poland was undoubtedly provoked by the German threat looming over Poland. Yet the statement was about aggression in

* See Document No. 171

** See Document No. 169.

*** See Document No. 163.

general, and the Poles could have interpreted it as a promise of assistance against the USSR as well. Even though we do not intend to attack Poland, we would nonetheless consider an agreement between England and Poland against us to be incompatible with the kind of relations between us and England that are now being suggested.

Clause 8. We regard an agreement with Turkey to be extremely desirable. We are not including her among the participants in the general agreement we are proposing, as Turkey would hardly agree or be able to render assistance to any of our neighbours except Rumania. A special agreement with Turkey is therefore necessary. Furthermore, the English Ambassador himself had told me that negotiations on some kind of agreement between England and Turkey were already under way.

Seeds was obviously in a hurry to get back to the theatre, where he had left his wife, and therefore he was not inclined to conduct a long conversation.

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 171.

PROPOSAL PRESENTED BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR *

April 17, 1939

As we regard the French proposal** as an acceptable one in principle and wish extend M. Bonnet's idea, and as we also desirous of placing relations between the three States on a solid foundation, we are endeavouring to combine the English and French proposals in the form of the following propositions which we are submitting for the consideration of the British and French Governments:

* On April 18, this proposal was also presented by the Soviet Ambassador in France to the French Foreign Minister.

** See Document No. 104.

1. That England, France and the USSR conclude with one another an agreement for a period of five to ten years, by which they would oblige themselves to render mutually forthwith all manner of assistance, including that of a military nature, in case of aggression in Europe against any one of the contracting Powers.

2. That England, France and the USSR undertake to render all manner of assistance, including that of a military nature, to the Eastern European States situated between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea and bordering on the USSR, in case of aggression against these States.

3. That England, France and the USSR undertake to discuss and to settle within the shortest possible period of time the extent and forms of military assistance to be rendered by each of these States in fulfilment of paragraphs 1 and 2.

4. That the English Government announce that the assistance promised by it to Poland concerns exclusively aggression on the part of Germany.

5. That the treaty of alliance which exists between Poland and Rumania be declared operative in case of aggression of any nature against Poland and Rumania, or else be revoked altogether as one directed against the USSR.

6. That England, France and the USSR undertake, following the outbreak of hostilities, not to enter into negotiations of any kind whatsoever and not to conclude peace with the aggressors separately from one another and without the common consent of all three Powers.

7. That an agreement on the above lines be signed simultaneously with the convention to be elaborated in accordance with paragraph 3.

8. That the necessity be recognized for England, France and the USSR to enter into joint negotiations with Turkey for a special agreement on mutual assistance.

From the archives.

No. 172.
TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR
IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR

April 18, 1939

Our proposal* made a tremendous impression on Bonnet. As soon as he had familiarized himself with all eight clauses of our proposal he went into an adjoining room, probably to telephone Daladier.

I did not have to give any particular explanations on paragraphs 4 and 5 as, these points, having no direct bearing on France, probably did not particularly interest Bonnet. For that matter, in regard to paragraph 5 he even said that "this is a fully legitimate demand". His entire interest was naturally focussed on paragraphs 1 and 2. In regard to paragraph 2 he was evidently disturbed by the extension of the guarantee to the Baltic region. He raised no objections but asked several times which countries this related to. In familiarizing himself with paragraph 1, Bonnet noted with obvious satisfaction that it applied only to Europe and did not extend to the Far East. Quite understandably, Bonnet did not give, nor could he have given, a reply, but he did ask me to communicate to you that his "first impression was a very favourable one" and that he had to admit that our draft was "most interesting".

Would you not consider it necessary, in view of the seriousness of the question, for me to ask for a meeting with Daladier? This could be done with Bonnet's knowledge so that he should not take offence.

Ambassador

From the archives.

* See Document No. 171.

No. 173

**TELEGRAM FROM THE GERMAN CHARGÉ
D'AFFAIRES IN BRITAIN TO THE MINISTRY FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GERMANY***April 18, 1939*

The Counsellor of the Polish Embassy, whom I met today at a social function, said that both Poland and Rumania continued to reject any Soviet Russian offers of assistance. Germany, the Counsellor said, may rest assured that Poland would never allow a single Soviet Russian soldier, whether from the army or the air force, to set foot on her territory. This puts an end to all speculations about aerodromes being made available to Soviet Russia to be used as a base for air operations against Germany. The same goes for Rumania. In the words of M. Jazdzewski, it is well known that Soviet Russia's aviation does not have enough range to attack Germany from bases situated on the territory of Soviet Russia. Poland is thereby proving once again that she is a European barrier against Bolshevism.

I also had the impression that the Counsellor of the Polish Embassy wanted to give me a hint that the British Government had been making no more attempts to secure a change in the position of Poland and Rumania. There could be no question of a weakening of Poland's and Rumania's resistance to the policy of involving Soviet Russia. When I asked M. Jazdzewski whether the English had not told M. Beck of any reservations they had in regard to their direct negotiations with Soviet Russia, he evaded answering my question but emphasized once again that he could not imagine how Soviet Russia could possibly be included in the British system without the co-operation of Rumania and Poland.

I know from another source that both these countries would be prepared to accept supplies of war materials from Russia. In this way Soviet Russia's aid would be limited to supplies of this sort.

Press reports are so contradictory that no picture can be formed on their basis.

Th. Kordt

No. 174.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE US AMBASSADOR IN
BELGIUM TO THE US SECRETARY OF STATE***April 18, 1939*

For the President and the Secretary of State. I am convinced that the decisive factor in Hitler's determination will be whether or not Russia will support Britain and France wholeheartedly. From personal knowledge I know that the Soviets did mistrust Britain and France, both their purposes and their performances. They do trust you. They also believe in me. * I am impelled therefore to suggest that if you considered it advisable I could go to Moscow on the pretext of cleaning up personal affairs for a few days (if that pretext is advisable) and can personally and if need be unofficially see Litvinov, Kalinin,** Molotov and, I am quite sure, Stalin also with the object of aiding in securing a quick and speedy agreement with Britain against aggression. Neither the French nor the British in my opinion can personally reach the highest authorities there in the negotiations there pending. I am confident that I not only can see the proper people otherwise unreachable but that they have confidence in my good judgment and sincerity. In my judgment Hitler will not fight now if he is confronted with two military fronts. I believe that I could help without commitments in either turning the scales in the Russian decision or aid in strengthening it and thus in a small way help in implementing your great effort for world peace. It may be that from your wider information such action is unnecessary or inadvisable. You know I am sure that my sole purpose is to help. Speed is vital.

Davies

*From Foreign Relations of the United States.
Diplomatic Papers. 1939, Vol. I,
Washington, 1956, pp. 234-235.*

* Joseph E. Davies was Ambassador to the Soviet Union 1936-38.

** President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

No. 175.**TELEGRAM FROM THE US SECRETARY OF STATE TO
THE US AMBASSADOR IN BELGIUM***April 18, 1939*

Personal for the Ambassador. The President and I sincerely appreciate your suggestion and offer to be helpful in the present situation. We both feel you will understand, however, that from a domestic point of view such a visit however carefully prepared, might be misconstrued. During these days when our neutrality legislation is being considered by the Congress, it is more than ever important not to run any risk.

Hull

From *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers. 1939, Vol. 1,*
Washington, 1956, p. 236.

No. 176.**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE***April 19, 1939*

To avoid misunderstandings I wish to inform you that in the second paragraph* we have in mind Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Poland and Rumania. If you did not list all of these countries, do so. Paragraph 5 also applies to France, for she too must bring appropriate pressure to bear on Poland and Rumania.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

* See Document No. 171.

No. 177.**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***April 21, 1939*

Raczynski called on Halifax yesterday. According to Litauer* Halifax told Raczynski that the Soviet proposal,** though serious, went farther than the British Government was prepared to go.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 178.**EXCERPT FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE TURKISH AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR***April 21, 1939*

Apaydin came to tell me that just the day before he had received the information I had asked him about several days ago. Its gist is as follows.

Around the 15th the English Ambassador offered to form an alliance with Turkey against Italy in case of aggression against the independence and interests of Turkey or of a direct or indirect threat to her. If Turkey defended herself, England would support her with all the means at her disposal. Turkey should likewise come to the assistance of England if the latter was at war with Italy. Experts were to discuss in greater detail the eventuality requiring such assistance. Subsequently another proposal was received from England broadening the former proposal by extending assistance to the eventuality of a threat emanating from Germany.

* President of the Foreign Press Association in London.

** See Document No. 171.

To this proposal Turkey had given roughly the following oral reply. She is in solidarity with the English point of view that violent actions by the Axis constitute a great danger for the small countries. Turkey considers it her duty to struggle against the policy of the Axis aimed at achieving hegemony in Europe, even if her interests are not directly affected. In particular, the possibility of Italian hegemony in the Mediterranean constitutes as much of a danger for Turkey as for England. Thus, the Turkish policy runs parallel with the English and is in harmony with it. Before giving a final reply, however, Turkey would wish to clear up certain points. If Turkey were to take a definite position against the Axis Powers, their pressure would be directed in the first instance at the Straits. This is giving Turkey cause for reflection. It is important to know what assistance Turkey will be rendered by England, France and the Soviet Union. So far Turkey has received no indications on this point. Nor has she received a reply from the Soviet Union (it is not clear to what question). Since Turkey would have to shoulder the onerous duty of defending the Straits, she would not be in a position to render any aid to Rumania. It is also necessary to give some thought to whether Turkey's co-operation with the Anglo-French bloc might not make Bulgaria more implacable, in which case Turkey will be deprived of the possibility of playing her role of mediator in the Balkans between Bulgaria and Rumania. Furthermore, Hitler had promised to give Turkey the twenty-four 30-cm motorized coastal guns for which she had placed orders with Czechoslovak plants. Would Turkey get them if she joined the Anglo-French bloc? What would be England's advice in that eventuality (that is, would England offer substitutes for those guns)?

Apaydin had been instructed to ascertain the intentions of the USSR regarding support for Turkey in the Straits, as well as our views in connection with the Turkish reply, for Turkey would in any case wish to have the co-operation of the USSR in defending the Straits.

I thanked Apaydin for his information, promising to communicate it to my Government, and then I informed him briefly about our latest correspondence with Turkey about the visits and about the forthcoming departure of Comrade Potemkin to Ankara. [...]

From the archives.

Litvinov

No. 179**TELEGRAM FROM THE US CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN
THE USSR TO THE US SECRETARY OF STATE***April 22, 1939*

The British Embassy here states that the conversations with Litvinov are proceeding satisfactorily and that the Soviet Union has manifested an attitude of sensational co-operation with France and England. Although exact details of the discussions are still unavailable it is stated that the unilateral basis for a Soviet declaration embodied in the original British proposal* has been abandoned and that other measures concerning possible Soviet association with the position adopted by England and France are now being discussed. It is again affirmed that the technical matters of Soviet military assistance are not a part of the present British-Soviet conversation in Moscow and that the question of the Far East has not been raised by either side.

The Soviet Ambassador to London arrived in Moscow yesterday. [...]

Kirk

From *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers, 1939*, Vol. I, Washington, 1956, p. 240.

No. 180.**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE***April 23, 1939*

We regard all eight clauses of our proposal** as organic parts of a single and integral whole. The proposal as a whole makes up the

* See Document No. 163.

** See Document No. 171.

minimum of our wishes. We should like to know the views of the French and English Governments on the draft as a whole.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

No. 181.

**LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE**

April 23, 1939

So far no reply has been received from the English to our proposal.* They may again be waiting until Hitler's next speech on the 28th—just in case there is a hint of peace and an excuse to return to Munich positions. I do not at all consider such a relapse on Chamberlain's and Bonnet's part to be impossible.

According to information received from Rome, Hitler and Mussolini are convinced that Chamberlain is negotiating with the USSR only under pressure from the Opposition, from some of the Conservatives and public opinion. To make it easier for Chamberlain to retreat to his former positions and to help Beck justify his rejection of Soviet assistance, Mussolini is vigorously insisting on a German-Polish agreement and in this he has the support of Goering. Hitler's final decision is being awaited. From the same source we have been informed of exceptionally strong pressure on Yugoslavia which is being asked not only to join the Anti-Comintern Pact⁸, but also to form a single political organization of the fascist type coupled with the abolition of the remaining parties and with some extension of the political rights of the Croats and Slovenes. It is intended through Yugoslavia to draw also Rumania into the orbit of Italo-German policy and then perhaps Greece as well, to destroy the Balkan Entente²⁵ and create in its stead a new one made up of Hungary, Yugoslavia and Rumania. Evidently it is hoped that after the evaporation of the threat to Poland and Rumania Chamberlain and Bonnet will have no interest in concluding an agreement with the USSR. Again the ques-

* See Document No. 171.

tion will arise as to how the USSR can help England and France if the road to Germany is barred by Poland and Rumania.

You will be informed about the mood here by Comrade Krapivtsev* and Comrade Maisky, whom I have asked to stop over in Paris for a few hours for this purpose. They will both be leaving tomorrow.

We have information that a reception given in early April by the General Secretary of the Anti-Comintern in Berlin, the retired Swedish Captain, Nils von Bahr, was attended by the French Military Attaché, General Didelet, the Naval Attaché, Captain Tracou, the Financial Attaché, Aris, and Second Secretary Lalotet. Neither the English nor the Americans attended the reception, but the Italians, Spaniards, and Germans, besides representatives of some other small nations, were, of course, present. On occasion you should draw the attention of the appropriate persons to this.

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 182.

EXCERPT FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE CHINESE AMBASSADOR IN THE USSR

April 23, 1939

The Ambassador says he has received a telegram from his Government on a subject that he would like to discuss with the People's Commissar. The matter is that the next session of the League of Nations is due to begin next month. The Chinese Government is hoping that a commission for economic sanctions against Japan will be formed. The Chinese Government would like to see all the Pacific countries, which are interested in bringing economic pressure to bear on Japan represented on the commission. The Chinese Government is requesting the Soviet Union to render its assistance in this direction. The Chinese

* Counsellor of the Soviet Embassy in France.

Government is hoping that the forthcoming session of the League of Nations will take the following measures:

1. Pressure will be brought to bear on Japan.
2. All nations will render assistance in transporting military supplies for China through their territory.
3. All nations will renounce purchases of Japanese goods and will refuse to supply Japan, either directly or indirectly, with raw materials, such as petrol and aeroplanes.

The Chinese Government is requesting the Soviet Government to lend it its assistance. It would be a good thing if the countries desiring to assist China could elaborate, jointly or separately, a declaration stating that Japan had committed a breach of world order and that they were in favour of restoring order. It would be desirable from the Chinese Government's point of view that these countries extend credit to China or offer her aid in the form of war materials.

The Chinese *Ambassador* asks in what measure the Soviet Government could lend China its assistance.

The People's Commissar says that the question of aid to China is not a new one. This question has repeatedly been raised at sessions of the League of Nations. The Soviet Union has rendered its assistance to China,* but it has invariably met with the opposition of other countries. This time too such opposition is very likely. In an appropriate way China should bring some influence to bear on the other members of the League of Nations Council so as to eliminate their opposition this time.

The Ambassador replies that the Chinese Government has already sent an appropriate directive to its Ambassadors and they are preparing the ground. The Ambassador asks whether the People's Commissar will be attending the forthcoming session of the League of Nations.

The People's Commissar replies that he does not yet know as this depends on the international situation.

The Ambassador asks the People's Commissar's opinion regarding the future position of the Powers in respect of the League of Nations. Will they want to protect the prestige of the League of Nations?

The People's Commissar replies that at present it is not yet known what will happen in Geneva and whether a desire to

* See Documents Nos. 3, 92.

invigorate the League of Nations will be in evidence. So far negotiations between the Governments are being conducted outside the League of Nations.

The Ambassador observes that France and England are said to be desirous of securing the Soviet Union's co-operation in rendering assistance to Poland and Rumania.

The People's Commissar replies that the Soviet Government has been conducting negotiations on assistance to Poland and Rumania for a long time now. The negotiations have not yet been completed. The Soviet Government has posed a question as to the circumstances that are being alluded to. The position of Poland is not yet known. She seems to be taking an evasive line. Perhaps she intends to come to terms with Germany.

The Chinese *Ambassador* poses the question: if Poland should make known her desire to receive assistance from France and England and if those countries offer her assistance, what will be the position of the Soviet Union?

The People's Commissar. The Soviet Government has agreed in principle, but no understanding has yet been reached on the terms.

The Ambassador asks whether the Soviet Ambassador in London, who, according to the newspapers, has arrived in Moscow, has not brought back some concrete terms. Perhaps there are some questions relating to the Far East?

The People's Commissar. So far the question concerns Europe alone. The Ambassador returned only for directives.

The Ambassador poses the question: what is the position of Rumania? Is she counting on French and English assistance?

The People's Commissar. Rumania is hoping to receive the unilateral assistance of France and England. She has not assumed any binding commitments. She has been intimidated by Germany and is afraid to say anything.

The Ambassador asks: What is the People's Commissar's opinion as to the possible consequences of the concentration of French and English troops in the area of Gibraltar? Can there be any complications?

The People's Commissar replies that this depends on Germany and Italy. In all probability, Germany and Italy will try to incorporate Yugoslavia and Greece into their Axis¹⁰.

The Ambassador says that according to rumours, in the Mediterranean Italy intends to move eastwards to the Black Sea, while

Germany also intends to move towards the Black Sea, through Rumania. The Ambassador asks the People's Commissar whether he has heard about this.

The People's Commissar. I have read about this in the papers but I do not think their ambitions go so far.

The Ambassador asks how the People's Commissar assesses Roosevelt's message. What effect can it have?

The People's Commissar. It can have an effect of a purely moral nature—of once again drawing the attention of the whole world to aggression.

The Ambassador surmises that since France and Italy are at present preoccupied with European affairs, they will hardly be doing anything to bring peace to the Far East.

The People's Commissar replies that their interests in the Far East are being threatened by Japan and that they cannot fail to take an interest in the situation in the Far East.

The Ambassador asks the People's Commissar whether there is any new information concerning the international situation.

The People's Commissar replies that there is nothing particularly new, especially relating to the East. [...]

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 183.

TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR

April 24, 1939

Details of our proposal* are leaking out mainly through the English press. The French press is still unable to put its finger on it. Mandel told me that the text of our proposal had not yet been made known to the Cabinet. None of the Ministers, except Bonnet and Daladier, had seen the draft. The rest had merely been told in general terms that the matter concerned a military alliance. At the same time, some people who are remote

* See Document No. 171.

from power but who have connections with the upper echelons of the Quai d'Orsay, such as Odent, are fairly well informed of our draft. In their words, the upper crust of the Quai d'Orsay (probably meaning Léger and Comert*) are sceptical as they do not believe that Chamberlain would venture to go so far.

Odent has related that Lukasiewicz is conducting a vigorous campaign against co-operation with the USSR.

Intimating that the "Munichmen" have by no means disarmed and that signs of a certain softening up of the "new crisis" are already in evidence, Mandel is pinning great hopes on the military. In his words, they are now taking a very firm stand and the majority of them favour co-operation with the USSR. Several facts indeed attest to a heightened interest in us on the part of the military. They are now eager to meet me—something they had never sought to do before. A day or two ago, for instance, the military governor of Paris gave a luncheon in my honour attended by many military men. Today I received an invitation from the naval commander as well. Kérillis** says that he has been receiving many letters from military men approving his stand. Léger has spoken of the great interest aroused by Voroshilov's speech.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 184.

TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR

April 25, 1939

Today Bonnet told me that after a careful study of our draft*** and "after consultations with other interested parties" he had come to the conclusion that "in view of the breadth and complexity" of our draft an early solution on its basis could hardly be

* Head of the American department of the French Foreign Ministry.

** French Deputy and journalist.

*** See Document No. 171.

expected, but that the present moment called for quick decisions. He was therefore suggesting a return to his previous proposal. Yesterday the English had familiarized him with the memorandum which Seeds was to hand over to Litvinov. As the memorandum merely reiterated the previous English proposal for a unilateral Soviet declaration*—a proposal which even Bonnet regards as being “insufficient”—he had yesterday suggested that London associate itself with the French draft. In other words, a three-Power agreement (England, France and the USSR) should be concluded instead of the bilateral agreement between France and the USSR** which he had earlier proposed. He still had no reply from the English. After he had made this statement, he began analysing our draft point by point, and he said that “in so far as it concerned France alone”, he did not in fact have any objections on most of the clauses of our draft. Paragraph one was acceptable. The fourth had no relation to France. On the fifth he would be prepared to make a *démarche*. Only paragraph 2 was unacceptable for France because of the Baltic countries. “But things do not depend on France alone.” (In this connection he made several references to London’s position and to his consultations with the Poles and the Rumanians).

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 185.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE’S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

April 25, 1939

I am transmitting to you the draft of a “three-Power agreement” sent to me by Bonnet. You will see that this draft differs considerably from what Bonnet said earlier today and from his own previous proposal.**

* See Document No. 165.

** See Document No. 164.

“If France and Great Britain should find themselves in a state of war with Germany in consequence of meeting the obligations which they had assumed in order to prevent any forcible changes in the *status quo* in Central or Eastern Europe, the USSR would immediately lend them aid and assistance.

“If the USSR should find itself in a state of war with Germany in consequence of the assistance it had given France and Great Britain under conditions stipulated in the preceding paragraph, France and Great Britain would immediately lend it aid and assistance.

“The three Governments would consult with one another without delay on the nature of this assistance, in both of the cases contemplated, and will take all steps to ensure its full effectiveness.”

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 186.

EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE

April 25, 1939

[...] I wish to inform you that Turkey has recently received from England a proposal to conclude a bilateral Pact under which England would come to Turkey's assistance in the event of a “direct or indirect threat to her” from Italy, while Turkey would have to take the side of England if the latter should find herself at war with Italy. This proposal was subsequently broadened so that the Pact would cover aggression by Germany as well. The wording of the proposal is noteworthy. In regard to Turkey there has to be aggression before English assistance can be received. But assistance to England is to be given even in the absence of aggression, that is, even if England herself were to attack Italy as a result of action by the latter against France or for any other reason. In her reply Turkey expressed her solidarity with England's position in respect to aggression in general and the

need to help small nations. But she made several reservations on the substance of the proposal. In the event of Turkey joining the Anglo-French bloc, aggression by the Axis might be directed with particular force at the Straits, and therefore Turkey said she would first have to ascertain what assistance England, France and especially the USSR would give her. She also mentioned certain other considerations against accepting the proposal. Turkey has asked us about our attitude to this proposal, and as we ourselves also wanted to obtain more detailed information on the Balkan questions and on the possibility of drawing Bulgaria into the anti-fascist bloc, we invited the Turkish Government to send a representative* to us, and then decided to send Comrade Potemkin to Ankara. [...]

Litvinov

From the archives.

No. 187.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE**

April 26, 1939

The draft** speaks of the *status quo* in Central or Eastern Europe. Has Bonnet specified, at least orally, what countries were meant here and whether the Baltic region was in this case considered not to be part of Eastern Europe? The wording of the draft is humiliating, but let us know anyway.

~ People's Commissar

From the archives.

* See Document No. 166.

** See Document No. 185.

No. 188.

**EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMIS-
SAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

April 26, 1939

[...] In Bonnet's words, he has not yet consulted with London concerning his latest proposal (of the 25th) * but I definitely think that between my conversation with him yesterday morning** and the sending of the Aide Memoire there was some consultation with the English. At any rate, the text of the latest proposal that was sent to me differs considerably from what he told me yesterday during my morning visit. At that time he had spoken about turning the bilateral agreement into a trilateral one. But he had said not a word about any intention to alter the actual content of the agreement. In his first proposal the principle of reciprocity had at least outwardly been observed. We would come to the assistance of France (and of England under a trilateral agreement) if France should be involved in a war with Germany in consequence of her assistance to Poland and Rumania, and vice versa. According to the new draft, however, "reciprocity" amounts to our being committed to render assistance to France and England in the event of their getting involved in a war as a result of their actions to protect the *status quo* in Central and Eastern Europe, whereas they would come to our assistance not under comparable circumstances, but only after we were at war with Germany as a result of our coming to the assistance of France and England, i.e., when France and England are already at war with Germany. It appears that whenever France and England consider it necessary to fight Germany to protect the *status quo* in Europe, we will automatically be drawn into the war on their side. But if we were to defend the same *status quo* on our initiative, England and France would not be committed to anything. A strange equality. It is also noteworthy that references to Poland and Rumania have disappeared from the text. The Aide Memoire offers some explanation for this, but it is not hard to guess

* See Document No. 185.

** See Document No. 184.

that this was done not without pressure and instructions from the "interested" countries themselves. If the second draft is undoubtedly better than the first one in that it envisages England's participation in a combination with us, it is much worse than the first from the standpoint of the actual content of the agreement. [...]

At any rate, it now looks as if all the noise and fuss raised around "co-operation" with us will end in the usual bluff. Bonnet and Chamberlain, who have certainly never wanted such "co-operation" in earnest, will naturally try to shift the entire responsibility for the failure onto us. It may be all the easier for them to do this because of the secrecy surrounding the negotiations. No one from among the general public really knows what it is all about. And I believe the time is approaching when we shall probably have to lift the shroud of secrecy and show how things stand. So far my own situation is very difficult. I am besieged on all sides by "friends" from among the journalists, deputies and the like. Everyone is naturally interested in the progress of the negotiations and in our proposal.

As for my general impressions, they coincide almost completely with yours. I am quite convinced that until the storm actually breaks, we can expect no "firmness", at least here, in Paris. Almost all objective observers are coming to the same conclusion, and it is not for nothing that Mandel and his friends are already sounding the alarm.

From the archives.

Ambassador of the USSR in France
Surits

No. 189.

TELEGRAM FROM THE GERMAN CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN BRITAIN TO THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GERMANY

April 26, 1939

I learn from a reliable source that the British Government will give an answer to the Soviet Government through their Ambassador in Moscow this evening or tomorrow morning regarding the Soviet Russian counter proposals *, reported in my

* See Document No. 171.

above-mentioned telegram. The answer is tantamount to a rejection, although it is cloaked in the form of comments on the Soviet Russian counter proposals.

1. The main body of the Note is concerned with the rejection of the Three Power Pact for mutual assistance between Britain, France, and Soviet Russia, proposed by Russia. Thus the military agreements, which would supplement this pact, also fall through.

2. The British Government point out that the guarantee given by them to Poland and Rumania is directed against any aggression of which these countries might be the victims. This means a rejection of the Soviet Russian attempt to strip the existing Treaties between Poland and Rumania of their anti-Soviet bias and to render them effective solely against the West. The Soviet Russian proposals reported under paras. 3 and 4 of my telegram No. 136 meant in practice that Great Britain and France would from the start have to specify the aggressor (namely Germany) against whom their guarantee declarations could be made effective.

The decisive reason for rejecting the Soviet Russian proposal for a Three Power Pact was that, in the event of an attack by Germany on France and Britain, Russia as well as Poland would be obliged to render assistance. That would put Poland in an embarrassing situation which she wishes to avoid at all cost. Poland and Rumania will in no circumstances accept unsolicited assistance from Soviet Russia.

Kordt

*From Documents on German Foreign Policy. 1918-1945.
Series D, Vol. VI, p. 336.*

No. 190.

**EXCERPT FROM A TELEGRAM FROM THE MINISTER
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GERMANY
TO THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN JAPAN**

April 26, 1939

For quite a long time top secret discussions have been taking place between Berlin, Rome and Tokyo with a view to concluding a defensive alliance¹⁶ and, for special reasons and in accordance

with arrangements made with the other parties, have been conducted outside the usual diplomatic channels.

In the summer of 1938 General Oshima, who was then still Military Attaché, gave the information that in the opinion of the Japanese Army the time had come to conclude a general defensive alliance between Germany, Italy and Japan. He cited as terms of a pact of alliance:

1. Consultations between the three Powers, in the event of one of them becoming involved in political difficulties;
2. Political and economic support, in the event of one of the three Powers being threatened from outside;
3. Rendering of aid and assistance, in the event of one of the three Powers being the victim of an unprovoked attack by another Power.

On the occasion of the Munich Conference at the end of September the matter was discussed with Mussolini and Count Ciano. This discussion was continued during my visit to Rome at the end of October with the result that the Duce declared his agreement in principle, but reserved the fixing of a date for concluding the pact. At the beginning of January the Italian Foreign Minister made it known that the Duce was then ready to sign.

The text of the treaty was drawn up during direct negotiations between Oshima, Ciano and myself, and it contained, in addition to the above three points, the undertaking that, in the event of a war fought jointly, the armistice and peace should only be concluded jointly, and it fixed the duration of the treaty at ten years. The draft of the treaty was further supplemented by a draft of two secret protocols which provided for an immediate agreement on the implementation of mutual assistance undertaking in the various contingencies in question, and also special arrangements for dealing jointly with propaganda and press questions. Oshima despatched drafts by special courier to Tokyo where they were made the subject of Cabinet deliberations.

At the beginning of March Oshima and also Ambassador Shiratori in Rome received instructions, according to which the Japanese Government, although they were in general agreement with the idea of a pact, wished to limit the obligation to render mutual assistance exclusively to the contingency of war with Russia. Both Ambassadors informed Ciano and myself of this as a purely personal and confidential matter, but on their own

initiative they immediately informed Tokyo that they refused to submit so substantial a modification of the German-Italian draft in Berlin and Rome. They once more advocated acceptance of the original proposal and stated that they would have to resign if the Japanese Cabinet decided otherwise.

Then at the beginning of April a Japanese draft arrived from Tokyo which corresponded to the German-Italian draft in essentials, though it reduced the duration of the treaty to five years. The previous Japanese desire to limit the mutual assistance undertaking exclusively to the Russian contingency was, however, still maintained in the milder form of the Japanese requesting our express approval for them to make a statement to the British, French and American Ambassadors after the signature and publication of the pact somewhat on the following lines: The pact had developed out of the Anti-Comintern Pact; in concluding it the parties had envisaged Russia as the opponent in war; Britain, France and America had no need to consider the pact as directed against them. The Tokyo Cabinet cited as proof of the necessity for such a restrictive interpretation of the pact the fact that for political and especially economic reasons Japan was at present not yet in a position to come out openly as an opponent of the three democracies. Oshima and Shiratori told Tokyo that this desire of the Japanese Government was also impossible and informed Count Ciano and myself, again confidentially, of the matter. Both Ciano and I left no doubt that the conclusion of a treaty with this interpretation, which was completely at variance with the text of the treaty, could not be considered by us. Moreover, in order to accelerate final clarification, I told Oshima and Shiratori, who was in Berlin for the Führer's birthday, that I must know the final decision, positive or negative, of the Japanese Cabinet before the Führer's speech on April 28. Both Ambassadors reported this to Tokyo by telegram. [...]

Ribbentrop

From Documents on German Foreign Policy. 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. VI, pp. 337-339.

No. 191.**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE***April 27, 1939*

Seeds has not called on me as yet and has given no reply from his Government. It is to be understood that the draft of the three-power agreement handed to you by Bonnet * has been concerted with England which is thereby withdrawing her previous proposals? Let us know quickly without asking Bonnet. I trust you will acquaint Maisky with the French proposals. He is to leave for London today.

People's Commissar.

From the archives.

No. 192.**EXCERPT FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSA-
TION BETWEEN THE VICE-DIRECTOR OF THE POLI-
TICAL DEPARTMENT OF THE POLISH MINISTRY FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS** AND THE JAPANESE AMBASSA-
DOR IN POLAND***April 27, 1939*

During a conversation which I had on April 27 with the Japanese Ambassador in Warsaw, the latter informed me that the Japanese Imperial Council and the Japanese Government had rejected a German proposal to reinforce the Anti-Comintern Pact⁸ with a military alliance directed primarily against England and France¹⁶. This proposal had been advanced by Germany during the latest talks about strengthening the above-mentioned Pact.

According to the Ambassador, this idea was supported by the Japanese Ambassadors in Berlin and Rome contrary to the view

* See Document No. 185.

** M. Kobylanski.

of all the other Japanese diplomatic representatives in Europe and of the military circles, who were in favour of an alliance directed solely against the USSR. To verify the arguments advanced by Ambassador Oshima, Minister Ito as well as representatives of the Navy and Army were sent to Berlin.

In the Ambassador's opinion the above-mentioned decision could be altered only in the event of a change of government, though even this would be doubtful considering the above-stated position of the army and the fact that a change of government could occur only under the pressure of the army. According to the Ambassador, a change in Japan's present position could also be brought about by the extension to the Far East of Britain's commitments *vis-à-vis* the USSR. [...]

From the archives.

No. 193.

DRAFT AGREEMENT BY FRANCE, BRITAIN AND THE USSR PRESENTED BY THE FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE

April 29, 1939

“If France and Great Britain found themselves in a state of war with Germany as a result of the action which they had taken with a view to preventing all changes by force of the existing *status quo* in Central or Eastern Europe, the USSR would immediately lend them aid and assistance.

“If the USSR found itself in a state of war with Germany as a result of the action which it had taken with a view to preventing all changes by force of the existing *status quo* in Central or Eastern Europe, France and Great Britain would immediately lend it aid and assistance.

“The three Governments would concert without delay on the nature, in both cases contemplated, of this assistance and will take all steps to ensure its full efficacy.”

From *Documents on British Foreign Policy. 1919-1939*,
Third Series, Vol. V, London, 1952, p. 406.

No. 194.**EXTRACT FROM A TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMIS-
SARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***April 29, 1939*

Bonnet telephoned me just now and asked if I had received the new text,* and he said that the "countries of Eastern or Central Europe" should be taken to mean Poland, Rumania and Turkey.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 195.**TELEGRAM FROM THE DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COMMIS-
SAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE
PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE USSR***Ankara, April 30, 1939*

I am communicating the elucidations which Menemencioglu has given us on Sarajoglu's instructions on some of the points of the Turkish proposals of April 25:

(1) Menemencioglu definitely confirms that Turkey and Britain have pledged to render each other assistance against Italy in all circumstances and in any place, not excepting even those cases where the Turks or the British might consider it necessary to begin military actions against Italy without awaiting an attack by her.

(2) Turkey will take action against Germany only if she thinks that German aggression constitutes a direct threat to her.

(3) In regard to mutual assistance by Turkey and the USSR, Menemencioglu stated that in Turkey's opinion a mutual assistance treaty should be concluded between Britain and the USSR. It was up to the USSR and Britain to define the terms of such a treaty. Turkey's agreement with the Soviet Union, Menemen-

* See Document No. 193.

cioglu felt, could include mutual assistance obligations in the Straits, in the Black Sea and possibly in the Balkans.

(4) In respect of the economic and financial assistance and also of the military supplies envisaged in point 5 of the Turkish reply of April 25, Menemencioglu explained that economic aid to Turkey could take the form of British purchases of those Turkish goods that Germany did not buy. Turkey would also need monetary assistance, and military supplies would also be essential. Until Britain undertook to meet Turkey's concrete demands in all these matters no mutual assistance treaty would be signed. Therefore, the idea was that after Britain agreed in principle, a special commission would be set up to determine what she should give Turkey and in what quantities. As Menemencioglu put it, Turkey would demand that "the money be laid on the table."

When I visited Ismet yesterday Sarajoglu promised to give me the text of the Turkish proposals. This morning we received a message from Menemencioglu to the effect that because it was a public holiday no typist was available and the documents could only be ready tomorrow. In exchange Menemencioglu asked us to give him the copy of the text of our proposals to Britain and France.

Potemkin

From the archives.

No. 196.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN A
GERMAN JOURNALIST AND A COUNSELLOR OF THE
GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S OFFICE**

May 2, 1939

I had a long conversation with Doctor Kleist, one of Ribbentrop's closest aides.

Kleist gave me the following picture of the political situation.

According to what Hitler himself said several days ago to Ribbentrop, Germany is at present going through the phase of absolute military entrenchment in the East, which is to be accomplished by harsh methods and without consideration for ideological factors. The ruthless purge of the East is to be followed by

the "Western phase," which will culminate in the defeat of France and England to be brought about by political or military methods. Only after this will the great and decisive clash with the Soviet Union become possible and the rout of the Soviets become a practical proposition.

At the present time we are still in the phase of military entrenchment in the East. Poland is next in line. The German actions in March 1939—the creation of a protectorate in Bohemia and Moravia, the formation of a Slovak State, the incorporation of the Memel region—were in fact largely directed against Poland and had been regarded as anti-Polish actions. Hitler realized sometime last February that Poland could not be drawn over to his side through the former methods of negotiations. He therefore decided that Poland would have to be brought to her knees by force. A narrow circle of Hitler's associates were informed that the latest German proposal to Poland had been made in the firm conviction that it would be rejected by her. Hitler and Ribbentrop were certain that for considerations of home and foreign policy the Polish Government could not accept the German demands. It was only for this reason that the clause concerning the guarantee of the inviolability of Poland's frontiers for a period of 25 years—a clause that was quite inconceivable in itself—was included in the German proposal without a moment's hesitation. The German calculations proved correct. By rejecting the proposal Poland had in effect enabled us to get rid of the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact and obtain a free hand in regard to Poland.

If things develop in accordance with German plans, and unless Poland voluntarily capitulates in the coming weeks, which we can hardly expect, in July-August she will be subjected to a military attack. The Polish General Staff is alive to the possibility of military actions in the autumn, after the harvest. By acting suddenly, we are hoping to crush Poland and achieve a swift success. Large-scale strategic resistance by the Polish army should be broken within eight to fourteen days. The attack on Poland is to be conducted at full strength simultaneously from the German Eastern frontier, from Slovakia, the Carpatho-Ukraine and Eastern Prussia and, in the opinion of the German General Staff, it should result in a complete success. Such Polish pockets of resistance as will remain and as will undoubtedly continue to appear throughout the country in no small numbers, are to be put

down in the course of a bitter small-scale war, but one which will no longer be of any international significance.

German preparations for war against Poland are scheduled to be completed in July-August. Measures of a military nature have been started only recently. They are being carried out thoroughly and on a full scale, and in the strictest possible secrecy. Preparation of the political propaganda offensive against Poland is only just beginning. At present material is being selected for a propaganda onslaught against Poland. In the forefront are the following topics: under the topic "Poland is a second patchwork state" will be denounced the fatal policy of terror carried out by Poland with regard to the nationalities' question; under the topic "Poland is a declining, reactionary state" will be shown the poverty of the Polish peasants, the country's cultural backwardness, the feudal method of managing the economy leading to a decline, and the hunger and miserable existence of the Polish population; under the topic "parasites in power" will be shown the degeneration of the ruling Polish upper crust, the venality of the Polish leaders, their decadence and class alienation from the broad masses. Other similar topics are also being elaborated. They are to be incorporated into theses and slogans and published in the press at the appropriate time. The aim of this campaign is to influence world public opinion and the Polish people. It will be necessary to bring about a split in the Polish nation and to stage a class-motivated rebellion against the political leadership. It is not yet clear to us who will play the role of Benes in Poland. Smigly-Rydz probably will not be suitable for that role. All in all, preparation of the propaganda offensive against Poland will take about two months.

It would be ideal if the conflict with Poland were not openly provoked by Germany. At present we in Berlin are studying the question of using the Ukrainians in this affair. Agreement has been reached with Voloshin* and Revay** on granting broad autonomy to the Carpatho-Ukraine within the Hungarian State. We would thereby regain the confidence of the Ukrainian masses in Eastern Galicia and strengthen the waning will of the Ukrai-

* Head of the Autonomous Government of Carpatho-Ukraine, October 1938-March 1939.

** A Minister in the Autonomous Government of Carpatho-Ukraine, October 1938-March 1939.

nians to fight. There is no need to apply any special measures with regard to the Ukrainian leading circles, for the latest events have on no account shaken their loyalty to Berlin. Having carried out this kind of preparation we could then give the Polish Ukraine the signal to rebel. From Slovakia and the Carpatho-Ukraine we would immediately dispatch large quantities of arms and ammunition and also send in combat-trained detachments of *Sicheviki*. Such close and direct contact has been established between Berlin and Lwow that there should be no doubt about a mass uprising of the Ukrainians. The hotbed of the conflagration in the Ukrainian regions would give Germany an excuse for large-scale military intervention. This whole project is giving rise to only one concern in Berlin. That is the possible reaction of the Soviet Union.

We feel that the conflict with Poland can be localized. England and France are, as hitherto, not prepared to fight for Poland. If within the shortest possible period of time we crush most of Poland's resistance, England will stage a naval demonstration, France will do some saber-rattling behind her Maginot Line, and that will be all. If, however, contrary to expectations, a European war in connection with the action against Poland proves likely, we shall then know that a German strike against Poland serves merely as an excuse for the Western Powers to wage a war against Germany, and that a preventive war against Germany is foregone conclusion. In that case Hitler is ready to risk a major collision. In any event, we shall not allow ourselves to be provoked at a moment that is not in our favour, but will leave the choice of the time to act in our own hands. At the present time we would not agree to European war in view of our insufficient preparedness and the unfavourable international situation; we are hoping, however, that in three or four months' time we will be fully prepared. Germany's leaders are confident of their victory.

Our aviation will be of decisive significance. According to calculations of German military experts, all the English ports, for instance, can be wiped out within six hours. The devastating effect of German aviation has so far been tested only once: during the Civil War in Spain, at Guernica. It was a striking success. As a result of a massive raid by German aircraft the city was levelled. From this standpoint the rout of France and England does not seem too complicated an affair. America's intervention would come too late.

In connection with the forthcoming strike at Poland the South-East has now once again become the object of intensive study in Berlin. We must get closer to Rumania. We must exert direct pressure on Bucharest. To this end we want to liquidate independent Slovakia by incorporating her into Hungary. Slovakia is non-viable anyway and her political leadership is incompetent. We want to establish a German Protectorate over Hungary, which will be extended through the incorporation of Slovakia, and thus to thrust our troops forward to the Rumanian border. After this Rumania will capitulate.

In the Baltic States we want to achieve the same objective in a different way. There will be no use of force, no pressure or threats (we are conducting economic talks with Lithuania displaying a maximum of goodwill and courtesy). By this method we shall bring about the neutrality of the Baltic States, that is, their definite alienation from the Soviet Union. In the event of war the neutrality of the Baltic States is as important for us as the neutrality of Belgium or Holland; some time later, if it should suit us, we shall violate that neutrality, but then, in view of our previously concluded non-aggression pacts, there would be no mechanism of agreement between the Baltic States and the Soviet Union that would lead to the automatic intervention of the USSR.

Thus, the action against Poland will be carried out in July or August. If the Poles should attempt to provoke a preventive war before then, the situation will look quite different. Whether or not we shall counter this Polish provocation with a massive strike will depend on Hitler's decision and on his assessment of the international situation. In any case, it will be unpleasant if the Poles should dictate to us the laws of action and involve us in a war at the present moment, when the international situation is not favorable for us and when Germany's preparation for war not yet been completed.

From the archives.

No. 197.**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR
IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***May 3, 1939*

Summarizing the information I have culled from the press and from my meetings and conversations with various persons (Halifax, Hore-Belisha, Beaverbrook, Churchill, Eden, Greenwood, Lloyd George and others) since my return from Moscow, I can report the following:

1. The mood of the general public everywhere, except for a part of Scotland, is decidedly anti-German. Hitler's speech had not had any big effect here despite the fact that on the day after it was made some newspapers (notably the Beaverbrook press) started talking about the possibility of some new negotiations with Germany. The need to resist aggression is becoming a universal conviction. Hence the country's willingness to accept conscription (the Labour Party's opposition to conscription is not serious and it is already beginning to crumble). Hence the immense popularity among the masses of the idea of an alliance with the USSR. At political meetings and rallies throughout the country each mention of such an alliance is greeted with an ovation. In a recent public opinion poll, which reflects the mood of the country fairly accurately, 84 per cent of those questioned were in favour of an immediate alliance with the USSR.

2. The Government is a different matter altogether. Of course, it is feeling the pressure of public sentiments, and most of the ministers are at present in favour of resisting aggression, but so far the Government had evaded drawing the logical conclusions. The most important thing, however, is that Chamberlain, Simon and other "appeasers" have not yet finally given up their Munich policy. They have been compelled to retreat under the pressure of the masses and the pressure of the logic of events, but they are doing so most reluctantly. They are trying to reduce the inescapable concessions to a minimum and, where possible, they are even attempting to go back once again to the methods of the "appeasement" period (one example is the return of British Ambassador Henderson to Berlin). This half-way stand of the

British Government is in evidence at every step, notably in matters pertaining to the reorganization of the Cabinet, to conscription and to our proposal. Chamberlain is stubbornly postponing until the very last moment the bringing into the Government of men like Churchill, Eden and others, though this is regarded here as inevitable before long. The *Daily Telegraph* and the Beaverbrook press, not to mention the Left-wing papers, have already launched a campaign on these lines. This is highly significant. Chamberlain is also stubbornly resisting the introduction of conscription; and when he saw he would have to yield on this point, he arranged to have only one age group called up, although the Cabinet had originally been contemplating calling up three categories.

A curious game is being played with our proposal. * At first Chamberlain tried to throw a veil of silence over it and to delay a reply at least until Hitler's speech. Another idea was to reject our proposal and go back to the English proposal calling for our unilateral guarantee to the USSR's European limitrophe countries. However, thanks to the advocates of alliance with the USSR (Vansittart and others) within the Foreign Office, our proposal began very rapidly to leak into the press, so that by the time I returned, the basic points of the proposal had become widely known. The Opposition began putting the pressure on Parliament and a lively discussion was started in the press. The conspiracy of silence was broken. The Government found itself in an awkward situation and was compelled to begin a more serious discussion of the Soviet proposal. My return also made it more difficult to continue the procrastination game. The result was that the Cabinet began to consider our proposals seriously, but it is not yet clear what conclusions it will arrive at. A Government decision may be expected within the next few days.

Ambassador

From the archives.

* See Document No. 171.

No. 198.**TELEGRAM FROM THE DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COMMIS-
SAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE
PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE USSR**

Ankara, May 3, 1939

Chinese Ambassador Toug came to see me and told me of his conversation with von Papen * whom he had known since the time he was in Vienna. Papen told Toug that he had taken a most active part in preparing the Anschluss and in the occupation of Czechoslovakia. In his own words, Papen had come to Turkey with the task of ensuring her neutrality between the Axis and the states of the opposite camp. From England Germany wanted one thing: freedom of action in Eastern Europe and in the Balkans. Papen allegedly requested Toug to sound out for him why I had come and what we were negotiating about with the Turks. I must say I do not quite trust this Chinese.

Potemkin

From the archives.

No. 199.**TELEGRAM FROM THE DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COMMIS-
SAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE
PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE USSR**

Ankara, May 5, 1939

Today Terentyev and I were received by Ismet Inonu in the presence of Sarajoglu. Our conversation lasted about one and a half hours. Ismet began by noting the positive result of our meetings in Ankara. He asked us to convey his thanks to the Soviet Government for the method of contact we had chosen. He believes Soviet-Turkish friendship is entering a new phase. The

* German Ambassador in Turkey.

Turkish Government is profoundly gratified by the USSR Government's attitude to Turkey's negotiations with England and, in particular, to the contemplated Anglo-Turkish agreement on mutual assistance in the Mediterranean. In Ismet's view, this agreement, like the rallying of the Balkan countries for opposing aggression, can crush the Axis and save the general peace. Of great significance in this connection is Bulgaria. Every effort must be made to persuade Rumania, despite her vacillation and the personal resistance of the King, to cede Dobrudja to Bulgaria. If this were done, then at least the neutrality of Bulgaria could be guaranteed. Inseparably linked with Bulgaria's position is the fate of Yugoslavia. The latter is "languishing in the embrace" of Italy and Germany. If she sees that Bulgaria is joining the Balkan Entente²⁵ she will begin actively to defend her independence. Ismet specially requested me to stop over in Sofia and make it absolutely clear to Kiosseivanoff* that never and under no circumstances would it be possible to range the USSR against Turkey, and that without the closest possible co-operation of our two countries peace in the Balkans could not be assured. If Bulgaria bowed to German pressure she would perish as an independent state and a free nation.

Referring to the position of the Great Western Powers, Ismet noted that at first they had not only failed to oppose German expansion in Eastern Europe, but had even seen in it a way of staying aloof from the military conflict, letting Germany wear herself out in clashes in the East and of securing for themselves the role of masters and arbitrators of the destinies of Europe. But England and France had miscalculated. After Germany's seizure of Austria, Czechoslovakia and Klaipeda and after Italy's occupation of Albania, the small nations, having convinced themselves of the inaction of the Great Western Powers, had lost all hopes of receiving their assistance and were prepared to capitulate to the aggressors. According to Ismet, France and England are beginning to realize the very great danger which this situation poses for themselves. Germany has no reason to attack the USSR. Moreover, the Soviet Union is shielded from Germany by its limitrophe countries. Having increased their economic power and their military potential many times over by seizures of "living space" in the Eastern part of Europe, Germany and Italy would hurl them-

* Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria.

selves upon the Western Powers. Turkish military circles are convinced that the most immediate danger threatens France. England and France have decided to organize opposition to the aggressors. They have offered their guarantees to Poland and Rumania.* They have entered into negotiations with Turkey and the USSR. In Ismet's opinion, the USSR should not reject the offer of co-operation. Its self-isolation would do incalculable harm to the cause of peace. The world public should realize that no important foreign policy problem in Europe could be resolved without the participation of the Soviet Union. All the efforts of Turkey are directed towards that end.

Turkey will seek to carry out her ultimate programme set out in the document of April 25, which basically coincides with the Soviet proposals made to the French and the English.** However, the latter are making a very slow start and are moving forward in small steps. At present they are apparently still undecided about concluding an open alliance with the USSR. However, they are bound to associate themselves with the Soviet Union in a common struggle against aggressors.

Incidentally, in his conversations with General Weygand Ismet had argued that without the USSR's support France could not defend herself against Germany. There was even more reason why the USSR's participation in the organization of defence against aggression in Eastern Europe and in the Balkans should be a decisive factor.

Ismet also mentioned the subject of the Black Sea Pact. He promised to consider that problem in all seriousness and sincerity. For Turkey herself it could be resolved favourably and quite simply. There were but two difficulties that had to be overcome. Firstly, Rumania would have to be reconciled with Bulgaria. Secondly, the Black Sea Treaty would have to be concerted with the Balkan Pact. The Turkish Government would make every effort to find ways to settle all these questions. However, the eventual conclusion of the Black Sea Pact did not obviate the need for the USSR and Turkey to conclude agreement with France and England in terms of joint defence against Italy and Germany.

Ismet was willing to assume that Turkey might be the first to be attacked by Germany. He agreed with the Soviet Government

* See Documents Nos. 137, 160, 161.

** See Document No. 171.

that such an attack would be most likely to come from the North, through Rumania and Bulgaria. It would be important for Ismet to know beforehand what assistance the Soviet Union would offer him in that event. England and France were promising Turkey a great deal; but even with the best of intentions, they would not be in a position to render Turkey genuine aid if a war should break out that would sever communications between Turkey and the West. Ismet was pinning great hopes on the railroad link between Turkey and the USSR via Erzerum and Sarykamysh. However, that was insufficient. Turkey needed aid in the form of armaments, manpower, aviation and naval forces. Pending an answer to his question about our military assistance Ismet would like to ask the Soviet Government to meet Turkey's request for the sale of certain essential items. A list of these items had already been communicated to Apaydin. In particular the Finance Minister was strongly backing the request for the sale of 20,000 tons of sugar to Turkey. As for more important military supplies, Turkey needed tanks, planes, anti-tank artillery, lorries, tractors and, most important, petrol. Ismet explained that this was not a question of supplying large quantities but rather of replenishing what Turkey already had. If Turkey could count on such assistance from the Soviet Union she could withstand a confrontation with fascist Germany.

Ismet had already told the English that Turkey considered it necessary to conclude a bilateral Soviet-Turkish pact. He believed that in effect Turkey and the USSR were already allies. That alliance could be legally formalized whenever the two Governments considered it necessary. In conclusion, Ismet, visibly moved, asked that his warm thanks be conveyed to Comrades Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov and Kalinin for the confidence and friendship with which they were treating Turkey and for the sincerity and forthrightness displayed during the latest talks at Ankara.

Potemkin

From the archives.

No. 200.**TELEGRAM FROM A SOVIET MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER IN JAPAN TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE RED ARMY***May 5, 1939*

As German Ambassador Ott has learned from the Japanese General Staff, the difficulties within the Japanese Government itself in connection with the negotiations on the conclusion of a Japanese-German-Italian alliance¹⁶ are confirmed by the fact that Arita and the naval circles have put forward their own plan for the conclusion of an alliance ensuring adequate security and guarantees which would be put into effect in the event of the alliance being involved in a war against England or America. Arita and the naval circles are ready to conclude a general and unconditional pact of defence against any state that might start a war against any of the three countries signing the Anti-Comintern Pact, even if England, America or France should be involved in that war.

But the naval circles and Arita refuse to conclude a pact that would openly declare itself to be directed not only against the USSR, but also against England and other countries. Besides the official text of the allied pact of the three countries, Arita and the naval circles are drawing up a special secret appendage to it. In that secret appendage the articles of the pact will be broadened, envisaging also action against any country. They want to avoid overt friction with England and America by not publishing the text of a pact which plainly states that it is directed not only against the USSR.

The General Staff has said that Arita will resign unless his view-point is accepted, and it has hinted to German Ambassador Ott that the General Staff could not assume the responsibility for a split in the present Government over a difference of opinions, and it is hoping that the German side will also insist on the basic articles of the agreement. Ambassador Ott has telegraphed this to Berlin.

Ramzai

From the archives.

No. 201.**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***May 6, 1939*

I have received confirmation that England is still balking at concluding a tripartite agreement with us.

On May 3 Bonnet gave Halifax, through Corbin, a lengthy memorandum in which he replied to the English objections and again insisted on his draft being accepted. In the memorandum he cited the favourable responses of the General Staff and assured the English that his draft had been "favourably received in Moscow" (where he got that I do not know).

On May 4 in a conversation with Corbin Halifax, "though he did not give a final reply," nonetheless "tended towards a refusal". According to Halifax, a tripartite agreement with the USSR's participation, even in the curtailed form suggested by Bonnet, could "lead to and aggravate complications in Europe". As before, he suggested that the most that could be agreed on would be "parallel" actions through unilateral declarations. According to Corbin's information, Halifax is himself undecided and is inclined to accept an agreement, but this is opposed by Chamberlain who is backed by Simon and Hoare.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 202.**MINUTE FROM THE COUNSELLOR OF THE GERMAN
EMBASSY IN POLAND FOR THE INTELLIGENCE SER-
VICE OF A WESTERN POWER***May 7, 1939*

Within the last few days the following persons have come to Warsaw: (1) Kleist, one of Ribbentrop's closest associates, whose mission is to assess the mood in Poland; (2) the German Air Attaché in Warsaw, Colonel Gerstenberg, who has returned after

a briefing visit to Berlin; (3) the German Ambassador in Warsaw, von Moltke, who had been delayed for almost a whole month in Berlin on Hitler's instructions, and who has at present returned to his post having received no directives as to Germany's future policy in respect of Poland. Kleist and Gerstenberg have given identical information about Germany's present plans. Moltke said in reply to a question that he, too, had heard in Berlin about some parts of those plans.

The information brought by Kleist and Gerstenberg attests to the following.

A German strike against Poland has been in the planning stage since 1938. In connection with that action no attempt was made to prevent the incorporation of the Teschen area into Poland as a result of which relations between the Czechs and the Poles were expected to deteriorate for a long time to come, which has in fact taken place. Also in connection with the contemplated strike against Poland, permission for the establishment of a common Polish-Hungarian border was, at first, refused. Such a permission was granted only later in order to show Hungary that the decision rested not with Poland but with Germany.

The German measures in Slovakia—the creation of a Protectorate and the military occupation—are part of the broad military plan aimed at enveloping Poland from the north and the south. The fact that the German proposal to Poland was handed to the Polish Ambassador in Berlin several hours after the occupation of Memel was explained by Germany's design to place Poland in a position that ruled out her acceptance of that proposal. And if Poland had accepted the proposal, Hitler would have tied in his first visit to Memel with his first visit to Danzig. However, this would not have led to any changes in the broad German plan directed against Poland.

In the opinion of German military circles, preparation of the strike against Poland will not be completed before the end of July. It has been planned to start the offensive with a sudden bombing attack on Warsaw which is to be reduced to ruins. The first wave of bomber squadrons is to be followed six hours later by a second, so as to complete the destruction. A time-limit of 14 days has been set for the subsequent of the Polish army.

In preparation for the attack on Poland a vast press and radio propaganda campaign has been planned. In it a certain role will be assigned, for instance, to the sexual crimes and to the self-

enrichment of Polish leaders, as well as to the exploitation of peasants and workers by the ruling regime.

Furthermore, all preparatory measures have been taken to stage an insurrection in Eastern Galicia, which in this case would be used as a pretext for intervention. The Berlin-Lwow communication link is functioning excellently, notably through the German Youth Party in Poland. The resentment of the Ukrainians over the fact that the Carpatho-Ukraine has been left to the mercy of fate has been removed. Hungary will be prompted to grant the Ukrainian population certain autonomous rights.

Hungarian support can be counted on since Hungary will get Slovakia and will be placed under German protection together with Slovakia. When this is carried out the German army will reach the Rumanian frontier and will thus be able to put pressure on the Rumanians, whose attitude has been causing concern in Berlin.

In Berlin no one now thinks in terms of solving the Polish question on the basis of Hitler's March proposal. Any new Polish proposals would be turned down by Germany. At present the German minimum programme includes the incorporation of the entire Corridor and, if possible, also Upper Silesia and large portions of Poznan Province, especially her important agricultural regions. Although the new slogan advanced by Hitler is "strategical safeguarding of the frontiers", at the same time this means "extension of the supply base." In general, the shortage of all types of raw materials is the main impetus for Germany's present swift actions. On his birthday (April 20) Hitler informed a narrow circle of his associates that the implementation of the entire programme must now be speeded up. Hitler is certain that neither England nor France will interfere in the German-Polish conflict.

When Poland will have been dealt with, Germany will throw her entire might against the Western Democracies, break their hegemony and simultaneously assign Italy a more modest role. The breaking of the resistance of the Western Democracies will be followed by Germany's great clash with Russia as a result of which Germany's requirements in living space and raw materials will finally be satisfied.

For a correct assessment of this information it is necessary to note the following. It is beyond all doubt that the above ideas have been discussed by leading Berlin circles as guidelines for the

coming implementation of the German plans. It is possible that an attempt to carry out Germany's plans will be made as set out above. On the other hand, however, it must be borne in mind that on the subject of tactics, experience has shown that the thinking of the leaders of the Reich is liable to change quickly that each new tactical concept is presented by various confidants as being the latest and ultimate wisdom.

[*R. von Schelihah*]

From the archives.

No. 203.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE USSR * AND THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN THE
USSR**

May 8, 1939

I asked M. Grzybowski whether he was familiar with the proposal which the Soviet Government had made to England and France in connection with the present international situation, ** and then told him that information was reaching us to the effect that the Polish Government had taken a negative stand on the proposal. I had therefore invited Grzybowski to acquaint himself with the text of the USSR's proposal and also to tell me what was it in the proposal that Poland considered to be bad for her, and whether it was true that Poland was one of the opponents of the proposal. Grzybowski read the text of the proposal I had handed to him (the eight points and the introduction to them).

After reading the text of the proposal Grzybowski said he knew the content of the Soviet Government's proposal but point 4 (calling on England to declare that her latest mutual assistance agreement with Poland*** was directed exclusively against Germany) was new to him. The Ambassador said that Poland had not adopted negative attitude to the proposal and that this was the

* V. M. Molotov.

** See Document No. 171.

*** See Document No. 148.

business of the three States—England, France and the USSR. He did, however, have some doubts about points 4 and 5. The Ambassador went into a long discourse about the special position of Poland, which was situated between two great neighbours, and [said] that Poland did not want to take any steps that might be interpreted by Germany as acts designed to provoke aggression on her part. He also emphasized that it was one of Poland's principal aims to preserve her long-standing good relations with Hungary which was now being threatened with a Czechoslovakia-like situation and which Poland was still hoping to keep from going over to Germany's camp. In this connection Grzybowski said that to achieve this last-mentioned goal, too, Poland should do nothing to repel Hungary towards Germany.

Grzybowski objected to point 4, arguing that it was wrong to demand that the Anglo-Polish agreement be interpreted as being directed exclusively against Germany. He also indicated that theoretically it could be assumed that Germany would begin aggressive actions against Poland not directly but, say, by using for that purpose Rumania, and so forth. I pointed out that this argument was not serious and said that if the question was one of mutual assistance against aggression, it was clearly necessary to state straightforwardly that the Anglo-Polish agreement was directed precisely against Germany. I also pointed out unacceptability of a situation where, on the one hand, the USSR was expected to participate in guarantees for Poland while, on the other, an Anglo-Polish mutual assistance agreement had been concluded which could be interpreted as being directed, *inter alia*, against the USSR, instead of against the aggressor, that is, against Germany.

Grzybowski objected to point 5 of the Soviet proposals (on either imparting to the Polish-Rumanian Treaty of 1926 a general nature directed against any aggression or else annulling the Treaty altogether). He regarded the proposal to annul the Treaty as a "diktat", that is, as the imposition of an alien will. As for imparting to the Treaty the nature of being directed against any aggression so as to deprive it of its anti-Soviet edge, Grzybowski objected to this as well. He tried to argue that since the text of the Treaty was not directed against any power, it was therefore not directed against the USSR. At the same time, he did not deny that in the past the Treaty had been given a political significance as being directed against the USSR. I suggested to the Ambassador

that the Poles should consider ways to remove the anti-Soviet political significance of the Treaty which was not in accordance with the present-day situation.

This the Ambassador promised to do.

With marked interest the Ambassador raised the question of our position *vis-à-vis* Bessarabia. To this I responded that Rumania had nothing to worry about on this score, particularly at the present time.

In conclusion I handed to him the text of our proposal to the English and the French, for which he thanked me.

The conversation lasted about one and a half hours.

From the archives.

No. 204.

MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE AMBASSADOR OF BRITAIN IN THE USSR

May 8, 1939

The Ambassador began the conversation by asking whether Litvinov's resignation from the post of People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs implied any change in the Soviet Union's foreign policy.

I answered that the Soviet Government's position as set out in its 8-point proposal * which had been communicated both to the English and to the French Governments remained unchanged. Further on in the conversation I made it clear that the Soviet Government's position on questions relating to the international situation, as set out in the 8 points, remained unchanged so long as there were no changes in the international situation and in the positions of other powers.

The Ambassador then handed to me an aide-mémoire of the British Government,** in English with an appended Russian

* See Document No. 171.

** See Document No. 205.

translation, in which the British Government sets out, in a somewhat revised form, the original proposal it had made to the Soviet Government.

In handing over the British Government's proposal, the Ambassador spoke of the sincere desire of his Government for co-operation with the Soviet Government. He said that Halifax saw no fundamental difference between the Soviet Government's proposal and the present proposal of the British Government, and that the difference between those proposals was of a formal nature. At the same time the Ambassador said that well composed and logical as the Soviet proposal was, at the present critical moment questions of form were of great significance. The Ambassador explained the general line of the British Government as follows: to do nothing that might be interpreted by Germany as an act designed to provoke aggression on her part and at the same time to take measures to erect a barrier against aggressive actions. Hence, he said, the special importance of the form of actions by the peace-loving powers.

I then put several questions to Seeds. In connection with Seeds' observation that Poland was negatively disposed towards the afore-mentioned proposal of the Soviet Government, I said that we had other information about Poland's position. Seeds did not try to refute my statement but repeated his assertion about Poland in more general and vague terms.

I asked whether the British Government's position had changed after the well-known statement by Simon who had declared in the House of Commons that in principle a military agreement with the USSR was acceptable to England. Seeds tried to dodge a reply to this question by saying that he was unaware of that statement and that Simon was not the Foreign Secretary. But he said that consideration of this question, too, was not excluded in the future.

In reply to my question whether the British Government was anticipating the conclusion of any military convention between England and the USSR, apart from a declaration by the Soviet Government, Seeds said evasively that this was a matter for the future.

In reply to my question whether England had offered any guarantees to Belgium, Holland and Switzerland, Seeds said that the question of these countries, which were situated in the West, did not relate to the question under review, and that in the past all

the wars in which England had taken part had been closely linked with the destinies of Belgium and Holland.

In reply to my question whether the British Government was familiar with the French Government's proposal * in connection with the draft of the Soviet Government, ** Seeds said that France communicated the relevant drafts to England and vice versa.

In reply to the question whether England's present proposal had been concerted with France, Seeds limited himself to the observation that England was aware of France's proposals while France was aware of England's proposals.

At the close of the conversation I said that the British Government's proposal would be examined by the Soviet Government and a reply would be given to it.

The conversation lasted about one hour.

From the archives.

No. 205.

**AIDE-MEMOIRE HANDED BY THE AMBASSADOR OF
BRITAIN IN THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

May 8, 1939

In the task of erecting a barrier against aggression in Eastern Europe by making arrangements for the safety of those States most directly menaced, His Majesty's Government would always attach great importance to the association with their efforts of the Soviet Government. They are, in fact, fully conscious that the support that might be afforded by the Soviet Government to Eastern European countries would be of the utmost value in case of war, and that the prospect of such support would act as a powerful deterrent against aggression. Their whole effort has accordingly been directed to finding means by which certain difficulties inherent in the situation may be avoided or overcome. It was with this purpose that His Majesty's Government proposed that the Soviet Government should of their own volition make a

* See Document No. 193.

** See Document No. 171.

declaration * which, they are convinced, would steady the situation by showing the willingness of the Soviet Government to collaborate without causing immediate difficulties to those whom it is desired to help. By this proposal the Soviet Government would lend their assistance in whatever form seemed most desirable to States, victims of aggression and themselves determined to resist, who wished to take advantage of it. The original proposal made to the Soviet Government was designed for the purpose of giving effect to this idea.

His Majesty's Government have, however, in the light of the Soviet counter-proposal ** and of their consultations with other Governments, revised the proposal which they originally made to the Soviet Government, and they would now submit it in the following form:

"It is suggested that the Soviet Government should make a public declaration on their own initiative, in which after referring to the general statement of policy recently made by M. Stalin and having regard to the statements recently made by His Majesty's Government and the French Government, accepting new obligations on behalf of certain Eastern European countries, the Soviet Government would undertake that in the event of Great Britain and France being involved in hostilities in fulfilment of these obligations, the assistance of the Soviet Government would be immediately available if desired and would be afforded in such manner and on such terms as might be agreed".

From Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939, Third Series, Vol. V, London, 1952, p. 487.

No. 206.

TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE***

May 8, 1939

As you see, the English and the French are demanding of us unilateral and gratuitous assistance with no intention of rendering

* See Document No. 165.

** See Document No. 171.

*** A similar telegram was sent to the Soviet Ambassador in Britain.

us equivalent assistance. This is very much like the insolent Bonnet-Léger formula* later revised by Bonnet** with which you are familiar. Seeds has said that the French Government has no objections to this English proposal.*** I take this to mean that the English proposal supersedes Bonnet's last proposal and thus the Bonnet-Léger formula is restored. We urgently need your assessment of the English proposal. Please telegraph your advice as to the reply our Government should give.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

No. 207.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

May 9, 1939

The present English proposal**** which is basically a repetition of the British Government's proposal of April 15, ***** is explained by the fact that in the last ten days or so following Hitler's speech the "appeasers" have once again raised their heads here. This is evidenced by, among other things, the large-scale campaign in *The Times* calling for "one more attempt" to come to terms with Germany and Italy. One clearly feels that there is a relapse to the Munich policy in government circles. I personally think that the proposal made to you yesterday by Seeds is unacceptable, but I feel the English have not yet said their last word.

Ambassador

From the archives.

* See Document No. 185.
** See Document No. 193.
*** See Document No. 205.
**** See Document No. 205.
***** See Document No. 165.

No. 208.
TASS COMMUNIQUE

May 10, 1939

According to information received from London, Reuters News Agency has reported by wireless that the English reply * to the proposal of the USSR ** contains the following fundamental counter-proposals: firstly, the Soviet Union must give a separate guarantee to each of the states bordering on it and, secondly, England undertakes to render assistance to the USSR if the latter should be involved in hostilities as a result of fulfilling the guarantees it had assumed. TASS has learned from authoritative Soviet sources that this report put out by Reuters Agency does not fully correspond to facts. On May 8 the Soviet Government did receive the British Government's counter-proposal to which the French Government does not object. In this proposal it is not stated that the Soviet Government must give a separate guarantee to each of the states bordering on the USSR. It is stated there that the Soviet Government must give immediate assistance to Great Britain and France in the event of their being involved in hostilities in fulfilment of obligations assumed by them with regard to Poland and Rumania. However, in this counter-proposal the British Government says nothing about assistance which the Soviet Union would receive from France and Great Britain on a basis of reciprocity if it should be similarly involved in hostilities in fulfilment of the obligations it had assumed with regard to some states in Eastern Europe.

From *Izvestia*, No. 107 (6877),
May 10, 1939

* See Documents Nos. 204, 205.

** See Document No. 171.

No. 209.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***May 10, 1939*

You are right in saying that as regards its content the English proposal* differs little from the first French draft, but it is even worse as regards its form. If the Bonnet-Léger formula** actually imposed unilateral obligations on us, it was nonetheless worded as an agreement between the three countries and in its concluding part it envisaged the immediate establishment of contact between the General Staffs (in a veiled form). The proposal of the English, on the other hand, clearly reveals an unwillingness to get involved with us through any formal agreement, an unwillingness to place their signature side by side with ours on any document, and an unwillingness to go beyond "parallel" actions. It is still less acceptable to us than the Bonnet-Léger formula. It would automatically involve us in a war with Germany whenever England and France should choose to fight Germany under the obligations which they have assumed without our consent and which have not been concerted with us. They arrogate to no one but themselves the right to set both the time and the objectives of such a conflict. While assigning to us the role of a blind companion in this combination, they do not wish to guarantee us even against the consequences which our obligation would entail for us.

Ambassador

From the archives.

* See Document No. 205.

** See Document No. 185.

No. 210.**TELEGRAM FROM THE DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

Warsaw, May 10, 1939

I had an hour-long conversation with Beck. I received some information about the state of Polish-German relations. By going into a detailed analysis of the balance of forces in Europe and the possibilities of effective Franco-English assistance to Poland I brought Beck to admit outright that without the support of the USSR the Poles could never hold out. As is my custom, I summed up the gist of our talk at the close of the conversation, and I pointedly reiterated this statement by Beck and he confirmed it. For my part, I emphasized that the USSR would not refuse assistance to Poland if she desired it. I shall inform you about the conversation in greater detail upon my return.

Potemkin

From the archives.

No. 211.**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN ESTONIA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

May 10, 1939

According to information received, military fortifications are being erected at a forced pace near the mouth of the Narva and 10-inch guns are being installed. Work is carried on round the clock. The construction is similar to the German Siegfried system. The operations are being directed by Germans together with the chief of Estonian counter-intelligence, Masing.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 212.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE USSR AND THE AMBASSADOR OF POLAND IN
THE USSR***May 11, 1939*

I received the Ambassador at his own request. Grzybowski began the conversation by apologizing for having inaccurately informed me during our last conversation * as to the Polish Government's position in respect of the Soviet Government's proposal to Britain and France. ** In expressing his generally positive attitude to the proposal during our last meeting, he had inaccurately set out the Polish Government's position. The Ambassador read out from a piece of paper the instructions he had received from Warsaw. Two points in those instructions deserve attention. Firstly, the Polish Government states that the French initiative in the negotiations regarding guarantees to Poland does not accord with the point of view of the Polish Government which feels that it alone can conduct such negotiations, and has not authorized France to conduct them. Secondly, Poland does not consider it possible to conclude a mutual assistance pact with the USSR in view of the practical impossibility for Poland to render assistance to the Soviet Union. In the meantime, Poland proceeds from the principle that a mutual assistance pact can be concluded only on conditions of reciprocity. At the same time, in reply to my question the Ambassador said that Poland could not oppose the conclusion of a mutual assistance pact between the USSR, England and France, believing that this was entirely up to those states themselves to decide.

When I asked whether Poland was interested in such a pact the Ambassador gave an evasive reply, and reread the instructions he had received. When I asked whether Poland was interested in guarantees for the European states bordering on the USSR, the Ambassador replied that this should not relate to Poland. He made it clear that he was saying this in the context of the present moment; in future the question might be seen in a different light.

* See Document No. 203.

** See Document No. 171.

The entire conversation shows that Poland does not wish at the present to bind herself through any agreement with the USSR or to consent to the participation of the USSR in guaranteeing Poland, though she does not exclude the latter in the future.

From the archives.

No. 213.

AIDE-MÉMOIRE HANDED BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE AMBASSADOR OF BRITAIN IN THE USSR

May 14, 1939

The Soviet Government has given careful consideration to the latest proposal of the Government of Great Britain which was handed to the Soviet Government on May 8, * and it has come to the conclusion that it cannot serve as a basis for organizing a front for resistance made up of peace-loving states against the further extension of aggression in Europe.

This conclusion is based on the following considerations:

1. The English proposal does not rest on the principle of reciprocity with regard to the USSR and places it in a position of inequality inasmuch as it does not oblige England and France to guarantee the USSR in the event of a direct attack on it by aggressors, whereas England and France as well as Poland do have such a guarantee on the basis of the reciprocity which exists between them.

2. The English proposal extends the guarantee to the East European states bordering on the USSR only to Poland and Rumania, thus leaving uncovered the north-western frontier of the USSR, where it borders on Finland, Estonia and Latvia.

3. The absence of guarantees to the USSR on the part of England and France in the event of a direct attack by aggressors, on the one hand, and the uncovered north-western frontier of the USSR, on the other, may serve as an element provoking aggression in the direction of the Soviet Union.

* See Document No. 205.

The Soviet Government believes that at least three conditions are required to create an effective barrier of peace-loving states against the further extension of aggression in Europe:

1. The conclusion between England, France and the USSR of an effective pact of mutual assistance against aggression;

2. The guaranteeing by these three Great Powers of the states of Central and Eastern Europe threatened by aggression, including Latvia, Estonia and Finland;

3. The conclusion of a concrete agreement between England, France and the USSR on the forms and the extent of assistance to be rendered to each other and to the guaranteed states, for without such an agreement the mutual assistance pacts risk being left hanging in the air, as the experience of Czechoslovakia has shown.

From the archives.

No. 214.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADORS IN ITALY AND GERMANY**

May 14, 1939

The Soviet Government's reply * was handed to British Ambassador Seeds today. Our reply rejects the British Government's proposal of May 8 which suggested that we should by unilateral declaration guarantee our assistance to England and France in the event of their involvement in a war with Germany over Poland and Rumania, but which gave no guarantee to the USSR in the event of an attack on it by the aggressors. We are insisting on the principle of reciprocity in the matter of mutual assistance by England, France and the USSR, and on the extension of a joint guarantee by these three countries to all the countries of Eastern Europe bordering on the Soviet Union.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

* See Document No. 213.

No. 215.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN AN
OFFICIAL OF THE DANZIG SENATE AND THE
PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE***May 15, 1939*

On May 5, 1939, I spoke with President Greiser who related the following.

In the next several weeks the storm that has been brewing in the relations between Germany and Poland will not yet have broken. German action against Poland is to be expected in August at the earliest. In the coming weeks Germany will try to drive a wedge into relationships between Poland and England. For this purpose the Danzig issue is an excellent instrument. We must bring forth the Danzig problem in such a way as to create the impression in London that Danzig is the crux of the German-Polish conflict. If the English recognize the proposition that Danzig is German by nature, and if they support a separate solution of the Danzig problem and thereby the incorporation of Danzig into Germany, it will mean that we will have practically won the game. It will then become possible to implement the remaining German claims against Poland as well. I am convinced that regardless of all statements to the contrary, the British Government is not prepared to put the Anglo-Polish mutual assistance pact into effect over the Danzig question. And if the English start hesitating on this score, the entire Polish system of security will collapse, and Poland will be ready to capitulate.

I believe that Hitler will pursue the conflict with Poland to the very end, even if peaceful methods should fail and the only alternative would be military intervention. In any event, Hitler will choose a time for such a military clash when Germany's external political situation will be favourable. Just now this is not the case. For this reason alone I believe that a Polish-German conflict is impossible at the present time. It is hard to foretell the direction in which the international situation will develop. For us the position of the Soviet Union is of decisive significance. According to my information, there has only been slight and limited contact between Germany and Russia through the Russian Ambassador in Berlin. The occasion for this was the contract

for deliveries of "Skoda" products which the Soviet Union had long since concluded with Czechoslovakia. Through its Ambassador in Berlin Moscow had enquired whether the contract would remain in force after the formation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Some time afterwards the German side made it known that the "Skoda" contract would be fulfilled by Germany even in the changed conditions.

From the archives.

No. 216.

**EXTRACT FROM A TELEGRAM FROM THE GERMAN
FOREIGN MINISTER TO THE AMBASSADOR
OF GERMANY IN JAPAN**

May 15, 1939

In agreement with the Italian Government, I have during the last few days given Ambassador Oshima the following information about the German and Italian views:

1) The German and Italian Governments are willing to continue to follow without change the political line so far taken by them towards Japan.

2) The two Governments have decided to sign a bilateral pact of alliance in the course of the present month, because they consider it opportune to meet with a swift counter move the political activity embarked on for purposes of propaganda by the Western Powers.

3) The trilateral Berlin-Rome-Tokyo negotiations are in no way prejudiced by the prior Italo-German pact of alliance. This pact of alliance will provide final proof of the unshakeable solidarity of the Rome-Berlin Axis ¹⁰ from the juristic standpoint as well. If they desire a Three Power pact ¹⁶, the Japanese cannot but be glad to see the internal relationship between their two European partners clarified beyond a shadow of doubt and every possibility of internal divergences between these partners ruled out.

4) It is, moreover, not the fault of the German and Italian Governments that the conclusion of a Three Power pact is being

so much delayed. For a long time I have been pointing out to the Japanese that, if the conclusion of a Three Power pact were postponed any longer, it might become necessary to conclude an Italo-German pact beforehand.

5) The fact that the Italo-German pact will in certain respects provide for closer ties than the present draft of the Three Power pact constitutes nothing to disturb the Japanese either. It is after all quite natural that political and military co-operation between the two European countries, who are neighbours and find themselves directly confronted by France and Britain, should be on more intimate lines than co-operation with far distant Japan. If, therefore, there emerges a difference between the two pacts, Germany and Italy are in no way thereby putting Japan politically on a lower level of friendship. World opinion, where the Rome-Berlin Axis has for long been a firmly established idea, will regard such a difference as a matter of course. Furthermore, it has always been Japan who has constantly pressed for cautious wording of the obligations in the Three Power pact. Germany and Italy for their part could not but welcome it if Japan were willing to join in the closer ties of the Italo-German pact. Japan cannot, however, demand, nor has she any interest in so doing, that Germany and Italy should in their mutual relations adapt themselves to the scale desired by Japan for the Three Power pact.

6) The existence side by side of the Italo-German pact and the Three Power pact will not involve any difficulties, either practically or technically. The several provisions of the present Japanese draft Three Power pact can remain completely unchanged. All that is required is the insertion at the end of a purely formal article, clarifying in legal terms the relationship of the two pacts to each other. I have handed Oshima the draft of an article to this effect.

7) The German and Italian Governments are extremely anxious that the Japanese Government should now reach their final decision quickly, so that the Three Power pact can be secretly initialled at the same time as the Italo-German pact is signed. This desire reveals once more that there is no intention on their part * of disparaging, from the political aspect, their relations with Japan. [...]

* The German and Italian Governments.

The text of the draft pact and of the relevant documents will be telegraphed separately to Tokyo for your personal information.

Ribbentrop

From Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. VI, pp. 494-496.

No. 217.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES
IN THE USA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

May 16, 1939

Today I called on Hull at his invitation. He congratulated me on my appointment* and said many friendly words of a general nature.

I took the opportunity to give him a correct account of our talks with England. Hull said that although owing to tradition and to the isolationist opposition the American Government had been deprived of an opportunity to participate in projects of mutual assistance against aggressors outside the Western Hemisphere, it was nonetheless interested in the success of the talks. He understood our demand for reciprocity and equal obligations. He saw his own task at present in explaining to Congress and to the American people that this was not a question of local conflicts but one of preparations for recarving the map of the world which ultimately would be harmful to the interests of the USA.

He enquired as to when I intended to present my Letters of Credence to the President who was leaving on an extended tour of the country around June 10. I replied that I would keep that in mind. Hull said that after I had presented my credentials he would like to discuss some practical questions concerning our relations. He commented warmly on our pavilion at the New York Fair.

Chargé d'Affaires

From the archives.

* A reference to the appointment of K. A. Umansky as Ambassador of the USSR to the USA.

No. 218.

**EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM THE AMBASSADOR
OF POLAND IN BRITAIN TO THE MINISTER FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF POLAND**

May 19, 1939

As Colonel Kwiecynski is flying to Warsaw tomorrow morning I hasten to set down here in a few words my impressions and observations concerning the Anglo-Soviet negotiations. I shall not go into a detailed analysis of the present state of the negotiations since I assume that you, M. Minister, are receiving from Kennard continuous and more detailed information than the information I possess. Furthermore, in this matter everything is in a state of flux and constant change. Nonetheless, I wish to draw your attention to the sentiments and opinions that are becoming ever more obvious in the light of these negotiations.

In my telegram of the 17th of this month I described in brief the views of the group of "activists" which includes Churchill and his followers in the Conservative Party and the entire camp of independent Liberals headed by Archibald Sinclair and Lloyd George. On the Russian question this group is obviously supported by the Labour Party. I wrote that these circles were pressing for an Anglo-Franco-Soviet alliance and that they were accusing the Government of not being resolute and vigorous enough on the question of creating a political organization possessing the maximum strength and practical possibilities and capable of erecting a barrier against German expansion. In their opinion Lord Halifax and Premier Chamberlain—the former most likely out of ideological considerations and the latter so as not to close off completely the avenues leading to the policy of "appeasement"—are consciously and deliberately dragging out the negotiations with Moscow to which their attitude remains cool as before. [...]

Edward Raczynski
Ambassador of the Polish Republic

From the archives.

No. 219.**EXCERPT FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE AMBASSADOR OF JAPAN IN THE USSR***May 19, 1939*

I called in the Ambassador and told him the following. We have received information about the violation of the border of the Mongolian People's Republic by Japano-Manchurian forces. As there is a Pact of Mutual Assistance between the USSR and the MPR, I am obliged to make a statement to the Ambassador about the aforesaid violation of the border of the MPR. Of late, on May 11-12 and thereafter, there have been several violations of the MPR border by Japano-Manchurian units which have attacked Mongolian units in the area of Nomon-Kan-Burd-Obo and in the area of Dongur-Obo. There were casualties among the military units of the MPR. Japano-Manchurian aircraft have also participated in this intrusion into the MPR. Thus, there have been gross violations of the border of the MPR, together with other inadmissible actions by Japano-Manchurian units. I am obliged to give warning that there is a limit to one's patience, and I am requesting the Ambassador to tell the Japanese Government that this should not happen again. This will be in the best interests of the Japanese Government itself. [. . .]

From the archives

No. 220.**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE USSR AT THE SESSION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS****May 20, 1939*

On the question of Japanese aggression against China be guided by the following: the proposal of the Chinese should be

* I. M. Maisky.

accepted as a basis, so that amendments may then be introduced. Say that it is the policy of the Soviet Government to support victims of aggression. Point out also that in keeping with Chamberlain's latest statement about consent to support victims of aggression the English should also support the Chinese proposal.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

No. 221.

**EXTRACT FROM A TELEGRAM FROM THE GERMAN
AMBASSADOR IN JAPAN TO THE GERMAN FOREIGN
MINISTER**

May 20, 1939

The War Minister * has just had a written statement for the Reich Foreign Minister read out to me by General Majiri. The following is a brief summary of its contents:

The Conference of Five Ministers had today arrived at a Japanese decision on the Military Pact.¹⁶ The Foreign Minister would inform the German Government on Sunday at the latest. The Army had secured agreement within the Services, had achieved acceptance of the demands in principle, and conceded some changes in wording. The Japanese Government hoped that agreement with Germany and Italy might be rapidly reached, as far as possible on this basis. The Army was striving for secret initialling, simultaneous with the signature of the Italo-German Pact, in order to establish the three-Power character of the alliance from the outset. Motivated by this the War Minister repeatedly expressed the urgent request that the Reich Foreign Minister might, with complete confidence in the sincerity of the Army and its ability to carry the field, overlook minor amendments to the German draft.

Ott

From *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. VI, pp. 541-542.*

* S. Itagaki.

No. 222.**TELEGRAM FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
USSR AT THE SESSION OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS
COUNCIL TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***May 22, 1939*

Munters, the Latvian Minister for Foreign Affairs, whom I saw today at a luncheon given by Avenol,* asked me about the state of the Anglo-Soviet talks and in so doing he intimated that it would be difficult for the Latvian Government to agree to a tripartite pact giving Latvia guarantees against aggression but that the question of such a pact guaranteeing her neutrality could be discussed.

Maisky

From the archives.

No. 223.**STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE USSR
AT THE SESSION OF THE LEAGUE OF
NATIONS COUNCIL***May 22, 1939*

In my capacity as representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, I would like to support the proposals put forward by the Chinese representative in his most able and eloquent speech. It is now being more and more universally recognized, even by those who were previously sceptical, that the only way to put an end to the further development of lawlessness and chaos in international relations—which, in the end, must inevitably lead to a general war spreading all over Europe and possibly all over the whole world—is by a firm resistance to aggression. From this it follows naturally that every victim of aggression should be rendered the maximum possible assistance

* Secretary-General of the League of Nations.

and support. This is the attitude of my country, which is, as a matter of policy, always prepared to render assistance to the victims of aggression. This is also growing conviction of other Governments. In this connection, I wish to quote the fact that the Government of the United Kingdom, through, I believe, no less a person than the British Prime Minister, has registered its adherence to the principle of giving help and assistance to the victims of aggression who are putting up an active resistance for their independence. This principle is fully applicable in the case of China, which we are discussing today. China is the victim of brutal and unprovoked aggression, and she is fighting hard and heroically for her independence. I believe, therefore, that the Council should record its appreciation of the Chinese delegation's request, and that the Chinese proposals should be given the maximum sympathetic consideration, especially by those Powers which support the said principle.

From the archives.

Published in *League of Nations*.
Official Journal, May-June 1939,
pp. 255-256.

No. 224.

**EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF A CONFERENCE AT
THE GERMAN REICH CHANCELLOR'S**

May 23, 1939

Present: The Führer, Field Marshal Göring, Grand Admiral Raeder, Colonel-General von Brauchitsch, Colonel-General Keitel, Colonel-General Milch, General (of Artillery) Halder, General Bodenschatz, Rear-Admiral Schniewind, Colonel Jeschonnek, Colonel (General Staff) Warlimont, Lieutenant-Colonel (General Staff) Schmunt, Captain Engel, Lieutenant-Commander Albrecht, Captain von Below.

Subject: Briefing on the Situation and Political Objectives.

The Führer gave as the purpose of the conference:

- (1) Review of the situation.
- (2) To set the Armed Forces the tasks arising from the situation.

(3) Definition of the conclusions to be drawn from these tasks.

(4) Ensuring that secrecy is maintained on all decisions and measures resulting from these conclusions. Secrecy is the prerequisite for success.

The gist of the Führer's statement is as follows.

Our present position must be viewed under two aspects.

(a) Actual development from 1933-1939.

(b) Germany's never-changing situation.

From 1933-1939 progress in all spheres. Our military situation improved enormously.

Our situation *vis-à-vis* the surrounding world has remained the same.

Germany was outside the circle of the Great Powers. A balance of power had been established without Germany's participation.

This balance is being disturbed by Germany claiming her vital rights and her reappearance in the circle of the Great Powers. All claims are regarded as "breaking in".

The English are more afraid of economic dangers than of ordinary threats of force.

The ideological problems have been solved by the mass of 80,000,000 people. The economic problems must also be solved. To create the economic conditions necessary for this is a task no German can disregard. The solution of the problems demands courage. The principle must not prevail that one can accommodate oneself to the circumstances and thus shirk the solution of the problems. The circumstances must rather be adapted to suit the demands. This is not possible without "breaking in" to other countries or attacking other people's possessions.

Living space proportionate to the greatness of the state is fundamental to every power. One can do without it for a time but sooner or later the problems will have to be solved by hook or by crook. The alternatives are: rise or decline. In fifteen or twenty years' time the solution will be forced upon us. No German statesman can shirk the problem for longer.

At present we are in a state of national ebullience as are two other states: Italy and Japan.

The years behind us have been put to good use. All measures were consistently directed towards the goal.

After six years the present position is as follows:

The national political unification of the Germans has been

achieved bar minor exceptions. Further successes can no longer be won without bloodshed.

- The delineation of frontiers is of military importance.

The Pole is not a fresh enemy. Poland will always be on the side of our adversaries. In spite of treaties of friendship Poland has always been bent on exploiting every opportunity against us.

It is not Danzig that is at stake. For us it is a matter of expanding our living space in the East and making food supplies secured and also solving the problem of the Baltic States. Food supplies can only be obtained from thinly populated areas. Over and above fertility, the thorough German cultivation will tremendously increase the produce.

No other openings can be seen in Europe.

Colonies: A warning against gifts of colonial possessions. This is no solution of the food problem. Blockade!

If fate forces us into a showdown with the West it is good to possess a largish area in the East. In war time we shall be even less able to rely on record harvests than in peace time.

The populations of non-German territories do not render military service and are available for labour service.

The problem of "Poland" cannot be dissociated from the showdown with the West. Poland's internal solidarity against Bolshevism is doubtful. Therefore Poland is also a doubtful barrier against Russia.

Success in war in the West with a rapid decision is questionable and so is Poland's attitude.

The Polish régime will not stand up to Russian pressure. Poland sees danger in a German victory over the West and will try to deprive us of victory.

There is therefore no question of sparing Poland and we are left with the decision:

To attack Poland at the first suitable opportunity.

We cannot expect a repetition of Czechia. There will be war. Our task is to isolate Poland. Success in isolating her will be decisive.

Therefore the Führer must reserve to himself the final order to strike. It must not come to a simultaneous showdown with the West (France and England).

If it is not definitely certain that a German-Polish conflict will not lead to war with the West, then the fight must be primarily against England and France.

Thesis: Conflict with Poland—beginning with an attack on Poland—will only be successful if the West keeps out of the ring.

If that is not possible it is better to fall upon the West and finish off Poland at the same time. [...]

Certified correct.

Schmundt, Lt. Col.

From *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. VI, pp. 574-580.

No. 225.

**COMMUNIQUE OF THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

May 24, 1939

The Government of Finland has approached the Government of the USSR with a request for assistance in carrying out a revision of the Convention of 1921 under which fortifications are not to be erected on the Aaland Islands and the islands are to be neutralized. The Convention was signed by 22 states. Although the USSR is not a signatory of the Convention, the Soviet Government has nonetheless considered it to be a matter of special significance. Finland is now seeking to revise the Convention of 1921, desiring, jointly with Sweden, to carry out the fortification of the Aaland Islands. In view of this the Soviet Government has requested, through the Finnish Minister in Moscow, for information on the character and extent of the contemplated fortification of the Aaland Islands. For the USSR this question is all the more significant since the fortification of the Aaland Islands, situated not far from the entrance to the Gulf of Finland, may be used in war time to block the entrances to and exits from the Gulf of Finland for Soviet ships.

Since the purpose of the fortification of the Aaland Islands remains undefined, and while the Finnish Government has refused to provide information on the extent and character of the fortifications, the Soviet Government, believing that under these conditions it is deprived of an opportunity to possess materials essential for arriving at a solution of the said question, has given

instructions to its representative in the League of Nations to seek a postponement of the consideration of this question at this time in the League of Nations Council.

From *Izvestia*, No. 119 (6889),
May 24, 1939.

No. 226.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN A
GERMAN BUSINESSMAN AND THE COUNSELLOR OF
THE GERMAN EMBASSY IN POLAND**

May 25, 1939

Von Scheliah related that at the suggestion of the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland, Arciszewski, German Ambassador von Moltke and Arciszewski himself attended a luncheon given by the Bulgarian Minister in Warsaw on May 19 or 20. Arciszewski acted with Beck's approval. Arciszewski said that Beck was participating with great reluctance in the conduct of Poland's present policy and he was, of course, prepared to come to terms with Germany if it should prove possible to find a way to do so that would not look like capitulation. Beck believes that a war between Germany and Poland would be an absurdity from which no one but third parties would stand to gain. The great importance that Beck attaches to the policy of doing nothing to irritate Germany is illustrated by the restraint Poland is displaying in respect of the talks about a pact between the West and the Soviet Union. Beck also fails to understand why Germany wants to have Danzig while refusing to take other German territories situated on the borders of Germany, such as the Southern Tyrol and Alsace.

In answering Arciszewski's question as to why Germany had chosen such an unfavourable moment to address her proposal to Poland, Moltke said that the proposal was to have served the cause of appeasement and that therefore, from the German point of view, the timing could not be of decisive significance. Moltke went on to state that at present there were no favourable opportunities for beginning a discussion. One of the reasons for this was Beck's speech, which displayed little desire to meet the other side.

On the basis of conversations which he had had between the 15th and 19th of May in Berlin with Woermann, head of the Political Department of the Foreign Ministry, and several other high-ranking officials of the Ministry, as well as with a number of staff officers from the Air Ministry and the War Ministry, von Scheliah concluded that just now no one in Berlin actually wanted to enter into negotiations with Poland under whatever circumstances. Should the Polish side make any concrete proposals this would be regarded in Berlin as most inopportune. They are counting on the complete success of the wearing-down tactics presently being applied against Poland. Such an approach is further encouraged, firstly, by reports about Poland's mounting economic difficulties and, secondly, by the above-mentioned reports of Polish willingness to negotiate. For this reason the aforementioned Berlin circles are openly saying that a settlement of the German-Polish dispute is now possible only on the basis of the return to Germany of Danzig and the Corridor. One can sometimes hear—and from very well-informed sources—that the German demands are already being extended to Poznan and Upper Silesia.

The Soviet Union is a factor which serves to restrain Germany in its undoubted aggressive designs in respect of Poland. In the opinion of influential Berlin circles, at present the position of the Soviet Union is in general the most important question.

In touching upon his other observations, von Scheliah said that the Reich Air Ministry was absolutely convinced that Germany would soon be at war. Opinions differ as to dates and concepts. They are saying that we do not want a world war, but that the Führer will certainly manage to find some suitable situation. High-ranking officers in the War Ministry are just as belligerent. They are of the opinion that the best thing would be the timely elimination of the eastern front by way of a preventive war against Poland. In saying so, they are referring to pronouncements by Hitler who is at present "personally angry with Poland". Hitler's recent speech before young Wehrmacht officers encouraged the spread of belligerent sentiments in both of the above-mentioned ministries. In that speech he also proceeded from the idea that an early war was inevitable and urged the officers to be prepared even today to give up their lives in that historic action.

Throughout the whole of Eastern Germany there are large-scale troop movements in the direction of the eastern frontier.

These troop movements have caused great concern among the population in the frontier areas. Already there have been numerous cases of migration to interior areas of the country. In Berlin, on the contrary, except for high-ranking officials and officers, the mood is completely fatalistic. People are preoccupied with the question of how to get their daily bread.

Contrary to the prevailing opinion in Poland that Ribbentrop is to blame for the stiffening of the German foreign policy line, it should be noted that Ribbentrop's foreign policy is determined entirely by Hitler. Owing to his rudeness, arrogance and lack of intuition in conversations with foreign ambassadors and ministers Ribbentrop can only make still less palatable the already barely acceptable desires and demands of Germany. This, for example, is what he actually did in his conversations with Lipski in March-April of this year. Because of this formal impression many foreign diplomats regard him as the author of the toughened German foreign policy.

From the archives.

No. 227.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE**

May 26, 1939

It has come to our knowledge that both the English and the French want to tie in their acceptance of our demand for mutual assistance between the three Powers with the Covenant of the League of Nations and with the League of Nations procedure. In other words, the English and the French, after having at a meeting of the League of Nations in the presence of Litvinov, recognized as unbinding the most important points of the League Covenant, including Article 16, now want to turn the first point of our proposal* into a mere scrap of paper. This means that in the event of aggression mutual assistance will not be rendered immediately, as we are proposing, but only after deliberations in the League of Nations, with no one knowing what the results of such deliberations would be.

* See Document No. 213.

Warn the French on your behalf that you are deeply convinced that Moscow will not accept the reservation in respect of the League of Nations but will insist on the immediate entry into force of a pact of mutual assistance.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

No. 228.
**FROM THE DIARY OF THE ITALIAN FOREIGN
MINISTER**

May 26, 1939

[...] We* agreed and embodied in a memorandum the following points: (1) Italy will finance Matchek's** Croat revolt with twenty million dinars; (2) he undertakes to prepare the revolution within four to six months; (3) he will quickly call in the Italian troops to insure order and peace; (4) Croatia will proclaim itself an independent state in confederation with Rome. It will have its own government but its ministries for foreign affairs and of national defence will be in common with Italy; (5) Italy will be permitted to keep armed forces in Croatia and will also keep there a lieutenant general as in Albania; (6) after some time we shall decide on possibilities for union under a single head.

The Duce read the report and approved. He desires, however, that Matchek countersign it. In the meantime, I have sent it to Zagreb by safe means. In the coming week we shall begin our payments via Zurich.

Mussolini is taken up with the idea of breaking Yugoslavia to pieces and of annexing the kingdom of Croatia. He thinks the undertaking is sufficiently easy, and, as things stand, I agree with him. [...]

From *The Ciano Diaries, 1939-1943*, pp. 87-88.

* Ciano and Carnelutti, a representative of the Croation separatist movement.

** Leader of the Croat Peasant Party.

No. 229.

MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE AMBASSADOR OF BRITAIN AND THE CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES OF FRANCE IN THE USSR*May 27, 1939*

Seeds said that he had been instructed to hand to the Soviet Government a new draft of an agreement between the USSR, England and France on joint resistance to aggression in Europe.* The draft had been elaborated by the British Foreign Office with the utmost care and with due regard for all the wishes stated in the latest reply of the Soviet Government** to the English proposal. The Ambassador expressed the hope that the Government of the USSR would appreciate the big step made by the Government of Britain towards meeting the wishes of the USSR and would itself move towards a quick conclusion of the talks, in which the British Government was extremely interested.

Payart said that on behalf of the French Government he was handing to Comrade Molotov a draft tripartite agreement between France, the USSR and England which was identical with the English draft. Payart said he shared Seeds' view concerning the draft and, like the British Ambassador, he expressed the hope that the Soviet Government would find the present Anglo-French proposal acceptable and that an early and happy conclusion of the talks on this matter between the three countries might be expected.

Replying to Seeds and Payart, Comrade Molotov said that, having familiarized himself with the Anglo-French draft, he had drawn a negative conclusion about that document. The Anglo-French draft contained no plan for the organization of effective mutual assistance of the USSR, England and France against aggression in Europe; furthermore, it gave no indication that the British and French Governments were seriously interested in concluding a pact with the USSR. The Anglo-French proposals

* See Document No. 230.

** See Document No. 213.

leave the impression that the British and French Governments were interested less in a pact itself than in discussions about it. England and France might need these discussions for some reasons. The Soviet Government did not know what these reasons were. It was not interested in discussions about a pact, but in organizing the effective mutual assistance of the USSR, England and France against aggression in Europe. The Soviet Government did not intend to engage in discussions about a pact, discussions whose purpose it did not know. The British and French Governments could conduct such discussions with more suitable partners than the USSR. Perhaps both Governments, having concluded mutual assistance pacts with each other and with Poland and Turkey, felt that this was sufficient for them. That was perhaps why they were not interested in concluding an effective pact with the Soviet Union. This was the conclusion prompted by the Anglo-French draft, which did not contain proposals for the conclusion of an effective mutual assistance pact between the USSR, England and France and reduced this question wholly to discussion about a pact.

Passing to the individual points contained in the Anglo-French draft, Comrade Molotov made the following comment:

In the Anglo-French draft the mechanism for the rendering of mutual assistance by the three States is made subordinate to the complex and lengthy procedure established by the League of Nations. The Soviet Government is not against the League of Nations. On the contrary, at the September session of the Assembly the representative of the USSR vigorously came out in defence of the League, notably of Article 16 of its Covenant against other delegates, including the British delegate, who finally spoke in favour of regarding this article as non-mandatory for the members of the League of Nations. However, the procedure provided for in the League of Nations Covenant for carrying out mutual assistance against aggression, which is now being proposed for adoption in the Anglo-French draft, cannot but be regarded as inadequate in meeting the needs of effective mutual assistance. Article 16 of the League of Nations Covenant requires a recommendation by the Council of the League before such mutual assistance is rendered. The situation might arise in which the question of aggression against the USSR by a member of the Axis would be placed before the Council. The representative of some country, say Bolivia, would start debating in the Council

whether or not there had actually been an act of aggression against the USSR, and whether or not it was necessary to render assistance to the USSR. In the meantime the aggressor would be pouring artillery fire on Soviet territory. The Soviet Government could not accept the replacement of effective assistance to the victim of aggression by mere discussions of the question. Incidentally, in the Treaties of Mutual Assistance concluded between England and France, and also by both those States with Poland and by the British Government with the Turkish Government there is no obligation to make such assistance subordinate to the League of Nations procedure as laid in Article 16 of the League Covenant. Why then should such subordination be envisaged in the Anglo-French draft of a treaty with the USSR? Equally puzzling is paragraph 5 of the Anglo-French draft which states that the rendering of support and assistance by the Soviet Union, England and France in cases referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 of the draft should be without prejudice "to the rights and position of other Powers". How could one act against an aggressor without prejudice to him? And finally, paragraph 4 suggests that in the event of a threat of aggression the three contracting States would not act but would merely consult together. This also shows that the Anglo-French proposal prefers mere discussions of the subject to effective counter-measures against the aggressor. Comrade Molotov again states that the position of the Soviet Government is quite the opposite. The USSR desires agreement on effective defence against an aggressor. It is not interested in, nor is it satisfied with, mere discussion. If the Governments of France and Britain are interested in having such discussions, they may conduct them with other partners. Comrade Molotov notes that for the moment he is expressing his personal opinion. He will submit the Anglo-French draft for consideration by the Government. After this he will be able to give a conclusive reply concerning this document.

With a look of extreme amazement Seeds and Payart tried to argue that the evaluation of the Anglo-French document given by Comrade Molotov was based on an obvious misapprehension. It was true that the Anglo-French proposal mentioned the League of Nations and even Article 16 of its Covenant. But this had been done merely in order to satisfy public opinion, particularly in England, where it was customary to link every international action with the League of Nations. Both Seeds and Payart said

that their Governments in no way meant to make the mechanism of mutual assistance by the USSR, France and England subordinate to the League of Nations procedure. Both Governments recognized the need for the prompt and automatic mutual assistance of the three contracting States against aggression. Both Seeds and Payart were stating this quite officially. The Anglo-French draft merely provided for the tripartite agreement between England, the Soviet Union and France to be concluded "according to the principles and in the spirit of the League of Nations". Nothing in this formula should be unacceptable to the USSR. Both Seeds and Payart gave assurances that it in no way imposed restraints on the automatic rendering of mutual assistance, in which the British and French Governments were just as interested as the USSR. Seeds and Payart also regarded as a misunderstanding the interpretation according to which the obligation, mentioned in paragraph 5 of the Anglo-French draft, to prevent "prejudice to the rights and position of other Powers" meant protecting the aggressor. The aforesaid paragraph was aimed solely at safeguarding the sovereign rights of the weakest States to which England, France and the USSR were agreeing to render assistance. It could happen that in the interests of defending such a State against aggression one of the three contracting Governments might consider it necessary, for instance, to destroy a town situated on the territory of the State being defended. Should the Government of the latter protest, its sovereignty in this matter would obviously have to be taken into account. Both Seeds and Payart expressed surprise over the assumption that the Governments of Britain and France were not seriously interested in a pact with the USSR and preferred mere discussions on the matter to concrete decisions. Seeds felt that his Government had taken a resolute step towards meeting the position of the Soviet Government and that the treaty with the USSR which it was proposing marked a radical turning point in British foreign policy. Both Governments were interested in the earliest possible completion of the negotiations with the USSR. Both wanted to act, not procrastinate. It was necessary, without losing time, to remove the misapprehensions that had arisen in Comrade Molotov's mind during his first reading of the Anglo-French document. Seeds would immediately inform his Government of the misapprehensions and suggest that they should be removed. He hoped to receive a fully satisfactory reply from London within

the next few days. Such a reply would immediately be communicated by him to Comrade Molotov. The Ambassador hoped that the Soviet Government would also try not to delay making its final decisions about the Anglo-French draft.

Recorded by *V. Potemkin*

From the archives.

No. 230.

**DRAFT AGREEMENT BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN,
FRANCE AND THE USSR HANDED BY THE AMBASSA-
DOR OF GREAT BRITAIN AND THE CHARGÉ D'AF-
FAIRES OF FRANCE IN THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S
COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

May 27, 1939

The Governments of the United Kingdom, France and the USSR desiring to give effect, in their capacity of Members of the League of Nations, to the principle of mutual support against aggression which is embodied in the Covenant of the League, have reached the following agreement:

I

If France and the United Kingdom are engaged in hostilities with a European Power, in consequence of either (1) aggression by that Power against another European State which they had, in conformity with the wishes of that State, undertaken to assist against such aggression, (2) assistance given by them to another European State which had requested such assistance in order to resist a violation of its neutrality, or (3) aggression by a European Power against either France or the United Kingdom, the USSR, acting in accordance with the principles of Article 16, paragraphs 1 and 2, of the Covenant of the League of Nations, will give France and the United Kingdom all the support and assistance in its power.

II

If the USSR is engaged in hostilities with a European Power, in consequence of either (1) aggression by that Power against another European State which the USSR had, in conformity with the wishes of that State, undertaken to assist against such aggression, (2) assistance given by the USSR to another European State which had requested such assistance in order to resist a violation of its neutrality, or (3) aggression by a European Power against the USSR, France and the United Kingdom, acting in accordance with the principles of Article 16, paragraphs 1 and 2, of the Covenant of the League of Nations, will give the USSR all the support and assistance in their power.

III

The three Governments will concert together as to the methods by which such mutual support and assistance could, in case of need, be made most effective.

IV

In the event of circumstances arising which threaten to call their undertakings of mutual support and assistance into operation, the three Governments will immediately consult together upon the situation.

The methods and scope of such consultation will at once be the subject of further discussion between the three Governments.

V

It is understood that the rendering of support and assistance in the above cases is without prejudice to the rights and position of other Powers.

VI

The three Governments will communicate to each other the terms of any undertakings referred to in I (1) and I (2) above which they have already given. Any of them which may in future be considering the giving of such an undertaking will consult the

other two Governments before doing so, and will communicate to them the terms of any undertaking so given.

VII

This agreement will continue for a period of (5) years from today's date. Not less than (6) months before the expiry of the said period, the three Governments will consult together as to the desirability of renewing it, with or without modifications.

From the archives. Published in *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939*, Third Series, Vol. V, London, 1952, pp. 679-680.

No. 231.

EXTRACT FROM A DISPATCH FROM THE NAVAL ATTACHÉ OF ITALY IN JAPAN * TO THE NAVAL MINISTER OF ITALY **

May 27, 1939

[...] If Japan sees the Government of Chiang Kai-shek as her overt enemy, she sees Russia as her enemy No. 1, and an enemy with whom there can never be a truce or a compromise. The European totalitarian states are throwing Bolshevism back to the East, declaring it to be an Asian utopia. Similarly, in East Asia Bolshevism is just as fiercely being thrown back by Japan. Japan knows that behind Chiang Kai-shek is the long red arm. Victory over Chiang Kai-shek would be of no significance unless Japan were in a position to erect a barrier in Russia's path, to throw her back, and to purge the Far East of Bolshevik influence once and for all.

The Communist ideology has naturally been outlawed in Japan, and the best Japanese army—the Kwantung Army—is

* G. Giorgis.

** At that time the Prime Minister of Italy, Mussolini, also held the post of Naval Minister.

stationed on the continent to guard the maritime province. Manchukuo was established as a springboard for an attack on Russia. The recently adopted grandiose programme of extensive rearmament pursues the obvious goal, insofar as the Army is concerned, of bringing it to a state where it could wage on two fronts, that is, in China and against Russia.

This does not contradict the fact that the Japanese military plan is very remote from a war on two fronts. It is better to fight two enemies separately than simultaneously—particularly if the enemy with whom one has already clashed is putting up resistance, albeit a passive one, yet a resistance that is absorbing considerable energy and causing no small concern. [...]

From I documenti diplomatici italiani,
Serie 8, Vol. 12, Roma, 1962, pp. 37-38.

No. 232.

THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION AND THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE USSR. A REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS AND PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AT A SESSION OF THE SUPREME SOVIET OF THE USSR

May 31, 1939

Comrade Deputies, the proposal put forward by the Deputies that this session of the Supreme Soviet should hear a report by the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs is understandable. The international situation has undergone serious changes of late. And from the viewpoint of the peace-loving powers, these changes have considerably worsened the international situation. We are now faced with the results which we all know, of the policy of aggressive states, on the one hand, and of the policy of non-intervention of the democratic countries, on the other. Representatives of the aggressive countries are not averse to bragging of the results of the policy of aggression. In fact, there is certainly no want of bragging in this respect. The representatives of the democratic countries, which have rejected the policy of collective security and

which have been pursuing a policy of non-resistance to aggression, are trying to belittle the significance of the present deterioration of the international situation. They are still engaged mainly in "pacifying" public opinion pretending that nothing important has occurred in the recent period.

The position of the Soviet Union as regards current international events differs from the position of both sides. As anyone will realize, under no circumstances can it be suspected of harbouring any sympathy for the aggressors. It is also opposed to any slurring over of the real deterioration of the international situation. For us it is clear that attempts to conceal from the public the real changes that have taken place in the world must be countered with a statement of facts. It will then become obvious that "soothing" speeches and articles are needed only by those who do not wish to put a stop to further aggression and who hope to channel aggression, so to say, in a more or less "acceptable" direction.

But recently authoritative representatives of England and France tried to placate public opinion in their countries by glorifying the successes of the ill-fated Munich Agreement. They said that the September agreement in Munich had prevented a European war through relatively small concessions on the part of Czechoslovakia. Many people felt even then that in Munich the representatives of England and France had made more concessions at Czechoslovakia's expense than they had a right to. The Munich Agreement was, so to say, the culmination of the policy of non-intervention, the culmination of compromise with the aggressive countries. And what have been the results of that policy? Has the Munich Agreement checked aggression? Not at all. On the contrary, Germany was not satisfied with the concessions she got in Munich, that is, with the possession of the German-speaking Sudetenland. She simply proceeded to eliminate a big Slav State, namely Czechoslovakia. Not much time had elapsed after the Munich Conference, held in September 1938, before Germany, in March 1939, put an end to the existence of Czechoslovakia. Germany succeeded in carrying this through without opposition from anyone, and so smoothly that one begins to wonder what was the true aim of the conference in Munich.

In any event, the elimination of Czechoslovakia, despite the Munich Agreement, showed the world the results of the policy of non-intervention of which Munich may be said to be its highest

point. The failure of that policy has become obvious. In the meantime, the aggressor countries continued to pursue their policy. Germany took Memel and the Memel region away from the Lithuanian Republic. It is common knowledge that Italy did not fall far behind either. In April she did away with the independent State of Albania.

After this there is nothing surprising in the fact that at the end of April the German head of State destroyed two important international treaties with one speech: the Naval Agreement between Germany and England³ and the Non-Aggression Pact between Germany and Poland. In the past great international significance had been attached to these treaties. Yet Germany did away with these treaties very easily and with no regard for any formalities. Such was Germany's answer to the proposal of President Roosevelt of the United States of America, a proposal imbued with the spirit of peace.

But there was more to it than the abrogation of two international treaties. Germany and Italy went further. Several days ago the military-political treaty concluded between them was made public. This treaty is basically of an offensive nature. According to the treaty, Germany and Italy are to support one another in any military actions initiated by either of those countries, including any aggression, or any offensive war. Only recently the alliance between Germany and Italy was said to have been brought about by the alleged need for joint struggle against communism. Hence all the fuss about the so-called "Anti-Comintern Pact"⁸. For a while the anti-Comintern clamour did to a certain extent divert public attention. But now the aggressors no longer consider it necessary to hide behind a screen. The military-political treaty between Germany and Italy says nothing about struggle against the Comintern. Meanwhile the statesmen and the press of Germany and Italy are openly saying that the treaty is directed precisely against the main European democratic countries.

It seems clear that the facts cited above attest to a serious deterioration of the international situation.

In this connection certain changes towards resistance to aggression are also becoming discernible in the policy of the non-aggressive states of Europe. It remains to be seen how serious these changes are. At present it is even impossible to say whether these countries have a sincere desire to abandon the policy of non-

intervention, the policy of non-resistance to further aggression. Will it not happen that the present policy of these countries of limiting aggression to certain areas will fail to serve as a barrier to aggression in other areas? Questions of this kind are being also raised in certain organs of the bourgeois press abroad. We, therefore, must be vigilant. We are for peace and for the prevention of further aggression. But we must remember the words of Comrade Stalin: "Caution must be observed so as not to allow our country to be drawn into conflicts by warmongers who are in the habit of getting others to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them." * It is only by observing caution that we shall be able to safeguard the interests of our country and the interests of universal peace.

There seem, however, to be some signs that the democratic countries of Europe are coming to realise more and more clearly the failure of the policy of non-intervention and the need for more serious searches for ways and means of creating a united front of peace-loving powers against aggression. In a country like England loud demands are being heard for a drastic change in foreign policy. We, of course, understand the difference between speeches and actual policy. But it is pertinent to note that these speeches are not fortuitous. Here are certain facts. No pact of mutual assistance had existed between England and Poland. Now the decision to conclude such a pact has been taken. ** The significance of this agreement is heightened by the denunciation by Germany of her non-aggression pact with Poland. There is no need to deny that the pact of mutual assistance between England and Poland has brought about a change in the European situation. Let us go further. There had been no pact of mutual assistance between England and Turkey, but recently a certain agreement on mutual assistance between England and Turkey has been reached. This also makes for change in the international situation.

In connection with these new developments the endeavour of the non-aggressive European powers to persuade the USSR to cooperate with them in the cause of resistance to aggression must be considered one of the characteristic features of recent times. This endeavour, of course, merits attention. Thus, the Soviet Government has accepted the proposal of England and France to hold

* From the report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to the 18th Congress of the Party (March 10, 1939).

** See Document No. 148.

talks on strengthening political relations between the USSR, England and France and on forming a peace front against further aggression.

How do we define our tasks in the present-day international situation? We believe that they accord with the interests of the other non-aggressive countries. They consist in stopping further aggression and creating for this purpose a reliable and effective defensive front of non-aggressive powers.

In connection with the proposals made to us by the British and French Governments, the Soviet Government entered into negotiations with those two Governments about the necessary measures for fighting aggression. This was in the middle of last April. The negotiations which started then have not yet been completed. However, it was clear even then that if there really were a desire to create an effective front of peace-loving countries against aggression, the following conditions must be met as the minimum prerequisites: the conclusion between England, France and the USSR of an effective pact of mutual assistance against aggression having a purely defensive character; a guarantee on the part of England, France and the USSR to the states of Central and Eastern Europe, including all the European countries bordering on the USSR, against an attack by aggressors; the conclusion of a concrete agreement between England, France and the USSR on the forms and extent of immediate and effective assistance to be rendered to one another and to the guaranteed states in the event of an attack by aggressors.

This is our view, which we impose on nobody but for which we stand. We do not demand acceptance of our point of view; we do not ask this of anybody. We believe, however, that this point of view corresponds to the security interests of the peace-loving states. This would be an agreement of a purely defensive character, directed against an attack by the aggressors and totally different from the military and offensive alliance which was recently concluded between Germany and Italy.

It is clear that the principle of reciprocity and equal obligations must form the basis for such an agreement.

It is to be noted that some of the Anglo-French proposals do not reflect a favourable attitude towards this elementary principle. Having guaranteed themselves against a direct attack by aggressors through pacts of mutual assistance between themselves and Poland and having made sure of the assistance of the USSR in the

event of an attack by aggressors on Poland and Rumania, the English and the French left open the question whether the USSR in its turn might count on their assistance in the event of a direct attack on it by aggressors. Another question was left open as well, namely, whether England and France could participate in a guarantee of the small states bordering on the USSR and covering the north-western borders of the USSR should those states not be in a position to defend their neutrality against an attack by aggressors. Thus, the USSR was placed in an unequal position.

During the last few days new Anglo-French proposals have been received. In these proposals the principle is recognized of mutual assistance between England, France and the USSR on a basis of reciprocity in the event of a direct attack by aggressors. This is of course a step forward. It should be noted, however, that it is hedged about with such reservations, including reservations in respect of certain points of the Covenant of the League of Nations, that it may prove to be a fictitious step forward. As to the question of a guarantee to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the proposals referred to show no progress at all if one considers the question from the standpoint of reciprocity. They provide for assistance to the USSR in regard to the five countries to which the English and the French have already given promises of guarantees, but they say nothing of assistance to the three countries on the north-western borders of the USSR which may not be in a position to defend their neutrality in the event of an attack by aggressors.

The Soviet Union, however, cannot assume obligations in regard to the five countries indicated above if it does not receive guarantees in regard to the three countries situated on its north-western frontiers. This is how matters stand with regard to the negotiations with England and France.

While conducting negotiations with England and France, we see no necessity for refusing to have commercial relations with such countries as Germany and Italy. At the beginning of last year, on the initiative of the German Government, talks began on a trade agreement and new credits. At that time Germany offered to grant us a new credit of 200 million marks. Inasmuch as we did not come to terms about this new economic agreement at the time, the matter was removed from the order of the day. At the end of 1938 the German Government again raised the question of economic negotiations and of the granting of a credit of 200

million marks. The German offer was accompanied by readiness to make certain concessions. At the beginning of 1939 the People's Commissariat for Foreign Trade was informed that a special German representative, Herr Schnurre, * was leaving for Moscow in connection with these negotiations. But thereafter the negotiations were confided to the German Ambassador in Moscow, Herr von Schullenburg, and they were suspended owing to differences of opinion. Now there are indications that the talks may be resumed.

I can also add that recently a trade agreement for 1939 was signed with Italy. It is of advantage to both countries.

It will be recalled that last February a special communiqué was published confirming the development of good-neighbourly relations between the USSR and Poland. A certain general improvement is to be noted in our relations with Poland. On the other hand, the trade agreement concluded in March could considerably increase the trade turnover between the USSR and Poland.

Our relations with friendly Turkey are developing normally. Comrade Potemkin's recent visit to Ankara for purposes of exchanging information proved to be extremely useful.

Of the international questions that have lately acquired a great significance for the USSR, I should like to dwell upon the question of the Aaland Islands. You will recall that for over 100 years these islands had belonged to Russia. As a result of the October Revolution Finland obtained her independence. Under a treaty with our country Finland also obtained title to the Aaland Islands. In 1921 ten countries, namely, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, England, France and Italy, signed a convention prohibiting, as had been the case previously, the fortification of the Aaland Islands. The governments of the capitalist countries did this without the participation of Soviet representatives. In 1921, weakened by the war and the foreign intervention, the Soviet Republic could only protest against that illegal act in regard to the USSR. But even then we clearly and repeatedly stated that the Soviet Union could not be indifferent to this question and that a modification of the legal status of the Aaland Islands was impossible without violation of the interests of our country.

* Head of the East European Section of the Economic Policy Department of the German Foreign Ministry.

The importance of the Aaland Islands lies in their strategic position in the Baltic Sea. The fortification of the Aaland Islands could be used for purposes hostile to the USSR. Situated not far from the entrance to the Gulf of Finland, the Aaland Islands, if fortified, could serve to close off for the USSR the entrances to and exits from the Gulf of Finland. Therefore, now that the Finnish Government, together with Sweden, wants to carry out an extensive plan for the fortification of the Aaland Islands, the Soviet Government has made a request to the Finnish Government for information about the objectives and the character of the contemplated fortifications. Instead of meeting this entirely natural request of the Soviet Union, the Finnish Government refused to provide the USSR with the relevant information and explanation. It is not difficult to see that the accompanying references to considerations of military secrecy are quite unconvincing. The Finnish Government did after all, communicate its plan for the fortification of the Aaland Islands to another government, namely, the Government of Sweden. And it not only communicated that plan, but also involved the Swedish Government in the carrying out of this fortification plan. But under the Convention of 1921 Sweden enjoys no special rights in this respect. On the other hand, the Soviet Union has a greater interest in the question of the fortification of the Aaland Islands than Sweden.

At the request of the Finnish and Swedish Governments, the question of revising the 1921 Convention was discussed at the recent session of the League of Nations Council without whose sanction the Convention cannot be revised since the ten-nation Convention was concluded on the basis of the relevant decision of the League of Nations Council of June 24, 1921. Owing to the objections raised by the representative of the Soviet Union, the Council of the League was unable to reach unanimity necessary for the adoption of any decision by the Council. The results of the discussion in the Council of the League are well known. The League of Nations Council turned down the proposal of Finland and Sweden. It did not sanction the revision of the 1921 Convention. The Finnish Government must surely draw the appropriate conclusion from this. In the light of recent international events the Aaland question has assumed a particularly large significance for the Soviet Union. We do not consider it possible to reconcile ourselves to any disregard for the interests of the USSR in this

matter which is of great importance for the defence of our country.

I shall now speak very briefly on the questions of the Far East and on our relations with Japan.

Here of the greatest significance during this past year were our negotiations with Japan on the fisheries question. It is common knowledge that in the Maritime Province, in the Sea of Okhotsk, on Sakhalin and on Kamchatka the Japanese have large numbers of fisheries on our territory. By the end of last year they numbered as many as 384. In the meantime, the period of the convention on whose basis the Japanese had received these fishing areas had expired. In the case of many fishing areas the lease periods previously agreed on had also run out. Thus, the Soviet Government entered into negotiations with Japan on the fisheries question. Our side declared that a certain number of areas whose lease periods had run out could no longer be placed at the disposal of the Japanese in view of strategic considerations. Despite the obvious validity of our position, it was strenuously opposed by the Japanese side. After protracted negotiations 37 fishing areas were taken away from the Japanese and they were given ten new areas in other localities. Following this the convention was prolonged for another year. This agreement with Japan on the fisheries question is of great political significance, especially since Japanese reactionary circles did all they could to emphasize the political aspect of this matter, even to the point of making all kinds of threats. The Japanese reactionaries had had an opportunity once again to convince themselves however, that threats against the Soviet Union are pointless, and that the rights of the Soviet state are well protected.

Now a few words about border questions. It would seem high time for those concerned to realize that the Soviet Government will not tolerate any provocations by Japano-Manchurian military units on its borders. Today it is necessary to recall this in respect of the borders of the Mongolian People's Republic as well. In accordance with the Treaty of Mutual Assistance concluded between the USSR and the Mongolian People's Republic, we consider it our duty to render the Mongolian People's Republic the necessary assistance for guarding her borders. We take a serious view of such things as mutual assistance treaties signed by the Soviet Government. I must give warning that by virtue of the Treaty of Mutual Assistance concluded between us we shall

defend the borders of the Mongolian People's Republic just as resolutely as our own borders. It is high time to realize that the charges of aggression advanced by Japan against the Government of the Mongolian People's Republic are ridiculous and absurd. It is also high time to realize that there is a limit to anyone's patience. It would therefore be best of all to give up in good time the recurrent provocative violations of the borders of the USSR and the MPR by Japano-Manchurian military units. An appropriate warning has also been made by us through the Japanese Ambassador in Moscow.

There is no need for me to speak about our attitude to China. You are fully aware of Comrade Stalin's statement about support for peoples that have fallen victim to aggression and that fight for the independence of their country. This applies in full measure to China and to her struggle for national independence. We are consistently pursuing this policy. It is fully in line with the tasks facing us in Europe, namely, the tasks of creating a united front of peace-loving powers against further aggression.

The USSR is no longer what it was, say, in 1921, when it had only just started carrying out peaceful constructive work. One is compelled to recall this fact because to this day even many of our neighbours are evidently unable to realise this. Nor can one fail to see that the USSR is no longer what it was a mere five or ten years ago, and that the USSR has grown stronger. The foreign policy of the Soviet Union should reflect the changes in the international situation and the increased strength of the USSR as a powerful factor of peace. It goes without saying that the foreign policy of the Soviet Union is fundamentally peace-loving and directed against aggression. The aggressive countries themselves know this better than anyone else. Belatedly and hesitantly some democratic powers are becoming aware of this simple truth. The Soviet Union is entitled to a place in the vanguard of the united front of the peace-loving states that are really opposed to aggression.

From Third Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. May 25-31, 1939. Stenographic Report. Moscow, 1939, pp. 467-476.

No. 233.**DRAFT AGREEMENT BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN,
FRANCE AND THE USSR HANDED BY THE PEOPLE'S
COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO
THE AMBASSADOR OF GREAT BRITAIN AND THE
CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES OF FRANCE IN THE USSR**

June 2, 1939

The Governments of Great Britain, France and the USSR seeking to give effect to the principles of mutual support against aggression adopted by the League of Nations, have come to the following agreement:

1. France, England and the USSR undertake to render to each other immediately all effective assistance should one of these States become involved in hostilities with a European Power as a result of either (1) aggression by that Power against any one of these three States, (2) aggression by that Power against Belgium, Greece, Turkey, Rumania, Poland, Latvia, Estonia and Finland, whom England, France and the USSR have agreed to undertake to defend against aggression, or (3) assistance rendered by one of these three States to another European State which had requested such assistance in order to resist a violation of its neutrality.
2. The three States will come to an agreement within the shortest possible time as to the methods, forms and extent of assistance to be rendered by them in conformity with paragraph 1.
3. In the event of circumstances arising which, in the opinion of one of the contracting parties, create a threat of aggression by a European Power, the three States will immediately consult together to examine the situation and in case of necessity to establish in common the moment for putting into immediate effect the mechanism of mutual assistance and the manner of its application independently of any procedure applied by the League of Nations to the examination of questions.
4. The three States will communicate to each other the texts of all their undertakings assumed in the spirit of the obligations provided for under paragraph 1 in respect of European States. If one of these States should contemplate in the future the

possibility of assuming new obligations of a similar character it will first consult the other two States and communicate to them the contents (text) of the agreement.

5. In the event of the commencement of joint operations against aggression in accordance with paragraph 1 the three States undertake to conclude an armistice or peace only by joint agreement.
6. This agreement enters into force simultaneously with the agreement which is to be concluded in virtue of paragraph 2.
7. This agreement will continue in force for a period of five years from today's date. Not less than six months before the expiry of this period the three States will consider whether they wish to renew it with or without modifications.

From the archives.

No. 234.

TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR

June 3, 1939

Daladier began the conversation by saying that he had fully associated himself and continued to associate himself with all the three basic conditions which we had put forth in our first reply to the English. * It was in this spirit that he had held talks with Halifax in Paris and had tried to convince the latter that as regards French interests he considered Moscow's demands to be reasonable. He added that for him personally the most important thing was the military commission to which he attached far greater significance than to the agreement as a whole. It was the Paris discussions that had produced the latest Franco-English draft ** which also fell far short of satisfying him, particularly because of the reference to Article 16 of the League of Nations Covenant. He had at first objected to this reference and had

* See Document No. 213.

** See Document No. 230.

agreed to include it in the general draft only after the English had assured him that the procedure of the League would not be applied and that the obligation would operate automatically. In coming negotiations he would support any Moscow wording that ruled out ambiguity.

The question of the Baltic States was somewhat more difficult. The main argument of the English was that for a country to be rendered assistance it was necessary for that country to request such assistance and be prepared to defend itself.

The English were also afraid of "complicating the position of the small countries" by drawing them into broad combinations. He personally would be inclined (he did not know yet if the English would go along with him) to work out a broader formula covering all eventual cases of aggression in approximately the following form:

"The parties undertake to render each other immediate assistance in the event of a direct attack on European soil on any of the contracting parties or in the event of any of the parties being involved in hostilities in consequence of the assistance rendered by it to any European country subjected to direct or indirect aggression."

In this way it was possible to completely avoid enumerating the States and differentiating between those that had already received a guarantee or would make such a request and those that had not yet done so.

Daladier added that he had only had a quick look at the modifications you introduced yesterday but wanted me to tell you that he was "prepared to go a long way for the sake of speedily achieving a clear and unambiguous military agreement". Therefore, "though the sharp tone of Molotov's speech will not be to the liking of many people here," he personally appreciated his directness. He believed that a form of expression had been found "which is necessary today, especially for England."

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 235.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE USSR AND THE ESTONIAN MINISTER IN THE
USSR***June 5, 1939*

Rei began by explaining the reasons for, and the nature of, the non-aggression pact to be signed shortly between Estonia and Germany. Rei said that the non-aggression pact between Estonia and Germany would be of the same nature as the recently signed non-aggression pact between Germany and Denmark. I said that it was noteworthy that Finland had refused to conclude a non-aggression pact with Germany while Estonia and Latvia had accepted the pact. I also said that we would form our opinion of the pact on the basis of the significance it acquired in reality.

Then Rei posed the same question as Kocins, only emphasizing still more strongly that during the negotiations about guaranteeing the Balts, the Balts themselves were being ignored. I gave him the same explanations I had given Kocins. I also indicated that we would form our judgement as to Estonia's position on the question of neutrality on the basis of Estonia's response to the proposal for a triple guarantee of Estonia's neutrality. I said that we had some doubts as to how consistently Estonia was pursuing a policy of neutrality since it was hard to imagine that a small country like Estonia would want to preserve her neutrality and at the same time maintain an identical attitude both to non-aggressive countries like the USSR, England and France, and to aggressive countries like Germany. Rei answered that Estonia was only formally maintaining an identical attitude to both the first and second groups of countries mentioned, but that in reality in the event of an attack by an aggressor it would count on the assistance of the non-aggressive countries and, first of all, on assistance by the USSR. To this I replied that Estonia could not count on anyone rendering her assistance against aggression at the very first moment she should ask for such assistance and on a scale she might wish until Estonia took the appropriate advance steps.

From the archives.

No. 236.**TELEGRAM FROM THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN JAPAN TO THE STATE SECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GERMANY***June 7, 1939*

I hear in strict confidence from an absolutely reliable Army source that, on the evening of June 5, instructions were despatched by telegram to Ambassador Oshima. According to this, Japan would be prepared to take part automatically in any war of Germany's provided Russia were one of Germany's adversaries. Should Russia, in a conflict between Germany and third Powers, remain neutral, Japan would only enter the war if and when it were agreed that her entry was in the common interest of the Allies. My confidant emphasized that the Army and the Navy had, after long negotiations, reached agreement on the above solution. This represents substantial progress, as the Navy has dropped its previous reservation, making Japan's entry into war against the Western Powers dependent exclusively upon Japanese interests.

Ott

From Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. VI, p. 656.

No. 237.**EXCERPT FROM A MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE POLISH AMBASSADOR IN JAPAN AND THE JAPANESE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS***June 7, 1939*

I began the conversation by recalling the official statement made to the Minister on April 24 last to the effect that the policy of my Government in respect of Japan, on the one hand, and the USSR, on the other, had undergone no change. This statement had not lost its validity despite the changes that had taken place

in Europe in the meantime. Would not the Minister now be inclined, on the basis of reciprocity, and the light of the latest decisions of the Japanese Government, to authorize me to assure my Government that the friendly attitude of Japan to Poland had likewise remained unchanged.

M. Arita hastened to give me an affirmative reply but asked that two observations be added to it: (1) the Japanese Government was anxious to see the complications that had arisen between Poland and Germany resolved in a peaceful manner, and (2) the Anti-Comintern Pact⁸ had given rise to an atmosphere of friendship between Japan, Germany and Italy which transcended the limits of the Pact. In reply to several of my questions he made it clear that what he had in mind was the general mood, not any concrete obligations on matters not covered by anti-Communist co-operation, least of all on questions that might in any way relate to the Polish-German disputes.

The Minister, in turn, asked me whether any Polish-German negotiations had been initiated in consequence of the mutual clarification of positions contained in the speeches by Hitler and Minister Beck. I replied that I was unaware of this but that it was my impression that the German Government had as yet not reacted to the memorandum of the Polish Government handed to it on May 5 in reply to the German memorandum of April 28. My Government was always prepared to enter into negotiations on the terms set out in that reply. But since claims were being presented not by us against Germany but by Germany against us, she should probably be the one to show an initiative in respect of negotiations. In this connection Arita surmised that Germany was hesitating because her prestige would be hurt by too hasty a search for agreement and it would look as if she were acting under the pressure of an Anglo-Polish alliance. If this were so, I replied, we could wait, although in the meantime the atmosphere was becoming increasingly tense and international developments were unfolding at a rapid pace, which would doubtless make it more and more difficult to reach agreement as time went on. In reply to Arita's question whether there was any truth in the rumour that had reached him about Germans being hounded by Poles in Gdansk, I said that questions of security and public order in Gdansk were the prerogative of the local authorities which were made up from amongst the German population and were completely independent of Poland. Consequently, if anyone in the

territory of the Free City was being oppressed on nationality grounds, it could only be the Polish minority.

I added that I was amazed by the effects of the policy pursued by Germany under anti-Comintern slogans. The Western Powers, for instance, were now seeking the friendship of the Soviets which until recently had been in complete political isolation while Poland, without which no anti-Soviet action in Europe, could be contemplated, even by Germany, had been confronted with the necessity of countering the unexpected German claims. Should these claims be buttressed by force, Poland would unhesitatingly offer armed resistance. Even if it were assumed that in a war with Poland the scales would be tipped in Germany's favour, in the final analysis Germany's defeat in a general conflict was inevitable. A striking contrast could be observed between the strivings for peace in Europe and for the defence of the European civilization against subversive activities by the Third International, and the strivings of Germany to absorb, to the detriment of the most vital interests of Poland, three hundred thousand Gdansk Germans who were themselves exercising power—both on the national question and in the political field—according to Berlin's instructions. The Third Reich's foreign policy in this sphere could only be explained by considerations of prestige and by the need of the National Socialist leaders for more and more successes.

In substance Minister Arita was unable to call in question the above-outlined arguments which I presented most forcefully. He therefore merely remarked that the Japanese Government maintained an equally friendly attitude to Poland and to Germany, and that it could not take any position on the questions now dividing the two countries and was compelled to limit itself to rendering such assistance as was within its power in getting these differences removed, in which it was highly interested. In answer to my question whether this assistance had assumed, or could assume, some concrete form Arita said that unfortunately the Japanese Government was not familiar enough with the Polish-German problems to be in a position to speak out on the matter. When I observed that it did after all have its ambassadors in Warsaw and in Berlin as its informants, he admitted that the ambassadors felt that for the time being the circumstances and the moods on both sides did not encourage the idea of Japanese mediation, and that consequently the idea could not be carried into effect.

In the course of further discussion we passed to the question of the Anglo-Soviet negotiations which, Arita emphasized, were now giving the Japanese Government more cause for concern than anything else. I recalled that in this matter my Government had given London a good deal of advice and no small number of warnings, and that it had even taken a number of steps aimed at getting England and France to officially assure Japan that the negotiations with the USSR would not relate to the Far East, and that finally we, for our part, did not intend to participate in any new agreements with the Soviets. We could not, however, prevent our Western allies from seeking new ways of strengthening security wherever they felt it to be necessary for themselves. Particularly convincing was the English argument that it was necessary to draw the Soviets over to their side at least in order to prevent a German-Soviet rapprochement. "I believe this," Arita said, interrupting me. To this I replied that I did not attach too much significance to this, though I could confidentially inform him that my Government had information to the effect that it was precisely this question that interested the leaders of the Rome-Berlin Axis.

Obviously perplexed, Minister Arita told me that he highly appreciated the role Poland was playing in respect of the Soviets and felt certain that this role would not change in the future. Russia was not just a European state, as territorially she extended all the way to the Asian Far East. Consequently, the strengthening of the security of her borders in Europe should give Russia considerable freedom of action in Asia—something that Japan could not be indifferent to. In the light of this any assurance that the agreements with the USSR contained no non-European obligations would be meaningless formality. I observed in reply that in my view Great Britain had had more than enough bitter experience in the struggle against the subversive influence of the Soviets in British India, Afghanistan and Iran for her not to be on guard and not to be wary of what would, for her, be a dangerous involvement with the USSR in Asia. Western and Central Asia were one thing, Arita replied, and China and the Manchurian frontier zone were another. English policy was playing with Soviet danger. In her desire to find a new, but illusory, friend England would lose an old one. "Whom do you have in mind?" I asked. "I leave that for you to reflect upon. Perhaps Japan, perhaps Poland, and perhaps both," he said with a grin. We had

just now clarified Poland's position, I observed. As for Japan, I feared that in connection with the present situation in China England was insufficiently aware of the importance of friendship with Japan to be guided in her Russian policy by the fear of losing it. Also, to thank Arita for his statement about Japan's role in the Polish-German disputes, I said that Poland naturally would not take a position on the Anglo-Japanese conflict in China but that she was anxious to see its amicable settlement. [...]

From the archives.

No. 238.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

June 8, 1939

Halifax asked me to call on him today and informed me that the British Government was anxious to have a treaty concluded between the three Powers as soon as possible. It was with this in mind that the British Government believed it expedient to adopt a somewhat different method of negotiation: instead of exchanging Notes at a distance, which inevitably involved loss of time, the English proposed to hold talks with you round the table in Moscow, to discuss the draft agreement point by point and to find in the course of the talks formulas acceptable to both sides. The British Government was authorizing Seeds to conduct these negotiations and had wanted to summon him to London to give him the necessary instructions. But as Seeds was ill with influenza, it had been decided to send to Moscow the Head of the Central Department of the Foreign Office, Strang, who was familiar with all the details of the present Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations from the start. Furthermore, Strang was very adept at drafting all manner of diplomatic documents and formulas. Strang's task would be to thoroughly inform Seeds of the views and sentiments of the British Government in respect of the Anglo-Soviet negotiations and also to help him in the conduct of the negotiations. Strang would be leaving for Moscow early next week, that is, around June 12 or 14. Halifax expressed the hope that this new method of conducting the negotiations would lead quickly to a final agreement.

As regards our latest proposals, * Halifax made three comments:

1. Within the last few days the British Government had been in contact with the Baltic countries and it had come to the conclusion that none of them (particularly the Finns) wanted an open guarantee. Therefore, the British Government considered it impossible to accept our proposal for a listing of the countries to be guaranteed. On the other hand, acknowledging that our demand in respect of the Baltic region was essentially justified, it wanted to look for a compromise formula on the lines set out by Chamberlain in yesterday's statement, namely, that no mention should be made in the document of any of the guaranteed countries and that it should simply say that the pact obligations take effect in the event of a direct or indirect threat to the security of one of the parties to the agreement. The details of the formula could be elaborated in Moscow.

2. The British Government had great doubts about our demand for the simultaneous signing of the pact and of an agreement on military measures, for this would delay the conclusion of the treaty for a considerable period of time and in the present international situation this would be dangerous. The British Government was prepared immediately to begin negotiations on military measures but considered it necessary to sign the treaty as soon as agreement on it was reached, or at least to issue a communiqué similar to the one published in connection with the Polish and Turkish negotiations.

3. The British Government also had some doubts regarding the clause providing for the obligation not to conclude a separate armistice, but Halifax did not elaborate on this subject in any detail and observed in general that it should not be difficult to settle this question.

In the course of the conversation Halifax mentioned that the Finns had, allegedly, authorized the Swedes to conduct negotiations with us on behalf of both countries on the question of the Aaland Islands, and also that some people had advised him to go to Moscow himself in connection with the negotiations, but he was opposed in principle to frequent and lengthy absences of the Foreign Secretary from his country and that at this particular time

* See Document No. 233.

the complexity of the international situation chained him to London.

From the archives.

Ambassador

No. 239.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN**

June 10, 1939

Tell Halifax the following in reply to his statement: *

We take note of the decision of the British Government to send Strang to Moscow.

To avoid misunderstandings we consider it necessary to make it clear that the question of the three Baltic States is a question without whose satisfactory solution it would be impossible to bring the negotiations to a conclusion. We feel that without guaranteeing the security of the north-western borders of the USSR by providing for decisive counteraction by the three contracting parties against any direct or indirect attack by an aggressor on Estonia, Latvia or Finland it will be impossible to satisfy public opinion in the Soviet Union, particularly now that the Soviet Government's position has been officially endorsed by the Supreme Soviet. Explain to Halifax that this is not a question of technical formulas but one of agreeing on the substance of the question, after which it will not be difficult to find a suitable formula.

As regards the question of the simultaneous signing of the basic treaty and the special agreement, it could be settled in the course of the negotiations.

As regards what Halifax said about someone having advised him to go to Moscow, you may drop him a hint that his coming would be welcomed in Moscow.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

* See Document No. 238.

No. 240.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***June 10, 1939*

Polish Ambassador Raczynski called on me today. He wanted to know about the progress of the Anglo-Soviet negotiations and emphasized that the Polish Government was convinced of the sincerity of British intentions to create a "peace front" against aggression.

Among other things, Raczynski said that the preliminary agreement between England and Poland published on April 6* so far remained in force and that they had not embarked on the conclusion of a final treaty though this would probably be done very shortly. The Poles wanted a permanent treaty signed as soon as possible and the English seemed to feel the same on this matter. Military negotiations between the two countries had already started in Warsaw where a British mission had been sent, and a Polish mission was expected soon in London. Reports about a visit by Smigly-Rydz to England were premature but he might come in September for the English military manoeuvres. However, the military negotiations would be held whether or not a visit by Smigly-Rydz took place. In the very near future the Poles would begin official negotiations in London on the subject of credits, mainly for arms purchases. Raczynski said that the phrase about "direct or indirect threats" to independence had been written into the Anglo-Polish agreement on the suggestion of the English in order that the agreement could be put into operation in the event of Germany taking action against Danzig which was formally a Free City and not a part of Polish territory. It had been agreed between the Poles and the English that Poland would be the judge as to whether an action taken by Germany in respect of Danzig constituted an "indirect threat" that called for Polish response. England, on the other hand, undertook to render Poland support in such actions as the latter might consider necessary to take. This had not been set down anywhere but such

* See Document No. 148.

was the agreement and that was precisely how the Poles understood their rights under the agreement. In a conversation with Raczynski two days ago Chamberlain had complained that the Soviet Government was dragging out the negotiations for the pact, but I explained to the Polish Ambassador who was really to blame for their delay.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 241.

AN EDITORIAL FROM *PRAVDA*: "THE QUESTION OF THE DEFENCE OF THE THREE BALTIC COUNTRIES AGAINST AGGRESSION"

June 13, 1939

The foreign press continues to comment on the speech by Comrade Molotov in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. * The part of Comrade Molotov's speech most widely commented on is that which deals with assistance by England, France and the USSR to the three Baltic countries—Estonia, Latvia and Finland—against aggression, in the event these countries prove incapable of upholding their neutrality.

At first some foreign journalists thought that the question concerning the three Baltic countries was far-fetched and had been artificially dragged in for some unknown reasons. Now, however, they are compelled to acknowledge that such an appraisal was wrong and that the question of maintaining the neutrality of the three Baltic countries is of vital importance for the Soviet Union's security.

Others contended that while the question of the three Baltic countries interested the Soviet Union it was of no great concern for France and England. Soon, however, they too had to admit that they had been wrong. It became obvious in the course of the discussion that France and England were no less interested in maintaining the neutrality of the three Baltic countries than the Soviet Union. Even a politician like the British Conservative,

* See Document No. 232.

Churchill, was compelled to acknowledge the paramount significance of that question for France and England. Speaking in favour of guarantees to Latvia, Estonia and Finland, Churchill said:

"It is beyond doubt that if these countries were invaded by the Germans or else were exploded from inside by fascist propaganda and intrigues, the whole of Europe would be involved in war... Should their independence or integrity be threatened by the German fascists, Poland must fight, Great Britain and France must fight, the USSR must fight." *

But while acknowledging in principle the correctness of what Comrade Molotov said about assistance to the Baltic countries, a large number of foreign journalists fail to draw the appropriate practical conclusion from it when they come to the question of a triple guarantee of the neutrality of those countries.

Some said that such a guarantee would not be in the interests of Estonia, Latvia and Finland, that the peoples of those countries did not need outside assistance and that they were capable of upholding their independence against any aggression. This is, of course, wrong, to say the least. If a state like Czechoslovakia, which had a population and an army twice as large as the population and the army of the three Baltic countries taken together, was unable to defend herself against aggression, when left to her own devices, what grounds are there for assuming that the three small Baltic states are capable of doing more than Czechoslovakia, and that they are not in need of assistance from other states? There can be no question that the peoples of the three Baltic countries are vitally interested in a guarantee of their independence by the Great peace-loving Powers.

Others are saying that the acceptance by the three Baltic countries of assistance from the Great Powers would mean the loss of their sovereignty, the loss of their independence. This is nonsense, of course. All peace-loving states are seeking assistance from one another against aggression. England has been guaranteed assistance by France, Poland and Turkey. All those countries, in their turn, have been guaranteed assistance by England. Then there is also Belgium, whose neutrality has been guaranteed by England and France, and Rumania and Greece whose independence has been guaranteed by England. Does this

* Retranslated from the Russian.

mean that those countries, having received external guarantees, have thereby forfeited their sovereignty and lost their independence? It suffices to squarely pose this question to realize how absurd such an objection is.

Finally, some Anglo-French journalists are saying that official representatives of the three Baltic countries have refused to accept help from the peace-loving powers, that they do not want to have such assistance, and that therefore it would be wrong to impose the assistance of the peace-loving powers upon those countries. It is common knowledge that this argument is also being resorted to by the Foreign Minister of Estonia, Selter and the Foreign Minister of Finland, Erkko. It seems to us that here we have either a case of misunderstanding or of a poorly concealed desire on the part of certain politicians to prevent the establishment of a defensive front of peace-loving powers against aggression.

We have already said that the peoples of Estonia, Latvia and Finland are vitally interested in assistance from the peace-loving states in the event of a direct or an indirect attack on them by an aggressor. This is a self-evident truth which certainly needs no proving. How then can one explain the rejection by Messrs. Selter and Erkko of assistance of the peace-loving powers? Perhaps it is due to an underestimation by those politicians of the threat of aggression. We have recently had to contend with a similar case of underestimation on the part of Rumania and Poland, some of whose representatives objected both to a guarantee by the Soviet Union and, as we were told, to the conclusion of a pact of mutual assistance between England, France and the USSR. Circumstances have, however, removed those objections. It is not impossible that this may in the near future prove to be the case with certain representatives of the three Baltic countries as well, both because the threat of aggression is becoming ever more obvious (and on this subject a good deal of useful information could be gathered from the well-known message of President Roosevelt of the USA) and because the fundamental interests of the three Baltic countries, which require the assistance of peace-loving countries against aggression, will have a more and more telling effect.

But there may be another explanation for the behaviour of the Estonian and Finnish politicians mentioned above. It is quite possible that certain outside influences are involved here, if not direct inspiration from those who want to impede the formation

of a broad defensive front against aggression. It is difficult to say at present just who the inspirers are: the aggressive states that want to prevent the setting up of an anti-aggression front, or certain reactionary circles in the democratic states that seek to confine aggression to certain areas but not to prevent it from breaking out in others. It is significant that even a right-wing French bourgeois journalist like Henri de Kérillis considers such an explanation to be the most likely one. This is what he writes in the newspaper *L'Époque*:

"In respect of guarantees to the Baltic countries the Soviet Union's demands are absolutely legitimate and quite logical. If France and England are in favour of an agreement with the Soviet Union they would not want to see the Soviet Union suffer in the very first days of the war in consequence of German intervention through the territory of the Baltic countries. It is essential that we should know what we are striving for: do we or do we not want to conclude an alliance with the USSR?... If we want that alliance we must do everything to prevent Germany from gaining a foothold in Riga, Tallinn and Helsinki, as well as on the Aaland Islands. It is said that neither Finland, nor Estonia or Latvia wants to have Franco-Anglo-Soviet guarantees. What sort of devilry is this? If they do not want to have these guarantees it means there are all the more grounds for concern. The aforesaid Baltic countries, two of which are liliputian countries, are incapable of assuring their independence without outside help. And if they are asserting the opposite, it means they have entered into the German orbit. The Soviet Union wants to oppose this. We must act likewise."

It thus appears that the last objections to the aforesaid argument advanced in Comrade Molotov's report concerning the defence of the three Baltic countries against aggression are just as groundless from the standpoint of the interests of the anti-aggressive front of peace-loving powers as are all the previous objections.

It is clear from the foregoing that the position of the Soviet Union on the question of defending the three Baltic countries against aggression is the only correct position which fully corresponds to the interests of all peace-loving countries, including those of Estonia, Latvia and Finland.

From *Pravda*, No. 162 (7847),
June 13, 1939.

No. 242.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
STATE SECRETARY OF THE GERMAN MINISTRY FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR
IN GERMANY***June 13, 1939*

The British Ambassador, who was talking to me today about an alleged currency offence by his German servant, presently turned the conversation to his anxiety as to how we could survive the summer without a conflict. Henderson conducted the conversation as a private one, and did not make it clear where his own views stopped and official ones began. Towards the end, he was unquestionably representing Halifax's views, whereas in the first part of the conversation he expressed criticism of British policy in Warsaw and Moscow.

It is well known that for some days the press has been referring to a report by Henderson who is said to wish to expedite the treaty negotiations with Moscow. Without going into this, Henderson made a statement to the following effect: While negotiations between London and Moscow were in progress, a conversation between London and Berlin was of course impossible. Once the Russian pact was concluded, discussions with Berlin should be easier. By this Henderson presumably meant to say something like *The Times* did, namely, that strength and willingness to negotiate were quite compatible with each other; without strength Britain was perhaps not even a suitable partner for negotiations.

On the subject of Britain's pact with Russia, I made a few remarks ridiculing its advantages for Britain, and a very serious one on its effect in promoting war, particularly in Poland. British policy, I said, was diametrically opposed to Henderson's own thesis, which he had already repeatedly stated in public: "England wants the sea for herself, the continent of Europe can be left to Germany." Instead of this, the fact was that Britain was now undertaking greater and greater commitments on the Continent; for instance, she was allowing the Poles to gamble with her destiny. If there were any logic in British policy at all, the only logic I could see was that England was resolved on a preventive war and was working for it.

Henderson reacted very sensitively to this remark. There could be no question whatever of such a will to war. He deplored certain Labour influences; he did not in any way defend the Anglo-Polish Agreement and said that no Runciman would be sent to Warsaw. Neither did he deny Polish unpredictableness or obstinacy. But, as usual, he ascribed the change of front in London to Germany's march into Rump Czechia. * In conclusion he reverted once again to the danger period of this summer.

From here on, Henderson, obviously acting on instructions, spoke of London's willingness to negotiate with Berlin. Halifax obviously had in mind that the present state of tension could and must be ended by means of discussions. Neither England nor Germany could, or wanted to, bear the burden of rearmament any longer. The ending of the armaments race and the revival of economic relations could be the subject of discussions between London and Berlin. The colonial question could also be discussed. I made no comments on these remarks except to say that something similar had already been brought to my knowledge from London through different channels, but that I could not make anything of such unsubstantiated remarks.

It should be deduced from these conversational statements of Henderson's, that he is not happy about British relations with the Poles, that he thinks nothing of the Russian pact, and that, for the rest, he is deeply concerned about a possible conflict this summer, for he feels his responsibility as Ambassador in Berlin weighing heavily upon him.

Weizsäcker

From *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. VI, pp. 718-719.

* "Resttschehei" in the German original.

No. 243.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***June 14, 1939*

Today Bonnet asked me to call on him and said that the instructions given to Strang were worked out after a protracted exchange of views between London and Paris and could be regarded as Anglo-French. The negotiations in Moscow, therefore, would be conducted by the English together with the French Ambassador. Bonnet discussed the instructions in a very vague way and in the most general terms. He said that in his opinion the one and only question still to be settled was the "Baltic" question and that he hoped that on this question, too, a formula satisfactory to both sides would be found "round the table" in Moscow. He added that Strang's instructions in effect envisaged the guaranteeing of the Baltic countries "even without a request for assistance on their part." In his opinion, the dispute now was one of form rather than substance.

It is my feeling that Strang's main objection will be the enumeration in Article 1 of the countries to be guaranteed (the mention of the Baltic countries) and that a compromise will be sought by way of introducing the concept of "indirect aggression" and clarifying what each contracting party means by it.

As far as I know, Daladier and Léger have all along been in favour of such a solution of the question. According to their thinking, each should indicate in a separate protocol the countries a violation of whose neutrality would be regarded by it as an aggression directed against it as well, and would thus call into operation the undertakings contained in Article 1.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 244.**EXCERPT FROM THE DIARY OF THE ITALIAN
FOREIGN MINISTER***June 14, 1939*

[...] The Duce desires that we begin to define with Spain the future programme for the western Mediterranean: Morocco would go completely to Spain; Tunisia and Algeria would go to us. An agreement with Spain should insure our permanent outlet to the Atlantic Ocean through Morocco. [...]

From *The Ciano Diaries*, p. 99.

No. 245.**DOCUMENTS HANDED BY THE AMBASSADORS OF
GREAT BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THE USSR TO THE
PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE USSR****BRITISH DRAFT***June 15, 1939***Article I**

The United Kingdom, France and the USSR undertake to give to each other immediately all the support and assistance in their power should one of these countries become involved in hostilities with a European Power as a result either of

(1) aggression by that Power against any one of these three countries,

(2) aggression by that Power against another European State which the contracting country concerned had, in conformity with the wishes of that State, undertaken to assist against such aggression,

(3) action by that Power which the three contracting Governments, as a result of the consultation between them provided for in paragraph 3 *, considered to threaten the independence or neut-

* The reference is to Article III.

rality of another European State in such a way as to constitute a menace to the security of the contracting country concerned.

Such support and assistance will be given in conformity with the principles of Article 16, paragraphs 1 and 2, of the Covenant of the League of Nations, but without its being necessary to await action by the League.

BRITISH DRAFT

Article III

Without prejudice to the immediate rendering of assistance on the outbreak of hostilities in accordance with paragraph 1*, in the event of circumstances arising which threaten to call into operation the undertakings of mutual assistance contained in paragraph 1, * the three contracting Governments will, on the request of any one of them, immediately consult together to examine the situation. Should the necessity arise, they will decide by common agreement the moment at which the mechanism of mutual assistance shall be put into operation and the manner of its application.

Published in *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939*, Third Series, Vol. VI, London, 1953, p. 39.

No. 246.

AIDE-MÉMOIRE HANDED BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE AMBASSADORS OF BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THE USSR

June 16, 1939

Having studied the Anglo-French formulas handed to Molotov on June 15 ** the Government of the Soviet Union has come to the following conclusion:

* The reference is to Article I.

** See Document No. 245.

1. As regards paragraph 1 of Article I (Soviet Government draft*) the position of the Soviet Government coincides with that of the British and French Governments.

2. As regards paragraph 2 of Article I (Soviet Government draft) the position of the Soviet Government is rejected by the British and French Governments.

The latter consider that the Soviet Union should render immediate assistance to Poland, Rumania, Belgium, Greece and Turkey in the event of an attack on them by an aggressor and in the event of England and France being involved in hostilities in connection therewith, whereas England and France would not assume obligations to render immediate assistance to the Soviet Union in the event of the USSR being involved in hostilities with an aggressor in connection with an attack by the latter on Latvia, Estonia and Finland which border on the USSR.

The Soviet Government cannot possibly agree to this inasmuch as it cannot accept the humiliating position of inequality in which the Soviet Union would thereby be placed.

In their proposals Britain and France justify their refusal to guarantee Estonia, Latvia and Finland by the unwillingness of these countries to accept such a guarantee. If that argument presents an insurmountable obstacle, and since the Soviet Government, as said above, finds it impossible to take part in rendering joint assistance to Poland, Rumania, Belgium, Greece and Turkey without being assured of equivalent assistance in the defence of Estonia, Latvia and Finland against an aggressor, the Soviet Government is forced to conclude that the whole question of a triple guarantee to all the eight States enumerated above, as well as the question which is the subject of paragraph 3 of Article I, will have to be put aside as not being ripe for solution and that paragraphs 2 and 3 of Article I will have to be excluded from the agreement.

In this event Article I would only consist of paragraph 1, and the obligations of England, France and the USSR as regards mutual assistance would enter into force only in the case of a direct attack by an aggressor on the territory of either one of the Contracting Parties, but they would not extend to cases in which one of the Contracting Parties might be involved in hostilities as the result of rendering assistance to any third State which is not a

* See Document No. 233.

party to the present agreement but which is the object of an attack by an aggressor. In this connection the wording of paragraph 1 of Article I would clearly have to be changed accordingly.

3. In view of the differences of opinion further discussion is necessary on the question of the simultaneous entry into force of a general agreement and a military agreement.

4. As regards the question of not concluding an armistice or peace except by general agreement, the Soviet Government maintains its position, for it cannot accept the idea that any of the Contracting Parties should have the right, at the height of defensive military operations against an aggressor, to conclude a separate agreement with the aggressor behind the back of and against its allies.

5. The Soviet Government considers the reference to Article 16, paragraphs 1 and 2, of the Covenant of the League of Nations to be superfluous.

From the archives.

No. 247.

TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADORS IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE

June 16, 1939

The Anglo-French proposal received yesterday * is basically a repetition of the preceding proposal. In particular, we are asked to render immediate assistance to the five countries but they are refusing to render immediate assistance to the three Baltic countries in view of the latter's alleged rejection of such assistance. This means that the French and the English are putting the USSR in a humiliating and unequal position, something which under no circumstances would we accept.

Today I again called in Seeds, Naggiar and Strang and handed them our reply. ** It says that since England and France do not

* See Document No. 247.

** See Document No. 246.

agree to our proposal for guaranteeing Estonia, Latvia and Finland, the USSR cannot participate in guaranteeing the five countries and that we are therefore proposing that the entire question of a triple guarantee to the eight countries be dropped and regarded as not being ripe for solution.

In this case Article 1 of the Treaty would contain mutual assistance obligations by England, France and the USSR but such obligations would become operative only in the event of a direct attack by an aggressor on the territory of either one of the three Contracting Parties but they would not extend to cases where one of the contracting parties is involved in hostilities as a result of rendering assistance to any third State which is not a party to the present agreement but which is the object of an attack by an aggressor.

We feel that the English and the French want to conclude a treaty with us which would be advantageous to them and disadvantageous to us, that is, they do not want a serious treaty based on the principle of reciprocity and equality of obligations.

It is clear that we shall not accept such a treaty.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

No. 248.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

June 19, 1939

At numerous receptions lately I have seen a great many different people, including many prominent military men. It is my impression that no one here even considers it possible that the talks with us might break down and fail to result in an agreement. Never before have I noticed such a universal recognition of our strength, such an upsurge of our prestige, coupled with an awareness "that without the USSR nothing will be achieved". Everyone is perplexed over the delay in the conclusion of the "agreement that is so necessary for everyone", and it is significant that the blame for this is no longer being laid on us. The English are being

blamed most of all. At best this is being attributed to their "conservatism" and "dilatatoriness" (Sarraud, Reynaud, Pertinax), but there are also some direct charges of "double-dealing" (Sellier and Violet). There has been a fundamental reappraisal of our position in respect of the Baltic area. Whether this is due to the influence of our newspaper articles or to the position of the Baltic countries themselves, it is a fact that almost everyone (especially the military men, for instance, General Giraud and Billotte) is saying that our demands are logical and reasonable. Even those who have not read our articles are repeating our arguments; in other words, one may conclude that a breakdown of the agreement would be regarded here as a disaster and that the Government would in that case find it difficult to justify its position.

Your latest reply to Strang is logical and irreproachable from the standpoint of equality and reciprocity. * We are saying: "If you do not want guarantees for the Baltic area, then let us not speak about third countries at all, let us confine ourselves to cases directly affecting us." This is simple and logical but of course, it will not at all be to the liking of the English and French.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 249.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN A
GERMAN JOURNALIST AND A COUNSELLOR IN THE
OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
GERMANY**

June 19, 1939

The other day I spoke with Dr. Kleist from Ribbentrop's office. This is what Kleist said:

The information I gave you last May regarding the German-Polish conflict and the solution of the Polish question which Berlin was seeking** remains correct and valid to this day. Hitler is fully determined to ensure Germany's military security in the East in

* See Documents Nos. 246 and 247.

** See Document No. 196.

the course of this year by eliminating the Polish state in its present territorial and political form. In a conversation with Ribbentrop Hitler said that the Polish question must be necessarily solved for the following three reasons:

1. that present-day Poland is threatening Germany's freedom of political and military manoeuvre;
2. that capitulation of the Reich to Poland with the ensuing colossal loss of its prestige is inconceivable;
3. that a German concession to Poland would lead to insuperable difficulties for German policy in the East.

On another occasion Hitler said that he would be counting on a peaceful solution of the Polish problem to the very last but that simultaneously he would give orders to have everything ready for a swift and successful military action against Poland. If matters reached the point of an armed struggle between Germany and Poland, the German Army would act ruthlessly and without mercy. Throughout the world, Hitler went on to say, the Germans were known as Huns, but what would ensue in the event of a war with Poland would surpass all the deeds of the Huns. This ruthlessness in German military actions was necessary in order to show the states of the East and South-East, by the example of the destruction of Poland, what it meant, in present-day conditions, to resist the German will and to provoke Germany into war.

In the last few weeks Hitler has been preoccupied with the Soviet Union and he has told Ribbentrop that after the solution of the Polish question it would be necessary to stage a new Rapallo phase²⁶ in German-Russian relations and that it would be necessary for a certain period of time to pursue a policy of equilibrium and economic co-operation with respect to Moscow.

German military action against Poland has been scheduled for late August or early September. War preparations in East Prussia have almost been completed and they are continuing in Germany and in Slovakia. In general terms the military action against Poland will start off with massive strikes delivered from all sides. In the first days of the war such crushing blows will be struck at Poland that Polish resistance will be broken within the shortest period of time and the conflict will be resolved in a local war before the English and French will have time to come to their senses. Unfortunately we shall have to accept big losses among the Germans living in Poland. Hitler said recently that he would order a hundred Poles to be shot for every German killed. So if

the Poles should start slaughtering Germans they would be subjected to ruthless reprisals.

Another period of German-Polish negotiations may well precede the military conflict. Of late the Poles have repeatedly intimated to us that they are willing to begin negotiations with us on certain questions. Only a few days ago, when the Poles learned that I was leaving for the Baltic area and would make a short stopover in Warsaw (Kleist had been charged with preparations for the setting up in Riga and Tallinn of a German-Latvian and a German-Estonian Society), they asked me to pay a visit to the *Chef de cabinet* of the Polish Foreign Ministry, Count Lubienski. It is true that Ribbentrop declined this offer of contact but he gave instructions to respond to similar Polish requests on occasions that are favourable for us. In the course of possible German-Polish negotiations the question of Danzig might, for instance, be touched upon, and the Poles could be provoked into making far-reaching statements that could be interpreted as capitulation, and then, should we feel the time to be right for starting military action, the negotiations could be broken off and the entire world, and particularly the Polish people, could be told how far the Polish participants in the negotiations had gone in their capitulation. Such discrediting of the Pilsudskiite regime before the Polish public would be an excellent domestic political subversive act which might result in the overthrow of the Polish Government and in internal disorders in Poland, thereby increasing the effect of the strike by the German armed forces which would be delivered at the same time. This plan was recently outlined to me by Ribbentrop, and I felt that it was quite feasible.

The propaganda action against Poland will begin on a large scale in three weeks, or so. Anti-Polish radio broadcasts will be conducted in Polish, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Kashub, Slezanski and other languages. Furthermore, a press bulletin will be issued in Berlin in English, French, Spanish and several Scandinavian languages, which will feature anti-Polish articles and reports. Also, at the present time authoritative Berlin agencies are defining the new German-Polish frontier. By and large, the plan for the new frontier envisages the following: the attachment of the Suwalki district to East Prussia; the attachment of the Corridor and Danzig to the Reich; the establishment of a border, running from Torun in the direction of Poznan, which is to remain outside the limits of the Reich; from Poznan the new frontier is to coin-

cide with the old imperial frontier, with Lodz remaining outside the limits of the old imperial frontier; Polish Upper Silesia is to be returned to the Reich, with the new frontier overlapping the old one and embracing the entire Polish Upper Silesian industrial complex; the area of Teschen and Bielitz is also to be included within the new imperial borders. This plan for the delineation of the frontier in a "Godesberg situation" ²⁰ will, if matters reach that point, be submitted to an international forum. Whether we shall observe that frontier after the solution of the Polish question is another matter.

From the archives.

No. 250.

**CONTRACT FOR THE DELIVERY OF SPECIAL
EQUIPMENT BY THE SOVIET UNION TO CHINA**

June 20, 1939

In accordance with Articles 3 and 4 of the "Treaty between the Governments of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Chinese Republic" of March 1, 1938, the Plenipotentiary Representatives of the aforesaid Governments have concluded the present Contract relating to the delivery to China of special equipment on account of the balance of 21,841,349 US dollars, on the following terms:

1. In keeping with the order placed by the Government of the Chinese Republic the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics will, between June 25, 1939, and September 1, 1939, deliver to China the special equipment listed in the enclosed inventory ²⁷ to a total sum of 21,841,349 US dollars convertible into gold according to the exchange rate as of June 20, 1939.

2. Upon acceptance of the special equipment listed in the enclosed inventory by representatives of the Chinese Side the Plenipotentiary Representative of the Government of the Chinese Republic will confirm, by a relevant inscription in the inventory, the acceptance of the special equipment and certify the correctness of the calculation of payments for this equipment.

3. Within ten days of the date of the signing of the inventory

appended to the present Contract the Plenipotentiary Representative of the Government of the Chinese Republic will present to the Plenipotentiary Representative of the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics a "Payments Obligation of the Government of the Chinese Republic" for the total sum due on the deliveries.

4. The present Contract has been drawn up in the Russian language, in two copies: one for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the other for the Chinese Republic.

In witness of the correctness of the obligations undertaken by the two Sides the Plenipotentiary Representatives have signed the present Contract.

Plenipotentiary Representative
of the Government of the
Union of Soviet Socialist Re-
publics

A. Mikoyan

Plenipotentiary Representa-
tive of the Government of the
Chinese Republic

Yang Tse

From the archives.

No. 251.

CONTRACT FOR THE DELIVERY OF SPECIAL EQUIPMENT BY THE SOVIET UNION TO CHINA

June 20, 1939

In accordance with Articles 3 and 4 of the "Treaty between the Governments of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Chinese Republic" of June 13, 1939,²⁸ the Plenipotentiaries of the aforesaid Governments have concluded the present Contract relating to the delivery to China of special equipment on account of the aforesaid Treaty, on the following terms:

1. In keeping with the order placed by the Government of the Chinese Republic the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics will, between June 25, 1939, and September 1, 1939, deliver to China the special equipment listed in the enclosed inventory to a total sum of 14,557,564 US dollars convertible into gold according to the exchange rate as of June 20, 1939.

2. Upon acceptance of the special equipment listed in the enclosed inventory by representatives of the Chinese Side the Plenipotentiary Representative of the Government of the Chinese Republic will confirm, by a relevant inscription in the inventory, the acceptance of the special equipment and certify the correctness of the calculation of payments for this equipment.

3. Within ten days of the date of the signing of the inventory appended to the present Contract the Plenipotentiary Representative of the Government of the Chinese Republic will present to the Plenipotentiary Representative of the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics a "Payments Obligation of the Government of the Chinese Republic" for the total sum due on the deliveries.

4. The present Contract has been drawn up in the Russian language, in two copies: one for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the other for the Chinese Republic.

In witness of the correctness of the obligations undertaken by the two Sides the Plenipotentiary Representatives have signed the present Contract.

Plenipotentiary Representative
of the Government of the
Union of Soviet Socialist Re-
publics

A. Mikoyan

From the archives.

Plenipotentiary Representa-
tive of the Government of the
Chinese Republic

Yang Tse

No. 252.

TASS COMMUNIQUE

June 21, 1939

A report appeared yesterday in some German newspapers saying that the Soviet Government was insisting in the course of the negotiations with England and France on its Far Eastern borders being guaranteed and that this was an obstacle to the conclusion of an agreement. TASS is authorized to state that this report is devoid of any foundation and is a fabrication.

From *Pravda*, No. 170 (7855),
June 21, 1939

No. 253.**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
ESTONIA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***June 21, 1939*

Information has been received that the other day most of the troops of the Estonian regular army were moved to the Estonian-Soviet frontier, mainly to the Narva region. I shall ascertain the exact number of troops moved very shortly.

On June 26 Chief of Staff Halder will arrive in Tallinn from Berlin to inspect Estonian military units. From Estonia Halder will go on to Finland. A lavish reception is being prepared for him there.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 254.**DRAFT OF ARTICLE I OF THE TREATY OF MUTUAL
ASSISTANCE BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN, FRANCE
AND THE USSR HANDED BY THE AMBASSADORS OF
BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S
COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***June 21, 1939*

The United Kingdom, France and the USSR undertake to give to each other immediately all the support and assistance in their power should one of these countries become involved in hostilities with a European Power as a result either of:

(1) aggression by that Power against any one of these three countries, or aggression by it which, being directed against another European State, thereby constituted a menace to the security of one of these three countries, or

(2) aggression by that Power against another European State which the contracting country concerned had, with the approval of that State, undertaken to assist against such aggression.

Such support and assistance will be given in conformity with the principles of the League of Nations, but without its being necessary to await action by the League.

From *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939*, Third Series, Vol. VI, London, 1953, pp. 92-93

No. 255.

AIDE-MEMOIRE HANDED BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE AMBASSADORS OF BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THE USSR

June 22, 1939

The Soviet Government has carefully studied the proposal of England and France handed to V. Molotov on June 21*. In view of the fact that this proposal is a repetition of the previous proposal made by England and France, which has met with serious objections on the part of the Soviet Government, the Soviet Government has decided that this proposal must be rejected as unacceptable.

From the archives.

No. 256.

TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADORS IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE

June 23, 1939

The Anglo-French proposal handed to us on June 21** was accompanied by an explanation to the effect that it was based on "the fullest possible equality for the three Contracting Parties."

* See Document No. 254.

** See Document No. 254.

But in reality it is something quite different. In this "new" proposal England and France, as hitherto, avoid the question of rendering immediate tripartite assistance to the three Baltic countries against an aggressor, while undertaking to provide for immediate tripartite assistance to the five countries. To these five countries the "new" Anglo-French proposal adds another two, Switzerland and Holland, to which the USSR is also supposed to undertake to render assistance together with England and France, though everyone knows that the USSR does not even have diplomatic relations with Switzerland and Holland. In view of this situation we have given a brief reply pointing out that the latest Anglo-French proposal is a repetition of the previous proposal made by England and France to which the Soviet Government has already made serious objections, and therefore, this proposal is rejected as unacceptable.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

No. 257.

**LETTER FROM THE US CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN
FRANCE TO THE US SECRETARY OF STATE**

June 24, 1939

Sir: I have the impression that a second Munich, this time at the expense of Poland, may be in the making. The position of Daladier and the official position of the French Government remain, of course, that France will support Poland if the latter resists aggression against Polish vital interests. It is, furthermore, possible that Germany will try to settle the Danzig question with such a heavy hand as to leave no way open for the French and British to attempt further "appeasement". Nevertheless my impression grows that many of the influences which were at work in France and England last September are coming to life again, and have determined that a trial of strength with Germany must again be avoided, and that if necessary Danzig must go the way the Sudetenland went.

Among the factors which contribute to the foregoing impression are:

(1) The appearance of a sense of weariness over the continued tension in Europe. This comes out at times in conversation with French people. Recently inquiries were made of Daladier by members of parliament, who had received complaints from constituents, as to how much longer reservists who had been called to the colors would be kept on active duty. Daladier has announced that he intends to liberate by September 1st the reservists serving in the Maginot Line, and by October 1st other reservists, adding that if the situation permitted he might advance these dates.

(2) One hears it said at times by French people that France must not allow itself to be dragged into war over Danzig. Such opinions were not expressed a few weeks ago. There is criticism that Poland intends to force France into war.

(3) A feeling, probably widespread, that after all the present set-up of Danzig and the Corridor is unsound and not worth a war in order to perpetuate it.

(4) A deep-seated dislike and distrust of Beck in French governmental circles.

(5) Failure of the British and French Governments, after weeks of discussion, to give any effective financial assistance or to furnish arms to Poland. Failure of the British and French Governments to conclude the definite political accords with Poland.

(6) The possibility that the Anglo-French negotiations with the Soviet Union will fail. Failure to reach agreement with the Soviet Union would give a further argument to the "appeasers", namely, that France and Britain cannot go to war for Poland unless the Soviet Union comes in.

(7) Impossibility, in the case of war, of rendering effective military assistance to Poland. France would be obliged alone to attempt to break through the Siegfried Line. It is doubtful whether the British could get ships into the Baltic. Of course, in the long run France and Britain would win—but would it be worth it? (One hears such statements).

(8) Concern in France over the role which Spain might play in case of a general war.

(9) The terrible cost of continuing rearmament and the burden of financing the rearmament of Poland, Rumania, Turkey, Greece, etc.

(10) Demoralizing effect of developments in the Far East: weakening of British prestige; realization that if war breaks out France's Far Eastern Empire would, for the time being at least, be

lost. If British fears over the Far East should limit British assistance to Poland in case of war to economic measures, such as an attempted blockade of Germany, that would strengthen the "appeasers" in France.

(11) Persistence of the feeling in influential circles that after all France should abandon Central and Eastern Europe to Germany, trusting that eventually Germany will come into conflict with the Soviet Union, and that France can remain secure behind the Maginot Line. This feeling went under cover on March 15th last. It continues to exist, however.

Edwin C. Wilson

From Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers. 1939, Vol. I. Washington, 1956, pp. 193-194.

No. 258.

TELEGRAM FROM A SOVIET MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER IN JAPAN TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE RED ARMY

June 24, 1939

Negotiations for a military pact ¹⁶ between Germany, Italy and Japan are continuing. According to German Ambassador Ott and Assistant Military Attaché Scholl, the latest Japanese proposals contain the following points:

1. In the event of war between Germany and the USSR, Japan will automatically join in the war against the USSR.
2. In the event of Italy and Germany being at war with England, France and the USSR, Japan will likewise automatically join Germany and Italy.
3. In the event that Germany and Italy should start a war against France and England only (with the Soviet Union remaining uninvolved in the war) Japan will continue to regard herself as an ally of Germany and Italy but whether she will begin military action against England and France will depend entirely on the general situation. But if the interests of the tripartite alliance should require it, Japan will join in the war immediately.

This last reservation was made owing to the position of the USSR, which will probably be involved in a European war, and also to the unclear position of the USA. Japan's active military operations will be limited: in the second and third cases Japan will not advance beyond Singapore. Under the first point, all Japanese forces will be thrown against the USSR.

Ramzai

From the archives.

No. 259.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

June 24, 1939

The British Government is increasingly taking an attitude of capitulation with regard to the events in Tientsin. All talk of reprisals against the Japanese has ceased. Chinese Ambassador Quo Tai-chi has told me that in a conversation with him three days ago Halifax clearly intimated that the British Government was prepared to withdraw its demand for a "neutral commission" and, without standing on any ceremony, to hand the four Chinese over to the Japanese, if this would eliminate the Tientsin "incident". As for Chamberlain, he told Greenwood (Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party group) that the British authorities in Tientsin had acted rashly, that they had all too hastily come out in defence of the four Chinese, and that those four Chinese were men of "doubtful reputation", and so forth. Unless any new events occur to compel the British Government to take more vigorous action, there is every reason to believe that the lifting of the Tientsin blockade will follow the Munich pattern.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 260.**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***June 25, 1939*

Yesterday at a reception given by General Gamelin he asked me to tell you that according to information received from military agents, notably from the military agent in Berlin, extremist elements in Germany are urging Hitler to take immediate action against Poland. The military measures of the last few days (manoeuvres along the Siegfried Line and concentrations of large forces in Slovakia and Danzig) lend weight and authenticity to this information. There is no doubt in General Gamelin's mind that the Japanese measures in the Far East have not coincided with Berlin's war preparations by chance. As a soldier, he did not interfere in our negotiations, but he could not help expressing his bewilderment at the slow progress made at the talks.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 261.**TASS COMMUNIQUE***June 26, 1939*

Since May 15 a number of foreign newspapers, basing themselves on erroneous reports put out by the headquarters of the Kwantung Army, have been publishing information about clashes between army units of the Mongolian People's Republic and Japano-Manchurian forces. Japanese newspapers are making false charges that these clashes were caused by a violation of the Manchurian frontier by Mongolian forces. At the same time, Japanese newspapers are loudly bragging of the "great" losses inflicted on the troops and air force of the Mongolian People's Republic.

On the basis of information received from the headquarters of the Mongolian-Soviet forces in the MPR, TASS is in a position to

present verified information about the events on the Mongolian-Manchurian frontier.

In reality, the following events occurred on the Mongolian-Manchurian border in the vicinity of Lake Buir Nor.

On May 11 Mongolian frontier posts in the area of Nomon-Kan-Burd-Obo (southeast of Lake Buir Nor and 16-20 km east of the Khalkhin Gol river) were subjected to a surprise attack by Japano-Manchurian forces and compelled to withdraw westwards from the border to the river Khalkhin Gol. Starting from May 12 frontier clashes occurred in the area almost daily for a period of ten days, resulting in dead and wounded on both sides. On May 22 reinforced Japano-Manchurian forces which attempted to attack our units and advance into the territory of the MPR were thrown back behind the border and they sustained considerable losses. On May 28 and 29 Japano-Manchurian forces, heavily reinforced with fresh Japanese troops which had arrived from Hailar with tanks, armoured cars, artillery and large numbers of aircraft, again invaded the territory of the Mongolian People's Republic. The raiders were routed and dispersed by the troops of the Mongolian People's Republic. Leaving behind many dead and wounded and much abandoned armament, the Japano-Manchurian forces retreated to their own territory. In this battle the Japano-Manchurian forces lost over four hundred men.

The casualties sustained by the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Army in these battles were 40 dead and 70 wounded.

Among captured documents belonging to three routed Japanese headquarters, one of which was the headquarters of the detachment of Lieutenant-Colonel Adzuma, was the original copy of an order, dated May 21, issued by the Commander of the 23rd Japanese Division, Lieutenant-General Kamatsubara, from Hailar. In that order General Kamatsubara, among other things, tells his troops that "the Division's own units must alone destroy the troops of Outer Mongolia in the area of Khalkhin Gol".

Along with the fighting between ground forces, there have also been air clashes in the area. On May 28 a group of Japanese fighters and bombers violated the Mongolian border and unexpectedly attacked two field aerodromes of the Mongolian Army. Caught unawares, the Mongolian-Soviet fighters took off somewhat belatedly and this gave the enemy an advantage. In this battle the Mongolian-Soviet side lost nine aircraft, and the Japanese lost three. The Japanese planes were finally forced to beat a hasty

retreat to their own bases. On June 22 there occurred a new attack by the Japano-Manchurian air force, with 120 planes taking part. The Mongolian-Soviet air force went into battle with 95 aircraft. Shot down in this battle were 31 Japano-Manchurian aircraft and 12 Mongolian-Soviet aircraft. On June 24 the Japano-Manchurian air force launched another attack, this time with 60 aircraft. The Mongolian-Soviet air force went into battle also with 60 aircraft and shot down 25 Japano-Manchurian aircraft. In this battle, the Mongolian-Soviet air force lost only two aircraft.

On June 25 no incidents were recorded on the border between the MPR and Manchukuo.

Mongolian-Soviet forces are holding all points on the Mongolian-Manchurian frontier east of the Khalkhin Gol river. Throughout the period of clashes Mongolian-Soviet forces had not once violated the established border except in isolated cases where Mongolian-Soviet aircraft were compelled to fly across the border into Manchuria in pursuit of Japano-Manchurian planes.

From *Izvestia*, No. 146 (6916),
June 26, 1939.

No. 262.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
STATE SECRETARY OF THE GERMAN MINISTRY FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR
IN GERMANY**

June 27, 1939

After handing over the memorandum on the naval question today, the British Ambassador brought the conversation gradually round to general policy again. One could sense that like the rest of the Diplomatic Corps here Henderson considers our relationship with Poland to be very strained and is afraid of an impending crisis. However, Henderson expressed his anxiety more in the form of a search for starting points for new German-British discussions. He thought that if only certain encouraging remarks were exchanged between Berlin and London the door [for negotiations] would be opened more and more and finally a

constructive exchange of views would come about. The Ambassador asked me again as he did a fortnight ago* whether the conclusion of the British talks in Moscow might not be beneficial for the initiation of German-British talks.

Using similar arguments to those used last time I told the Ambassador that the opposite was the case. British foreign policy would be completely incomprehensible to me unless I regarded it as emanating from domestic policy.

Henderson emphatically agreed with this and said he wished that the Labour Party were at the helm and not the Conservatives, for in reality Chamberlain was now obliged to pursue Labour's foreign policy and also to bear the odium for its setbacks. Henderson had an idea that the Führer would also touch on foreign policy at the launching of the ship on July 1.** He hopes that on this occasion the Führer will not be too violent against London. Henderson believed that the tone of Dr. Goebbels' latest speeches*** had to be interpreted as hardly being inspired by the Führer.

The Ambassador's efforts to keep contacts with us were unmistakable. Unlike last time, however, he did not mention economic questions, the pause in armaments, and colonial questions as subjects for discussion but kept to more general suggestions. As he left he offered his services for anything he could do towards a resumption of talks. He said it was absolutely wrong to believe that Chamberlain had left the path of peace.

Weizsäcker

From *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, Series D.
Vol. VI, pp. 797-798.

* See Document No. 242.

** The 10,000 ton cruiser *Lützow* at Bremen. Footnote by the editors of *Documents on German Foreign Policy*.

*** J. Goebbels, the German Minister for Propaganda.

No. 263.**TASS COMMUNIQUE***June 27, 1939*

According to information received from the Headquarters of the Mongolian-Soviet forces in the MPR, on June 26 about 60 Japanese fighters again violated the border in the area of Lake Buir Nor. Over the territory of the MPR, in the area of Mongol-ryba*, an air battle took place in which 50 Mongolian-Soviet aircraft were engaged.

It was a fierce battle which lasted for about 2 hours. It ended with the rout of the Japanese aircraft which fled from the battlefield pursued by Mongolian-Soviet fighter planes as far as the area of Ganchur.

Twenty-five Japanese fighters were destroyed in the battle. After the battle three Mongolian-Soviet fighters failed to return and a search for them is continuing.

From *Izvestia*, No 147 (6917),
June 27, 1939.

No. 264.**TASS COMMUNIQUE***June 28, 1939*

According to information received from the Headquarters of the Mongolian-Soviet forces, on June 27 there was a new attack by Japano-Manchurian aircraft over the territory of the MPR in the area of Tamtsak-Bulak, which is 120 km. away from the frontier. About 80 Japano-Manchurian fighters and 30 bombers took part in the attack. As a result of the brief encounter 7 Japanese aircraft were shot down (including two bombers). Of the Mongolian-Soviet aircraft that took part in the battle six failed to return to their bases and a search for them is now under way. Two small

* A joint-stock fishing company with a base on Lake Buir Nor.

houses in Bain-Tumen * were damaged by the bombing and five people were wounded.

From *Izvestia*, No. 148 (6918),
June 28, 1939.

No. 265.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

June 28, 1939

Everyone here is discussing the motives behind the latest Japanese provocations against Mongolia. It would seem to be against the interests of Japan to become involved in a conflict with us at a time when she is in a state of conflict with the Western countries. However, some people in this country feel that the nature of those conflicts is the same, and the conflicts are prompted mainly by the course of the Japano-Chinese war, that is, by a desire to seal off all the supply routes leading to China.

Most people, however, are inclined to link Japan's actions against Mongolia with the tripartite agreement, and here some versions are being put forward:

1. After the Tientsin conflict the Japanese feared that the agreement might be extended to the Far East as well. To influence our partners it was necessary to show that Japan's main enemy and the most likely direction of Japanese aggression was the USSR.

2. The initiation of hostilities against the USSR pursued the aim of scaring others away from an agreement with a country that was already in a "factual state of war" and whose strength would be dispersed and fettered to the Far Eastern front.

Ambassador

From the archives.

* At present the town of Choibalsan.

No. 266.**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FINLAND TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

June 28, 1939

The Chief of Staff of the German Army, General Halder, is arriving in Helsinki tomorrow, June 29. The visit of Halder and five German military officers to Vyborg and Perkejarvi (the central point of the fortifications being erected on the Karelian Isthmus) and then to Kemi and Rovaniemi (the point from which the extension of the railway between Kemi and Rovaniemi is to be built in the future so as to connect Kemi and Petsamo) shows fairly clearly the purpose of this visit.

The Defence Ministry announced today that the differences in opinions between the Government and Mannerheim* on the question of defence have now been cleared up and removed.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 267.**LETTER FROM THE STATE SECRETARY OF THE GERMAN MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN**

June 28, 1939

Many thanks for your letter of the 27th instant. The inclination of British circles to enter into discussions with us on outstanding questions is occasionally also shown here by Henderson. I take it that you also have by you the memoranda on our conversations here with Henderson. However, the concrete suggestions which Henderson advances can still hardly be regarded as constructive.

Weizsäcker

From *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. VI, p. 802.

* Field Marshal, Chairman of the National Security Council of Finland.

No. 268.**THE JAPANESE PROVOCATION IS CONTINUING (TASS COMMUNIQUE)***June 29, 1939*

On June 28, 15 Japano-Manchurian bombers escorted by fighters again violated the frontier of the MPR in the area of Lake Buir Nor. They were met by anti-aircraft artillery fire and Mongolian-Soviet fighters. Met with anti-aircraft artillery fire Japano-Manchurian bombers dropped several untargeted bombs and withdrew to the territory of Manchuria without putting up a fight. Two Japano-Manchurian planes were shot down by anti-aircraft artillery fire and fell on the territory of the MPR.

From *Izvestia*, No. 149 (6919),
June 29, 1939.

No. 269.**AN ARTICLE BY A. ZHDANOV "THE BRITISH AND FRENCH GOVERNMENTS DO NOT WANT AN EQUAL AGREEMENT WITH THE USSR"***June 29, 1939*

The Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations for the conclusion of an effective Pact of Mutual Assistance against aggression have reached an impasse. In spite of the fact that the Soviet Government has made its position perfectly clear and exerted every effort towards reaching a speedy conclusion of a mutual assistance pact no real progress can be observed in the course of the negotiations. In the present international situation this cannot be a matter without grave consequences. It gives wings to the hopes of the aggressors and all enemies of peace—hopes for a possible breakdown of the talks for an agreement of the democratic states against aggression, and it drives the aggressors on to further acts of aggression.

The question arises in this connection: What has caused the impasse in these negotiations, whose successful outcome is

impatiently and hopefully awaited by all peace-loving nations and all friends of peace?

I will venture to express my personal opinion on this subject although my friends do not agree with it. They still think that the British and French Governments began negotiations for a mutual assistance pact with the USSR with the serious intention of creating a powerful barrier against aggression in Europe. My opinion is, and I will try to prove it with facts, that the British and French Governments do not want an equal agreement with the USSR, that is, the only type of agreement that any self-respecting state could conclude, and I consider this to be cause of the state of impasse the negotiations have now reached.

What are the facts?

The Anglo-Soviet negotiations if we count from April 15, i.e. the date on which we received the first British proposal, have been going on for seventy-five days now. Of this number of days, the Soviet Government required only sixteen days for the preparation of its replies to the various British drafts and proposals; the remaining fifty-nine days were wasted in procrastination and delay on the part of the British and the French. Who, one may ask, is responsible for the slow progress of negotiations, if not the British and the French?

It is a matter of common knowledge from practical experience in the field of international agreements similar to the Anglo-Franco-Soviet one, that none other than England concluded pacts of mutual assistance with Turkey and Poland* within a very brief period; this only goes to show that when England *wished* to conclude the agreements with Turkey and Poland she found the means of ensuring the necessary tempo of the negotiations. The inadmissible delays and endless procrastination in the negotiations with the USSR warrant doubts as to the sincerity of the real intentions of England and France and make us wonder what actually is behind such a policy: is it a serious endeavour to form a peace front? Or is it a desire to make use of the negotiations and of the delay attending them for some other purposes which have nothing in common with the creation of a front of peace-loving powers?

Such a question suggests itself all the more so owing to the position of the British and French Governments which have been

* See Documents Nos. 137, 148.

piling up artificial difficulties in the course of the negotiations and creating the impression that serious differences of opinion existed between England and France, on the one hand, and the USSR, on the other, on such questions which, given good will and sincerity on the part of England and France, could have been settled without delay. A good example of this kind of artificial stumbling blocks in the negotiations is provided by the question of a triple guarantee of immediate assistance to Latvia, Estonia and Finland in the event of a violation of their neutrality by aggressors. There is clearly no ground for saying that these Baltic States do not want such guarantees and that this is what prevents England and France from accepting the Soviet proposal. Such statements can only be prompted by one motive, namely the desire to complicate the negotiations in order to frustrate them. In any case we all know of instances which prove that when, for instance, England considers it to be in her interest to guarantee this or that country, she finds ways and means of doing so without waiting for the countries concerned to ask for guarantees.

The British newspaper, *The Sunday Times*, says in its issue of June 4 that "should Great Britain be involved in hostilities as a result of an attack on Holland, Poland has agreed to come to her assistance", and that "on the other hand, if Poland is involved in hostilities as the result of an attack on Danzig or Lithuania, Great Britain has agreed that she will come to the assistance of Poland." Thus Poland and Great Britain simultaneously guarantee both Lithuania and Holland. I do not know whether Lithuania and Holland were asked about this bilateral guarantee. In any case nothing was said on the subject in the press. Moreover, both Holland and Lithuania, so far as I know, have denied the existence of such a guarantee. An agreement for the bilateral guarantee of these two countries has, however, been concluded in principle, according to *The Sunday Times*, and it is no secret to anybody that the statement in *The Sunday Times* has not been denied anywhere.

Not long ago the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Beck, in an interview given to a French journalist, stated quite clearly that Poland had no demands or requests to make as regards any guarantees to her by the USSR and he also said that Poland was quite satisfied with the recently concluded trade agreement between herself and the Soviet Union. What difference is there between the position of Poland in the present case and that of the

government circles in the three Baltic States? Absolutely none. This, however, does not prevent England and France from asking the USSR to guarantee not only Poland and four other states (of whose wish as regards guarantees from the USSR we know nothing), but also Holland and Switzerland with whom the USSR does not even have diplomatic relations.

All this shows that the British and the French do not want a treaty with the USSR based on the principles of equality and reciprocity, despite their daily protestations of their desire for "equality". What they want is a treaty in which the USSR would play the part of a hired labourer bearing the brunt of the obligations on his shoulders. No self-respecting country will accept such a treaty unless it wants to be a plaything in the hands of people who are used to having others pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them. Still less can such a treaty be acceptable to the USSR whose strength, might and dignity are known to the whole world.

It seems to me that the British and French do not want a real treaty, a treaty acceptable to the USSR. The only thing they really want is to talk about a treaty and, by spreading word about the alleged obstinacy of the Soviet Union, to prepare public opinion in their countries for an eventual deal with the aggressors.

The next few days will show whether this is the case or not.

Deputy of the Supreme Soviet
of the USSR
A. Zhdanov

From *Pravda*, No. 178 (7863),
June 29, 1939.

No. 270.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE**

June 30, 1939

The provocative Japano-Manchurian actions against Mongolia are, according to our information, an attempt to demonstrate Japan's military strength, and they were taken at the insistence of Germany and Italy. The aim of these Japanese actions was to

prevent the conclusion of an Anglo-Franco-Soviet agreement by scaring England and France away from such an agreement. The obvious setback suffered by the Japanese in this venture is bound to have an effect contrary to what the Germans and Italians had expected.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

No. 271.

**DOCUMENTS HANDED BY THE AMBASSADORS OF
BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S
COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

July 1, 1939

DRAFT ARTICLE I

The United Kingdom, France and the USSR undertake to give to each other immediately all effective assistance should one of these countries become involved in hostilities with a European Power as a result of aggression by that Power against any one of these three countries, or aggression by that Power against another European State whose independence or neutrality the contracting country concerned felt obliged to defend against such aggression.

The assistance provided for in the present article will be given in conformity with the principles of the League of Nations, but without its being necessary to follow the procedure of, or to await action by, the League.

DRAFT OF AGREEMENT NOT TO BE MADE PUBLIC

It is understood between the three Contracting Governments that Article I of the Treaty between them signed today will apply to the following European states:

Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Poland, Rumania, Turkey, Greece, Belgium, Luxemburg, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

The foregoing list of countries is subject to revision by agreement between the three Contracting Governments.

The present supplementary agreement between the three Governments will not be made public.

From the archives.

No. 272.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE AMBASSADOR OF THE USSR
IN THE USA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***July 2, 1939*

On June 30 I requested a meeting with the President in connection with my departure. On the same day I had a 40-minute conversation with Roosevelt.

The President gave a lengthy reply to my question whether there was anything he wished to communicate to the Soviet Government. His statement, of which I shall give a more detailed account in person, can be summarized as follows. The situation in Europe is extremely dangerous, and a new aggression is only weeks away. Further unpunished aggression poses a threat of economic, and following that, political enslavement of the whole of non-fascist Europe. The USSR will hardly reconcile itself to the enslavement of the Baltic countries and the USA cannot reconcile itself to the enslavement of England and France. He is doing everything possible, given the present composition of the Congress, to promote the setting up of a democratic front, and he is arranging for assistance to victims of aggression. He understands why we mistrust the present governments of England and France. He himself does not trust the French, particularly Bonnet, but feels that England has had her path to further "appeasement" cut off. The chances of Poland fighting for Danzig are, in Roosevelt's opinion, "two to one" that Poland would resist. The British and the French can have no doubts as to his (Roosevelt's) interest in the successful completion of the Moscow negotiations (I gave Roosevelt a detailed account of our position on the lines of Zhdanov's article*).

In reply to my question whether he anticipated the application of "appeasement" methods at the expense of China in connection with the Tientsin conflict, Roosevelt said that he feared excessive concessions by the British, and anticipated similar events in Shanghai in the coming weeks but that he had to take into account the fact that the British naval forces were tied up and he

* See Document No. 269.

felt that "retaliation is inevitable, the English people are waking up". The Chinese are fighting well. American assistance, mainly financial, will be continued. For the time being, certain items of raw materials are being shipped from the USA to Japan, but the Japanese have less than a hundred million dollars of gold reserves left, and they will not be given credits.

As regards the events on the border of the MPR, the greatest air battle in history, he does not believe the Japanese version and thinks highly of our defence capacity. He asks that it be communicated to Stalin and Molotov that the other day he received a confidential letter from a highly influential Japanese who was a member of the Japanese Government four years ago and at present maintains close ties with some members of the Japanese Cabinet. This person offered him a plan of Japanese-American co-operation "in exploiting the wealth of Eastern Siberia almost as far as Baikal". "It is fantastic, but typical of the plans of certain Japanese 'activists' who, despite Japan's exhaustion, have not given up thoughts of adventures in your direction."

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 273.

**DOCUMENTS HANDED BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE
AMBASSADORS OF BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THE
USSR**

July 3, 1939

DRAFT ARTICLE I

The United Kingdom, France and the USSR undertake to give to each other immediately all effective assistance should one of these three Powers become involved in hostilities with a European State as a result either of aggression by that State against any one of these three Powers, or of aggression, direct or indirect, by that State against another European country whose independence or neutrality one of the three Powers concerned felt obliged to defend against such aggression.

The assistance provided for in the present Article will be given in conformity with the principles of the League of Nations, but without its being necessary to follow the procedure of, or await action by, the League.

DRAFT ARTICLE III

Without prejudice to the immediate rendering of assistance in accordance with Article I and in the interests of securing its better preparation, the three Contracting Governments will exchange information periodically about the international situation and will lay down the lines of mutual diplomatic support in the interests of peace, and in the event of circumstances arising which threaten to call into operation the undertakings of mutual assistance contained in Article I, they will, at the request of any one of them, immediately consult together to examine the situation and to determine jointly the moment at which the mechanism of mutual assistance shall be put into immediate operation and the manner of its application independently of any procedure of the League of Nations.

DRAFT PROTOCOL

It is understood between the three Contracting Governments that Article 1 of the Treaty between them signed today will apply to the following European States in the event of either direct aggression or indirect aggression, under which latter term is to be understood an internal *coup d'état* or a reversal of policy in favour of the aggressor:

Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Poland, Rumania, Turkey, Greece and Belgium.

The foregoing list of countries is subject to revision by agreement between the three Contracting Governments.

The present supplementary agreement will not be made public.

From the archives.

No. 274.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE SOVIET
AMBASSADORS IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE***July 3, 1939*

Today I handed over our reply* to the latest Anglo-French proposals. We are accepting the Anglo-French proposal to list the five countries and the three Baltic States only in a secret protocol, so that in the open treaty this subject should be mentioned in a general form and without indicating any specific countries. We have rejected the new Anglo-French proposal to offer guarantees to three additional countries—Switzerland, Holland and Luxemburg—since only eight, and not eleven, countries were considered both in the negotiations and in the resolution of the Supreme Soviet which approved the policy of the Soviet Government. We could agree to include in the protocol another two countries (Switzerland and Holland), but not three, and the two only on condition that Poland and Turkey conclude mutual assistance pacts with the USSR similar to the mutual assistance pacts which England and France have with Poland** and Turkey. This would facilitate matters for us since Poland and Turkey would be assuming obligations of assistance in relation to the USSR. Without this we cannot assume any new obligations (over and above the said eight countries). Today's conversation concentrated on this question.

Furthermore, our amendments consisted in the following: the Anglo-Franco-Soviet Treaty should have in view not only direct but also indirect aggression. And further, in the Treaty, without prejudice to the rendering of immediate assistance, provision must be made for consultations between England and France and the USSR in cases which threaten to call into operation the undertakings of mutual assistance. Also, with a view to securing more effective preparation for the rendering of mutual assistance, the three Contracting Governments will exchange information periodically about the international situa-

* See Document No. 273.

** See Documents Nos. 137 and 138.

tion and lay down the lines of mutual diplomatic support in the interests of peace.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

No. 275.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
ESTONIA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

July 5, 1939

On July 3 the shale mine in Kiviily, 30 km from Narva, was visited by Japanese General Kawabe of the Japanese Embassy in Berlin together with Colonel Okuchi of the Japanese Embassy in Riga. They later toured the fortified district of Narva.

On the same day Tagami and Katayama of the Japanese Embassy in Riga visited Narva, Tartu and Pacher as "tourists".

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 276.

**JAPANESE PROVOCATEURS ARE NOT CALMING
DOWN (TASS COMMUNIQUE)**

July 6, 1939

According to a report issued by the Headquarters of the Mongolian-Soviet forces in the MPR, by July 2 the Japano-Manchurians had concentrated sizable forces of infantry, cavalry, artillery and about 100 tanks in the area of Nomon-Kan-Burd-Obo, south-east of Lake Buir Nor. Supported by bomber and fighter planes, and again violating the border of the MPR, at dawn on July 3 Japano-Manchurian troops mounted an offensive from the area of Nomon-Kan-Burd-Obo and further north, as far as Lake Yanhu, attacking the positions of Mongolian-Soviet forces east of

the Khalkhin Gol river and trying to break through in a westerly direction from that river. Taking part in the offensive was the entire 23rd Infantry Division under Kamatsubara supported by an infantry regiment, the 3rd and 4th Tank Regiments and up to 6 *bargut* cavalry regiments.

The Mongolian-Soviet forces repulsed all the attacks of the Japano-Manchurian forces in the area of Nomon-Kan-Burd-Obo and inflicted heavy losses upon them. To the north-west of this area Japanese infantry supported by at least 60 tanks gained some ground from the cavalry units of the Mongolian-Soviet forces and crossed over to the western bank of the Khalkhin Gol river where they occupied a small bridgehead. As a result of an all-out counterattack by Mongolian-Soviet ground and air forces, by the end of July 5 the Japanese forces which had crossed over to the western bank of the Khalkhin Gol were thrown back to the east of the Khalkhin Gol river and they sustained heavy losses. During these days Mongolian-Soviet artillery shot down 50 Japanese tanks and damaged eight guns. Some eight hundred Japano-Manchurian troops were killed.

The losses of the Mongolian-Soviet forces were 100 men killed and 200 wounded, and 25 tanks and armoured cars damaged.

In the same period, between July 2 and 5, there occurred air battles involving large numbers of planes on both sides. In all these armed clashes the Mongolian-Soviet air force invariably came out on top. Between July 2 and 5 the Japanese lost 45 aircraft which had been shot down. The Mongolian-Soviet side lost nine aircraft.

According to information from the Headquarters of the Mongolian-Soviet forces, the chief of the press office of the Kwantung Army, Kawahara, has been removed from his post and replaced by Colonel Wato for issuing false reports bragging about the imaginary successes of the Japanese air force.

From *Izvestia*, No. 155 (6925),
July 6, 1939.

No. 277.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

July 7, 1939

Yesterday I had lunch with Mandel. He acknowledges that we have every right to mistrust negotiators and to insist that every point be made clear and explicit. "It is better to lose a few weeks than to allow any vagueness or reservations." The experience of Czechoslovakia also fully justifies our demand that provision be made not only for cases of direct aggression but also for internal *putsches*. From the very outset he has been in favour of guaranteeing "all countries without exception" which might be subjected to aggression, and therefore he also supports our stand on the Baltic area question.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 278.

**DRAFT ANGLO-FRANCO-SOVIET AGREEMENT HAND-
ED BY THE AMBASSADORS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND
FRANCE IN THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

July 8, 1939

**DRAFT ANGLO-FRANCO-RUSSIAN AGREEMENT
(JULY 8, 1939)***

Alternative "A"

The Governments of the United Kingdom, France and the USSR, with the object of

Alternative "B"

The Governments of the United Kingdom, France and the USSR, considering that

* In the original texts this heading appears before each article of the draft agreement and before the draft protocol. To avoid repetition the heading is not repeated hereafter.

making more effective the principles of mutual assistance against aggression adopted by the League of Nations, have reached the following agreement:

any action against the independence or neutrality of a European State affects the peace and security of Europe as a whole, being firmly attached to the respect and maintenance of such independence and neutrality and desirous of making more effective the principles of mutual assistance against aggression adopted by the League of Nations, have reached the following agreement:

Article 2

The three Contracting Governments will concert together as soon as possible as to the methods, forms and extent of the assistance to be rendered by them in conformity with Article 1, with the object of making such assistance as effective as possible in case of need.

Article 3

The three Contracting Governments will exchange information periodically about the international situation and will lay down the lines of mutual diplomatic support in the interests of peace. Without prejudice to the immediate rendering of assistance in accordance with Article 1, and with a view to securing its more effective preparation, in the event of circumstances arising which threaten to call into operation the undertakings of mutual assistance contained in Article 1, the three Contracting Governments will, on the request of any one of them, immediately consult together to examine the situation and (in case of necessity) to decide by common agreement the moment at which mechanism of mutual assistance shall be put into immediate operation and the manner of its application (independently of any procedure of the League of Nations).

Article 4

The three Contracting Governments will communicate to one another the terms of any undertakings of assistance which they have already given to other European States. Any of the three Governments which may in future be considering the giving of any fresh undertaking of the same character will consult the other two Governments before doing so, and will communicate to them the terms of any undertaking so given.

Article 5

In the event of joint operations against aggression being begun in accordance with Article 1, the three Contracting Governments undertake only to conclude an armistice or peace by common agreement.

Article 6

With a view to ensuring the full efficacy of the present agreement, the agreement foreshadowed in Article 2 will be concluded within the shortest possible time, and negotiations for this purpose will open immediately after the signature of the present agreement.

Article 7

The present agreement will continue for a period of five years from today's date. Not less than six months before the expiry of the said period, the three Contracting Governments will consult together as to the desirability of renewing it, with or without modification.

Protocol (Paragraph 1)

It is understood between the three Contracting Governments that Article 1 of the agreement between them signed today will apply to the following European States, and that the word "aggression" is to be understood as covering action accepted by the State in question under threat of force by another Power and involving the abandonment by it of its independence or neutrality.

From the archives.

No. 279.**DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY LETTER TO THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE USSR, BRITAIN AND FRANCE HANDED BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE AMBASSADORS OF BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THE USSR***July 9, 1939*

The three Contracting Governments have agreed as follows:

1. Article 1 of the Agreement signed by them today will apply to the following European States: Turkey, Greece, Rumania, Poland, Belgium, Estonia, Latvia, Finland, Switzerland and the Netherlands.

2. As regards the two last named States (Switzerland and the Netherlands) the Agreement will only enter into force if, and when, Poland and Turkey conclude pacts of mutual assistance with the USSR.

3. The expression "indirect aggression" covers action accepted by any of the above-mentioned States under threat of force by another Power, or without any such threat, involving the use of territory and forces of the State in question for purposes of aggression against that State or against one of the contracting parties, and consequently involving the loss by that State of its independence or the violation of its neutrality.

The foregoing list of States is subject to revision by agreement between the three Contracting Governments.

The present supplementary Agreement will not be made public.

From the archives.

No. 280.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE AMBASSADOR OF THE USSR
IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***July 12, 1939*

In a conversation with me Polish Ambassador Raczynski assessed the chances of war and peace over Danzig as fifty-fifty. He assured me, however, that the predominant mood in Warsaw (he had just returned from the Polish capital) was one of calm determination and readiness to resist the aggressor. When I asked who was going to decide when and in what forms action would have to be taken against German aggression in Danzig, Raczynski replied somewhat differently than he did to the same question about a month ago. At that time Raczynski had said that Poland herself would decide, while England and France would automatically have to support Poland. Now Raczynski declared that very close relations had been established between Poland and England, that Warsaw was informing London in detail of all developments and that if any act of aggression should occur in respect of Danzig, Warsaw would undoubtedly make this known to London and ask for advice.

Generally speaking, it is now obvious to me that in the last week the British Government has succeeded in taking the Polish Government somewhat more in hand by, *inter alia*, exploiting the financial negotiations which Colonel Koc* is at present conducting in London. Among other things, Raczynski strongly emphasized that Poland would do her best to avoid any "provocative acts" in respect of Germany—and the way he put it would seem to indicate that such acts even include the sending of protest notes to the Danzig Senate or to the German Government.

Ambassador

From the archives.

* Head of the Polish economic mission to London in the summer of 1939.

No. 281.**TELEGRAM FROM THE AMBASSADOR OF THE USSR
IN ESTONIA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***July 13, 1939*

A German cruiser has arrived in the Tallinn roadstead. The crew is in the city. Every night between midnight and 3 a. m. the Estonians are sending trainloads of military equipment and armaments to the Estonian-Soviet border.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 282.**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***July 14, 1939*

A highly influential statesman has informed me that some "Munichmen" in the Cabinet have been resorting to various tricks and stratagems in order to prepare public opinion for the idea that nothing will come of an agreement with us and that it is therefore necessary to seek other ways to bring about the "appeasement of Europe". Besides the press, influential parliamentarians (Party leaders) and military men have also been influenced. The result is a failure. Gamelin refuses to be convinced that "Moscow does not want an agreement"; on the contrary, he discerns in Moscow's manner of negotiating, besides mistrust of the "Munichmen", evidence of a "serious approach to the matter." As regards Moscow's demands, he finds that most of them are reasonable and also meet the interests of France. Gamelin has strongly warned against a "curtailed" agreement between the three, pointing out that such an agreement would not be adequate in coping with the most vital tasks of the moment. The suggestion that one of the reasons for the Moscow delays was "a backward glance at

Berlin" has also had a reverse effect and has served as an additional argument in favour of the speediest possible conclusion of a treaty with Moscow (this, incidentally, was how the Right-winger, Marin, reacted). According to my informant, Chamberlain's associates have come to the same sad conclusions. It will hardly prove possible to shift all the blame on to Moscow, and it is yet to be seen whether Chamberlain himself would come out unscathed should the negotiations fail to lead to an agreement. My informant is therefore convinced that "the effective treaty Moscow is striving for will be concluded".

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 283.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

July 14, 1939

Today I lunched with Lloyd George who expressed grave concern over the course and future prospects of the Anglo-Soviet negotiations. He said that the Chamberlain clique, still unable to accept the idea of a pact with the USSR against Germany, was now attempting a manoeuvre roughly along the following lines. On the one hand, the British Government was putting pressure on Poland through political, military and economic channels, recommending "moderation" over Danzig. On the other hand, by mobilizing the navy, putting on a show of air power in France* (and probably also in Poland), emphasizing the strength of the Anglo-French alliance, publicizing the "firm" speeches made by British ministers, etc., the British Government hopes to give Germany "a bit of a fright" and thus to restrain her from expanding the conflict over Danzig into an all-out war. If this manoeuvre is successful and German aggression either stops altogether for a time or is turned in a direction that does not

* A reference to flights of RAF planes to France.

involve the need for England to fulfil her obligations to European states, the urgency of concluding a pact with the USSR will diminish and Chamberlain will have an opportunity to try once more to reach an agreement with the aggressors, or at least to delay for a long time the signing of a treaty with the Soviet Government. The fact that on August 4 Parliament will rise for the holidays until October has an important part to play, in the Prime Minister's reckoning. With Parliament adjourned, the British Government has greater freedom of action. During the recess, when pressure from the Opposition of all shades will naturally slacken, it will be easier for Chamberlain either to break off the Anglo-Soviet negotiations altogether, or at least to freeze them for an extended period, putting the blame for this (in the eyes of British public opinion) on the USSR. Whether or not the Premier can carry out this plan is another question, for this will depend on a great many factors over which the Prime Minister has no control. However, Lloyd George believes it necessary to warn us that such is the plan.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 284.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE AMBASSADOR OF THE USSR
IN ESTONIA TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

July 14, 1939

According to information received, the German cruiser may remain in Tallinn for a longer period. At present German officers are engaged in inspecting fortifications on the Islands of Aegna and Naissaar, which are situated opposite the Bay of Tallinn.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 285.

**THE JAPANO-MANCHURIAN PROVOCATION IS
CONTINUING (TASS COMMUNIQUE)**

July 14, 1939

According to a dispatch from the Headquarters of the Mongolian-Soviet forces in the MPR, from July 6 to 12 there have been intermittent battles between Mongolian-Soviet and Japano-Manchurian forces in the area of Nomon-Kan-Burd-Obo and east of the Khalkhin Gol river. On July 5 the Japano-Manchurian units were thrust back from the territory of the MPR by a determined counterattack of Mongolian-Soviet land and air forces, and by the end of July 6 nearly all of them had been driven back to Manchurian territory.

At dawn on July 8, Japano-Manchurian units, reinforced by fresh reserves brought up from Manchuria and by large forces of tanks, heavy artillery and aircraft, again violated the border of the MPR to the east of the Khalkhin Gol river in the area of Nomon-Kan-Burd-Obo, and mounted an offensive.

From July 8 to 12 battles developing into hand-to-hand skirmishes occurred to the east of the Khalkhin Gol river. All the attacks of the Japano-Manchurians were successfully repulsed by a determined counterattack of Mongolian-Soviet land forces supported by bomber and attack planes. The area east of the Khalkhin Gol river is being firmly held by Mongolian-Soviet forces.

According to figures provided by the Mongolian-Soviet Headquarters, in the period of the fighting from July 6 to 12 the Japano-Manchurian forces lost about 2,000 men killed and over 3,500 wounded. In the same period the Mongolian-Soviet forces captured 254 prisoners, four guns, four tanks, 15 armoured cars, 70 machine-guns and other weapons.

Important documents have been captured, including Order No. 1532, dated June 20, issued by the Commander of the Kwantung Army, General Ueda, and Order No. 105, dated June 30, issued by the Commander of the 23rd Infantry Division, General Kamatsubara, dealing with the advance of the Japano-Manchurian forces on July 1 towards the Khalkhin Gol river. Among the captured are one captain (Kato Takeo) and 12 non-commissioned officers.

Both the testimonies of prisoners-of-war and the captured documents show beyond any doubt that this new Japanese adventure in the area of Lake Buir Nor had been thoroughly planned in advance.

Taking part in the battles against the Mongolian-Soviet forces were two Japanese infantry divisions, the 23rd and the 7th, as well as the 1st Mechanized Brigade, up to a hundred tanks with a motorised infantry regiment, the 1st Independent Heavy Field Artillery Regiment and up to 6 or 7 Japano-Manchurian cavalry regiments.

In these battles the Mongolian-Soviet forces lost 293 men killed and 653 wounded.

From July 6 to 12, in the area of Lake Buir Nor and in the area of Nomon-Kan-Burd-Obo, there have been air battles and action by bomber planes on both sides, with the Mongolian-Soviet air force always emerging the victor. In the air battles from July 6 to 12, Mongolian-Soviet planes and anti-aircraft fire shot down 61 Japanese aircraft. Of the crews of these aircraft 12 Japanese airmen have been captured: Captain Marimoto, Lieutenant Amano, Lieutenant Mitsutomi, Sub-Lieutenant Mitsudo, Sergeant-Majors Saito, Miadzimo, Fuji, and Mitsutomi, and non-commissioned officers Ishibe, Takamatso, Ishijawa, and Motohara. Most of them are badly wounded.

A briefcase was captured containing orders and other documents issued by the Commander of the air force of the Kwantung Army, General Giga, who directed the operations of the Japanese planes.

In this period, the Mongolian-Soviet air force lost 11 aircraft.

From May 28 to July 12 a total of 199 Japanese aircraft were shot down. In the same period the Mongolian-Soviet air force lost 52 aircraft.

In the opinion of the Mongolian-Soviet Command, the Japanese infantry is fighting not badly, though it ought to fight much better, since both Japanese divisions, the 23rd and the 7th, are said to be the best divisions. If these divisions sustain defeat so easily, it is because elements of demoralization are beginning to penetrate deep into the Japanese infantry, and thus the Japanese Command is often compelled to send these units into the attack intoxicated. The Japanese air and tank units are weaker than the Japanese infantry.

As regards the rumours spread by the Kwantung Army Headquarters about the use by Mongolian-Soviet units of toxins and bacteriological means of warfare, the Headquarters of the Mongolian-Soviet forces regards these rumours as an impudent lie and malicious slander.

From *Izvestia*, No. 161 (6931),
July 14, 1939

No. 286.

**DOCUMENTS HANDED BY THE AMBASSADORS OF
BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S
COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

July 17, 1939

ANGLO-FRANCO-SOVIET AGREEMENT

Article 1

The United Kingdom, France and the USSR undertake to give to each other immediately all effective assistance if one of these three countries becomes involved in hostilities with a European Power as a result either.

1) of aggression aimed by that Power against one of the three countries, or

2) of aggression aimed by that Power against any European State whose independence or neutrality the contracting country concerned feels obliged to defend against such aggression.

It is agreed between the three Contracting Governments that the word "aggression" in paragraph 2 above is to be understood as covering action accepted by the State in question under threat of force by another Power and involving the abandonment by it of its independence or neutrality.

The assistance provided for in the present Article will be given in conformity with the principles of the League of Nations but without its being necessary to follow the procedure of, or to await action by, the League.

ANGLO-FRANCO-SOVIET AGREEMENT**Protocol**

The three Contracting Governments have agreed as follows:

1. Paragraph 2 of Article 1 of the agreement signed by them today will apply to the following European States: Turkey, Greece, Rumania, Poland, Belgium, Estonia, Latvia and Finland.
2. The foregoing list of States is subject to revision by agreement between the three Contracting Governments.
3. In the event of aggression or threat of aggression by a European Power against a European State not named in the foregoing list, the three Contracting Governments will, without prejudice to the immediate action which any of them may feel obliged to take, immediately consult together at the request of any one of them with a view to such action as may be mutually agreed upon.
4. The present supplementary agreement will not be made public.

From the archives.

No. 287.**TELEGRAM FROM THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR TO THE AMBASSADORS OF THE USSR IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE**

July 17, 1939

Today the Ambassadors stated that they did not insist on including Switzerland, Holland and Luxemburg in the secret Protocol and would list only the eight countries. However, the wording of the Protocol will require clarification.

There is still disagreement on how the definition of "indirect aggression" should be worded; our partners are resorting to all kinds of trickery and disgraceful subterfuge.

Also, we are insisting that a military pact is an inseparable part of a military-political agreement, which is what the draft treaty under discussion is, and categorically reject the Anglo-French proposal that we should first agree on the "political" part of the

treaty and only then turn to the question of a military agreement. This dishonest Anglo-French proposal splits up what should be a single treaty into two separate treaties and contradicts our basic proposal to conclude the whole treaty simultaneously, including its military part, which is actually the most important and most political part of the treaty. You understand that if the overall agreement does not include as an integral part an absolutely concrete military agreement, the treaty will be nothing but an empty declaration, and this is something we cannot accept.

Only crooks and cheats such as the negotiators on the Anglo-French Side have shown themselves to be all this time could pretend that our demands for the simultaneous conclusion of a political and military agreement are something new in the negotiations, while at the same time leaking a canard to the press intimating that we are demanding a military pact first, that is, before signing a political agreement. It is hard to understand just what they expect when they resort to such clumsy tricks in the negotiations. It seems that nothing will come of the endless negotiations. Then they will have no one but themselves to blame.

People's Commissar

From the archives.

No. 288.

**EXTRACT FROM A TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMIS-
SARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

July 19, 1939

By not dealing fairly with you the negotiators are deceiving the public in their own countries, where the vast majority (at least here, in France) are waiting impatiently for the early conclusion of an effective agreement with us. The deception is primarily in the form of distorting our position—which they describe as one of constantly coming up with new demands—and of deliberately misinforming the public about the substance of our demands and the real nature of the differences.

The three months' procrastination in the talks has made it perfectly clear that our partners do not want to reach a real agreement with us, but, afraid of their own public, will conceal this fact and continue to hide behind the "secrecy of negotiations". This is a trick which we must expose. We must make public what has taken place throughout the negotiations with no regard for diplomatic conventionalities. One hint from us that we may be compelled to do so may force the negotiators to change their tactics.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 289.

**MEMORANDUM OF THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN
BRITAIN**

July 21, 1939

Of his talks with Sir Horace Wilson and Mr. Hudson of the Department of Overseas Trade, Herr Wohlthat told me the following:

1. Hudson had let him know through the Norwegian member of the Whaling Commission that he would very much like to have a talk with him. Thereupon, with my consent, a meeting was arranged, which took place yesterday afternoon. At this conversation, Hudson developed far-reaching plans for Anglo-German co-operation in opening up new world markets and exploiting existing ones. He said, among other things, that there were still three big regions in the world where Germany and England could find wide opportunities for activity: the British Empire, China and Russia. England alone could not adequately take care of her vast empire, and it would be quite possible for Germany to be given a rather comprehensive share. Just as little could Japan satisfy all China economically; in Russia the situation was similar.

Hudson went on to speak in greater detail of a delimitation of German and British spheres of interest and of the possibility of avoiding deadly competition in common markets.

Herr Wohlthat got the impression that Hudson knows how to think on big lines and has a thorough grasp of the matter.

2. In his first conversation with Herr Wohlthat, Sir Horace Wilson put forward ideas which he developed in more detailed and positive form in the second. Sir Horace had prepared a paper in which a regular programme was formulated; it began with the words; "Under the assumption that..." (presumably: "Under the assumption that political agreement with England is reached, the following points will enter into force") Sir Horace Wilson made it perfectly clear that Chamberlain approved this programme; Wilson invited Wohlthat to have a talk there and then with Chamberlain, in which the latter would confirm what he had said. However, in view of the unofficial nature of his talks, Wohlthat did not consider it appropriate to have such a conversation with Chamberlain.

When, after the first conversation with Wilson, the opportunity for a talk with Hudson presented itself, Herr Wohlthat, with my acquiescence, arranged for a second talk with Wilson; he wanted to have greater clarity on certain points than it had been possible to get in the first conversation. As his motive for suggesting this second conversation, he referred to his talk with Hudson and told Wilson that he wanted to give him an account of it and at the same time to ascertain whether Hudson had been speaking on the instructions of the Cabinet.

The programme discussed by Herr Wohlthat and Sir Horace Wilson was as follows:

- a) Political points,
- b) Military points,
- c) Economic points.

Ad a)

1) *Pact of Non-Aggression.* Herr Wohlthat had taken this to mean the customary pacts of non-aggression such as Germany had concluded with other Powers, but Wilson wanted the pact of non-aggression to be understood as renunciation of aggression in principle.

2) *Pact of Non-Intervention,* which was to include a delimitation of the spheres* of the Great Powers, in particular as between Britain and Germany.

Ad b) Limitation of Armaments.

- 1) Naval,

* In the original "Grossräume".

2) Land,

3) Air.

Ad c)

1) *Colonial Questions.* Here the subject chiefly discussed was how Africa could be developed. Wilson suggested the already known project for the formation of an extensive African colonial zone, for which certain uniform regulations were to be established. The question how far the German colonies which would be restored to us would remain our individual property after the creation of the international zone was left open. That the British in this respect are ready, or would be ready, at least in theory, to go a long way to meet us is to be presumed from the fact that Herr Wohlthat has quite reliably learned that in February the British Cabinet decided to restore the colonies, as such, to Germany. Sir Horace Wilson also spoke of German colonial activity in the Pacific; but on this question Herr Wohlthat was very reserved.

2) *Raw Materials and Their Acquisition by Germany.*

3) *Industrial Markets.*

4) *Settlement of the International Debt Problem.*

5) *Exchange of Financial Facilities.**

By this Sir Horace Wilson meant the sanation of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe by Germany. In connection with this point Herr Wohlthat said that Germany would have to insist on a qualified most-favoured-nation clause. When I asked Herr Wohlthat what this meant, he explained that most-favoured-nation clause, coupled with a world-wide gold standard, as it had functioned before the war, was no longer as effective as it used to be. Owing to differences of currency systems and living standards, as well as of production costs, it was impossible to grant such different countries as Canada, Argentina and Rumania, for instance, the same privileges in their export trade with Germany. Countries like Rumania or Yugoslavia, with their low living standards, must be given better chances by allowing part of their products to be imported into Germany at lower customs rates. Herr Wohlthat said that he realized that this would be tantamount to the abolition of the most-favoured-nation system; it was however very important how the child was named, so as not to offend others.

* In the original these words are in English.

Herr Wilson* suggested as the general objective a broad Anglo-German agreement on all major questions, as had been originally envisaged by the Führer. In this way questions of such great importance would be raised and settled that the deadlocked Near Eastern questions, such as Danzig and Poland, would be pushed into the background and become immaterial. Sir Horace Wilson definitely told Herr Wohlthat that the conclusion of a non-aggression pact would enable Britain to rid herself of her commitments *vis-à-vis* Poland. As a result the Polish problem would lose much of its acuteness.

Asked by Herr Wohlthat whether Hudson's proposals had been approved, Wilson replied that they were discussed by influential members of the Cabinet, but without a final decision having been taken at this stage.

Herr Wohlthat thereupon remarked that a radical settlement of the questions discussed with Mr. Hudson would have to be preceded by a settlement of colonial questions.

To a further question by Herr Wohlthat, whether in that case the British Government would agree to the German side putting other questions, besides those enumerated, on the agenda, Wilson answered in the affirmative; he said that the Führer had only to take a sheet of paper and jot down his points; the British Government would be prepared to discuss them.

Then Herr Wohlthat asked how confirmation of this programme of negotiations could be obtained through some responsible British representative or authority, in order that the negotiations might be put on a tangible footing.

To this Sir Horace Wilson replied that the decisive thing here was that the Führer should authorize some person to discuss the above-mentioned programme. If the Führer made his willingness known in this way, it was immaterial to the British how the further negotiations were conducted.

Referring to his conversation in June, Herr Wohlthat told Sir Horace Wilson that he had made a report on it to Field-Marshal Goering; he added that he would try to find out whether the Führer considered that the moment had now come to start such discussions.

* The name in the typescript is "Wohlthat", but it has been crossed out and the word "Wilson" written above in blue pencil.

Sir Horace Wilson said very feelingly that if this succeeded, a most important step would have been made toward overcoming the difficulties.

Sir Horace Wilson further said that it was contemplated holding new elections in Britain this autumn. From the point of view of purely domestic political tactics, it was all one to the Government whether the elections were held under the cry "Be Ready for A Coming War!" or under the cry "A Lasting Understanding With Germany is in Prospect and Achievable!" It could obtain the backing of the electors for either of these cries and assure its rule for another five years. Naturally, it preferred the peaceful cry.

Von Dirksen

*From Documents and Materials
Relating to the Eve of the
Second World War, Vol. II,
Dirksen Papers (1938-1939),
Moscow, 1948.*

No. 290.

**NEW VIOLATION OF THE BORDER BY JAPANESE
FORCES (TASS COMMUNIQUE)**

July 23, 1939

According to a report by the Headquarters of the Mongolian-Soviet forces in the MPR, between July 12 and 20, in the area of Lake Buir Nor, the Japano-Manchurian forces, while displaying no particular activity, harassed the positions of the Mongolian-Soviet forces to the east of the Khalkhin Gol river with artillery and machine-gun fire. On only one occasion, towards nightfall on July 12, in a sector south-west of Nomon-Kan-Burd-Obo, a detachment of Japanese infantry, up to battalion supported by artillery, attempted to drive a wedge into positions of the Mongolian-Soviet forces, but the detachment was encircled by Mongolian-Soviet forces and was completely destroyed. Left behind at the scene of battle were over 100 Japanese dead, four three-inch guns, eight anti-tank guns, 500 shells, 5 heavy machine-guns and other armament captured by the Mongolian-Soviet forces. The Mongolian-Soviet forces sustained insignificant losses.

On July 21 and 22 the Japano-Manchurian forces further stepped up their operations and several times tried to attack the Mongolian-Soviet forces. However, all their attacks were beaten off.

The Mongolian-Soviet forces are in full control of the locality to the east of the Khalkhin Gol river.

In the period between July 12 and 20, the Japanese air force carried out only reconnaissance operations. On one occasion only, on July 16, up to 50 Japanese fighters appeared in the air, but upon catching sight of Mongolian-Soviet aircraft in the air, they withdrew to their own territory without accepting battle. On July 21, in the area east and South-East of Lake Buir Nor, the Japanese again violated the border with an intrusion by their aircraft. An air battle ensued over the territory of the MPR in which up to 120 Japanese fighters, brought in from various regions of Manchuria, took part. On the Mongolian-Soviet side about 100 fighters took part in the battle. The battle lasted about one hour and ended on Manchurian territory in the Japano-Manchurian planes being pursued by Mongolian-Soviet planes.

In this air battle the Mongolian-Soviet aircraft shot down 13 Japanese aircraft of whose crews two Japanese fliers were captured alive. In the battle the Mongolian-Soviet side lost three aircraft.

The Command of the Mongolian-Soviet forces called the rumours spread by the Headquarters of the Kwantung Army about a bombing raid carried out by a Mongolian-Soviet aircraft on the station of Fuliaerdi (near Tsitsihar) a malicious fabrication.

From *Izvestia*, No. 169 (6939),
July 23, 1939.

No. 291.

TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR

July 24, 1939

In summing up the information, which I have obtained from a wide variety of sources in the last ten days, I believe it is necessary

to point out that my information about Chamberlain's intentions which I communicated to you after a conversation with Lloyd George* is being increasingly corroborated. The Premier is now making a desperate attempt to dodge fulfilment of the obligations to guarantee Poland,** undertaken last spring, and at the same time to revive his old policy of "appeasement". To these ends the British Government is continuing to exert strong pressure on the Polish Government, recommending "moderation" on the question of Danzig. At the same time a stick and carrot policy is being pursued in respect of Germany: on the one hand, there is mobilisation of the British Navy, and an Air Force demonstration was staged in France (and one probably will be staged in Poland, too, very shortly); and on the other hand, there are Hudson's "personal conversations" with Wohlthat in London*** about the possibility of granting Germany colossal loans of up to a thousand million pounds if Hitler renounced in earnest his "aggressive intentions" (meaning if he should leave the West alone and turn to face the East). Despite official denials, there is no doubt that Hudson was expressing the Premier's sentiment in his conversations. It is rather significant that Hudson is still at his post as if nothing at all had happened although under normal circumstances he should have been made to resign if, as Chamberlain asserts, he had been acting without the latter's knowledge and entirely at his own risk when he astounded Wohlthat with his "sensational" proposals.

It has been learned from reliable sources that through unofficial emissaries Chamberlain is now sounding Hitler to see whether it might not be possible to "settle" or at least to postpone the aggravation of the Danzig problem. If Chamberlain should succeed in this there will no longer be any need for an early conclusion of the Anglo-Soviet negotiations. Lately the Foreign Office Press Department has been saying to journalists "unofficially" that a "postponement" of the negotiations for a certain period of time is possible. This indeed should not be ruled out, especially since on August 4 Parliament is rising for the holidays at least for a couple of months: so the Government will be free of even the imperfect control which has so far been exercised by the Opposi-

* See Document No. 238.

** See Documents Nos. 137 and 148.

*** See Document No. 289.

tion. In preparation for such a state of affairs government circles are now inundating London with all sorts of rumours and fabrications so as to place the blame for a possible breakdown of the negotiations upon the Soviet Government. In particular, in the last two or three days a story has been circulating in parliamentary lobbies to the effect that the British Government had learned "from the most reliable sources" that some "highly placed person" in Moscow had declared boastfully the other day that in August Halifax was going to be kicked out of the Government and in September Chamberlain himself would fall. This is designed to prove that the Soviet Government does not want to conclude a treaty but is merely using the negotiations as a weapon to help bring down the present Cabinet.

To better evaluate the situation one must also bear in mind the fact that the Premier is constantly looking for a convenient moment to hold parliamentary elections and consolidate the power of the Conservatives for another five-year term. It is known for sure that the leaders of the "party machine," who two months ago had advised the premier against calling an election without the "Russian Pact," have now changed their minds and believe that with the Opposition being as weak as it is now, an "agreement on Danzig" would be quite enough to win the election. Such are the hopes and designs of the Chamberlain clique. To what extent they will come true is another matter.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 292.

**LETTER FROM THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN
BRITAIN TO THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
GERMANY**

July 24, 1939

Subject: Decision of the British Government to pursue a constructive policy.

Now that the excitement over the Danzig week-end crisis has subsided, the general atmosphere has calmed down, thus enabling the leading personalities to concentrate their thoughts on the deci-

sive question, namely, whether the German-British tension is driving to war, or whether a settlement can be reached by peaceful means. Politicians, both responsible and irresponsible, bellicose and sober, are agreed that the state of extreme tension which has now lasted so many months cannot go on. While, however, the press and the majority of politicians are confining themselves to fatalism or to bellicose utterances, the few really decisive statesmen in Britain have considered and put into more concrete form the lines of thought mentioned in my report of June 24, 1939, on a constructive policy towards Germany.²⁹ The trends in foreign and domestic policy described in this report—tension with Japan, stagnation in the negotiations for a pact with Russia, doubts as to the value of the Polish ally, considerations of election tactics—have in the meantime had further effect and have strengthened the constructive trends.

General considerations as to how a settlement with Germany could be achieved by peaceful means seem to have crystallized into a number of concrete points, which it is desired to discuss as a whole and simultaneously. Based on a policy of political appeasement, which is to secure the principle of non-aggression and the limitation of spheres of political interest by a comprehensive formula, a comprehensive economic programme is in the process of being worked out, to include the following questions: colonies, raw materials, spheres of economic interest, agreements over co-operation in other markets. Naturally, as being the point of greatest interest to the British, the limitation of armaments has been included in the programme. On these plans, entertained by leading circles, Staatsrat Wohlthat, who during his stay in London last week has had detailed conversations on them* on British initiative, will be able to give more exact information.

The question which causes the sponsors of these ideas the greatest headaches is how to start these talks. Public opinion is so roused and the warmongers and intriguers have gained such an ascendancy, that publication of such plans for negotiations with Germany would immediately be torpedoed by Churchill and other agitators with cries of "No second Munich!" or "No return to the policy of appeasement!" How active and dangerous this group is, has been shown by the publication of the fact that confidential talks between Wohlthat and Sir Horace Wilson and

* See Document No. 293.

between Wohlthat and Mr. Hudson, the Secretary for Overseas Trade, have taken place; more poison was spread by the printing of a quite fantastic and mendacious account of the programme of the negotiations. The fact that the *Daily Telegraph* and *News Chronicle* are leading this campaign of incitement clearly shows who are the men behind it.

Those concerned with working out a list of points for negotiation therefore realize that the preparatory steps in respect of Germany must be taken in the greatest secrecy. Only if Germany's willingness to negotiate is established and agreement is reached, at least on the programme, perhaps on some general principles, would the British Government feel strong enough to acquaint the public of their intentions and the steps so far taken. If, however, the Government could in this way open up the prospect of a German-British settlement, they feel certain that the public would hail such an announcement with the greatest joy and that then all the mischief-makers would be reduced to silence.

So much is, indeed, expected from the realisation of such a plan, that it is even considered an effective election slogan, which would bring victory to the Government parties in the autumn and thus enable them to remain in power for another five years. However, the Whigs are more than ever convinced that the election could just as surely be won on the opposite slogan of "Preparedness for the Coming War", should there be no prospect of a settlement with Germany.

This conviction means, at the same time, that the decision in principle on starting negotiations with Germany, and the achievement of agreement in principle, are subject to a certain time limit. For, since the elections are presumably to be held in November, and the organisation of the preparations for them takes some six weeks, the British would have to try and get matters straightened out with Germany by the end of September at the latest. As to the time factor, there is a certain amount of optimism in that people think that the Germans too—assuming that in principle they are willing to negotiate—would desire a certain speeding up, in view of the Party Rally at Nuremberg.

In conclusion I should like to point out that, in these trends towards coming to a settlement with Germany, the German-Polish problem has also found a place, in so far as it is thought that, in the event of a German-British settlement being reached, the Polish problem would also be easier to solve, as a calmer atmos-

phere would help negotiations and there would be less British interest in Poland.

The plans of leading British statesmen as described above may appear Utopian, given the unbridled language used by the British press and politicians, and in view of the fact that the encirclement policy is being continued, albeit not with the same enthusiasm. But such plans gain in probability if one considers the limited influence of the British sensational press and, moreover, bears in mind that, for Great Britain, agreement with Germany is still the most worthwhile aim—as opposed to the alternative of a war, which would be undertaken only with great reluctance, but which, however, failing agreement with Germany, is considered inevitable.

Dirksen

From *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, Series D*,
Vol. VI, pp. 969-971.

No. 293.

EXCERPT FROM A MEMORANDUM BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR THE FOUR-YEAR PLAN OF GERMANY

July 24, 1939

Minute on Conversations with Sir Horace Wilson on July 18, 3:15 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., and on July 21, 1:0 p.m. to 1:30 p.m., with Sir Joseph Ball on July 20, 6:20 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., and with Mr. Hudson on July 20, 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. [...]

Sir Horace had, apparently in readiness for our conversation, prepared a memorandum, which he had brought in by his secretary and which began with the words "In the assumption of". This memorandum obviously contained an elaboration, approved by Neville Chamberlain, of the points which would have to be dealt with between the German and British Governments. On the basis of the Führer's speech of April 28, he had drawn up these points for negotiations.

Sir Horace holds the view that the conversations must be held in secret. At present only Britain and Germany should negotiate; France and Italy should only be brought in later. Both Govern-

ments could come to an understanding to inform the friendly Powers by a definite date. Sir Horace declared that Great Britain wished to negotiate with Germany as an equal partner. The highest-ranking personages should be brought together through the negotiations. Beyond this, the German-British agreements and declarations should bring out in every way the desire to cooperate. The results of the conversations should be concerned with agreements in which the basic principles of a joint German-British policy are laid down, which will then have to be worked out by constant further co-operation in individual agreements.

As on previous occasions, Sir Horace asked me for a statement of points which, in the Führer's view, should be discussed by both Governments. I told him that we could only speak unofficially and suggested that we discuss his memorandum. He asked when I was coming to London again. I said that I had no commission which would take me to London in the foreseeable future. He asked me to be good enough to put the German points into a form and language clearly understandable to the British. Perhaps he was being too optimistic and the solution which he considered possible appeared to some observers to be unreal, given the present situation. He had, however, had an opportunity of observing the Führer and he thought that the Führer could, as a statesman for peace, achieve even more than he had already accomplished in the building up of Greater Germany. He believed that the Führer wished to avoid the outbreak of a world war caused by the Danzig question. If the Greater German policy in respect of territorial claims was approaching the end of its demands, the Führer could take this opportunity of finding, in conjunction with Britain, a form which would enable him to go down in history as one of the greatest statesmen and which would lead to a revolution in world opinion.

If I wished to have a specific statement from the British Government, he could promise me that I would be given a responsible opinion by the Prime Minister the same day or on the following day. It naturally depended on what was the best way for such negotiations. They took the view that the negotiations ought not to be brought to the knowledge of persons who were fundamentally hostile to an understanding. In the present situation it ought not to be a question of political manoeuvres, but of realizing one of the greatest political combinations it was possible to imagine. Certainly the British Government would not like to

create the impression that they desired to negotiate in all circumstances. If no other solution was possible, Britain and the Empire were today ready for, and determined upon, an armed conflict. Given the mentality of some circles, it appeared to him of the greatest importance that there should be no false impression as to British readiness for peace or for war.

Programme for German-British Co-operation. (Sir Horace W.)

A. Political Questions

1) A joint German-British declaration that forcible aggression will not be employed by either country as an instrument of international policy. ("Joint Anglo-German declaration not to use aggression".) This should not take the form of a non-aggression pact between the two countries, but of a general declaration on a political principle, whereby both countries renounced the use of forcible aggression as an instrument of policy. Here Sir Horace takes the view that such a declaration would make Britain's guarantees to Poland and Rumania superfluous, since, as a result of such a declaration, Germany would not attack these States and they could not therefore feel that their national existence was threatened by Germany.

2) Mutual declarations of non-interference by Germany in respect of the British Commonwealth of Nations and by Great Britain in respect of Greater Germany. I drew attention to the fact that it was not only a question of the frontiers of States and possessions, but also of territories of special interest and of economic influence. For Germany this would apply especially to East and South-East Europe. Sir Horace replied that this point needed especially careful political wording and that the political definition would probably best result from an examination of Germany's economic interests. Britain was only interested in keeping her share of European trade.

Note. By the declarations of principle in respect of (1) and (2) the British apparently wish to establish a new platform for dealing with the questions between Germany and Poland. The Danzig question, after a broad German-British agreement, would play a minor part for Britain.

3) The Colonial and/or Mandates question. A German-British declaration on a fundamental revision of the relevant provisions of the Versailles Treaty.

As other States besides Great Britain administer mandates, amongst which are former German colonial territories, the position adopted by the British would be the starting-point for opening up the colonial question as a whole. As to the practical solution of the colonial question, members of the Cabinet have from time to time discussed plans, of which one plan is dealt with under: "C. Economic Questions".

B. Military Questions

A German-British declaration on the limitation of armaments and a common policy towards third countries.

- 1) Naval Agreement.
- 2) Air Agreement.
- 3) Army Agreement.

The Naval Agreement would be suitably modelled on the experiences of the previous agreement.

The Air Agreement and the Army Agreement should take into account the special strategic and military conditions of the British Empire and of the Greater German Reich in Central Europe.

The German-British agreements would have to be brought into relation with existing agreements, and agreements newly to be concluded, with third countries.

C. Economic Questions

1) A German-British declaration on a common policy for the supply of raw materials and food to both countries and an agreement on the export of German and British industrial products to the principal markets.

Note. Should German-British co-operation in all fields be desired I consider it possible, from my knowledge of the views of leading British politicians, to ensure the long-term co-operation of the two greatest European industrial nations. By directing the great national economic forces, which could be expanded in Europe and in the world under the leadership of Germany and Britain through the co-operation of their Governments, an

unprecedented economic boom could be achieved and a further raising of the peoples' standards of living, which would be a determining factor for an industrial epoch. Systematic German-British co-operation would, above all, extend to the economic development of three great markets:

The British Empire (especially India, South Africa, Canada, Australia).

China (in co-operation with Japan).

Russia (assuming that Stalin's policy develops accordingly).

German-British co-operation, which would secure peace for a foreseeable period, opens up unlimited new possibilities for all the forces of labour and capital in view of modern industrial equipment. The dangers of unemployment during the change-over of industrial production from armaments to the production of capital and consumer goods could be avoided in conjunction with these plans. It would be possible within the framework of German-British co-operation to finance the reorganization of British and German industry. Large-scale economic planning by Britain and Germany would make possible the long-term financing of the latest raw material and industrial projects in other continents.

2) *Colonial Questions.* In connection with German-British economic co-operation, Mr. Hudson discussed the plan for a "colonial condominium" in Africa. Underlying this plan is the idea of a common opening up of Africa by the European colonial powers. It would be a question of a large integrated territory, which would embrace the greater part of tropical and sub-tropical Africa. Togoland, Nigeria, the Cameroons, the Congo, Kenya, Tanganyika (German East Africa), Portuguese and Spanish West and East Africa and Northern Rhodesia might be included. In this territory the production of raw materials and food, the investment of capital goods, foreign trade and currency, transport, administration, police and military control could be uniformly organized.

According to Sir Horace Wilson, other practical solutions of the colonial problem are also possible.

Mr. Hudson said he was not allowed to speak officially of an understanding between British and German industry; but he supported any practical arrangement which came to his knowledge. Naturally, Britain wanted to win the next war; but he would consider himself more than foolish if he did not try to speak to me

now instead of at the next Peace Conference. After a war the present problems would be distinctly more difficult for all participants than they are now.

3) A joint German-British declaration on the relation of both countries' currencies to each other, on the basis of an international debt settlement for Germany. Loans for the German Reichsbank. Restoration of the link between the European capital markets. Settlement of South-East Europe's currency and debt question led by the Berlin market. Adjustment of the most-favoured-nation clause to the special conditions of production of the European agricultural nations.

German-British agreement on the British share in the markets within the special economic spheres of interest of the Greater German Reich in Eastern and South-East Europe.

On the question as to when the negotiations should be held, I should like to point out that the Prime Minister, as leader of the Conservative Party, must decide for the middle of September on what programme he wants to fight the General Election, which, according to confidential information from Sir Joseph Ball, is scheduled for November 14. Sir Joseph Ball believes the Election will result in Neville Chamberlain and the Conservative Party remaining in power for a further five years.

Sir Horace Wilson said, on parting, that he saw the possibility of a common foreign trade policy for the two greatest European industrial States. Neither Britain nor Germany could, alone, and in competition with all the other industrial countries, bring about anything like so great an economic expansion as a systematically directed co-operation would achieve.

Sir Horace said: If the Führer would agree to conversations, this would be regarded as a sign of returning confidence.

I request instructions as to whether and in what form I can give Sir Horace an answer.

Wohlthat

From Documents on German Foreign Policy. 1918-1945. Series D, Vol. VI, pp. 977-983.

No. 294.**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***July 25, 1939*

Today Halifax gave me an account of the last Moscow meeting (held on July 23) and informed me that the British Government was accepting the Soviet proposal to begin military talks at once, without waiting for the completion of the political negotiations. A British military mission could leave for Moscow in about seven or ten days. Its composition has not yet been determined.

Halifax then said that since the British Government had met us on the question of the simultaneous entry into force of the Pact and the Military Convention, he hoped very much that we would meet the British Government on the only question still at issue, that of indirect aggression. Halifax asserted that the British formula covered cases of aggression of the Czechoslovakia type. Anything going beyond the limits of a case of this type would be a subject that required consultations. Halifax was asking us to be content with this.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 295.**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***July 25, 1939*

The correctness of the position we have taken in the negotiations has become particularly clear to everyone in the light of the Hudson-Wohlthat negotiations * and the Anglo-Japanese agree-

* See Documents Nos. 289, 292, 293.

ment which is in the nature of a capitulation. Among the French both these facts have caused great concern, which is being toned down in the press in accordance with instructions from above. Every honest person who is in favour of reaching agreement with us is asking himself what confidence Moscow can have in the negotiators when, as the negotiations are actually in progress, a bridge is being built towards agreement with Germany, and shameful overtures are made to Japan, while the USSR and Japan are involved in a military conflict. The Left-wingers are quite worried by the indubitable fact that the loudly proclaimed slogan of combatting German espionage and corruption is beginning to be converted in this country into a struggle against the Communist Party and against the "agents of Moscow". This does not make for greater confidence in the sincerity of the desire to co-operate with us.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 296.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET NAVAL ATTACHÉ IN
JAPAN TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE RED ARMY**

July 25, 1939

Lately anti-USSR utterances by admirals have become more frequent. On June 26 the Command of Ominato* came out with certain threats against the USSR. On July 20 threats against the USSR were uttered by Kanadzawa. On July 24 the Ominato Command repeated its threat of June 26 in sharper terms. On the same day Yonai declared that vigorous measures would be taken against the unlawful pressure of the Soviet authorities.

The admirals' statements were deliberately timed to coincide with a review by the Emperor on July 21 of ships of the United Squadron near Tokyo, and were in line with the new instructions of the Centre to the Command of the Kwantung Army: to continue military operations at Buir Nor on an extended scale.

* A Japanese naval base.

The admirals are acting under the pressure of the Kwantung Army Command. The false reports about "victories" at Buir Nor and about oppression of Japanese at the concessions are aimed at indoctrinating Japanese public opinion with the idea that our armed forces are weak and that it is necessary to launch an armed action against the USSR on land and on sea. In the light of this the forces guarding Vladivostok, Kamchatka, and Sakhalin should be augmented.

A. Kovalev

From the archives.

No. 297.
**JAPANESE PROVOCATION CONTINUES (TASS
COMMUNIQUE)**

July 27, 1939

According to a report issued by the Headquarters of the Mongolian-Soviet forces in the MPR, from July 23 to 25 Japano-Manchurian forces made repeated attempts to attack and capture the positions of the Mongolian-Soviet forces east of the Khalkhin Gol river. These attempts were repulsed by the Mongolian-Soviet forces, with the Japano-Manchurian troops sustaining heavy losses.

The Soviet-Mongolian forces are firmly in control of their previous positions on the eastern bank of the Khalkhin Gol river.

During these days, besides clashes of ground forces, there have also been air battles.

In the air battles on July 23 the Japanese air forces lost 15 fighters, two bombers, two reconnaissance aircraft and one spotter balloon. After these battles five aircraft of the Mongolian-Soviet air force failed to return to base. On the same day Colonel Kowaro, commander of a Japanese light-bomber air detachment, was shot down and taken prisoner. His testimony confirms the fact that the Japanese have concentrated a large air force in the area of operations by bringing in aircraft from Changchun, Harbin, Sipinghai, Hailar and other areas.

Air battles occurred also on July 24 and 25. Clashes starting with encounters of small groups of fighters usually developed into

large-scale air battles. In the air battles on July 24, the Japanese lost 34 fighters, two bombers and one balloon. Nine aircraft of the Mongolian-Soviet air force failed to return to base.

On July 25, 19 Japanese aircraft were shot down and one balloon burned. Six aircraft of the Mongolian-Soviet air force failed to return to base.

From *Izvestia*, No. 172 (6942),
July 27, 1939.

No. 298.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE STATE SECRETARY OF THE
GERMAN MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO THE
GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN**

July 31, 1939

On his return to Berlin, Wohlthat made a report on his conversation with Sir Horace Wilson, * which has reached the Foreign Minister through Field Marshal Göring. This report contains Wilson's suggestions for comprehensive German-British co-operation and agreement in political, military and economic respects. These suggestions appear to be regarded on the British side as an official feeler. Wohlthat did not apparently put the obvious question to Wilson, whether the suggestions presuppose the simultaneous abandonment of the encirclement negotiations, in particular with Moscow. The Foreign Minister requests, as already stated in the preceding telegram, a report by telegram on the substance of Wohlthat's conversations, as well as on your attitude to them.

Weizsäcker

From *Documents on German Foreign
Policy, 1918-1945*, Series D,
Vol. VI, p. 1026.

* See Documents Nos. 289 and 293.

No. 299.

LETTER FROM THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE STATE SECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GERMANY

August 1, 1939

1) As regards the Wohlthat/Sir Horace Wilson conversation and my attitude towards it, I refer you to my telegram No. 277 of July 31. The fact that during the conversation Wohlthat did not expressly raise the question of the abandonment of the encirclement policy is to be attributed to the agreement he had with me that he should, in general, confine himself to a purely receptive attitude.

2) Although the conversation did not go deeply into political matters I have the impression that it was intended, *via* questions of economic policy, to suggest a comprehensive constructive programme. I described the difficulties the British Government would have to face in carrying out this programme, in view of the present mood of public opinion, in my report of July 24, No. A 2974. *

3) That a settlement with Germany would not be compatible with the simultaneous prosecution of an encirclement policy is clear to leading personalities here. The determining considerations in such respect are roughly as follows:

a) A settlement with Germany would chemically dissolve (*chemisch auflösen*) the Danzig problem, so to speak, and would clear the way for a German-Polish arrangement in which Britain would no longer need to be interested.

b) The progress of the pact negotiations with Russia is regarded sceptically, in spite of, or just because of, the despatch of a Military Mission. This is borne out by the composition of the British Military Mission: the Admiral, formerly Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth [*sic*], is practically on the retired list and was never on the Naval Staff; the General is also purely a combatant officer; the Air Marshal is outstanding as a pilot and an instructor, but not as a strategist. This seems to indicate that the task of

* See Document No. 292.

the Military Mission is rather to ascertain the fighting value of the Soviet press [*sic*] than to conclude agreements on operations.

A high-ranking officer in the Air Ministry recently remarked to the Air Attaché that he was convinced that neither the British nor the Russians had any serious desire to conclude an agreement.

c) As to what is thought of the military value of Poland, doubts also prevail which find expression in reserve about financial questions. General Ironside's report is also said not to have been any too favourable.

d) Rheden [*sic*] Buxton (brother of Lord Noel-Buxton *), a politician who enjoys the best connections and belongs to the Labour Party, approved, in a conversation with the Counsellor of Embassy, ideas similar to those of Wilson's, and described the abandonment of the policy of encirclement as a natural result of settlement with Germany. A memorandum on the conversation with Buxton follows by the same air mail.

3[4] There is a mounting feeling that the possibilities of an agreement in principle with Germany ought to be ascertained within the next few weeks, in order to be clear about a slogan for the elections (see report of June [*sic*-July] 24, A 2974). It is hoped that the period of political calm, which is expected to set in with the recess, ** will create the conditions for drawing up a programme of negotiations which would have some prospects of bearing fruit.

Dirksen

From *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. VI, pp. 1033-1034.*

No. 300.

TASS STATEMENT ON ONE OF THE REASONS FOR THE DELAY IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH BRITAIN

August 2, 1939

According to press reports, in his speech in the House of Commons on July 31, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign

* A prominent member of the British Labour Party.

** The parliamentary recess.

Affairs, Mr. Butler, said that the British Government was doing all it could to remove as quickly as possible existing differences of opinion between the USSR and Britain, the chief of which concerned the question whether the independence of the Baltic States should be encroached on. I agree, Mr. Butler is reported to have said, that we should not do so, and this difference of opinion is one of the main reasons why there has been a delay in the negotiations.

TASS is authorized to state that, if Mr. Butler really made the foregoing statement, he misrepresented the position of the Soviet Government. In actual fact the differences of opinion do not concern the question of encroaching or not encroaching upon the independence of the Baltic States, since both parties are in favour of guaranteeing that independence; they concern the question of leaving no loopholes in the formula about "indirect aggression" for an aggressor making an attempt to encroach on the independence of the Baltic States. One of the reasons for the delay in the negotiations is that the British formula leaves such a loophole for an aggressor.

From *Izvestia*, No. 177 (6947),
August 2, 1939.

No. 301.

DRAFT DEFINITION OF THE TERM "INDIRECT AGGRESSION" HANDED BY THE AMBASSADORS OF BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THE USSR TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR

August 2, 1939

It is agreed between the three contracting Governments that the words "indirect aggression" in paragraph 2 above * are to be understood as not excluding (or as including) action accepted by the State in question under threat of force by another Power and involving the abandonment by it of its independence or neutrality.

In the event of circumstances which fall outside the framework

* See Document No. 286.

of the foregoing definition but which, in view of one of the contracting Governments involve a threat to the independence or neutrality of the State in question, the contracting Governments will immediately consult together at the request of one of them with a view to such action as may be mutually agreed upon.

From the archives.

No. 302.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN AND THE CHIEF
INDUSTRIAL ADVISER TO THE BRITISH
GOVERNMENT**

August 3, 1939

I

After it was ascertained in Herr Kordt's conversation with Mr. Butler that Sir Horace Wilson in addition to his conversation with Herr Wohlthat * would like to have a talk with me, it was arranged that I should visit him today at his home at 4 o'clock. The conversation took place and lasted nearly two hours.

II

I set worth on having Sir Horace Wilson confirm the notes which I had made on the basis of my talks with Herr Wohlthat regarding his conversations with Sir Horace Wilson. It seemed to me essential to have this corroboration in order that there might be full clarity on these important points, all the more that since Hudson's indiscretion a new campaign had been started against Chamberlain's appeasement policy. It turned out that the basis of the Wohlthat-Wilson conversation remained in force. Sir Horace Wilson confirmed that he had suggested to Herr Wohlthat the following programme of negotiations:

1) Conclusion of a treaty of non-aggression, in which both Sides would obligate themselves to renounce unilateral aggressive

* See Document No. 293.

action as a method of their policy. The inherent intention of the British Government regarding this point was explained to me by Sir Horace Wilson when in the course of the conversation I asked how agreement with Germany could be reconciled with the British Government's encirclement policy. To this he replied that an Anglo-German agreement involving renunciation of aggression *vis-à-vis* third Powers would completely absolve the British Government from the commitments to which it was now pledged by the guarantees to Poland, Turkey, etc.; these commitments were assumed only against the event of attack, and were so formulated. With the removal of the danger the commitments would also cease to be operative.

2) An Anglo-German declaration to the effect that both Powers wanted to ease (improve) * the political situation, in order to make it possible to co-operate in improving the world economic situation.

3) Negotiations with a view to increasing foreign trade.

4) Negotiations regarding Germany's economic interests in the Southeast.

5) Negotiations regarding raw materials. Sir Horace Wilson stressed that this was to include the colonial question. It was not expedient at the present moment to go deeper into this very delicate matter. It was enough to stipulate that the colonial question would be discussed.

6) A non-intervention agreement. Sir Horace Wilson said that the declaration required from the German Side was already contained in the Führer's speech of April 28. The English Side would be prepared to make a declaration of non-intervention in respect to Greater Germany (Greater Reich). ** This would embrace the Danzig question, for example. Sir Horace Wilson avoided being as explicit regarding Germany's sphere of interest as he had been in his conversation with Herr Wohlthat, or as Mr. Roden Buxton had been in his conversation with Herr Kordt, although it was to be gathered from what he said that the German demand could be discussed in connection with this point of program.

7) Armaments. On this point Sir Horace Wilson said that he wanted to make it quite clear that it was not disarmament that

* In the German text the word in parentheses, "improve," is in English.

** The words in parentheses, "Greater Reich", are in English.

was meant, but negotiations regarding armaments in general. It was apparent from the further course of the conversation that he was well aware of the difficulties that would attend any agreement for limitation of armaments, as well as of the fact that it would take years to get going and become effective.

8) I took advantage of this opportunity to ask Sir Horace Wilson to tell me how the newspaper rumours that Mr. Hudson had held out the prospect of a big "disarmament loan" had originated, since Herr Wohlthat had made no mention of it to me. Sir Horace Wilson said that it had been often discussed how the financial and economic difficulties which it was to be feared might attend armament limitation could be overcome. Hudson had perhaps seized upon this idea and enlarged upon it. But the question was now closed and was no longer being considered. He personally believed that in that event * there would be a period of 3 to 6 months in which financial difficulties would arise, but chiefly in the sphere of currency technique.

III

Recapitulating his conversation with Wohlthat, Sir Horace Wilson expatiated at length on the great risk Chamberlain would incur by starting confidential negotiations with the German Government. If anything about them were to leak out there would be a grand scandal, and Chamberlain would probably be forced to resign. Labour Member Dalton had already referred in the House of Commons yesterday to the rumours that Chamberlain was making new "appeasement moves," and he, Wilson, had himself just received an anonymous letter warning him and Chamberlain against such manoeuvres.

When I questioned whether in general, in view of the prevailing state of feeling, with everyone who came out in favour of adjustment with Germany regarded as a traitor and branded as such, it was possible for a British Government to arrive at any binding agreements with Germany, Sir Horace Wilson replied that it was possible, but that it would require all the skill of the British persons involved not to come to grief in the attempt. Above all, the greatest secrecy was necessary at the present stage. The question was, how and in what form the public were later to be

* In the event of a situation resulting from disarmament, presumably.

informed of the Government's plans. Here Wilson pointed out that in England—whether rightly or wrongly he would not say—confidence in Germany and her peaceful intentions had been shattered; the thing above all was to convince the British public that confidence was warranted. Then there was the fear that in the next few weeks or months developments might occur which would precipitate a new crisis. The British Government had information that two million German troops were shortly to be called to the colours; that manoeuvres menacing to Poland, with the participation of large numbers of aircraft, were being held on the Polish frontier; bearing further in mind the statement recently made by Reichsminister Goebbels regarding the continuation of the war of nerves, a situation might arise in which further negotiations would have little prospect of success. There would be no sense in negotiating for an adjustment if another dangerous crisis was to be expected. It had to be admitted that it was a vicious circle: on the one hand, the public could not be reassured by announcing that negotiations were in prospect (because that would jeopardize the negotiations), and, on the other, the German side declined to make reassuring declarations before they had a clear picture regarding the negotiations. It was difficult, because of Britain's democratic constitution, for Chamberlain to come out publicly with a conciliatory statement, for then he and the Cabinet would probably be forced to resign. The vicious circle could therefore perhaps be more easily broken if the Führer, who had no political attacks to fear at home, took the initiative and himself made such a conciliatory statement. He could do this all the more because he was not only a great, but also a successful statesman who, in the knowledge of his strength and achievements, could say the word without endangering his prestige or fearing internal upheavals.

I replied to this that the extensive manoeuvres projected by Germany were by no means comparable to the military measures of other Powers: in the past four months the Poles had mobilized a million men and were standing on our frontiers (Sir Horace questioned whether the number was so large, but offered no objection to the figure 900,000); Britain's armed forces, land, naval and air, were more or less mobilized; France had taken comprehensive mobilization measures. It was therefore impossible to expect us to reverse our measures or to cancel the manoeuvres.

Sir Horace Wilson protested that he had not had this in mind; there were however substantially different ways of holding manoeuvres: they could be arranged in such a manner as to lead the other Side to regard them as a direct threat and challenge, or they could be arranged as ordinary peacetime manoeuvres.

I went on to say that on the question of deceived confidence our view entirely differed from the British; at any rate, it was a fact that it had been the aim of British policy in the past months to build up a regular world coalition against Germany, and that to this day it was preparing the individual members of the coalition financially and military for eventual action against Germany. We must know for certain how the British Government reconciled this policy with the possibility of an adjustment with Germany. The Führer would certainly not consider making pacifying or friendly declarations unless he knew what attitude he could expect from the British Side toward Germany's justified demands.

In reply to this Sir Horace Wilson made the statement already mentioned regarding the British encirclement policy, that it would become inoperative if a treaty of non-aggression were concluded with Germany. As to the question of how far the Führer must be certain concerning the concessions the British Side were to make before he, so to speak, could hold out the olive-branch of peace, here too the difficulty was that there must first be concrete results; in any case, the German side must be definitely assured that they know what the programme of negotiations is to be; the British Side were prepared to discuss all points proposed by the German Side. How far agreement would be possible it was still too early to say.

The conversation then turned on the question, in what form the talks with Herr Wohlthat should be continued, assuming there was the desire on the German Side to continue them. Sir Horace Wilson said that it would be a severe disappointment to the British Side if we did not take up the thread. In that case there would be nothing left but to drive to disaster (heading on to the catastrophe). * It would therefore be of great interest to him to know how his conversation with Wohlthat was received in Berlin.

I replied that I could tell him nothing definitely on this score. I myself could not clearly picture how, from the purely technical aspect, the continuation of the conversations was possible; for

* In the German text the words in parentheses are in English.

example, owing to Hudson's indiscretion, another visit of Herr Wohlthat to London was out of the question.

Sir Horace Wilson believed that a way could be found; it could be discussed when the time came. Probably the two emissaries could meet in Switzerland or elsewhere.

IV

From the conversation sketched above there gradually emerged certain definite points, which Sir Horace Wilson summarized as follows:

1) What instructions has the Führer given respecting further action on the Wohlthat report, and what are the views of the German Government regarding the next steps that ought to be taken?

2) Will it be possible for the Führer, as far as it depends upon him, so to determine developments in the next few weeks as not to lead to any exacerbation of the situation?

3) Assuming that the problem and the individual points to be discussed have been determined, how could the Führer make known his decision to take the initiative in creating an atmosphere in which the negotiations programme could be discussed with prospect of success?

To my question, what would be the British preliminary contribution which justified such a preliminary contribution from the German Side, Sir Horace Wilson replied that the British Government had manifested its good will and initiative by discussing the afore-mentioned points with Herr Wohlthat and had thereby made known to the German Government its readiness to negotiate.

It was to be inferred from all that Sir Horace Wilson said that he regarded the programme of negotiations he had suggested to Herr Wohlthat, and now confirmed to me, as an official British feeler, to which a German reply was now expected. It was quite clear that the British Side are deeply concerned about the difficult predicament in which the British Government finds itself, that is, into which it has manoeuvred itself. On the one hand, there is the excited state of public opinion which it has whipped up against Germany by its policy and agitation, and, on the other, there is the wish, by means of an adjustment with Germany, to avoid war, which otherwise is regarded as inevitable. The concern that this may damage its encirclement policy seemed to me to hold a

secondary place; the dominant feeling was that, compared with an effective adjustment with Germany, the ties that had been formed in the last few months with other Powers were only a subsidiary means, which would cease to be operative as soon as agreement with Germany, the all-important objective worth striving for, had been really attained. The bringing in of France and Italy likewise played a secondary role in the conversation. Sir Horace Wilson said casually that the agreement should be made between Germany and Britain, and that, naturally, if it were thought desirable, Italy and France could be brought in.

Von Dirksen

From Documents and Materials Relating to the Eve of the Second World War, Vol. II, Dirksen Papers (1938-1939), Moscow, 1948.

No. 303.

TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR

August 4, 1939

When seeing off the French military delegation at the station I had a brief talk with General Valin * (Doumenc was not there—he is joining the delegation at some point along the way). Valin told me that the news of our having appointed such a high-powered delegation, headed by Voroshilov himself, had made a big and highly gratifying impression here. This fact was also noted by Pertinax who drove back with me from the station, and who regretted that Gamelin was not heading the French mission. One's first feeling is that the French mission, made up of little-known men, does not look too impressive. Besides Doumenc, there is not a single name known outside a narrow circle of experts.

Ambassador

From the archives.

* Member of the French Military Mission in the negotiations between the Military Missions of the USSR, Britain and France in Moscow in 1939.

No. 304.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***August 4, 1939*

Addition to the immediately preceding telegram.

Commandant Krebs is probably known to you, since he was on a training assignment in the USSR. He is an instructor and expert in artillery. He has an excellent knowledge of Russian and will probably be responsible for liaison with our delegation.

In addition to what I have already reported about Doumenc, Pertinax told me that Doumenc, being a lively man and somewhat hotheaded, is noted for great perseverance and industriousness. He is a graduate of a polytechnical school. During the war, together with Girard, * he organized the army motor transport service. Subsequently he dealt mainly with problems of army motorization. It is for his role in this matter that he was promoted to the highest posts. It is far more difficult to say what his political outlook is.

If Odent is to be believed, Doumenc was not particularly pleased with the instructions he was given at the Quai d'Orsay prior to his departure. "Nothing clear or definite." "They go about it with nothing more than general and stereotyped phrases and remarks." The impression is that the English will be at the helm of both military and political negotiations.

Ambassador

From the archives.

*French military leader during the First World War.

No. 305.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE AMBASSADORS OF
BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THE USSR**

August 5, 1939

The two Ambassadors came to see me together. They posed the following questions:

1. How would the official presentation of the Military Missions arriving in Moscow take place?

Seeds and Naggiar felt that they should themselves present the arriving military men to whoever was to receive them. Both Ambassadors believed that Comrade Voroshilov would probably wish to meet the members of the Missions before the start of the talks. Seeds and Naggiar would like to know whether Comrade Voroshilov would consider it possible to receive all the military delegates or whether he would receive only the principals. In either case, the Ambassadors believed, the French and the English should present themselves together.

Seeds and Naggiar also wanted to know whether the members of the English and French Military Missions could count on being presented to Comrade Molotov. If it was felt that this would be possible, the Ambassadors would call on Comrade Molotov with their military representatives.

I told Seeds and Naggiar that I would refer their questions to Comrade Molotov and Comrade Voroshilov and that on receipt of a reply I would notify the Ambassadors of the decision.

2. Seeds and Naggiar made it known that the military Attachés of their Embassies would be involved in the work of the Military Missions in Moscow. The two Ambassadors would like to know whether these Attachés could be included in the official list of participants in the Missions or whether the heads of Missions would be entitled to summon their Attachés to participate in the work whenever required.

I replied that I would ask for Comrade Voroshilov's opinion on this.

Before departing, Seeds told me that Strang had been recalled to London and that further negotiations on the political articles of

the Treaty would take place without him. It seemed to me that Seeds spoke of this without displeasure. He emphasized right there that Strang primarily skilled as a technician in negotiations and in drafting texts. It was possible, in the Ambassador's opinion, that Strang had been summoned to London to receive a promotion.

Naggiar added, in his turn, that what remained at issue concerning the political part of the Treaty was the question of indirect aggression. The Ambassador felt that a precise definition of this concept was very difficult. In any event, he preferred that it should not appear in the text of Article 1 but should be transferred to the supplementary secret protocol. For that matter, even in that document it would be best of all not to look for a comprehensive formula but to be content with a definition clarified by several concrete examples. In taking their leave, the Ambassadors expressed the hope that after the weekend they would receive my answers to the questions they had raised.

V. Potemkin

From the archives.

No. 306.

MANDATE OF THE HEAD OF THE SOVIET DELEGATION FOR THE CONDUCT OF NEGOTIATIONS AND THE SIGNING OF A CONVENTION ON QUESTIONS OF ORGANIZING THE MILITARY DEFENCE OF BRITAIN, FRANCE AND THE USSR AGAINST AGGRESSION IN EUROPE

August 5, 1939

People's Commissar for Defence of the USSR, Marshal of the Soviet Union K. Y. Voroshilov, Head of the Soviet Military Delegation, which includes the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army, Army Commander I B. M. Shaposhnikov, People's Commissar for the Navy, Fleet Commander II N. G. Kuznetsov, Chief of the Red Army Air Force, Army Commander II A.D. Loktionov, and Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army, Corps Commander I.V. Smorodinov, is empowered to conduct

negotiations with the British and French Military Missions and to sign a military Convention on questions pertaining to the organization of the military defence of Britain, France and the USSR against aggression in Europe.³⁰

Chairman of the Council of People's
Commissars of the USSR *V. Molotov*
Office Manager of the Council of
People's Commissars of the USSR
M. Khlomov

From the archives.

No. 307.

**THE JAPANESE REFUSE TO CALM DOWN (TASS
COMMUNIQUE)**

August 6, 1939

According to a report issued by the Headquarters of the Mongolian-Soviet forces in the MPR, from July 26 to August 5 the Mongolian-Soviet forces have been in firm control of the area to the east of the Khalkhin Gol river while in battle contact with the Japanese-Manchurian forces. Repeated attempts by the Japanese and Manchurians to attack the Mongolian-Soviet forces and drive a wedge into their positions were repulsed with artillery and machine-gun fire, with the Japanese-Manchurian forces sustaining heavy losses.

Throughout these days there have been several air battles. On July 28 the Mongolian-Soviet air force destroyed five Japanese aircraft in one air attack, without losing a single aircraft of its own.

The Japanese air force was especially active on July 29. On that day, in several air battles over the territory of the MPR, the Japanese lost 32 aircraft. On the same day the Mongolian-Soviet air force shot down and captured two Japanese airmen, Fikuji Takio and Sub-Lieutenant Tabuchi. Four airmen of the Mongolian-Soviet air force failed to return; a search for them is continuing.

On July 31 there were several air battles in which Mongolian-Soviet aircraft shot down five Japanese fighters. One aircraft of the Mongolian-Soviet air force failed to return.

On August 1 Japanese bombers intruded into the territory of the MPR, but, met by Mongolian-Soviet fighters and anti-aircraft fire, without accepting battle or dropping any bombs, they withdrew to their own territory, losing two aircraft which were shot down by pursuing Mongolian-Soviet fighters. One airman of the Mongolian-Soviet air force was slightly wounded but returned safely to base. In the afternoon of August 1 Japanese bombers again attempted to attack the positions of Mongolian-Soviet forces but were driven off by anti-aircraft fire and fighter planes.

At 8 a.m. on August 2 Mongolian-Soviet aircraft bombed an enemy aerodrome and destroyed eight Japanese aircraft, shooting down another three aircraft as they were taking off. The Mongolian-Soviet air force sustained no losses.

On August 3 Japanese bombers, escorted by fighters attempted to attack the Mongolian-Soviet forces, but, met by Mongolian-Soviet fighters, they withdrew to Manchurian territory, losing two bombers which were shot down and fell on the territory of the MPR.

On August 4 there were two air battles over the territory of the MPR between Japanese fighters and bombers and Mongolian-Soviet aircraft. In these battles ten Japanese aircraft were shot down. One aircraft of the Mongolian-Soviet air force failed to return to base.

From *Izvestia*, No. 181 (6951),
August 6, 1939.

No. 308.

MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN A GERMAN JOURNALIST AND THE GERMAN AIR ATTACHÉ IN POLAND

August 7, 1939

On August 7, 1939, Colonel Gerstenberg asked me to call on him and to give him a brief account of current political events. He then said the following:

On August 5 and 6 I was in Berlin. The decision has now been taken. As early as this year we will be at war with Poland. From an absolutely reliable source I have learned that Hitler has taken

such a decision. After Wohlthat's visit to London* Hitler is convinced that in the event of a conflict England will remain neutral. The negotiations of the Western Powers with Moscow are not proceeding in our favour. But for Hitler even this is one more argument in favour of speeding up action against Poland. Hitler is saying to himself that at present England, France and the Soviet Union have not yet come together; to reach agreement between the General Staffs the participants in the Moscow negotiations will need considerable time; therefore Germany should strike the first blow before this happens. The deployment of German forces against Poland and the concentration of the necessary equipment will be completed between August 15 and 20. After August 25 a start of military action against Poland is to be expected.

From the archives.

No. 309.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE US CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES IN
BRITAIN TO THE US SECRETARY OF STATE**

August 8, 1939

The Foreign Office sees no hope of an early termination of the Anglo-French-Russian negotiations for a political agreement and the military mission which has now left for Moscow has been told to make every effort to prolong its discussions until October 1. Negotiations by the Ambassador for a political agreement which hangs almost entirely on the question of "indirect aggression" are to continue simultaneously.

Johnson

From *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers. 1939, Vol. 1*, Washington, 1956, p. 294.

* See Document No. 293.

No. 310.**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES
IN GERMANY TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***August 9, 1939*

As the campaign over Danzig is being stepped up, tensions here are mounting. This is felt both in the press and in conversations with diplomats whom I met today at the Bolivian Minister's reception. The situation is being compared to last year's pre-Munich period. The Germans are openly spreading rumours (true, through non-responsible channels) that Poland is going to be dealt with within a matter of days, and it is asserted that England will not intervene.

Chargé d'Affaires

From the archives.

No. 311.**LETTER FROM THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN THE
USSR TO THE GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTRY***August 10, 1939*

S u b j e c t : The Polish attitude to the pact negotiations between France, Britain and the Soviet Union.

The Polish Ambassador here, Grzybowski, returned from leave at the beginning of August. In a talk between him and the Italian Ambassador, Rosso, the conversation also turned to the pact negotiations between Britain, France and Russia. The Italian Ambassador said he thought that the military discussions now beginning could only produce real results if Poland were associated with them in some way or other, or at least agreed to accept armed assistance from the Soviet Union. To this the Polish Ambassador replied that Poland's attitude to the pact negotiations remained unchanged. Poland would in no circumstances allow Soviet troops to set foot on Polish territory, even if only in transit. When the Italian Ambassador remarked that that pres-

umably did not apply to Soviet aircraft, the Polish Ambassador stated that Poland would in no circumstances place airfields at the disposal of the Soviet air force.

Count von der Schulenburg

From *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. VII, p. 13.

No. 312.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AIR ATTACHÉ
IN BRITAIN TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE
RED ARMY**

August 12, 1939

According to verified information, Germany is carrying out war preparations which are due to be completed by August 15. The call-up of reservists and the formation of reserve units are proceeding on a large scale and under cover.

On August 15 the "Spannung" order is expected to be issued throughout Germany. These are very serious mobilization measures.

In preparation is a strike against Poland by units of the 1st army: the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 8th, 13th, 17th and 18th Army Corps and Armoured Divisions, all oriented eastwards. Only defensive measures are being taken in the west.

German military circles are anticipating that Poland will be offered another chance to reach a peaceful settlement. In any event, it has been decided to resolve the question this year.

I. Cherny

From the archives.

No. 313.

**FROM MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION
BETWEEN THE GERMAN REICH CHANCELLOR AND
THE ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER***August 12, 1939*

[...] The Führer replied that no time should be lost in solving the Polish problem. The further autumn advanced, the more difficult military operations in Eastern Europe would become. Because of the weather conditions, very little use could be made of the Luftwaffe in these territories from the middle of September, while it would also be impossible to employ motorized forces owing to the state of the roads, which rapidly became a morass after the rains which start in the autumn. From September to May, Poland was one vast swamp and completely unsuitable for any military operations. Thus Poland could simply occupy Danzig in October—and she probably intended to do so—without Germany being able to do anything at all to prevent it, for there was naturally no question of bombing and destroying Danzig...

The Führer was therefore determined to utilize the opportunity provided by act of political provocation that may come—be it in the form of an ultimatum, maltreatment of Germans in Poland, an attempt to starve Danzig out, an entry of Polish troops into Danzig territory, or anything of that kind—to attack Poland within forty-eight hours and solve the problem in that way. This would constitute a considerable strengthening of the Axis, just as the liquidation of Yugoslavia by Italy would constitute a considerable increase in Axis power.

Count Ciano asked when such an operation against Poland was to be expected, since Italy would naturally have to be prepared for all eventualities. The Führer replied that in the present circumstances a move against Poland must be expected at any moment.³¹ [...]

No. 314.

RECORD OF THE MEETING OF THE MILITARY MISSIONS OF THE USSR, BRITAIN AND FRANCE³²*August 12, 1939**Opened at 11.30 a.m.*

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Gentlemen, I think it best that we should first settle procedural matters, that is, fix our days and hours of work. Then, I think, it would be right to establish the order of chairmanship; we shall obviously need a chairman. It seems advisable to me that the heads of Missions should preside in rotation, with the head of one Mission in the chair one day, the head of another the next, and so on.

Furthermore, I think we should decide what we are going to call the sittings of the Military Missions of Britain, France and the USSR. I expect it would be right to call them meetings.

After a brief exchange [of opinions] the heads of the British and French Missions consent to the proposed order of chairmanship and agree to call the sittings of the Military Missions meetings.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: What do you propose in regard to the days and hours of our meetings?

The French Mission suggests holding two meetings each day. The British Mission has no objection.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Our Mission consents to having meetings every day—two sessions each day.

The British and French Missions jointly propose to hold the morning session from 10.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. and the evening session from 5.30 p.m. to 7 p.m.

The proposal is accepted.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV suggests that the Missions decide who should take the chair today and how many sessions should be held—two or one.

After an exchange of opinions the British and French Missions suggest holding one meeting today and that the head of the Soviet Mission, Marshal Voroshilov, should preside.

The proposal is accepted.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I declare the meeting of the Military Missions of Britain, France and the Soviet Union open. I

presume that there is no need for any speeches and suggest that we get down to the business in hand.

I think that we must first settle the following question. First. Do the British and French Missions think that we must keep our meetings secret?

After an exchange of opinions Admiral Drax * and General Doumenc say that the meetings must be kept secret and that all communications which the conference sees fit to issue to the press shall be mutually agreed by all three Missions.

The Soviet Mission accepts this proposal.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: A second question—I should like to know whether we are going to keep minutes of the results of our meetings. I personally think that there is no need to keep minutes of speeches and statements, since we have decided to keep the meetings secret; however, the decisions if any are reached should be recorded. We shall put down what is said whenever there is need for it. I suggest that each delegation keep its own language. One more point of procedure. I think that all the statements of the British, French and Soviet delegates should be translated by their own interpreters—French statements by the French interpreter, British by the British, and Soviet by the Soviet interpreter.

After an exchange of opinions Marshal Voroshilov's proposal to keep minutes of adopted decisions only, and the proposal on interpreting procedure are both accepted.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Now that all points of procedure have been settled, we could start discussing the essentials. But it is only natural that before starting the discussion we should first familiarize each other with whatever written mandate we have, authorizing us to discuss the range of questions we have in mind. I herewith present the mandate empowering my associates and myself to conduct negotiations and sign a military Convention should we reach final agreement on questions of interest to us. I ask you, Admiral Drax, and you, General Doumenc, to acquaint us with your authorization and to show your mandates. I suggest that all available written authorization should be translated into the languages of the Missions. I shall read my mandate in Russian.

* The head of the British Military Mission.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV reads the text of his mandate, * which is then translated into French and English.

GENERAL DOUMENC presents his Ordre de service.

ADMIRAL DRAX states that he has no written mandate; he is authorized to negotiate, but not to sign a Pact (Convention).

Asked a second time by Marshal Voroshilov whether he has any written powers at all, Admiral Drax says that he understands his powers have been made known to the Soviet Mission by the British Embassy, but that he has no written powers with him. If necessary, he will present written powers as soon as possible.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: You realize, I'm sure, that we do not doubt that you represent the interests of your countries, and, in particular, that the British Mission represents the British Army, Navy and Air Force, and the French Mission represents the French Army, Navy and Air Force. But in my opinion we need written powers in order that we may all know within what limits you are empowered to negotiate, what questions you can deal with, to what extent you are competent to discuss them, and to what result these negotiations may lead. Our powers, as you see, are all-embracing. We can negotiate matters concerning the defence of Britain, France and the USSR against the European aggressive countries, and we can sign a military Convention. Your powers, outlined verbally, are not entirely clear to me. In any case, it seems to me that the question is not an idle one; it determines from the outset the order and form of our negotiations.

ADMIRAL DRAX points out that the Soviet Mission has the advantage of being able to communicate directly with its Government. He says further that if it were convenient to transfer the negotiations to London he would be given full powers, but that in view of the great distance from London he cannot sign a Convention until it has been seen by his Government.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV remarks amid general laughter that bringing papers from London to Moscow is easier than for so big a company to go to London.

ADMIRAL DRAX says that he does not think the absence of powers should stand in the way of the negotiations and that no precedent existed of a Military Mission's being empowered to sign a Convention without preliminary approval by the Government. This applied to Britain's negotiations with Turkey and Poland.

* See Document No. 306.

GENERAL DOUMENC reads his powers, the text of which amounts to the following:

"The President of the Council [of Ministers], Minister of National Defence appoints Member of the Supreme Military Council General Doumenc to head the Military Mission sent to the USSR, and empowers him to come to an agreement with the Supreme Command of the Soviet Armed Forces on all questions pertaining to co-operation between the armed forces of both countries."

(Taken down from the translation given by the interpreter of the French Mission).

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I take it that our Mission is ready to note the statement of the head of the British Mission, Admiral Drax, to the effect that he will present his missing written powers in due time and that this circumstance should not delay the opening of our discussions of the essential issues.

ADMIRAL DRAX declares that he is gratified by the statement of the head of the Soviet Mission.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Now I should like to ask the head of the British Mission, Admiral Drax, and the head of the French Mission General Doumenc, to state their proposals concerning the measures which, in their opinion, would best serve to organize the defence of the contracting parties, that is, Britain, France and the Soviet Union. Have the Missions of Britain and France military plans to put forward in this connection?

ADMIRAL DRAX replies that he expected the draft to be proposed by the Soviet Mission, since he has come here at the invitation of the Soviet Government.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: We have a sketchy kind of plan, but we think that each Mission must have its own proposals. This is why we are very much interested in your plans. Our Government invited the Military Missions of Britain and France in the hope that the British General Staff, and the French as well, have discussed these questions several times and that they have these plans. All the more so, our conference was preceded by political negotiations begun on Britain's proposal. For this reason, the matter could not, naturally, have been lost sight of either by the British or the French Government.

ADMIRAL DRAX says that, naturally, his Mission has a plan, but a very general one, since the Mission's departure had been hurried. We do not have a precise plan (Admiral Drax added).

Germany has two million men under arms and plans to open hostilities on August 15. We have come to Moscow in the hope of discussing a more detailed plan.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Our Mission does not claim to have a military plan worked out in every detail. We consider, however, that it would be beneficial and absolutely proper, or, if you like, fair, for the British and French Missions to submit whatever plan they have of defending the three contracting Powers from aggression in Europe. The Soviet Union is in a somewhat different position to Britain and France. It does not have a common frontier in the West with countries of the aggressive bloc, and hence cannot be the first object of attack. In the case of Britain and France, however, and the countries with which they have concluded Pacts, they border immediately upon the countries of the aggressive bloc and obviously it is you in the first place who should have plans against possible armed attacks by the aggressors. We do not know your plans. It is difficult for us to come out with our own plan, until we have at least a rough plan of the British and French military organization [of defence], and of the military organization [of defence] of the countries with which you have treaties [on] resisting the aggressor. This is why I would like to ask you to prepare a communication about your plans for tomorrow morning's meeting, if not for today, so we could discuss it. We are prepared, in our turn, to produce our plans, but I repeat that they, too, do not claim to be comprehensive and precise.

After a lengthy exchange of opinions between the British and French Missions ADMIRAL DRAX says: As you have pointed out, your plan may not be perfect from our point of view. [But] we are prepared to study it however; we attach the greatest importance to two questions:

1. The possibility of Germany conducting a war [*sic*] on two fronts.

2. Direct communications between the Soviet Armed Forces and those of the other countries, that is, Britain and France.

If we could come to an agreement on these two items much would have been achieved.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: You agree that we should discuss or acquaint each other at first with the plans which the British and French Missions have (one or two plans), and then with our plan, and then go on to discuss all the other questions

which, despite their importance, are only elements of the plan itself.

It seems to me that we must first look into your plans, then into ours, and then discuss the questions you have mentioned, that is, the question of a possible war on two fronts and then the question of the physical connections between the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union and those of France and Britain.

ADMIRAL DRAX says that he is very pleased with the statement of the head of the Soviet Mission and will tomorrow submit in general outline a draft of our common aims, which could be discussed.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Our aim is clear and now it is a matter of drawing up a plan to achieve this aim. Our aim is clear-cut: to defend the peace-loving countries headed by Britain, France and the Soviet Union against the aggressive bloc in Europe. That, I think, is the aim, and we must now discuss the means of achieving it. The aim is clear.

GENERAL DOUMENC says that for their part they would employ all their forces against the enemy and that he thought all the forces of the USSR should also be engaged against the aggressive bloc.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Quite right. But we must first discuss the military plan. The aggressive European bloc, if it attacks one of the countries, must be smashed at all costs, and for this we must have an appropriate military plan. This plan must be discussed in all detail, and we must negotiate and conclude a military Convention, go home and wait for events with a comfortable sense of strength.

GENERAL DOUMENC advances three principles:

1. The establishment of two firm fronts against the enemy both in the West and in the East.
2. The continuity of fronts.
3. The use of all forces against the enemy.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: We have nothing to say against these principles, but I should like to return to the subject under discussion—giving each other an idea of our plans, and discussing them. As concerns the principles, they are unquestionably correct.

ADMIRAL DRAX: With your permission we shall now adjourn, go home and prepare the material.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Are there any objections to

adjourning the meeting at this point? We must still settle a point of procedure. I suggest that at every session we draw up the agenda for the next one. If you do not object to that, we should now determine the items for tomorrow's agenda, if only for the morning session, and settle the order in which we shall preside. In my opinion it should be as follows: head of the Soviet Mission, head of the British Mission, and head of the French Mission.

ADMIRAL DRAX and GENERAL DOUMENC consent, and add: As regards tomorrow, you have already set out a programme.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I should like to make certain once again. Tomorrow we must acquaint each other with our available plans for organizing the defence of the three contracting Powers—Britain, France and the Soviet Union—against the aggressive bloc and then go on to discuss them. If no one objects, we could now adjourn for the day.

ADMIRAL DRAX and GENERAL DOUMENC accept this programme and state that they will do their best for the success of the work.

The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.10 p.m.

From the archives. Published in *International Affairs*, 1959.
No. 2, pp. 144-147.

No. 315.

RECORD OF THE MORNING SESSION OF THE MILITARY MISSIONS OF THE USSR, BRITAIN AND FRANCE

*August 13, 1939
Opened at 10.45 a.m.
Adjourned at 12.30. p.m.*

The head of the British Mission, ADMIRAL DRAX, is in the chair.

Before opening the meeting ADMIRAL DRAX thanks Marshal Voroshilov for the new arrangement of seats, which will

greatly help the proceedings; then he requests the delegates to speak in short sentences to ease the task of the interpreters.

He says that, although it will be difficult to discuss aims, principles and plans concurrently, he is prepared, in view of Marshal Voroshilov's proposal, to discuss the plan of organizing defence against the aggressive countries in Europe.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: There appears to be some misunderstanding—apparently it is the interpreter's fault. If the Chairman permits, I shall elucidate yesterday's proposal. Yesterday, we proposed to discuss at today's meeting, or rather to acquaint one another with the plans in the possession of the Military Missions concerning the organization of the defence of the contracting parties against aggression in Europe, with the understanding that the principles and aims are already clear to all of us and that the very plans which we are going to discuss here are based on the relevant principles; they must build upon the fundamental precept that we are organizing our armed forces for the defence of our states. If it developed that this assumption is insufficient, we could touch specially upon principles and aims. But I fear that this would take us too far afield.

I repeat, the principles and aims are clear. What we do not know are the plans. For this reason, we must forthwith set out the plans.

ADMIRAL DRAX says that in the course of the conference our principles and aims will have to be defined and put in writing, but that today he is prepared to begin with the plans.

He goes on to say that some of the principles in these negotiations will be put in writing in the course of the day.

You are probably interested most in the plan of land operations on the Western frontier, says Admiral Drax. I shall therefore ask General Doumenc to set forth the defence plan for the Western frontier.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I presume that in presenting the defence plan of France and Britain for the Western Front General Doumenc will not confine himself to the West alone, and will state how, in his opinion, we should organize our defence to draw off concentrations of the aggressor to the East. I shall be pleased if the *exposé* of the plan does not confine itself solely to the defence plan for France, but embraces all the assumptions of the French General Staff.

ADMIRAL DRAX remarks that the plan will deal with all the fronts. If questions arise, he adds, General Doumenc will answer them at the end of his *exposé*.

It goes without saying, he continues, that the Chiefs of Staff will work out the plans jointly; here we shall present a general sketch, and shall deal with the details later.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: That isn't very clear. The plan must be defined here. I believe that it is the duty of this important gathering representing both the Governments and armed forces of the three contracting Powers determine the essentials of the plan: the numerical strength of the armies of the three Powers, their material resources and the actual direction of operations in the defence of our states. All this, I think, must be defined here.

If Mr. Chairman, Admiral Drax, has no objection, we shall agree on that. If there are other proposals, I should ask you to specify them.

ADMIRAL DRAX suggests that first a summary of the plan should be presented and then its failings be examined.

ARMY COMMANDER SHAPOSHNIKOV: Yesterday General Doumenc spoke of the need to devote all our forces to combatting the aggressor. For this reason, our Military Mission would like to know the plan of operations not just of the land forces, but also of the air and naval forces.

ADMIRAL DRAX states that all this would be included in the plan, but he thought that the Army aspect of the problem was the one which interested the Soviet Mission most, and that General Doumenc would therefore first deal with the Army.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Start with anything you like. We are interested in the overall plan—for land, air and naval forces. All the available forces of the three contracting Powers, and of all the others connected with them, would have to be employed against the aggressor.

ADMIRAL DRAX suggests that General Doumenc begin his *exposé*.

Before opening his *exposé*, GENERAL DOUMENC states that he has two requests: one—as he is going to divulge fairly accurate figures about the state of the French Army, he would ask all those present to keep the information advanced here in the strictest confidence and to forget it on leaving the hall; second—that he would like to remain seated and that questions should be asked after he ended his *exposé*.

Both requests are granted.

GENERAL DOUMENC says that in compliance with Marshal Voroshilov's request he proposes to open his *exposé* with facts about the numerical strength (and) directions of operations of the French armed forces, and their armaments and supplies.

In speaking of the French armed forces, General Doumenc asks Marshal Voroshilov and Admiral Drax to do him the honour of assuming that the French Army is ready for battle.

The French Army consists of 110 divisions. Three divisions make up an army corps and the corps are grouped in armies of four corps. French divisions have three infantry regiments and two artillery regiments. An army corps and an army have their own artillery and tanks. Apart from division elements, the French Army has 4,000 modern tanks and 3,000 heavy guns from 150 mm to 420 mm (75 mm [guns] and howitzers, which are of the divisions, are not included in this figure). These figures also exclude anti-aircraft and coast defence units, and troops in North Africa and West Africa. Furthermore, there are Spanish Republican troops numbering 200,000 who wish to serve in the French Army.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Have they been enrolled, or are they still asking to be enrolled?

GENERAL DOUMENC: A part has been enrolled. Furthermore, there are training depots for recruits which I have not mentioned in the *exposé*.

Going on to the question of mobilization, General Doumenc specified the time it would take to concentrate the armed forces at the point of operations [*sic*]. The covering force would be ready in six hours and would take up positions along the entire French border and in the fortified areas. There are now fortifications along the entire French border, and the Maginot Line has been extended to the sea.

Some of the fortifications, running from the Jura to the Belgian border, are more modern, and stronger. Between Belgium and the sea they may be compared with the Siegfried Line. In the Jura and the Alps there are strong shields (individual defence points) at all places where troops can pass. They are very easy to defend.

In the last two years, France has gone to considerable effort to fortify her borders.

With covering forces stationed in the fortified areas, the French Army is able to bring all its main forces to the frontier in less than ten days, with two-thirds of the forces arriving at the point of

concentration within eight days and the remainder two days later.

Distribution along the front is not uniform, but it is possible to effect any redeployment in 10 days. General Gamelin disposes of eight lateral lines for this purpose—four railways and four motor roads. They are about 200 kilometres deep. With their help the Commander-in-Chief can alter the disposition of his troops at will.

Out of the 110 divisions 20 are not easily moved, being employed for the defence of Tunisia and Corsica, and for manning the Maginot Line. The other 90 divisions are easily transferable.

Further, General Doumenc turns to questions of supply.

The French Army has a strict rule of keeping a six months' reserve of supplies, munitions and other war material. All this reserve is located in depots which are well concealed from air attack.

No less than 10 railway lines provide for the normal supply of the army. Manufacture of supplies is on a war footing. A law has been issued recently in France under which all workers are declared mobilized and receive mobilization cards in the same way as soldiers. The law permits the Government to mobilize the desired number of workers for the war industries. In order to boost the output of steel, pig iron and other goods for defence needs we shall have to convert more factories, so as to add to the existing war plants. In about three months the output of these plants will equal consumption. In six months it will exceed consumption.

This explains why the French Army keeps a six months' reserve of supplies.

Turning to Marshal Voroshilov, General Doumenc says that if fuel supply questions are of interest to him, he would deal with them.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: If it is not going to hold you up and is part of your plan, we are ready to listen.

GENERAL DOUMENC: We have a six months' war supply of fuel in our storage tanks, but these, to our regret, are inadequately disguised, particularly those along the coast. Measures are being taken to disguise them.

Many underground fuel stores are now being built. Should the supply of fuel be interrupted, we could produce engines working on generator gas within three months. In three months their number could be brought up to 10,000.

We are also able to produce synthetic fuels of all kinds.

There are adequate stocks of cotton and alcohol to produce explosives.

Then GENERAL DOUMENC outlines the plan of operations.

If the main Nazi forces are concentrated on the Western frontier, France will meet them with a solid and continuous front. She will hold the enemy offensive with the help of her fortifications, and will then, after amassing her troops at points advantageous for tanks and artillery, take the counter-offensive. By that time the French Army will be reinforced with British troops, whose number, however, he is unfortunately unable to state.

With the help of the lateral communication lines, of which he [General Doumenc] has already spoken, General Gamelin will be able to mount a powerful attack at short notice.

For example, they can move 15 divisions simultaneously along the four lateral roads by motor transport.

This powerful attack will prevent the transference of enemy troops from West to East.

Should the main Nazi force be massed on the Eastern Front, the Germans will still have to leave not less than 40 divisions against France, and in that case General Gamelin will employ all his forces to attack the Germans.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: If the aggressor—in this case Germany—launches his attack eastward, evidently against Poland, General Gamelin expects the Germans to leave no less than 40 divisions on the French border?

GENERAL DOUMENC: Yes, not less than 40 divisions.

Hitler says that the Siegfried Line is impregnable, but we cannot agree. There is no fortress that cannot be taken.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Yes, I agree with you.

GENERAL DOUMENC points out that in the past towns, surrounded with powerful walls which artillery could not breach, and with five lines of fortifications, have fallen. The French have learned how to break through this line.

I think that Marshal Voroshilov is well acquainted with these methods. First you have to break through the fortifications, and then extend the breach.

In this case, General Gamelin will make the enemy switch his forces back from the Eastern Front.

Should the enemy fail to do so, the Nazi forces will be defeated.

In conclusion, General Doumenc says that he has presented

general outline of French defence and that if there are any questions he is prepared to reply to them with the help of his imperfect memory.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: If the Chairman permits, I have the following questions:

F i r s t Q u e s t i o n—a technical one. I should like to know if there are any fortified areas south of the Maginot Line and towards the sea.

S e c o n d Q u e s t i o n—What land forces does Britain contribute during the war in the alternative just outlined by General Doumenc?

T h i r d Q u e s t i o n—With what forces does Belgium participate in the war in the alternative outlined by General Doumenc?

F o u r t h Q u e s t i o n—Will Poland enter the war on France's side, what forces will she engage, and is there an agreement to that effect?

F i f t h Q u e s t i o n—Does the French General Staff expect Italy to take part on the side of the aggressor, and if so, what forces will France deploy on the Italian front?

S i x t h Q u e s t i o n—What forces will the French General Staff leave on the Spanish border?

I have not put two more questions connected with General Doumenc's report.

The first is about the operational plan of the French Air Force, and the other about the operational plan of the French Navy. When I say French I am not altogether precise. What I mean is the operational plan of the joint air and naval forces of France and Britain.

GENERAL DOUMENC asks to be allowed to reply in the evening.

ADMIRAL DRAX proposes an adjournment and that the meeting be resumed at 5.30 p.m.

From the archives. Published in *International Affairs*, 1959, No. 2, pp. 147-150.

No. 316.

**RECORD OF THE EVENING SESSION OF THE MILITARY
MISSIONS OF THE USSR, BRITAIN AND FRANCE***August 13, 1939**Opened at 5.36 p.m.**Closed at 7.10 p.m.*

GENERAL DOUMENC is in the chair. He declares the meeting open.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I have made use of the interval to draft the principles and aims of which we have spoken earlier. I hand these documents to you, Marshal Voroshilov and Admiral Drax, for your information, and ask you to consider them and offer your opinion at tomorrow's meeting. (He hands the documents to Marshal Voroshilov and Admiral Drax.)

Now I shall reply to the questions raised by Marshal Voroshilov.

Are there any fortified sectors south of the Maginot Line?

(General Doumenc shows the Maginot Line to the Marshal on the map. As he had said at the morning session, it has been extended to the sea.)

You asked how it runs southward. It is strong enough along the Rhine, just as in the North.

(General Doumenc points out the particularly strong sections of the Maginot Line on the map.)

Now the fortifications along the River Doubs. Here we have a network of fortifications with one major centre.

Then come almost impassable mountains.

(On the map General Doumenc points out specially fortified areas in the Alps.)

These fortifications straddle the natural passages accessible to troops. From the French side the Alps are particularly hard to cross in view of the width of the mountain range. But this does not apply to the other side of the French border.

I avail myself of my rights as Chairman to withhold a reply to your second question about the British contribution to defence and refer it to the representative of the British Army, General Heywood.

GENERAL HEYWOOD: Britain has made a very great effort to be strong on land, air and sea.

I am going to give a few details on the organization of the British Land Forces.

The British Army consists of two basic parts. One of these is the professional army, relatively small, but well trained, motorized and equipped with modern weapons. Half of this army is stationed in Britain and the other half overseas.

The other part is the "territorial army", which is more numerous and on the spot, but less well trained.

In addition, we have the colonial forces and the forces of the Dominions.

Thanks to Hitler, Britain has introduced compulsory military service. This means that we now have little difficulty in raising a numerically formidable army.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Regular or territorial?

GENERAL HEYWOOD: Both.

The system in the present-day army is such that after completing their compulsory military training these troops either enlist voluntarily in the regular army, or are compulsorily transferred to the territorial army. Raising formations now depends entirely on the availability of armament and equipment.

The Marshal must be aware of the industrial power of our country, and therefore our programme will be fulfilled quickly enough.

Our programme is to mobilize a first echelon of 16 divisions, which will be ready for service by the first stage of the war. If war breaks out tomorrow the number of troops will be small, but if it breaks out in six months the situation will be greatly changed.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: How soon after the outbreak of war will the 16 divisions of which General Heywood has spoken be ready?

GENERAL HEYWOOD: In the shortest possible time.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: If war were to break out tomorrow, how many divisions, and how soon, would you be able to send to France?

GENERAL HEYWOOD: At present Britain has five infantry divisions and one motorized division, which have been brought up to war establishment as regards personnel by enrollment of recruits. These can be sent at once.

I should like to remind the Marshal that in the last war we started with six divisions and ended with a hundred. We are more

advantageously placed at present, and I am confident that we shall play a greater part in the early period of the war.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: The General intended also to inform us about the second echelon, but we interfered with our questions. Now I should like to ask him to tell us about the second echelon.

GENERAL HEYWOOD: 19 divisions exist already, while the other 13 are in the process of formation and depend entirely on the question of armament and equipment.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Are we to understand that there are 16 divisions in the first echelon and 16 in the second? Is that right?

GENERAL HEYWOOD: Precisely.

GENERAL DOUMENC: Allow me to go on to the third question — about Belgium's participation in the war in the alternative we are considering. I shall try to deal with this question as clearly and broadly as possible.

The question of Belgium is for us the same as that of Switzerland. I want to speak about the Western Front, which applies equally to both these countries.

The armies of these countries must primarily defend their own territory. We must not, and cannot, enter their territory, until they ask us to do so. But we are ready to answer this call. If the request should come too late and their front is in danger, it will be our mechanized troops and air forces that will begin operations.

At the same time, General Gamelin will know how to ensure numerical superiority with the help of the available lateral lines of communication.

In any case, we are ready in every way and by every means to provide assistance, in particular by organizing lines of communication in their rear, for they are deficient in them, and by furnishing the necessary armament and supplies.

I know, on the other hand, and it is also probably known to Marshal Voroshilov, that at present these two countries are building strong fortifications along their borders.

I go on to the fourth question: Is there any agreement which defines the forces that Poland will produce and how they will be employed?

Poland has a Mutual Assistance Treaty with France. I have already spoken this morning on what we are going to do on the

Western Front if Poland is attacked. If Poland is not attacked, and France is, Poland is committed to do the same for us.

MARSHALL VOROSHILOV: Could you specify more clearly what that means?

GENERAL DOUMENC: I do not personally know the exact number of troops which Poland is to produce. All I know is that the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army is obliged to assist us with all available forces.

Allow me to go on to the fifth question: Has the French General Staff taken into consideration the intervention of Italy on Germany's side, and if so, with what forces will France oppose her?

Yes, I have taken that into account, and there are covering forces along the Italian border; furthermore, provision has been made to concentrate troops if this is necessary. I expect that we shall need eight divisions to begin with. Deployment of reinforcements, over and above these eight divisions, will largely depend on the season, since the border runs across the Alps.

Marshal Voroshilov asked a further question: Will Italy come into the war at the same time as Germany?

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: We did not ask that question.

The initial reply covers our question entirely.

ADMIRAL DRAX: We have had some information on that score in London, although it may not be entirely reliable. According to this information it seems to us very unlikely that Italy would march with Germany if the USSR had a military agreement with the Western Powers. It also seems to us on the strength of this information that if such a Pact were known to exist Hitler would not risk a war.

GENERAL DOUMENC: The proverb says: "If you wish for peace, be prepared for war." And we must prepare for war.

I go on to the next question: What forces France proposes to leave on the Spanish border?

To the best of my knowledge the only forces there are border posts. One idea, which appears to be the best, is to reinforce this border with the former troops of the Spanish Republic.

Before going on to the next question I should like to dwell on the following. It seems to me that the Marshal has asked for our opinion about the Italian forces.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: We did not raise this question.

GENERAL DOUMENC: Then allow me to deal with the operational plan of the joint air and naval forces of France and Britain.

I know that the French Navy co-operates very closely with the British Navy and that together they make up a powerful force.

The principal aim of our Navies is to destroy the enemy. This is the principal task, and everything else is secondary.

There are, of course, many details, but they apply to communications between the fronts. I meant to speak about these communications yesterday, but in compliance with your wish, Mr. Marshal, I confined myself today to just the land forces.

The question of communications between the Western and Eastern fronts is of extreme importance. It is highly important to make certain that General Gamelin and Marshal Voroshilov could communicate, consult, and help each other. Each is responsible for his own front, but both fronts must be in touch with one another.

Now I turn to the question of air forces.

The air force is considered under two heads according to the tasks it has to perform: army-co-operation air force and independent action air force.

At present we have one squadron for every two divisions. Besides, there are reserve aircraft to back up the army support air arm.

But I have forgotten that I am the Chairman and that there is an air force expert in our Mission—General Valin, who is in command of an air division at Rheims.

GENERAL VALIN: I can only say what General Doumenc has said before me, namely, that our air force is divided into two parts—army-co-operation and of independent action (fighter and bomber aircraft).

As regards army-co-operation air force, France has an adequate number of reconnaissance and spotting aircraft. I think this highly important, and for this reason we must increase the strength of this air arm.

The army-co-operation air force is distributed as follows: one squadron for every two divisions, and two reconnaissance squadrons for every army.

All in all, there are 70 squadrons, ten aircraft in each.

These army-co-operation aircraft are not all of one type. Their types depend on the functions they are to perform.

As regards the bomber and fighter air force, its employment is not as clearly defined as that of the army-co-operation forces. We must first decide the question of land operations. This question is bound up with the general method of warfare. We are still studying the matter on the basis of available facts about operations of the allied air force on the Eastern Front.

It seems to me that we ought to put off the question of the fighter and bomber forces until we learn more about operational plans on the Eastern Front.

I have had an opportunity to discuss the problem with Air Marshal Burnett * who shares this point of view, but unfortunately not with General Loktionov. However, knowing him to be a distinguished expert in air force matters, I am certain that he shares it too.

ARMY COMMANDER LOKTIONOV: I think that something should be said about the number of aircraft, the organization of the French Air Force of Independent Action, and about the part which the British Air Force is to play on the French fronts.

GENERAL VALIN thinks, however, that the three air forces and the tasks which they will be set should be examined together.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Our Mission does not object.

GENERAL DOUMENC suggests that the meeting should draw up the agenda for the next session and says that he expects Marshal Voroshilov to give an *exposé* about the disposition of Soviet troops on the Eastern Front similar to the one he has just made about the French Army.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I do not object to the proposal made by General Doumenc, but should first like the Anglo-French Mission to reply to one more question: What part do these Missions or the General Staffs of France and Britain consider the Soviet Union should take in a war against the aggressor if he attacks France and Britain, or if he attacks Poland or Rumania, or if he attacks them together, and also if he attacks Turkey? In brief, how do the British and French Missions conceive our joint action against the aggressor or the aggressive bloc in the event of an aggression against us?

GENERAL DOUMENC: We have today studied the situation on the Western Front and stated what forces can be made avail-

* A member of the British Military Mission.

able on that front. I should be glad to have similar facts from Marshal Voroshilov concerning the Eastern Front.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: My question was apparently mistranslated to the General. I have already informed the meeting that I shall willingly make the communication in which they are interested, but that I should first like an answer to my question: What part do the British and French General Staffs consider the Soviet Armed Forces should take jointly with the armed forces of Britain and France in the war against the bloc of aggressors, or the main aggressor?

GENERAL DOUMENC states that he would be ready to answer the question tomorrow and then hear Marshal Voroshilov's communication.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Has my question been properly understood? I wish to make it clear. The Soviet Union, as you know, has no common border either with Britain or with France. We can, therefore, only take part in the war on the territory of neighbouring states, particularly Poland and Rumania.

GENERAL DOUMENC states that he will make a statement on this score tomorrow.

ADMIRAL DRAX proposes that there be only one meeting daily, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., with a 30-minute interval, so as not to waste time on travel.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: The Soviet Mission thinks that we must work not less than four hours. We have no objection to holding only one meeting and suggest that our sessions start at 10 a.m. and close at 2 p. m. with a 15-minute interval.

The proposal is accepted.

GENERAL DOUMENC declares the session adjourned.

**FRENCH MILITARY MISSION
DRAFT FRANCO-ANGLO-SOVIET
MILITARY AGREEMENT**

Preamble

The present Convention will come into force in accordance with the terms of the Treaties which bind the three contracting Powers when one of the eventualities laid down in these Treaties occurs.

In view of the military situation in Europe today, this Convention deals with the urgent measures to be taken should war break out in the immediate future.

Article I

The three contracting Powers are agreed on the vital importance of building up a continuous, solid and durable front on Germany's Eastern as well as on her Western frontiers.

Article II

In order to oppose without delay the development of the common enemy's military action, the three contracting Powers undertake to operate with all their forces, naval, land and air, on all enemy fronts on which they can fight effectively until Germany is defeated.

The manner in which these forces are employed will depend on the decisions of the respective Supreme Commands. These decisions will be arrived at according to the development of the situation, but the first common aims to be pursued are specified in the present agreement.

August 13, 1939

From the archives. Published in *International Affairs*, 1959, No. 2, pp. 150-153.

No. 317.

**RECORD OF THE MEETING OF THE MILITARY MISSIONS OF THE USSR, BRITAIN AND FRANCE**

August 14, 1939

Opened at 10.05 a.m.

Adjourned at 2.20 p.m.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV is in the chair.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Allow me to declare the meeting of the Military Missions of France, Britain and the Soviet Union open. At yesterday's session General Doumenc submitted a draft of what he called principles, which are apparently to be discussed by our conference. These so-called principles, by their tenor, are evidently meant to be the basis for the future Convention. In view of the gravity of the questions raised, the Soviet Military Mission must study thoroughly the three principles submitted before it makes its reply.

Allow me to turn to the question in hand.

It was decided at yesterday's session that today's session would open with General Doumenc's answer to the question I raised. Need I repeat the question?

GENERAL DOUMENC asks the Marshal to remind him of the question.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Yesterday I asked General Doumenc the following question: What part do the present Missions, or the General Staffs of France and Britain, consider the Soviet Union should play in the war against an aggressor if he attacks France and Britain, if he attacks Poland or Rumania, or Poland and Rumania together, and if he attacks Turkey? In brief, how do the British and French Missions conceive our joint action against the aggressor or the bloc of aggressors in the event of an aggression against one of the contracting parties or against the countries I have just referred to?

GENERAL DOUMENC: I shall try and answer this question. It is easy to answer, because, I feel, the Marshal and I understand each other well.

General Gamelin holds the view, and I, as his subordinate, share it, that our primary task is for each party to hold firm on its own front and group all its forces on that front. As regards the countries referred to earlier, we consider that it is their duty to defend their own territory. But we must be prepared to come to their assistance when they ask for it. And in that event we must be prepared to ensure lines of communication in which they are deficient. I have drawn up a rough sketch which will show my ideas more clearly. (General Doumenc offers an explanation to Marshal Voroshilov on his sketch.)

These countries defend their own territory, but we extend help to them when they ask for it.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: But what if they do not ask for it?

GENERAL DOUMENC: We know that they are in need of assistance.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: ...if they do not ask for this assistance in good time, it will mean that they have put up their hands, that they have surrendered.

GENERAL DOUMENC: That would be highly deplorable.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: What will the French Army do then?

GENERAL DOUMENC: France will then keep on her own front the forces she deems necessary.

If circumstances compel, General Gamelin will take the responsibility on himself for deciding the question. An impregnable front, solid connections with the rear and help to these countries by lines of communication. We intend to study communications between us in detail, and are willing to deal with this later. I say nothing of Turkey, because that is connected with the question of sea communications, which we have decided to discuss later.

Aside from this basic participation, I see two more highly important points which we must jointly discuss. First, joint action against the communications of the enemy fascist Power (shows the direction on the map).

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Sea communications?

GENERAL DOUMENC: Yes. As I have said, we shall study questions of supply and communications in detail later on.

Second, joint action of our bomber and fighter air force. That is another question the discussion of which we yesterday decided to postpone. I ask the Marshal, are my explanations sufficiently clear?

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: They are not clear. Excuse my frankness, but we soldiers must be forthright in what we say.

This scheme is not clear, because I, and I think my colleagues too, do not have a very clear idea about the place of the Soviet Armed Forces in it. In general, the outline is clear, but the part in it of the Soviet Armed Forces is not altogether clear. It is not clear where they are located and how they physically participate in the common struggle.

GENERAL DOUMENC (unfolds a map of the USSR and points to the area of its Western frontier): The Germans must never be allowed to break through this front. And that is the front where the Soviet Armed Forces should base themselves.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: It is a "front" which we always occupy, and which, you may rest assured, General, the fascists will never break, whether we come to an agreement with you or not.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I am very glad to hear this assurance from the Marshal.

If the Germans attack Poland, I don't think the Soviet forces can enter the struggle before they complete their concentration.

I ask the Marshal this question: Will he be able to render help to Poland at the moment the attack occurs?

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: There are no accidents in the world. As concerns our plan, our forces and possibilities, we shall make our report later, in accordance with our agreement of yesterday.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I am happy that you will tell us your point of view on this question. If the Marshal could present his plan now, it would be easier to say what can be done to help Poland. I have made my proposal to the Marshal. I have raised the question. Now I await his counterproposal.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: General Doumenc has replied to part of my question, but not to all of it. We have in mind the Eastern Front. If the aggressor, or the bloc of aggressors, attacks Poland across East Prussia or directly attacks the Western border of Poland—that is one question. General Doumenc has replied to it.

The second part of my question refers to the case when the aggressor attacks France or Britain directly, or both these countries together. What help do the French and British General Staffs consider the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union should then render to their countries?

(Admiral Drax confers at length with General Doumenc.)

GENERAL DOUMENC: I explained yesterday that aggression in the West automatically involves Poland. In the circumstances, General Gamelin thinks we shall have to see how the situation develops. General Gamelin is of the opinion that Soviet troops must be concentrated at the points indicated in the plan and that he and Marshal Voroshilov must maintain the closest contact in order to avoid land operations with insufficient strength. General Gamelin will deploy his forces according to the plan and will ask for an immediate air attack on Germany and her communications, while the operations in the West will be prepared with considerable forces.

It may be assumed that as soon as Poland and Rumania enter the war they will require help in supplies. We shall do everything we can, and these communications will be ensured. But it is plain that the USSR can do much in that direction because the Red Army is better disposed.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I do not agree with your idea. What do you mean by better disposed? (The interpreter explains

that geographical position is meant.) Regardless of what happens, our country is well situated to defend its borders. But it cannot consider itself well disposed for joint action against the enemy.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I'll put it more clearly as follows. We mean your air force and its attack on Germany. We are not as yet dealing with the question of lines of communication.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I want a clear answer to my very clear question concerning the joint action of the Armed Forces of Britain, France and the Soviet Union against the common enemy—the bloc of aggressors, or the main aggressor—should he attack. That is all I want to know and I ask you to tell me how General Gamelin and the General Staffs of Britain and France conceive this joint action.

I am interested in the following question, or, to be more precise, the following supplement to my question:

Do the French and British General Staffs think that the Soviet land forces will be admitted to Polish territory in order to make direct contact with the enemy in case Poland is attacked? And further:

Do you think that our Armed Forces will be allowed passage across Polish territory, across Galicia, to make contact with the enemy and to fight him in the south of Poland? And one more thing:

Is it proposed to allow Soviet troops across Rumanian territory if the aggressor attacks Rumania?

These are the three questions which interest us most.

(Admiral Drax confers at length with General Doumenc.)

GENERAL DOUMENC: I agree with the Marshal that the concentration of Soviet troops must take place principally in the areas indicated by the Marshal, and the distribution of these troops will be made at your discretion. I think that the weak points of the Polish-Rumanian front are its flanks and their limiting point. We shall speak of the left flank when we deal with the question of communications.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I want you to reply to my direct question. I said nothing about Soviet troop concentrations. I asked whether the British and French General Staffs envisage passage of our troops towards East Prussia or other points to fight the common enemy.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I think that Poland and Rumania will implore you, Marshal, to come to their assistance.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: And perhaps they will not. It is not evident so far. We have a Non-Aggression Pact with the Poles, while France and Poland have a Treaty of Mutual Assistance. This is the reason why the question I raised is not an idle one as far as we are concerned, since we are discussing the plan of joint action against the aggressor. To my mind, France and Britain should have a clear idea about the way we can extend real help or about our participation in the war. (There is a lengthy exchange of opinion between Admiral Drax and General Heywood.)

ADMIRAL DRAX: If Poland and Rumania do not ask for Soviet help they will soon become German provinces, and then the USSR will decide how to act. If, on the other hand, the USSR, France and Britain are in alliance, then the question of whether or not Rumania and Poland ask for help becomes quite clear.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I repeat, gentlemen, that this question is a cardinal question for the Soviet Union.

ADMIRAL DRAX: I repeat my reply once again. If the USSR, France and Britain are allies, then in my personal opinion there can be little doubt that Poland and Rumania will ask for help. But that is my personal opinion, and to obtain a precise and satisfactory answer, it is necessary to approach Poland.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I regret that the Military Missions of Great Britain and France have not considered this question and have not brought an exact answer.

(Admiral Drax and General Doumenc confer again.)

ADMIRAL DRAX: Yesterday you asked us for our opinion, Mr. Marshal. We gave it to you. We are discussing a question whose solution depends on the Polish Government which is under the pressure [of threat] of war. I should like to cite the following example: a man is drowning in a river and another man says he is ready and willing to throw him a lifebelt, will he decline to ask for it? The lifebelt will be on the spot if we act jointly.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Since you're resorting to parables, allow me to reciprocate. I must say the following: But what if the "lifebelt" is so far distant that it can't be thrown to the drowning man? A lifebelt of that kind, naturally, is useless to him.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I shall extend this comparison and say that this "lifebelt" must first of all be strong and solid. That is a question on which I have insisted from the military standpoint from the very first.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV indicates on the map how assistance can be practically rendered and how the Soviet Union can participate with its Armed Forces in the common struggle against the aggressor.

GENERAL DOUMENC: It will be a conclusive victory.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: No one knows what it will be. Anything can happen in war. But passage of our troops onto Polish territory through the Wilno Corridor and Galicia, and through Rumanian territory, is a preliminary condition. It is a preliminary condition of our negotiations and of a joint Treaty between the three states. If that is not granted, if the question is not solved favourably, I doubt the usefulness of our conversations.

I do not think that the statement by General Doumenc and by other representatives of the French and British Military Missions to the effect that Poland and Rumania will themselves ask for help is quite right. They, Poland and Rumania, may turn to the Soviet Union for help, and they may not, or they may ask for help so belatedly that this will have very grave consequences for the armies of France, Britain and the allies whom they will have. We shall not at that moment be able to exercise an appropriate influence on events.

The statement by Admiral Drax that if Poland and Rumania do not ask for Soviet help they will very soon be German provinces, is a very interesting one. I shall deal briefly with that question.

I do not contest the view itself that Poland and Rumania, if they do not ask for Soviet assistance, may very rapidly become provinces of aggressive Germany. But I must note that our conference is a Conference of Military Missions of three Great Powers, and the people representing the Armed Forces of these Powers should know the following: it is not in our interests, not in the interests of the Armed Forces of Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union, that the supplementary armed forces of Poland and Rumania should be destroyed. Yet if they, Poland and Rumania, fail to ask for Soviet help in good time, then, according to the Admiral, they will be annihilated.

This is why the Military Mission of the Soviet Union insists that the question of allowing passage of Soviet troops across Polish territory (in the North and South) and Rumanian territory should

be settled before we come to terms on the appropriate documents that are to culminate our conference.

ADMIRAL DRAX: We have heard the Marshal's statement with great interest and I now propose a 15-minute interval in which to discuss it.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I don't object to it and declare a 15-minute interval.

(AFTER THE INTERVAL)

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: The session continues.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I want to say first of all that we are pleased with the Marshal's proposals concerning the organization of defence on the Eastern Front. We think it is the best way of striking at the aggressor. But we must be certain that on our part we shall have adequate forces that can be engaged at the appropriate moment. We shall be pleased to know what forces the Marshal proposes to engage in our joint actions. Perhaps he will tell us now?

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: You have given our Mission no reply to our straightforward question. I repeat this question: Will the Soviet Armed Forces be allowed onto Polish territory in the Wilno area through the so-called Wilno Corridor? One.

Will the Soviet Armed Forces be permitted to advance through Polish territory in order to make contact with the aggressive troops through Galicia? Two.

Will the Soviet Armed Forces be given an opportunity to use Rumanian territory if the aggressor acts in that southern direction? Three.

I repeat once again: The answers to these straightforward questions are most cardinal for the Soviet Mission. Without an exact and unequivocal answer to these questions further conversations will not have any real meaning.

Upon receipt of an answer to these three questions we shall at once present our plan and our proposals in such detail as we think fit, and which, I feel, will be to the satisfaction of the present high conference.

(General Doumenc, Admiral Drax and General Heywood confer at length.)

GENERAL HEYWOOD (on behalf of the heads of both

Missions): In order to give you an accurate reply we ask for five minutes.

After a ten-minute discussion, during which Admiral Drax and General Heywood arrange their notes and read them to General Doumenc, General Heywood reads the following communication on behalf of the British and French Military Missions:

"We have already given our personal opinion quite clearly, and we take note of the Marshal's summary of the situation. But it must not be forgotten that Poland and Rumania are sovereign states, and that in the given case the authority required by the Soviet Mission must be obtained from these two Governments. The question has become a political one, and the USSR should ask the Polish and Rumanian Governments for the answer. This is obviously the most simple and direct procedure. However, if the Marshal specially wishes it, we are prepared to refer to London and Paris to request our Governments to ask the Polish and Rumanian Governments the following question:

"If the USSR is our ally, would they be prepared, in the event of aggression by Germany, to permit Soviet troops to enter Polish territory in the region of the Wilno Gap and in Galicia, and also to enter Rumanian territory in order to co-operate in operations against Germany?"

"It is possible that Germany will be marching into Poland tomorrow. If it is desired to avoid wasting time, could we not proceed with our work in the hope of affirmative answers to the above questions? It is our personal opinion that our conference can usefully continue.

"We have given the Marshal our defence plans in the West. In sending our requests to our Governments our Missions would feel greatly fortified if we knew how the Marshal intends to use the Soviet Armed Forces if permission for their passage across the territory of the above-mentioned countries is given."

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I ask for an interval, in order to formulate the proposals of the Soviet Military Mission.

I declare a 15-minute interval.

(AFTER THE INTERVAL)

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I apologize for the delay, and ask you to hear a statement by the Soviet Mission.

“The Soviet Military Mission, in answer to the communication of the British and French Military Missions, read by General Heywood, points out:—

1) The Soviet Military Mission did not, and does not, forget that Poland and Rumania are sovereign states. On the contrary, it is precisely on account of this indisputable fact that the Soviet Military Mission asked the British and French Military Missions to reply to the question: Will the Soviet Armed Forces be allowed to pass through Polish territory (the Wilno Corridor and Galicia) and through Rumanian territory in the case of aggression against Britain and France, or Poland and Rumania?

This question is all the more legitimate, in that France already has a political and military alliance with Poland, and Britain has a mutual Assistance Pact and a Military Treaty with Poland.

2) The Soviet Military Mission is in agreement with the British and French Military Missions in their opinion that this is a political question; but it is a military question to an even greater extent.

3) As regards the view of the British and French Military Missions that the simplest method would be for the Soviet Government to address itself directly to the Governments of Poland and Rumania, since the Soviet Union has no military agreements with Poland or Rumania, and since the danger of aggression in Europe principally affects Poland, Rumania, France and Britain, the question of the rights of passage of the Soviet Armed Forces across the territory of Poland and Rumania, and also the question of the action of the Soviet Armed Forces against the aggressor in the territory of these countries should be decided by the Governments of France and Britain in consultation with the Polish and Rumanian Governments.

4) The Soviet Military Mission expresses its regret at the absence of an exact answer on the part of the British and French Missions to the question raised about the right of passage of the Soviet Armed Forces over Polish and Rumanian territory.

The Soviet Military Mission considers that without a positive solution of this question the whole present attempt to conclude a Military Convention between France, Britain and the Soviet Union is, in its opinion, doomed to failure. For this reason, the Soviet Military Mission cannot in all conscience recommend to its Government that it take part in an undertaking obviously destined to fail.

5) The Soviet Military Mission asks that the replies to the question by the British and French Governments should be expedited.

Pending receipt of this reply the Soviet Military Mission is willing to set forth its plan for joint action against aggression in Europe."

I am very sorry that today's session had to be spent entirely on [the discussion of] one question and one answer. Tomorrow's meeting will be devoted to the Soviet plans concerning our idea of joint action against aggression in Europe if we come to terms about concluding a Military Convention.

If there are no questions and comments we can adjourn. (No comments.)

I declare the session closed.

From the archives. Published in *International Affairs*, 1959, No. 2, pp. 154-158.

No. 318.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE HEAD OF THE FRENCH
MILITARY MISSION TO THE WAR MINISTRY OF
FRANCE**

Moscow, August 14, 1939

The three Delegations had two meetings on August 13 and one long meeting on August 14.

The Soviet Delegation expressed a desire to achieve results and asked us not to discuss general and universally recognized principles but to consider only concrete questions.

At first, the question of the Western front was discussed, and tomorrow the Soviet Delegation is due to present a report on military resources and on plans of operations envisaged on the Russian front. But even before all that the Soviet Delegation today made the conclusion of a military pact contingent on the assurance that in the event of aggression against Poland and Rumania the Soviet Army could, if necessary, enter the Wilno

Gap, Galicia and Rumanian territory.* Our work is nonetheless continuing.

Our Ambassador feels, as I do, that the quickest solution of the question would be to send to Warsaw General Valin, who has been specially assigned by you to the Polish Staff. He could try to secure from the Polish Staff a secret agreement in principle which would enable the Franco-British Delegation to discuss the matter at the conference from the military standpoint while officially leaving the Polish Government uninvolved.

The British Mission is fully in agreement with this.

With reference to today's telegram from the Ambassador I have the honour to ask you to send me urgent instructions.

It has been agreed with the other two Delegations that no communiques about the present state of negotiations will be published. I hope to be able tomorrow to give you precise information as to the areas of Rumanian territory which could be the subject of discussion.

General Doumenc

A document found in the archives of the
Ministry for Foreign Affairs
of Germany.

No. 319.

RECORD OF THE MEETING OF THE MILITARY MISSIONS OF THE USSR, BRITAIN AND FRANCE

August 15, 1939

Opened at 10.07 a.m.

Adjourned at 1.20 p.m.

ADMIRAL DRAX (in the chair): I declare the session open.

Upon receipt at yesterday's session of the statement of the Soviet Military Mission we referred it to our Governments and at present are awaiting reply. We are happy that while waiting for this reply the Soviet Mission is willing to continue the work of our conference. We, too, are willing to proceed.

We are now expecting an explanation of the Soviet plans on the

* See Document No. 317.

Eastern Front, which, as the Marshal has said, will be to the satisfaction of the French and British Missions.

I ask the Marshal to begin the *exposé*.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: The Soviet Military Mission takes note of Admiral Drax's statement to the effect that the British and French Missions have forwarded our questions to their Governments and are expecting a reply to them. I think it is now possible to turn to an exposition of our plans and ask the Chairman to give the floor to Army Commander I. B. M. Shaposhnikov, a member of our Mission and Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army.

ADMIRAL DRAX: Please proceed.

ARMY COMMANDER SHAPOSHNIKOV: At previous sessions of the Military Missions we have heard [the plan] of the disposition of the French Army in the West. In compliance with the request of the French and British Missions, I will now on behalf of the Soviet Military Mission expound the plan of the dispositions of the Armed Forces of the USSR on its Western frontiers.

Against aggression in Europe, the Red Army will deploy in the European part of the USSR and will dispose on the front 120 infantry divisions, 16 cavalry divisions, 5,000 heavy guns (including both guns and howitzers), 9,000 to 10,000 tanks, 5,000 to 5,500 warplanes (excluding auxiliary aircraft), that is, fighter and bomber aircraft.

These figures do not include the garrisons of the fortified areas, air defence troops, coast defence units, reserve training units, and rear troops.

I will not go into details about the organization of the Red Army, but I will say briefly that a rifle division consists of three rifle regiments and two artillery regiments; its war strength is 19,000 men.

A corps consists of three divisions and has its own artillery, viz., two regiments. (Admiral Drax asks General Heywood whether any of the officers are taking down Army Commander Shaposhnikov's exposition, and is answered in the affirmative.)

Armies contain a varied number of corps, from five to eight, and have their own artillery, aviation and tanks.

The garrisons of the fortified areas will be ready within 4 to 6 hours of receiving the alarm. The USSR has fortified areas along

the whole length of its Western Frontier from the Arctic Ocean to the Black Sea.

The concentration of the Army takes from 8 to 20 days. The network of railways not only permits of the concentration of the Army on the border within the time indicated, but also permits of redeployment of this concentration along the front. We have along the Western frontier from 3 to 5 lateral lines of communication at a depth of 300 kilometres.

We have now a sufficient number of big powerful locomotives and heavy freight cars double the size of our former cars. The tonnage of our trains is double the previous tonnage. The speed of the trains has been increased.

We have a considerable quantity of motor transport, and our lateral road communications allow us to carry out considerable concentrations along the front by this means.

We have heard from General Doumenc a general outline of the French plans, but we have heard nothing concrete about the operational plans of the British Army from General Heywood. Similarly, we have heard nothing concrete of the plan of action on the high seas of the joint Anglo-French Fleet.

I will now give three alternative plans, in the event of aggression in Europe, for the joint action of the Armed Forces of Great Britain, France and the USSR, which have been approved by the Soviet Military Mission.

First alternative. If the aggressor bloc attacks Britain and France.

In this case, the USSR will put into the field a force equal to 70 per cent of the armed forces which Britain and France engage directly against the main aggressor, Germany. I will explain: for example, if Britain and France were to deploy directly against Germany 90 infantry divisions, the USSR would deploy 63 infantry divisions, 6 cavalry divisions and a corresponding force of artillery, tanks and aircraft, making up a total of about 2,000,000 men.

In this alternative, the support of Poland is considered essential on the strength of her treaty with Britain and France, and she should afford this support with all her strength. In doing so, Poland must concentrate 40 to 45 infantry divisions for the main battle on her own Western frontier and against East Prussia. The British and French Governments must obtain from Poland the right of passage and action for Soviet land and air forces

through the Wilno Corridor; and, if possible, across Lithuania towards the East Prussian frontier; and also, if the situation so demands, across Galicia.

Although the concrete naval operational plans of the joint French and British Navies have not been expounded, I consider it necessary to give the considerations of the General Staff of the Red Army, approved by the Soviet Military Mission.

The action of the joint Anglo-French Navy should have the following aim:

- 1) Closing the English Channel, and breaking through with a strong squadron into the Baltic for action against the navy of the principal aggressor in the Baltic, and against his coasts.

- 2) Britain and France should obtain from the Governments of the Baltic States their permission for the temporary occupation by the Anglo-French Navy of the Aland Islands, the Moon-Sund Archipelago with its islands of Ozal, Dago and Wormsi, and the ports of Hango, Parnu, Hapsal, Ainazi, and Libau, with a view to protecting the neutrality and independence of these countries against attack by Germany.

- 3) Cutting off the supply of ore and other raw materials from Sweden to Germany.

- 4) Blockading the coast of the principal aggressor in the North Sea.

- 5) Controlling the Mediterranean and closing the Suez Canal and the Dardanelles.

- 6) Carrying out cruiser operations along the coasts of Norway and Finland outside their territorial waters, and round Murmansk and Archangel, against submarines and cruisers of the aggressor.

The Northern Fleet of the USSR will carry out cruiser operations along the coasts of Norway and Finland outside their territorial waters jointly with the Anglo-French squadron.

As regards our Baltic Fleet, in the event of a satisfactory settlement of the questions of temporarily occupying the islands and ports I have mentioned, it will be based with the joint Franco-British Fleet on Hango, the Aland and Moon-Sund Archipelagoes, Hapsal, Parnu, Ainazi and Libau with the object of defending the independence of the Baltic countries.

In these circumstances, the Baltic Fleet of the USSR can develop its cruiser operations, the action of its submarines and its mine-laying operations along the coast of East Prussia and Pomerania. The submarines of the Baltic Fleet of the USSR will inter-

fere with the transportation of industrial raw materials from Sweden to the chief aggressor.

(As Army Commander Shaposhnikov presents the operational plan, Admiral Drax and General Heywood fill in the dispositions in their sketch-maps.)

S e c o n d a l t e r n a t i v e in which hostilities may begin is aggression against Poland and Rumania.

In this case, Poland and Rumania deploy all their armed forces at the front.

Poland must defend Rumania. Poland and Rumania may be attacked not by Germany alone, but also by Hungary. Germany can put up to 90 divisions in the field against Poland.

France and Britain must act and immediately declare war on the aggressor.

The USSR can only intervene when France and Britain reach an agreement with Poland, and, if possible, with Lithuania, and also with Rumania, for the passage and operations of our troops through the Wilno Corridor, through Galicia, and Rumania. In that case, the USSR will engage forces equal to 100 per cent of the armed forces which Britain and France engage directly against Germany. For example, if France and Britain put 90 infantry divisions into the field against Germany, the USSR will put into the field 90 infantry divisions, 12 cavalry divisions and the corresponding number of guns, aircraft and tanks.

The tasks of the British and French Navies will be the same as indicated for the first alternative plan; and the tasks of the Northern and Baltic Fleets of the USSR also remain the same.

In the South, the Black Sea Fleet of the USSR, having closed the mouth of the Danube against the exit of the aggressors' submarines and other naval forces, will close the Bosphorus in order to prevent the entry into the Black Sea of hostile surface warships and submarines.

T h i r d a l t e r n a t i v e.

This alternative envisages the case when the principal aggressor uses the territory of Finland, Estonia and Latvia, in order to attack the USSR.

In this case, France and Britain must immediately enter the war against the aggressor or aggressor bloc. Poland, bound by agreement with Britain and France, must enter the war against Germany, and grant rights of passage to our troops, through the

Wilno Corridor and into Galicia, in accordance with agreements which should be reached between the British, French and Polish Governments.

I have indicated before that the USSR will deploy 120 infantry divisions, 16 cavalry divisions, 5,000 heavy guns, 9,000 to 10,000 tanks and 5,000 to 5,500 aircraft. France and Great Britain must, in that case, engage the equivalent of 70 per cent of the Soviet Armed Forces just indicated and immediately begin active operations against the principal aggressor.

The action of the Anglo-French Navy should proceed as indicated in the first alternative plan.

Poland should deploy against Germany not less than 45 divisions of infantry, and the corresponding number of guns, aircraft and tanks.

If Rumania were to be dragged into the war, she should engage all her forces, and the British and French Governments should obtain the permission of the Rumanian Government for the passage of our forces across Rumanian territory.

These are the general considerations concerning common action by the Armed Forces of Britain, France and the USSR, as approved by the Soviet Military Mission.

(General lively discussion among all members of the British and French Military Missions).

ADMIRAL DRAX: We thank the Marshal and the Chief of General Staff for the clear and precise presentation he has just made of the plan.

We have a number of questions. We would therefore like to have some time to discuss them, so that their number will not be too large. For this reason, we think it best to present these questions at tomorrow's meeting. There are also a number of questions we should like to ask today after the interval.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Our side has no objection.

ADMIRAL DRAX announces an interval.

(AFTER THE INTERVAL)

ADMIRAL DRAX: We have decided that it will be best to ask our questions tomorrow.

I should like to set forth in brief the plan of naval operations of the Anglo-French fleet.

One of the principal tasks that confront the Navy is to maintain communications for ourselves and our allies, and, on the other hand, to paralyze the communications of the enemy.

We note with great interest the proposed plan of operations of the Soviet Navy in the Baltic. I should like to deal with these questions somewhat later, after treating a few questions which will better elucidate the situation.

From the point of view of world sea communications the Baltic is only of local importance, but we are well aware that it is of major interest to the USSR.

If we want the war to be won quickly, we should at once cut all enemy communications. I will now begin by setting forth considerations concerning outer lines of communication (oceans and outer seas).

This is a task which demands considerable forces. One of the principal tasks from the standpoint of difficulty and requiring superior forces is that of hunting down and destroying the enemy naval forces in order that they should not interfere with our communications.

The material resources required for war come to us chiefly from Australia and South America, but also from other parts of the world.

Germany has made arrangements which will enable her cruisers and submarines to operate 10,000 miles from their bases. Germany has not only land, but also floating, bases for her Navy. I would remind you that the Atlantic Ocean is more than 3,000,000 square miles, and the Pacific double that size.

I think the experience of the last war has shown us and the Soviet Union how important it is to maintain communications in the open seas, to secure for our countries the necessary raw materials for military purposes. Soviet communications go either through Murmansk (Arctic Ocean), or through the Black Sea (the Dardanelles). To defend only these entrances would be insufficient to maintain all necessary lines of communication. The defence of these areas is a local matter, but it is insufficient to ensure general communications. You will therefore realize, and bear in mind, that even though we may undertake operations in the vicinity of the Soviet coasts, and though we may close the English Channel, we shall also have our Navy to operate over millions of square miles.

We must have a navy in the North Sea exceeding in strength the whole naval forces of Germany, which can be concentrated in that sea at very short notice.

We must have in the Mediterranean a navy greater than the Italian, which would enable us to destroy the naval forces of Italy. In the Mediterranean, Italy has today more than a hundred submarines. Until these submarines have been destroyed, Soviet sea lanes in the Black Sea will be in jeopardy.

All transports going to the Black Sea come through the Aegean Sea and the Dardanelles, which are favourable for the operations of submarines and mines laid along the lines of communication because the sea here is very narrow and has many islands.

We could later discuss how our forces in the Aegean Sea can combat this danger. We attach great importance to joint action against the Dodecanese Islands, which may be a base for Italian submarines.

In the North we must arrange for the protection of Soviet transports over a large area. We shall evidently have to mark off the spheres of operation for our forces, leaving the Orkneys as the British base, and Murmansk as the Soviet base. You will note therefore the volume of work that has to be done to achieve this goal.

We have today a navy of tremendous strength. We are adding to it faster than ever before. We have annually been adding more than a hundred warships in recent years.

To be efficient, a fleet is largely dependent on trained personnel. In the last three years all our training establishments and centres providing the British Navy with personnel, have been filled to capacity.

All our squadrons are now ready for combat action at four hours' notice. They are at their war stations. Besides, we have recently mobilized our reserve fleet of more than 130 warships. These ships are not yet manned with their full crews, as we have not yet called up all our reservists. They have between 75 per cent and 90 per cent of their full complement. (I don't have precise figures, because not all reservists have been called up.) But they can be mobilized in less than two days. The ships are fully mobilized with complete supplies of ammunition; there is only a shortage of personnel.

As concerns our merchant shipping, which performs the major task of bringing supplies to us and our allies, we are building

merchant ships today whose tonnage exceeds by 1,000,000 tons that which we have had at any time since the war. We have also the advantage of having the modern French Navy and Merchant Marine at the disposal of the Allied command.

CAPTAIN WILLAUME: The French Fleet is practically on the same footing as the British and is at its war stations. The action of the French Navy will be by decision of the French and British Command in accordance with the distribution of their zones. Their joint and particular operations will be decided according to the dispositions of the enemy fleets.

The French Fleet is modern and fast enough. Its cruisers, flotilla leaders, destroyers and submarines are trained for distant operations. This training has been emphasized by the Navy in recent years.

ADMIRAL DRAX: The plan of co-operation for the Navies of Britain and France was worked out for the main aim. This conforms to the basic principle of naval strategy, meaning that we shall have to concentrate our forces in order to smash the enemy fleet at the very outset.

As an example, I would speak of operations against enemy submarines. You will remember that in the last war we were in great difficulty when German submarines had nearly cut our sea communications. That happened not because the British Navy was incapable of dealing with this menace, but because we never foresaw the possibility of Germany violating all international laws, and sinking without warning allied and neutral vessels and murdering their crews on the high seas.

As soon as this happened, we took the necessary steps. At the end of the war, Germany was building submarines in all her shipyards as fast as she could. Yet the allied navies were sinking those submarines faster than Germany could produce them. In the last 20 years we have not stood still. We consider that today we can deal with that menace more effectively than in 1918.

I think that I have given an adequate outline of our naval intentions. In the event of the Soviet Union's becoming our ally, we shall have to discuss a considerable number of points concerning naval co-operation.

This is all I wanted to say.

I now suggest that we discuss the programme for tomorrow. I propose that we begin with our questions concerning the exposition of the plan made today by Army Commander Shaposhnikov.

I presume also that we should get an answer from the Soviet Mission on the three principles which were submitted to the Soviet Mission by General Doumenc. I suggest that we discuss this point, because we here can easily come to an agreement with the Soviet Union. It would be of great importance to define several points on which we could reach agreement.

After discussion of these two questions Air Marshal Burnett and General Valin will be ready to present the operational plan of their air forces. If all concur, we shall now close our session.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Before the session is closed, I should like to take the floor for two minutes.

The Soviet Military Mission is grateful to the Chairman and head of the British Military Mission, Admiral Drax, for the thorough outline of Anglo-French naval action.

As regards tomorrow's agenda, it seems more useful to me to hear the communications of the representatives of the Anglo-French Air Force, so as to have a complete picture of the common action of all the armed forces of the future allies.

With regard to the reply concerning the three principles which were submitted to us by the head of the French Mission, General Doumenc, this can be made at tomorrow's session if my proposal is accepted, after hearing the communications of the British Air Marshal and the French Air Force General.

We have no objection to closing the session.

ADMIRAL DRAX: We are in agreement on tomorrow's programme. Thank you for the consideration with which today's session was conducted.

I declare the session closed.

From the archives. Published in
International Affairs, 1959,
No. 3, pp. 139-143.

No. 320.
**TELEGRAM FROM THE HEAD OF THE FRENCH
MILITARY MISSION TO THE WAR MINISTRY
OF FRANCE**

Moscow, August 15, 1939

I am submitting a report on the fifth meeting.

It was devoted to a detailed survey of the Soviet Armed Forces and plans, with account being taken of various possible alternatives and of the highly affective assistance which they are fully determined to give us. The main condition concerning passage [of troops] through Polish territory, as set out in my telegram of yesterday, is still being defined. I would like to note the great importance, from the standpoint of removing Polish fears, of the fact that the Russians are very strictly limiting the zones of entry [by Soviet troops], taking an exclusively strategic viewpoint.

I am renewing my request for an urgent reply to the proposals contained in my code telegram No. 1. * Please see today's telegram from our Ambassador.

General Doumenc

A document found in the archives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Germany.

No. 321.
**TELEGRAM FROM THE WAR MINISTRY OF FRANCE
TO THE MILITARY ATTACHÉ OF FRANCE IN WAR-
SAW****

August 15, 1939

S u b j e c t: Mission.

I have the honour to advise you that you are hereby authorized to inform the Polish General Staff about the negotiations now in progress in Moscow between the Military Mission of General Doumenc and the General Staff of the USSR.

* See Document No. 318.

** General F. Musse.

Also please take note of such comments as may be made in connection with these negotiations by the Polish General Staff.

In case of necessity you have the permission to go to Moscow.

For the Minister, and on his instructions, for the Chief of the Army General Staff,
Army Chief of Staff General
Colson

From a document found in the archives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Germany.

No. 322.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE ACTING MILITARY ATTACHE
OF THE USSR IN JAPAN TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF
THE RED ARMY**

August 15, 1939

In June the Cabinet rejected the proposal of the military calling for a military alliance with Germany and Italy¹⁶ which would be directed against the democratic countries, and took a decision to strengthen the anti-Comintern pact,⁸ i.e., the alliance against the USSR. Hoping to reach a compromise with England, the military were compelled temporarily to concur.

In view of the annulment of the treaty with America, the delay in negotiations with England and fears that the Japanese army by itself might not be able to deal with the USSR, the military have called for a review of the June decision on a military alliance.

On August 8 this subject was discussed for five hours at a conference attended by five ministers. Important differences of opinion came to light and no decisions were taken. The discussions are to be continued on August 18.

Court and financial circles would agree to the conclusion of a military alliance against the USSR alone, but not against all the democratic countries, as Germany and Italy are demanding.

The overwhelming majority of the naval group are supporting the financial group. The internal forces are demanding an alliance without any conditions.

L. Mishin

From the archives.

No. 323.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE AMBASSADOR OF THE USSR
IN FRANCE TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

August 16, 1939

At present attention is focused on the Burckhardt * mission. It has pushed into the background even the Salzburg rendezvous³¹ which, many people here believe, is closely connected with the Burckhardt mission. All who know Burckhardt rule out the possibility that he could have undertaken his trip without the knowledge and consent of London and Paris. The only difference of opinion concerns the source of the initiative. If no one has any further doubts as to the purpose of the mission, opinions differ as to what it has actually accomplished. It is known only that Burckhardt summoned to Basel representatives of the Foreign Office and Quai d'Orsay (from here Arnal** travelled to see him) for the express purpose of familiarizing them with the results. This unusual method (which is incidentally concealed from the public) was suggested by Burckhardt himself. Judging by the reaction of the press close to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the results of the mission were not particularly promising. The entire press on the whole also took a negative view of the very idea of repeating the "Runciman experiment". As a "*ballon d'essai*" the mission has failed. Small wonder that no one here wants to have anything to do with it.

There is also very little verified information about the Salzburg rendezvous. Did Italy really play the part of a restraining brake

* League of Nations High Commissioner in Danzig.

** Head of the League of Nations Section of the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

and suggest the idea of convening a conference? People are already talking about a new inspired démarche by the Vatican.

From the archives.

Ambassador

No. 324.

MINUTE FROM AN OFFICIAL OF RIBBENTROP'S SECRETARIAT TO THE PERMANENT LIAISON OFFICER OF THE GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTRY ATTACHED TO THE REICH CHANCELLOR

August 16, 1939

I enclose a letter from Mr. Charles Roden Buxton, the Labour Party's foreign policy expert, who is at present in Berlin. This letter contains proposals which he made to me in a conversation and then, at my request, put in writing.

Buxton emphasized that they were personal suggestions. For my part I told him that I also accepted them personally, and that I did not know whether the German authorities concerned would be interested in such proposals at the present time, especially as it was the holiday period just now.

T. C. P. Catchpool, who is accompanying Mr. Buxton, and whom I mentioned in my last Minute, indicated at the end of a conversation that Buxton knew Chamberlain and Halifax, and in particular was very closely associated with Butler. It might therefore be assumed that Buxton would not be making such proposals without a certain degree of approval from his Government.

Dr. Hetzler

*Enclosure
August 14, 1939*

In our conversation today I suggested to you the outlines of a possible settlement between Germany and England, and you asked me to write them down. I spoke purely as a private individual, and I must make it quite clear that I am not authorized to do so by any one else. But I hope I am a good European, I have studied European questions for many years, and I earnestly

desire peace. What I said was this:—I believe a settlement is possible if it is a complete settlement of all controversial questions at the same time; if it is announced to the public as one single whole; if it is on the basis of equality and of mutuality; and if definite and concrete steps are taken, on both sides, which will remove the present mistrust and create a feeling of confidence that a completely new stage is now beginning in Europe.

I would put my ideas in the following form:—If England agreed:

- a) to recognize East Europe as Germany's natural living space;
- b) to settle the colonial question by recognizing Germany's right to her former colonies, and immediately begin to set up a new system in Central Africa on the basis of the Berlin Conference (1885) with a new distribution of territory;
- c) to withdraw all methods of economic competition in East Europe other than the normal methods of trade and commerce;
- d) to withdraw all so-called "encircling" alliances in East Europe;
- e) to promote direct negotiation between Poland and Germany on Danzig and the Corridor;
- f) to make a new Naval Treaty;
- g) to make a general Disarmament Agreement, on a large scale, on a mutual basis, and with mutual inspection;

In such a case, would Germany then agree:

- a) to recognize the British Empire as England's natural living space;
- b) to enter into a system of European co-operation (for example a Conference of Germany, England, France, Italy, Poland, Spain) for the resettlement of Europe, with common guarantees for the new arrangements, and for the independence of all states;
- c) to withdraw any "encircling" agreements, if such exist, with Spain;
- d) to make a Declaration concerning the autonomy of the Protektorat;
- e) to make a new Naval Treaty;
- f) to make a general Disarmament Agreement, on a large scale, on a mutual basis, and with mutual inspection.

Charles Roden Buxton

*From Documents on German Foreign Policy.
1918-1945, Series D, Vol. VII, pp. 97-99.*

No. 325.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
CHIEF OF THE FOREIGN POLICY SERVICE OF THE
GERMAN NATIONAL SOCIALIST PARTY AND AN
OFFICIAL OF THE BRITISH AIR MINISTRY***August 16, 1939*

At 4 p.m. on August 16, Baron de Ropp called on me. He had been on a visit to the South of France and Corsica and had also been in London. He told me that in the last few days he had spoken to the officers of the British Air Staff and Air Ministry whom we knew. The views in these quarters were exactly the same as before. It would be absurd for Germany and Britain to engage in a life and death combat on account of the Poles. As things were, the result could only be the destruction of each other's air forces, and, at the end of such a war, the destruction of the whole of European civilization, leaving Russia with her forces intact as the only beneficiary. The Poles were in fact urging the Foreign Office to march against Germany in full force in the event of a war with Germany. But precisely in view of the fact that at first the whole weight of the war would fall on the Air Force, the influence of the Air Ministry and the Air Staff was on the increase.

Baron de Ropp told me that because of their good knowledge, acquired over some years, of Germany and the National Socialist Movement, he and his friends did not believe that Germany—even after a victory in the East—intended to destroy Britain or France. He knew rather that the Führer and our Movement had always regarded the British Empire as an entity. Neither could he and his friends imagine that we wanted to annex any British Dominions, which I confirmed as being the view of the National Socialist Movement hitherto.

Baron de Ropp added that, in the event of war, he had been selected as political adviser on Germany to the Air Ministry, i.e., as intelligence officer to assess the political situation in Germany and the reports on Germany's intentions. He said he was telling me this in confidence on account of our long acquaintance, because he was firmly convinced that everything must be done to prevent war. But, judging from the present situation, he believed

that, in the event of a warlike conflict between Germany and Poland, France and Britain would automatically be brought in. Even in this event, however, for the purpose of assessing such a conflict, the possibility of not letting it develop into a war of extermination for both sides must still be kept in mind. It might be that Germany would finish off Poland quickly, and that although at the time there would be a declaration of war, the war at that stage could still be conducted on both sides as a defensive war, i.e., that although the frontiers would be adequately defended by blockade and artillery, there would, however, be no aerial bombardment of unprotected cities, which was bound to lead to irrevocable hatred. In the event of a speedy ending of a German-Polish conflict, there would, in this hypothesis, still be the possibility of a quick liquidation of the war, as the British Empire and Germany could not stake their whole existence for a State which would then have practically ceased to exist in its previous form.

As regards France, the feeling there was extremely warlike as compared with last year. In particular, hatred of Italy had greatly increased; Corsica was overflowing with troops, and there was no doubt that the Corsicans themselves felt they were French. The question arose: if, in the event of a general conflict there were battles between the French and Italian Air Forces, would that automatically lead to general air warfare between Germany and Britain?

I took note of these statements, saying that I had just returned from leave and was not fully informed about the present state of affairs. De Ropp asked me: "Do you think that the Poles would become reasonable if pressure were exerted by Britain? What could be done about it?" At the same time he asked for detailed material, as authentic as possible, on the ill-treatment of Germans in Poland. I have given orders for this material to be available by tomorrow midday.

I told him that the Führer's first, conciliatory, proposal*—the return of Danzig, and a German highway between East Prussia and the Reich—had been brusquely rejected by the Poles, presumably because, through previous visits to London, they had already received from someone promises of firmer support. It could perhaps be said that the Poles were just gambling and had intentionally in the last few weeks intensified the persecutions of

* See Document No. 51.

Germans to an extreme degree in order to provoke us, because they were not quite sure of Britain's help if they took military action by themselves. Thus, by these constant provocations in word and deed they probably hoped to force Germany to take some step or other, and thereby bring full British and French support automatically into operation. I think that it might well be said in Britain that the guarantee* had been given on other conditions than those now prevailing. For as things are now, the German Reich is being deliberately provoked by the Poles, and thus an attempt is really being made to make Britain play Poland's game. In judging the Poles there must also be taken into account a Slav element, which at certain moments loses all restraint and power of clear judgement and then, as it were in despair, lets things slide.

In conclusion, de Ropp emphasized that he himself knew quite well that, after establishing herself in the East—which his friends particularly advocated, because in this they saw for Britain's future not only no harm but an advantage—Germany had no subsequent designs on the British Empire. But, fostered by certain centres, this idea had become firmly fixed among many of the French and British, and it was not easy to eradicate it. He, personally, and his friends also, saw matters clearly, and would do everything to stave off a disastrous outcome.

He said that he would be staying in Germany for another eight to ten days.

I consider it my duty to inform the Führer of these statements emanating from the British Air Ministry, and of the views of those in the highest levels of the British Air Staff, especially as these views coincide with what they have so far publicly stated in their newspapers.

A. Rosenberg

*From Documents on German Foreign Policy.
1918-1945, Series D, Vol. VII, pp. 81-83.*

* See Document No. 137.

No. 326.

**LETTER FROM THE FRENCH MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF
MINISTERS OF FRANCE***August 16, 1939*

The Franco-Anglo-Russian Military Negotiations.

Observations by M. Naggiar.

I have the honour to enclose herewith a memorandum reproducing the observations communicated to me by our Ambassador in Moscow on August 15 concerning the progress of the military negotiations being conducted at the present time between France, Great Britain and the USSR.

I would be indebted to you if you would be so kind as to regard these observations as being strictly confidential.

For the Minister for Foreign
Affairs,
Vice-Director for European
Affairs,
Minister *A. Hoppenot*

MINUTE**FRANCO-ANGLO-RUSSIAN MILITARY NEGOTIATIONS**

According to a dispatch from our Ambassador in Moscow, what the Russian Government is proposing by way of implementing the obligations under a political treaty is consistent, in General Doumenc's opinion, with the interests of our security and the security of Poland herself.

Far from seeking to exploit the negotiations in order to obtain our effective support in the West in exchange for limited support on its part in the East, the USSR is offering us, in M. Naggiar's opinion, quite definite assistance in the East, without advancing additional demands in the West, but on condition that by her negative attitude Poland should not make it impossible to create a resistance front in the East with the participation of Russian forces. In the event of failure in this matter the Russians are not claiming that we should give them support in the West so long as

Poland, owing to her negative attitude, keeps them at a distance from operations in the East. Indeed, they declare that in this case the military negotiations, and consequently also the political treaty, one of whose basic aims is the rendering of assistance to Poland by the Soviet Union, would be meaningless.

One could hardly find anything to counter this statement which leads us to the very crux of the matter, writes our Ambassador in Moscow on this score. Even if the Russians were to reconcile themselves to the fact that in the East provision would be made only for limited assistance and simple measures arising out of a temporizing position which, according to their instructions, the French and English Missions are to insist on, the Polish question, in M. Naggiar's opinion, still could not be avoided, not to mention the Rumanian question. And finally, there would arise complex problems of transit, supply and communications, and they would prove insoluble without the participation or tacit agreement of the Warsaw Government.

To talk about the complexity of the situation in order to camouflage the urgent need to achieve results in Moscow without the consent of Poland to which we have given a guarantee * to allow us to attain a more precise definition of the terms of Russian support, without which our guarantee might prove to be too onerous or ineffective, would in M. Naggiar's opinion, be tantamount to trying to build castles in the sand.

In offering Poland a guarantee, we should have predicated that guarantee on Soviet support which we consider to be necessary. The circumstances which justified that decision in the spring, undoubtedly appear to be more favourable at present. In any case, in the opinion of our Ambassador in Moscow, it is essential that the Poles should now realize, before it is too late, the necessity of their adopting a less negative attitude.

In this connection Naggiar believes that General Doumenc should be accorded complete confidence and that, without laying down any restrictions, apart from those dictated by his own experience, we should empower him to discuss all the problems relating to the effective participation of Russian forces in the struggle against aggression in the East.

The future Military Convention must of course be submitted for approval to the Governments concerned. Therefore it cannot be

* See Document No. 161.

concluded in its full extent without the consent of the Poles in so far as the French Government could give its final agreement only after it had been in touch with Warsaw on this matter. In this connection Naggjar recalls that General Huntziger alone concluded the Convention with Turkey and that the British Government approved it afterwards.

The main point at this stage, says our Ambassador in Moscow in conclusion, is to move forward the military negotiations with the USSR and not to permit a breakdown due to our refusal to discuss seriously the actual problems connected with the question of Russian support in the East.

A document found in the archives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Germany

No. 327.

RECORD OF THE MEETING OF THE MILITARY MISSIONS OF THE USSR, BRITAIN AND FRANCE

August 16, 1939

Opened at 10.25 a.m.

Adjourned at 1.55 p.m.

GENERAL DOUMENC (in the chair): I declare the meeting open. Admiral Drax will make a statement.

ADMIRAL DRAX: I apologize for our delegation being late today. After we arrived at the Embassy we had to formulate some of the questions which are of interest to us. I should like to ask a few naval questions after the interval. But there is one question I want to ask now, because all the others hinge upon it. The Soviet Mission will perhaps be able to answer it now, or after the interval.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I call on General Heywood.

GENERAL HEYWOOD: We should like to know what number and description of Franco-British naval forces you propose should take part in the operations in the Baltic?

GENERAL DOUMENC: The agenda of our meeting today includes comments by the Soviet delegation on the principles submitted to it. I should like to ask Marshal Voroshilov whether he can make his comments now.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: As regards the first question, raised by General Heywood, I hope you will allow me to answer it a bit later. As regards the second, asked by the Chairman, I understand that we agreed yesterday first to hear the statements about the British and French Air Forces and then proceed to the principles submitted by the French Mission.

GENERAL DOUMENC: Possibly there was some misunderstanding. We may have misunderstood each other, but I see no objection to starting now with the air force statement.

I call on Air Marshal Burnett who will make a statement on the British Air Force.

AIR MARSHAL BURNETT: The general policy is that the British Air Forces, aside from those stationed in Singapore, Aden, the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal, India and the Dominions, should be employed in co-operating with the French forces on the Western Front.

What are the military objectives of vital importance to us today?

Part of the fighter force will remain on the British Isles to destroy those enemy forces which may attack Britain. Our fighter force will, in that event, be assisted by the entire system of our anti-aircraft defences—the searchlight units, barrage balloons and sound-rangers.

Arrangements have been made for part of our air force to operate from French territory, where airfields have been prepared for it. You will understand that this is a major strategic advantage, since it extends the operational range of our aircraft.

Our air bases in Britain are protected in the best possible way. We have been continuously improving their anti-aircraft defences since 1917, so that today the efficiency is extremely high.

Our bomber force can operate deep in Germany's rear. Bombers from bases in England can keep up a continuous attack on the German rear, because we are going to have all the resources of British industry behind us. Furthermore, we have the additional advantage of having a large number of well-trained air mechanics. This is a great help in the problem of supplies and maintenance. Questions of supply and aircraft maintenance are much easier solved when our aircraft operate from English bases, rather than from forward bases (France, the Mediterranean coast), which involve upkeep of lines of communication. From

these bases, both the ones on the British Isles and in France, we can reach all important objectives in Germany.

You probably know from press reports about the long flights we have made from the British Isles to the Mediterranean, Marseilles among other places, and back. This was not done just once, but several times.

The British Air Force is getting stronger each day. It is not only the industrial output that is growing, but the output of pilots and air mechanics as well. We attach great importance to our air mechanics who are responsible for aircraft maintenance. The problem of proper aircraft exploitation is getting to be increasingly difficult as the aircraft are improved.

We are against building more aircraft of the first line than we can maintain during the war. We hold the view that we should have as many aircraft of the first line as we can maintain continuously for a long period with presently available reserves. We prefer to have 1,000 first-line aircraft and to maintain that number during six months of war, rather than several thousand first-line aircraft which we shall not be able to maintain.

It may interest the Soviet Air Force to know that today the first-line air force at home has more than 3,000 aircraft. This excludes training aircraft and aircraft earmarked for the overseas air forces. But the figure I have just named does not give a real idea of the tremendous possibilities of the British Air Force in wartime. We attach great importance to bomber operations being continuous and long-term. The state of our industry and the efficiency of our personnel (pilots and mechanics) rounds out the general picture of our air force.

I shall now deal with the system of training personnel. We have about 15 training schools for advanced pilots. From these advanced training schools the pilots are sent directly to the squadrons. Selection proceeds as follows. We select young people physically fit for service in the air force. They undergo initial training in schools. Some of them, those who pass the tests of piloting aircraft, then go to the above-mentioned schools, which are of two categories. The first category are schools where personnel is trained in handling modern aircraft equipment. In schools of the second category they are taught the employment of aircraft (bombing, air photography, firing). Pilots better suited for the fighter force are sent to fighter squadrons. Pilots better suited for long-range reconnaissance and bombing are sent, respectively,

to the reconnaissance and bomber squadrons. And pilots best suited for army co-operation undergo short-term courses in this line before being sent to their units.

In wartime, the number of these schools will rise steeply. The existing organization enables us to make this extension. If war breaks out tomorrow we can do it at once.

Furthermore, we have training schools for air mechanics. Their number is being increased and there are many schools in the process of formation. There are also civil schools at aircraft factories. We send our air mechanics to the factories, so that they familiarize themselves with the latest types of aircraft as these come into production. These mechanics are drafted from field units and training depots. After five years of service some of the pilots join the reserve. This has enabled us to build up a large reserve force.

As regards the capacity of our aviation factories, I can cite the following figures: output today exceeds 700 aircraft per month. This does not include civilian and training planes. I do not have precise output figures for civilian planes and therefore speak only of warplanes. No increase has been made in the usual number of shifts at the factories. Most factories work one shift and some two.

In the event of war, this industry will be able to produce considerably more. We have very large untapped industrial reserves which we shall use in the event of war. There are today many factories producing motorcars, motor-cycles and other peacetime goods which may in wartime be adapted to turning out military aircraft.

From what I have said you can get an idea of Britain's air power. By the end of the last war we had the most powerful air force in the world. There were more than 22,000 aircraft in our squadrons and units. This does not mean, of course, that they could all go up simultaneously.

In any case, I can confidently say that if war were to break out in the near future we would begin it under more favourable conditions than the last war. I am certain that we shall achieve more surprising results than we had by the end of the last war.

At present we have a system of uninterrupted supply for our bomber, fighter and reconnaissance air forces. We are taking steps to increase the output of all necessary materials (fuel, lubricants, etc.), and to build up required stocks so as to facilitate extension of this supply during the war.

I have now briefly outlined the state of the British Air Force and told you what it can do. I hope that very soon we shall discuss the best ways of employing the tremendous air power of the USSR, France and Great Britain.

GENERAL DOUMENC thanks Air Marshal Burnett for his communication, and is joined in this by Marshal Voroshilov and Admiral Drax.

The Chairman announces a 15-minute interval.

(AFTER THE INTERVAL)

GENERAL DOUMENC: The session is resumed. General Valin will speak about the French Air Force.

GENERAL VALIN: I want to give a description of the French Air Force.

I shall begin with the organization of materiel in order to meet General Loktionov's wishes and to reply to his questions. I shall follow the same principle as Air Marshal Burnett. I would like to begin with materiel, then proceed to personnel, organization of bases and airfields, mobilization, the system of various services, and shall wind up with air operations on the Western Front. But before I do so, allow me to make two points. First, I shall speak only of aircraft of the first line, in other words, of aircraft which can be mobilized at once and have the personnel, armament, supplies and spare parts. It must be borne in mind that first-line aircraft have a corresponding reserve. This is set at 200 per cent for the fighter force and at 100 per cent for all other types. For example, when I speak of 100 fighters of the first line, this means that there is a reserve of 200 aircraft which can perform combat missions. Secondly, speaking of the air force I shall only refer to the air force available in France and North Africa and not to the various air forces located in the colonies. Their task is to defend the colonies, but in case of need they may be used to reinforce the main force.

Materiel. The number of first-line aircraft today is about 2,000, of which two-thirds are modern aircraft with fighter speeds of 450 to 500 kilometres per hour with improved armaments, and bomber speeds of 400 to 450 kilometres per hour with a range of 800 to 1,000 kilometres and a bomb load of 1,000 to 2,500 kilograms.

This force has lately been developing fast thanks to our indust-

rial resources. In 1940, our air force is to have 3,000 first-line aircraft.

To round out the question of our matériel, I must say that the mobilization of French industry will enable us to maintain the number of first-line aircraft at its present level. Within three months after the outbreak of war the number of aircraft produced will exceed possible losses and will grow at a rate comparable to the last war.

P e r s o n n e l. As in all technical military services, the problem of air force personnel is the most difficult to solve. The methods whereby we train personnel for our air force are the following.

P r e - c a l l u p t r a i n i n g. Training in public aviation organizations is provided for young people who want to learn flying, with light aircraft used for this purpose. This is carried out by civil aero clubs, which teach them to handle light aircraft.

Young people who want to specialize in various branches of aviation are trained in schools run by aero clubs.

Finally such training is carried out at military flying schools, whose number is increasing all the time.

Air mechanics, ordnance mechanics, mechanics for special equipment, and electricians are trained at specialized military schools. I cite no figures because, compared to what Air Marshal Burnett has told you, they would not give the correct impression bearing in mind that our methods are different. For each line we have basic schools, which are filled to capacity, though not, it is true, for every speciality, but only for pilots, air mechanics and ordnance mechanics. Besides, there are other possibilities of obtaining technical personnel for our air force.

T r a i n i n g o f r e s e r v e s. All reservists are trained either in active units, and are in that case viewed as personnel of the active air force, or in special reserve training centres where they undergo advanced training either voluntarily or compulsorily.

O r g a n i z a t i o n o f l a n d b a s e s. Besides peacetime bases, we have set up wartime bases. Considerable effort has been devoted to this lately. At present, we have bases throughout France designed to accommodate the entire French and British Air Forces. These bases have been built with an eye to the various military alternatives which arise from the assumptions described here. Each base is capable of handling not less than 20 aircraft and has all the necessary means of supply.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Are they bases which fully provide for continuous war operations or bases where pilots can land to rest, and fly on?

GENERAL VALIN: I shall now tell you what these bases have. They have every means of supply, such as underground fuel storage tanks with all the necessary mechanisms for rapid refueling, ammunition dumps, means of communication such as an underground telephone exchange, stocks of camouflage material (paint, canvas, netting) and several thousand square metres of steel grating for rapid repair of refuel bombed runways. Besides, there are ground units called service companies. These are available at all the bases, whether aircraft are present or not. Their purpose is to organize defence of the airfield and to serve the needs and requirements of the air units which occupy or are to occupy it.

Mobilization. The entire air force can be put on a war footing at 4 hours' notice. What does this mean? Upon receiving orders the military air force is deconcentrated so as not to expose itself to bombardment. It is deployed at points which are not operative bases, but special deconcentration airfields. This is done to prevent the enemy from learning the location of the operational airfields at the start of the war.

Services. The air force services are organized much the same as those of the ground forces. Some of them, like the medical service, are absolutely identical.

The fuel and munitions supply services are organized very thoroughly. They include underground munition dumps at the bases. The more important of the stores are also underground. They are supplied by railway or motor roads operative in peace time. Time-tables for rail movements are provided for in the transport plans. In addition, supplies also come in by motor transport. They are serviced by special units known as companies. There are fuel supply companies, for example, and munitions supply companies. These are equipped with the latest means of communication and all other technical means, such as pumps and lorry winches for loading and unloading munitions. All these companies exist today. They will be doubled in the early period of the war by requisitioning lorries and cars. For example, a good number of lorries may be taken from the fuel industry.

I proceed to the general question of employment of the air force. The French Air Force Command intends to exploit to the

full the possibilities of the air force in order to concentrate aircraft as quickly as possible where they are needed.

For this purpose the air force has bases on the territories of France and North Africa, of which I have spoken. Their number is not less than three for every unit of 20 aircraft. All these bases and their supplies are operational in all war situations. Their location in relation to the front line depends on the war theatre. It will be different in the Alps as compared with the north of France.

Thanks to this organization there is no need to move the stationary equipment and the servicing personnel. This enables us to concentrate at points already available.

Therefore, if we need technical personnel, it may be transferred by air, since their point of destination will have a few days' supply of all necessities.

It is thus possible to move the operational centre of the air forces as the situation demands to the point where it is most needed at any given time.

Moreover, this organization facilitates protection from enemy air attacks, particularly bomber attacks. Since there are service companies at the airfields the aircraft can quickly move to other bases if an airfield is destroyed or an attack is imminent. This is also a great advantage.

The bases were built at great cost, but the outlay was unavoidable. As a result, every air force unit has three equipped bases.

Today we have an adequate number of these bases to accommodate the French Air Force and also the British Air Force which is going to operate from French territory. We have provided that, as the French Air Force expands, this principle of three bases for each aircraft unit will be preserved.

Hence, what I have said about the French Air Force differs little from Air Marshal Burnett's statement about the British Air Force. Both our air forces have been trained for joint action, and a good number of French bombers has already made flights over Britain.

The fighter force, which acts hand in hand with anti-aircraft artillery, defends the most vital objectives against enemy air attacks. In particular, it covers the most vital objectives whose destruction may affect the development of war operations, such as

railway junctions, motor roads, bridges, concentrations of land and air forces, and industrial plants vital for defence needs.

The bomber force is intended to destroy exclusively military objectives in enemy territory, and is to avoid action against the civilian population and civil buildings. The objectives of our bomber force are those which the enemy defends with his fighter units and anti-aircraft artillery. Bomber objectives are evidently the same in all countries.

The order of attack on various targets is a very complex question. It may be solved only in accordance with concrete operations at any given time on any given front.

That is the end of my statement.

GENERAL DOUMENC thanks General Valin on behalf of the meeting for his *exposé*.

(Marshal Voroshilov and Admiral Drax also thank General Valin.)

GENERAL DOUMENC: May we have a reply now to the question asked by the Admiral?

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I ask the Admiral and the conference for permission to make our reply at the next session.

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International Affairs, 1959,
No. 3, pp. 143-148.

No. 328.

RECORD OF THE MEETING OF THE MILITARY MISSIONS OF THE USSR, BRITAIN AND FRANCE

August 16, 1939

(Continued)

GENERAL DOUMENC: According to our programme the Soviet delegation is to give its comments on the three principles. Could I ask the Marshal to do so now?

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: The Soviet Military Mission has made thorough study of the three principles submitted to it by the head of the French Military Mission, General Doumenc.

These three principles concerning the organization of the

defence of the contracting parties are much too universal, abstract and immaterial, and do not bind anyone to anything. I naturally share them, since there is little one can say against them. But they do not represent anything concrete and could serve as material solely for some abstract declaration, whereas we have not gathered here to adopt some general declaration, but rather to work out a concrete military convention fixing the number of divisions, guns, tanks, aircraft, naval squadrons, etc., to act jointly in the defence of the contracting Powers.

This is our reply to the three principles submitted.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I want to say to the Marshal that he has been rather hard on my principles.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: The harshness of my answer is dictated by the harshness of the present military and political situation. Just two days ago, Admiral Drax stated that Germany had two million men under arms and ready to start operations on August 15, that is yesterday, against one of the peaceful nations. Although Admiral Drax's forecast happily has not come true, the tension of the political situation in Europe has not diminished; on the contrary, it has increased. It follows that the meetings of the Military Missions of Britain, France and the USSR, if they seriously wish to arrive at a concrete decision for common action against aggression, should not waste time on meaningless declarations, and should decide this basic question as quickly as possible.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I want to follow the advice Marshal Voroshilov has given me and suggest that we amend these points on the strength of what has yesterday been set out by Army Commander Shaposhnikov, the Chief of the General Staff. Someone should be deputed to write the draft and to submit the new proposal for discussion.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I do not think that the time has yet arrived to prepare any document. We have not solved what is for the Soviet side the cardinal question, that is, the question of the right of passage for the Soviet Armed Forces on Polish and Rumanian territory for joint action by the contracting parties against the common enemy.

Only after a favourable solution of that question could we proceed to discuss the plans outlined here by the representatives of the three Military Missions.

Up to now we have merely exchanged communications. I personally presume that this is only the beginning of our concrete

conversations about fixing the number of troops to be provided by each party, and their use against aggression in Europe.

GENERAL DOUMENC: Would the Marshal agree that in order to save time, figures should be specified in a preliminary draft of the paragraphs (articles) of a Convention?

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: It seems to me that until our Soviet Mission receives a reply to our question, now known to all, which the Missions of Great Britain and France have communicated to their Governments, all preliminary work is, to a certain extent, useless.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I take note of what the Marshal has said and suggest that we proceed to the question of what we are going to do at the next meeting. Could we hear the communication of the Chief of the Air Force, General Loktionov, about the air arm of the Red Army, which is still due?

In addition to the questions I have submitted to the Marshal in writing, there are a few more we should like to ask the Soviet Mission with the Marshal's permission, and to which we should be very pleased to receive replies. They are formulated in English and I shall now give them to my neighbour (he hands them to General Heywood).

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Would it not be better to give the questions to us in writing? I take it that our Mission will be allowed to reply to them at one of the next few meetings. We shall fulfil the Chairman's wish concerning the statement about the Air Force of the Soviet Union, because the Soviet Mission does not want to be in debt to the French and British Missions.

GENERAL DOUMENC: If there is no objection from the Marshal and the Admiral, I suggest that we have our next meeting tomorrow.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I should like General Doumenc and Admiral Drax to inform us when approximately they expect to get the reply to our question from their Governments.

GENERAL DOUMENC: As soon as possible.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: If the answer which the British and French Missions expect is delayed for long, it seems to me that after our communication about the Soviet Air Force we shall have to interrupt our meetings pending receipt of the reply.

GENERAL DOUMENC: Aside from the communication by General Loktionov, I should also like to hear the answers to the

questions just submitted to the Marshal because they are very important.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: They may be very important, but we have not as yet studied them. We must look into them, and will then be able to say whether we are going to reply to them before receiving the answer from the British and French Governments, or whether we are going to do so after receiving it.

ADMIRAL DRAX: I have no means of forming an opinion on when the answer will be received from the Government, because that depends on the Government.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I want you to tell us at tomorrow's meeting when the Soviet Mission will be able to reply to the questions we have asked—now or later. I think that perhaps we could carry on with our work on the assumption that the answer to the question of the Soviet Military Mission will be in the affirmative.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I am sorry to say that our Mission will not be able to carry on until we know for sure, rather than assume, how the Governments of Britain and France conceive our part in joint action against aggressor.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I think we can adjourn for today and gather again tomorrow at 10 o'clock.

The proposal is accepted.

MILITARY QUESTIONS

TO THE SOVIET MILITARY MISSION

1) What is the opinion of the Soviet Military Mission on the possibility of Italy coming into the war?

a) If the Soviet Union has signed a Pact with France and Britain?

b) If the Soviet Union has not signed a Pact with us? If the opinion of the Soviet Military Mission is that Italy will probably enter the war what is their view of Italy's possible action, operating from Albania?

2) Of the three alternative courses of action outlined by the Soviet Military Mission, which in their opinion is the most probable course of action which will be adopted by Germany?

3) Can the Soviet Military Mission give more precise details of the areas of Rumanian territory into which they think it necessary to have a right of access and in which they wish to operate?

4) In alternative course No. 2 what does the Soviet Union propose to do if Bulgaria is joined with Hungary against Rumania. In this case what help can they give to Turkey?

5) What regular traffic tonnage can be sent by railway to Poland,

- a) from Murmansk,
- b) from the Black Sea?

By what railways can it be directed in order to interfere as little as possible with the supply of the Russian Army?

6) What Soviet port(s) of the Black Sea can we use for the transport of supplies to the Russo-Polish-Rumanian front?

7) (a) If the question of the passage of Soviet troops into Poland is decided in accordance with the wishes expressed by the Soviet Military Mission, is the Soviet Union agreeable to participate in providing supplies, armaments, raw materials and other industrial material for Poland?

(b) The same question for Rumania.

8) What supplies of refined petroleum products could the USSR supply in war? Would sufficient tanker vessels be available for trans-shipment?

STATEMENT TO BE MADE AT THE END OF THESE QUESTIONS

We have prepared a few questions on Soviet air policy, but as the Soviet air plans are shortly to be expounded and that what is then said may answer some of these questions, we propose to postpone all air questions until the Soviet air plans are known.

NAVAL QUESTION

What description and number of Franco-British naval forces do you propose should operate in the Baltic?

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No. 3, pp. 148-150.

No. 329.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE USSR AND THE AMBASSADOR OF THE USA IN
THE USSR**

August 16, 1939

Steinhardt says he trusts that Comrade Molotov has received a report on Comrade Umansky's conversation with Roosevelt.* Comrade Molotov replies in the affirmative.

Steinhardt then requests Comrade Molotov to keep what he will tell him today a secret.

Roosevelt, Steinhardt begins, wants all he has said to Umansky to be understood correctly. What he wants to communicate today to Comrade Molotov is an account of Roosevelt's unbiased, though personal views concerning the present-day international situation. Steinhardt emphasizes that an account of these views does not constitute an official statement by Roosevelt and once again speaks of the confidential nature of the conversation. Steinhardt says that in wishing to make his views known Roosevelt is not trying to give advice and that these views are arrived at independently of the policy of any other country. Roosevelt is not in a position to accept any responsibility or give any assurance concerning the steps that England and France intend to take in connection with their negotiations with the USSR. After this introduction, Steinhardt proceeds with his account of Roosevelt's views. In the event of war in Europe and in the Far East and of a victory of the Axis countries, the situation of the USSR and the USA would undoubtedly change. In the event of a victory of the Axis countries the situation of the USSR, owing to its geographical proximity to Germany, would change more rapidly than the situation of the USA. For this reason Roosevelt feels that if a satisfactory agreement against aggression was achieved between any other European powers it would have a stabilizing effect in the interests of universal peace in which the USA and the USSR are deeply interested.

Comrade Molotov observes that judging by the statement made

* See Document No. 272.

by Steinhardt, he (Steinhardt) has evidently been instructed to expound Roosevelt's views.

Steinhardt replies in the affirmative and asks Comrade Molotov whether what he has said coincides in general with what Roosevelt told Comrade Umansky.

Comrade Molotov confirms this and states that the Soviet Government is extremely interested in these views of Roosevelt's and considers them highly valuable.

Steinhardt requests Comrade Molotov, if he considers it possible, to set out, for transmission to Roosevelt, the views of the Soviet Government on the present international situation and on the negotiations between the USSR, England and France.

Comrade Molotov states that the Soviet Government takes a most serious attitude towards the situation in Europe and towards its negotiations with England and France. We attach great significance to these negotiations, says Comrade Molotov, as may be seen from the amount of time we have given them. From the very beginning we have approached these negotiations not as something that would end with the adoption of some general declaration. We feel it would be wrong, and for us it would be unacceptable, to limit ourselves to a declaration. Consequently, we insist, as we have done from the moment the negotiations started, on discussing concrete obligations for mutual assistance to counter possible aggression in Europe. We are not interested in making declaratory statements in the negotiations but in arriving at concrete decisions on mutual obligations to counter possible aggression. For us these negotiations are important in that their purpose is to work out defensive measures to be taken in the event of aggression; we would not agree to participate in compacts to attack anybody. Consequently, we value these negotiations in so far as they may be instrumental in securing agreement on mutual assistance for defence against direct and indirect aggression. I know, Comrade Molotov continues, that the USA refrains from direct participation in European affairs, but I also know that Roosevelt takes the interests of universal peace close to heart. The Soviet Government will therefore display the keenest interest in the statement which Steinhardt has communicated to us and which expresses Roosevelt's personal views.

Steinhardt then asks whether Comrade Molotov is hopeful of a successful completion of the negotiations, for Roosevelt will be

asking Steinhardt for his opinion of the negotiations but his opinion would be of no value.

Comrade Molotov replies that we have been spending and are continuing to spend a good deal of time on the negotiations precisely because we are counting on the success of the negotiations. But it goes without saying that the matter does not depend on us alone.

Steinhardt indicates the reasons that have prompted him to raise this question. Clearly, Steinhardt says, Molotov will agree with him that Roosevelt has to be prepared for the eventuality of the negotiations coming to an end, especially if they are unsuccessful. Steinhardt emphasizes that this is merely his own personal opinion. Comrade Molotov says that the outcome of the negotiations does not depend on us alone, it also depends on England and France. Much has already been done to ensure the success of the negotiations but the negotiations have not yet been concluded.

Steinhardt says that he appreciates Comrade Molotov's frankness. He asks that today's conversation be kept secret as Comrade Molotov evidently knows about the American Congress, the American newspapers and the Isolationists that are hampering Roosevelt's efforts to keep the peace. Steinhardt asks that none of the messages which Roosevelt may communicate to Comrade Molotov be made public. Comrade Molotov, noting that he is aware of the difficulties which Roosevelt encounters in his work says that he will comply with the Ambassador's request.

From the archives.

No. 330.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET CHARGE D'AFFAIRES
IN GERMANY TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

August 16, 1939

From a conversation with the Italian Chargé d'Affaires who participated in the Salzburg talks,³¹ it follows that:

The Danzig question was not discussed in isolation but as part of the general problem of the redivision of the world. The Italian emphasized that at present the matter concerned not just Danzig

alone but Poland as a whole, and that the latter's prospects were extremely bleak, regardless of which side was victorious.

The Chargé d'Affaires admitted that Italy's role could be regarded as a restraining one in the sense that Italy had not lost all hope for a peaceful settlement, and on these lines she attempted to influence Germany for which Danzig had by now become a question of prestige—something that was not to the liking of the Italians.

In any event, the situation was so tense that the likelihood of a world war was by no means excluded. All this should be resolved within three weeks at the most.

Chargé d'Affaires

From the archives.

No. 331.

**RECORD OF THE MEETING OF THE MILITARY
MISSIONS OF THE USSR, BRITAIN AND FRANCE**

August 17, 1939

Opened at 10.07 a.m.

Adjourned at 1.43 p.m.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV (in the chair): I declare the session of Military Missions open.

At today's session we are to hear a communication about the Soviet Air Force. If there is no other business on hand, I take the liberty of giving the floor to the Chief of the Red Army Air Force, Army Commander **II Loktionov**.

ARMY COMMANDER II LOKTIONOV: The Chief of the Red Army General Staff, Army Commander **I Shaposhnikov**, has already told you in his report that the Red Army will deploy from 5,000 to 5,500 warplanes on the West European Front. This number applies to the first-line air force, which excludes the reserve.

Of this number 80 per cent is modern aircraft with the following speeds: fighters—465 to 575 kilometres per hour and more, and bombers—460 to 550 kilometres per hour. The range of the bombers is 1,800 to 4,000 kilometres, and the bomb load—from 600 kilograms for the older types to 2,500 kilograms.

Air Marshal **Burnett** said that real capacity to replace first-line

aircraft in wartime is more important than the nominal total of the latter. He is right in the sense that the output capacity of the aviation industry should be able to meet wartime aircraft losses. This is highly important. But it is not going to hurt us to have at least as many aircraft in the first line as the probable enemies. The side which enters the war with a superior air force will unquestionably have a big edge over the enemy.

The proportion between bombers, fighters and army co-operation aircraft is: bombers 55 per cent, fighters 40 per cent, and army co-operation 5 per cent.

The Soviet aviation factories are at present working one shift, and only a few of them two. They produce an average of 900 to 950 warplanes a month, aside from civilian and training craft.

In view of growing aggression in Europe and the East, our aircraft industry has taken steps to raise production to an extent that will cover war needs.

P e r s o n n e l. We have the following system of training air force pilots and air mechanics. Young men physically fit for service in the air force undergo preliminary training in training aircraft at aero clubs and further training at one- or two-year aviation schools. Pilots and pilots-observers are trained at 19 aviation schools, and mechanics of all types at eight technical aviation schools. Furthermore, there are four schools for advanced flying and technical training. All in all, there are 33 schools. The existing technical schools have courses of supplementary technical training. All the schools are filled to capacity and provide personnel for the air force and accumulate the reserve.

We have an Air Academy for the higher training of air force commanders and engineers.

In addition, civil aviation has its own training schools for pilots and technicians not only for its own personnel but to accumulate the reserve. Refresher courses for trained reservists, pilots and technicians, are conducted systematically at training centres and reserve units.

E m p l o y m e n t. The main air force units will be ready for action, from 1 to 4 hours after the alarm. Units on duty are continuously at their war stations.

In the early period of the war air force operations will follow the plans of the General Staff. The general principle of the operations is determined by the need to concentrate all efforts, both on land and in the air, in the main battle. Hence, air operations will

be conducted in close co-operation with the land forces in the battlefield and in the whole depth of the battle zone.

Bomber targets are: the enemy's manpower and some of his important military objectives. Furthermore, bombers will be ordered to operate against military objectives deeper in the enemy's rear. The Soviet Air Force has no intention of bombing the civilian population.

Aside from defending a number of vital military objectives, railways and highways, covering army and air force concentrations, and defending major towns in close co-operation with other means of anti-aircraft defence, such as anti-aircraft artillery, etc., the fighter force is to come to grips with the enemy air force, facilitate bombing operations and co-operate with attack aircraft on the battlefield.

Aircraft are based on operational airfields; this and the manner in which the bases operate facilitate flexible manoeuvring of air forces both laterally and in depth, avoiding wasteful redeployments of air units.

I have finished what I had to say.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: The next speaker is Marshal Burnett.

MARSHAL BURNETT: I should like to thank General Loktionov on behalf of the French and British Missions for his precise statement. I was much impressed by the energy and determination which have enabled the Soviet Union to build up such a fine air force.

If you permit me, I have one or two questions I should like to ask later to clear up a few points in General Loktionov's communication.

GENERAL VALIN: Could I ask a few questions, since I did not grasp a few places in General Loktionov's account. Such as the use of bases, for example.

ARMY COMMANDER LOKTIONOV: When the alarm is given the air force is transferred from peace-time bases to reserve airfields. It is thus deconcentrated. According to plan the air force occupies what we call its wartime, operational airfields, which already have the necessary supplies of petrol and munitions. A network of such airfields facilitates manoeuvring laterally and in depth.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Let us now turn to the discussion of further questions. We still have one thing to discuss—the

questions submitted by the British and French Missions to the Soviet Mission. These questions amounting to eight, plus one naval question, are, on the one hand, general questions of a political, abstract nature. On the other hand, they touch upon such details and concrete aspects of the relations of future allies that the answers to them would follow from the very fact of the conclusion of a military Convention between our countries.

Having made this reservation, I will reply to these questions in brief point by point.

FIRST QUESTION: What is the opinion of the Soviet Military Mission on the possibility of Italy coming into the war: a) if the Soviet Union signs a Pact with Britain and France, b) if the Soviet Union does not sign a Pact with them.

The opinion of the Soviet Mission is that Italy cannot remain a bystander in the event of an armed aggression in Europe. Italy has a military alliance with Germany, which obliges both countries to act jointly against a third party. Furthermore, the head of present-day Italy, Signor Mussolini, has repeatedly and unequivocally stated that he and his army would be with Germany under any conditions. This appears to be quite enough to form a definite opinion on this score.

The end of this first question is as follows: if the Soviet Mission thinks that Italy will probably enter the war, what is Italy's possible action, operating from Albania?

I regret that the Soviet Military Mission cannot give its opinion on this particular question, because Italy, with her hands untied, can and evidently will operate from different directions—not only from Albania, but directly on the French border, and very likely from Spanish territory as well. I say nothing of Tunisia and the islands in the Mediterranean. For this reason, the Soviet Mission finds it difficult, and, indeed, useless, to form any concrete opinion on this particular question.

SECOND QUESTION: Of the three alternative courses of action outlined by the Soviet Mission, which is the most likely to be adopted by Germany, and what is the opinion of the Soviet Mission on this score?

To foresee the intentions of Germany and her leaders is very difficult, to which the following fact will testify: three days ago Admiral Drax informed us that Germany had mobilized 2,000 000 men and intended to march on August 15.

ADMIRAL DRAX: No, no.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I see nothing wrong in this [forecast], and was in agreement with you at the time. It could have happened, but it did not. Neither the Admiral, nor the Marshals and Generals in attendance here can, unhappily, foretell events with any degree of accuracy, because the individuals who organize these events know the importance of acting suddenly and unexpectedly. This is why I am in a difficulty in replying to the second question comprehensively.

ADMIRAL DRAX: It is likely that my remark was mistranslated. I want to explain. I said that Germany had 2,000,000 men under arms and was ready for war. But I did not say that she would necessarily march on August 15. All I said was that as from August 15 she would be ready for action at any moment. But I never voiced any view with regard to the precise date when Germany would march.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I apologize to the Admiral if this is so, but the interpreters put it just as I said here, that Germany had mobilized 2,000,000 men and that there are reports that she would march on the 15th. Here is the record. It says: Germany already has 2,000,000 men under arms, and her action is set for August 15.

ADMIRAL DRAX: No, I did not say that.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I would ask the Admiral to give us his precise wording. This can be done later. You proceed from the assumption that there has been a misunderstanding. Yet everything I have said, except the reference to the Admiral's words, remains valid. If a big European war is destined to break out, and that is well-nigh inevitable, it will break out, and it will break out suddenly, and its scope and its dimensions are hard to foretell. This is why I can say nothing definite about the second question.

Third Question: Can the Soviet Military Mission give more precise details of the areas of Rumanian territory to which they think it necessary to have a right of access and in which they wish to operate?

This question, too, is hard to answer, because Rumania may be the object of attack at different points of her territory. And if the Soviet Union were to render her any assistance, we should have to take into account the situation as it existed. This situation would define the areas to which we should have to send our troops.

Fourth Question: What does the Soviet Union propose

to do if Bulgaria joins Hungary against Rumania? In this case what help can the USSR give to Turkey?

This question is easily answered. France and Britain have Mutual Aid Pacts with Turkey. These Pacts commit Britain and France to defending Turkey. If we were to conclude a military Convention of the three Powers, we should, naturally, take part in this defence of Turkey with our share of armed forces. The strength of the Soviet Union will suffice amply to take part in the joint action of defending Turkey.

Fifth Question: What regular traffic tonnage can be sent by railway to Poland a) from Murmansk, b) from the Black Sea? By what railways can it be directed in order to interfere as little as possible with the supply of the Russian Army.

This is one of those details which I mentioned earlier. If a Convention is concluded between our countries, the Soviet Union will find sufficient tonnage and sufficient possibilities to fulfil all its obligations in regard to its allies.

Sixth Question: This, too, is a question raising a detailed aspect of our future relations. We have a sufficient number of modern ports on the Black Sea to meet all the defence needs of our country, and of our allies if such there are to be.

If the Admiral and the General have no objection, we could now have our interval. (No objections). I announce an interval of 15 minutes.

(AFTER THE INTERVAL)

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: The session is resumed. I want to reply to the remaining questions.

Seventh Question: This question is one entirely, or almost entirely, for our economic People's Commissariats and primarily for the People's Commissariat for Foreign Trade. I can only say that the Soviet Union will conduct trade operations with friendly or neutral countries not only in time of war, but now, in peace time, as you know, the Soviet Union also has lively commercial relations with many countries in Europe, America and Asia.

Eighth Question: The Soviet Union has a powerful continuously developing oil industry. In step with its develop-

ment, we have good, perfectly adequate sea, river and railway fuel transport facilities, which are also developing continuously. And if the Convention is concluded, this question will naturally be settled in the concrete decisions that are to be adopted as a result of our agreement.

There is still the last, naval question. It reads as follows: What description and number of Franco-British naval forces do you propose should operate in the Baltic?

I give the floor to Fleet Commander II Kuznetsov, Commissar for the Navy.

FLEET COMMANDER KUZNETSOV: The number and description of the Anglo-French naval vessels which we think necessary in the Baltic will be defined and specified after the contemplated tasks are set out in detail. (Admiral Drax and General Heywood confer at length.) It should be borne in mind, however, that if an insufficient number of ships is sent to the Baltic it will be difficult to solve the principal task of the combined navies, i. e., the destruction of the enemy navy.

It is much harder for us to specify concretely the number and description of vessels than it is for Admiral Drax. In the meantime, the tasks, as we see them, have been outlined. (Another lengthy conference between Admiral Drax and General Doumenc.)

ADMIRAL DRAX: I thank the People's Commissar for the Navy for his reply. At the same time, I should like to ask a few more questions at the next meeting.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Who else would like to speak? The agenda for today is exhausted. We must fix the day of the next meeting and draw up its programme. We have agreed to work through all the questions on the agenda of our conference. The further progress of our meetings depends now entirely on the Soviet Military Mission receiving replies to the questions it has put to the Military Missions of Britain and France.

We have worked hard and if there is no reply today and tomorrow from the British and French Governments we shall, unfortunately, have to interrupt our meetings for some time while we wait for it.

GENERAL DOUMENC: On behalf of the British and French delegations, I should like to thank Marshal Voroshilov for the replies he has offered to our questions. Some of these questions, of course, demand detailed and thorough study. We are prepared to

submit additional questions necessary for this concrete study. As concerns our further meetings, we could, perhaps, fix a date for the next meeting at which to deal with these questions. This will not interfere with our waiting for a reply to the cardinal question.

AIR MARSHAL BURNETT: The Marshal may recall that this morning I wanted to ask a few air force questions to clear up some of the points in the plan set out by General Loktionov.

GENERAL HEYWOOD: It is proposed to ask these air questions concurrently with the military questions mentioned by General Doumenc.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: It remains for us to decide when we are going to convene. The Soviet Mission considers that we shall have to end the work of our conference until we get a reply to our questions. (Admiral Drax, General Doumenc and General Heywood confer at length.)

ADMIRAL DRAX: There is still plenty of work to be done, which we cannot do without receiving replies to the questions we intend to ask. This work would be held up if the answers are not received. In my opinion a delay of that kind is neither desirable nor necessary, and not in the interests of the three Missions. I propose, therefore, that the next meeting be fixed for the 20th or the 21st, as the Marshal wishes.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Like Admiral Drax, the Soviet Mission considers it most important to speed the work of our conference. Consequently, it is prepared not only to confer every day, but to give more time to the meetings. However, through no fault of the Soviet Mission, we shall have to terminate our work.

The Soviet Mission has already stated that without a reply to its questions it can recommend its Government nothing concrete on the questions we have here discussed. For this reason, unhappily, I am forced once again to ask Admiral Drax and General Doumenc to agree to an adjournment pending receipt by them of an answer from their Governments. (Admiral Drax and General Doumenc confer at length.)

GENERAL DOUMENC: I take the liberty to draw the Marshal's attention to the fact that it is through no fault of ours that we cannot meet his wishes, because you have raised questions which are governmental and require time. Nevertheless, I think it would be worthwhile to set a date, which could subsequently be

carried forward if no reply is forthcoming. I suggest fixing a meeting for August 20 at 10 a. m.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I see no need to set the date of the next meeting since we are not sure that it can take place. On behalf of my Mission, I declare our consent to convene at once at any moment, as soon as a reply is received from both, or one, of the Governments. Until receipt of this reply I recommend our dear guests to rest, see the sights of Moscow, visit the Exhibition, and make themselves at home. This will be best for our business, and for the outer world. A short interval is a natural thing.

ADMIRAL DRAX: We have agreed that any communication to the press must be co-ordinated by the three Missions. And since we are now contemplating an adjournment for an indefinite period the press will ask us questions on that score. I would, therefore, ask the Marshal whether he has any proposals with regard to the text of a statement for the press which we may have to make.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: It is best to make no statement. Our Missions are Military Missions representing the General Staffs of three Great Powers, and the work of our conference as long as no decisions have been made, does not concern the sensation-hunting pressmen. Adjournment of our session does not mean a breakdown, while the early resumption of work depends solely on the Military Missions of Britain and France and on their Governments. (Admiral Drax and General Doumenc confer at length.)

ADMIRAL DRAX: We are in agreement that no statement need be made to the press correspondents in Moscow. But I feel I must draw the Marshal's attention to the fact that when we inform our Governments that our conference has adjourned *sine die*, the world press is likely to view this act as a partial or temporary breakdown, particularly if no statement is to be made to the press. I think therefore that in the present circumstances our Governments would prefer to make a statement of some kind to the press. But that is a question they will decide for themselves. However, if the date of our next meeting were fixed, they would not probably consider it necessary to make a statement to the press. I think the Marshal will take that into account.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I would like a short interval, after which we shall gather again and decide what to do. (No objections to interval.) I announce a 15-minute interval.

(AFTER THE INTERVAL)

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: The Soviet Military Mission accepts the proposal to set the next meeting for the 20th or the 21st and asks which day is more agreeable to you.

ADMIRAL DRAX: We would rather have August 21. That is, if the reply from London or Paris does not arrive earlier. If it does, we shall ask for an earlier day.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: We agree. Allow me to declare the meeting adjourned.

NAVAL QUESTIONS

August 17, 1939

1. What description and number of Franco-British naval forces do you propose should operate in the Baltic? How is it proposed that these ships should enter the Baltic in view of the fact that passage through the Belts and Sound can easily be made impassable by the Germans?

2. How do you propose that these forces should be maintained as regards replenishment with ammunition, torpedoes and naval stores?

3. If, as is probable, the only entrance into the Baltic is by the White Sea Canal, what is the maximum size warship we can pass through?

4. If the German naval forces entirely abandon the Baltic in order to make a concentrated naval attack against Allied shipping in the Atlantic, how long would it take to move the total Franco-British force from the Baltic to Home Waters through the Canal in order to deal with that attack?

It should be noted that the distances via the White Sea to our North Sea naval bases are as follows: Rosyth 2,630; Chatham 3,000. These are greater than the distance from England to America across the Atlantic Ocean.

5. What naval base facilities could the USSR offer us in the Baltic and on the Murmansk Coast?

How rapidly can Franco-British surface ships operating in those waters be docked or efficiently repaired at Kronstadt or Leningrad after incurring severe damage in action? Would this work be slower in winter?

6. Does the USSR maintain ice-breakers to keep open Kronstadt during the winter?

7. To what extent can Soviet forces assist Allied naval forces in protecting convoys in the Eastern Mediterranean. How many ships can the USSR send out of the Black Sea to participate with the Allies against the Italian submarines, against the Dodecanese Islands, and in preserving Soviet communications through the Mediterranean?

8. If Britain agreed to move naval forces to the Baltic or Black Sea to deal with enemy concentrations that may temporarily occur in these areas, would the USSR agree to move equal forces to the North Sea and Mediterranean when enemy concentrations are operating there?

9. Does the USSR agree that when a merchant ship is intercepted by a submarine, the policy of visit and search shall be carried out and the crew put in a place of safety before the ship is sunk?

MILITARY QUESTIONS

August 17, 1939

First Question

It is about 20 days' march from your border to East Prussia. The number of possible routes between the Dvina and the Niemen is six. To form a front with solid initial positions against the fortified line of East Prussia it is necessary to occupy about 200 kilometres, which will require 20 divisions. To mount an attack infantry, artillery and tank reserves are also needed.

It will evidently take a month to do all this, considering the preliminary mobilization operations.

It seems likely that during this month the aggressor may, as soon as he establishes land communications with East Prussia, mount an operation of his own in the direction of Riga and seek a battle with the Russian Army on the Riga-Grodno Front.

Does the Russian delegation think that the Red Army will be capable of accepting this battle with forces that are at least equal to those which the enemy will concentrate there?

Does it feel that a battle is possible on this front, chiefly with regard to munitions?

Second Question

The Soviet delegation has been asked to indicate the parts of Rumanian territory into which the Red Army would like to send troops as soon as the situation demands.

The reply we received indicates that account must be taken of the concrete circumstances and that the situation would determine the zones of action.

We ask for the following explanation:

What actions does the Soviet delegation envisage in the event of an aggression by Hungary against Rumania?

Does it envisage the possibility of a battle south of the Carpathians?

Third Question

Alternative No. 3 is evidently the one which is of the greatest concern to the Soviet Union, because in that variant it deploys the greatest forces.

The position of the Soviet delegation makes even the preparation of a Pact conditional upon a political question which involves third Powers, and this retards the conclusions of the Pact.

As long as there is no pact, the situation in which we should find ourselves would be as follows:

The Franco-British armies would evidently be in a state of war with the German armies, because Germany would in the first place have committed an aggression against Poland in order to reach Latvia. Yet we would have no concerted operations in the Baltic or for the maintenance of your sea communications both in the Arctic Ocean and in the Mediterranean.

The Franco-British delegation suggests that these questions could be examined and negotiated independently of the state of the cardinal question, and that thereby we could avoid loss of time.

From the archives. Published in
International Affairs, 1959,
No. 3, pp. 150-155.

No. 332.**TELEGRAM FROM THE AMBASSADOR OF FRANCE IN
THE USSR TO THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF FRANCE**

August 17, 1939

For your personal information and for the information of the President of the Council of Ministers only.

The General * has submitted to his Department a report on the meetings on the 16th and 17th.

The next meeting has been scheduled for the 21st so as to give us enough time to receive instructions on the Polish question before that date.

I wish to confirm that in the absence of a favourable decision (official, semi-official or even tacit), which would enable us to give an affirmative reply here, the military negotiations will be suspended.

Since the Admiral ** has received instructions to concert his actions with the position of the French Mission, a *démarche vis-à-vis* the English would seem to be superfluous.

(A copy was sent to Warsaw.)

A document found in the archives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Germany.

No. 333.**TELEGRAM FROM THE HEAD OF THE FRENCH
MILITARY MISSION TO THE WAR MINISTRY OF
FRANCE**

Moscow, August 17, 1939

The scheduled meeting took place this morning; it was devoted mainly to a survey of the strength and plans of the Soviet Air Force.

* J. Doumenc.

** P. Drax.

The following is a report on all the meetings:

1) The impression was formed from the outset that the Soviet Delegation has strict instructions on the question of passage through Polish and Rumanian territory.* At the earliest opportunity they raised this question as the basis for any military agreement and declared that they would advise their Government against concluding any Convention unless this point was accepted.

2) We were able to keep the discussion going at all seven meetings by agreeing that brief reports should be made on the size of our respective military resources. In this respect the statements of the Soviet Delegation were precise and contained numerous figures.

Plans for military assistance to us in various possible cases were outlined. This assistance is considerable since, depending on the specific case, it would amount to between 70 and 100 per cent of the forces we would put up.

3) The motive for their *sine qua non* is the fear lest Poland and the Rumanians should be too late in approaching them for assistance. Another motive is their avowed desire to undertake offensive action in our favour in the event that the main blow should be directed against us. Finally, this would enable them to avoid losing time if German aggression should be directed against the Baltic States.

In short, we note a clearly expressed intention not to stand aside but, on the contrary, to act in earnest.

4) There is no doubt that the USSR wants to conclude a Military Pact and that it does not want us to come up with any document devoid of concrete meaning; Marshal Voroshilov declared that all those questions of assistance, rear areas communications and the like could be settled without difficulty as soon as the question which they call the "cardinal question" was resolved.

5) The atmosphere has all along been very cordial and the Soviet hospitality excellent.

Our relationships with the English Delegation are in the nature of very close contact.

6) The meeting of the 21st was scheduled only so as not to create any outward appearance of an interruption in the negotiations. For the negotiations to continue it is now necessary for me

* See Document No. 150.

to be able to say "yes" in reply to the question that has been posed.

See our Ambassador's telegram of today.
For General Gamelin
General *Doumenc*

A document found in the archives of the Ministry
for Foreign Affairs of Germany.

No. 334.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE AMBASSADOR OF FRANCE IN
THE USSR TO THE AMBASSADOR OF FRANCE IN
POLAND**

August 17, 1939

For your personal information and for the information of
General Musse.

Captain Beaufré will arrive in Warsaw on the 17th by train,
leaving Moscow at 23 hours on the 16th. He has been instructed
by General Doumenc, in concert with myself, to give you and
General Musse an account of the present state of our negotiations
in so far as Poland is concerned.

The very least that we should secure from the Poles is that they
should not take an attitude which provoke the breakdown of our
negotiations with the Russians.

We would be content if the Polish Staff, unless it should wish to
assume greater obligations (and for the moment we are not asking
it to) would agree, at least tacitly, to accord General Doumenc
complete confidence in elaborating together with the Russians a
programme of co-operation, geographically very limited, which
will be outlined to you.

If the Poles refuse to accept this minimal proposal they will
frustrate our agreement with the Russians and this would have
immediate consequences whose full gravity both for them and for
us as their guarantors they can well imagine.

A document found in the archives of the Ministry
for Foreign Affairs of Germany.

No. 335.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE MILITARY ATTACHÉ OF
FRANCE IN POLAND TO THE WAR MINISTRY OF
FRANCE**

August 19, 1939

For three hours today the British Military Attaché and I talked with General Stachiewicz * and searched in vain for a compromise formula.

The dogma handed down by Pilsudski ** and based on considerations of a historical and geographical nature proscribes even consideration of the question of foreign troops entering Polish territory. Only during hostilities can this rule be slackened.

The Chief of Staff has emphasized that the Polish doctrine on this question is well known and has always been immutable.

Finally, upon agreeing it with Beck, we acknowledged that our delegation in Moscow could manoeuvre as if no question had ever been put to the Poles.

Captain Beaufré, who is returning *** to Moscow on Sunday, has been informed.

A document found in the archives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Germany.

No. 336.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE AMBASSADOR OF FRANCE IN
THE USSR TO THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF FRANCE**

August 20, 1939

If the French Government does not consider it possible to speak in Warsaw as a guarantor with sufficient authority to compel the Poles to alter their position I see no solution other than not to

* Chief of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces.

** Marshal, Prime Minister of Poland, 1926-1928 and in 1930.

*** Part of the coded text has been distorted the most likely word has been inserted. (*Note in the original.*)

accept literally the objections of M. Beck, whose one desire may be to have an opportunity to ignore the entire business.

Under these conditions, the Russians could be given an affirmative reply in principle, which would make it possible for the military negotiations to continue, with the stipulation that the contemplated limited right of passage [of troops] would be granted only in the event of the outbreak of hostilities between Poland and Germany.

A document found in the archives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Germany.

No. 337.

**MINUTE OF THE WAR MINISTRY OF FRANCE.
MILITARY NEGOTIATIONS WITH MOSCOW**

Not earlier than August 20, 1939

The French Military Mission headed by General Doumenc, having established contact in London with the British Mission headed by Admiral Plunkett*, set out together by sea for Lenin-grad and arrived in Moscow on August 12.

"After a wonderful reception accorded by the Soviet side," the negotiations began on the 13th and passed "invariably in a very cordial atmosphere" (General Doumenc's telegram).

But the *sine qua non* condition for the conclusion of a Treaty advanced by the Soviet Delegation as early as the 14th ** is that in the event of aggression against Poland or Rumania the Armed Forces of the USSR should be able to enter:

the Wilno Gap,
Galicia,
and Rumanian territory.

The Soviets explain that they are advancing this condition owing to:

a fear lest they be asked to assist the Poles or Rumanians when it will already be too late;

a desire to undertake offensive operations in the interests of France in the event of the main German blow being originally directed against the Western front;

* Admiral Plunkett Drax.

** See Document No. 317.

the need to avoid any loss of time in the event of German aggression against the Baltic States.

In short, it is General Doumenc's impression that they are displaying firm determination not to stand aside, but, on the contrary, to assume the full extent of obligations.

On the other hand, to lessen the foreseeable fears of the Poles, the Soviet delegates are very stringently limiting the zones of entry [by Soviet forces] and in defining them proceed exclusively from considerations of a strategical nature.

Thus, the Moscow negotiations can evidently go on only if agreement is reached on the condition for direct co-operation which has been advanced by the Soviets and which can be accepted only with Polish consent.

However, despite the efforts of the French Ambassador in Warsaw and of our Military Attaché, the Poles have stubbornly refused to agree in principle to the entry of Soviet forces into their territory. M. Beck and the Army Chief of Staff, General Stachiewicz, have displayed irreconcilable hostility in this respect, only agreeing that in order to prevent a breakdown of the Moscow negotiations our Military Mission could manoeuvre as if not a single question had been put to the Poles. *

Should this concession be regarded as the only one that can be got from the Poles or should it be interpreted as an unspoken request for pressure to be brought to bear upon them?

Soviet support in the formation of an Eastern front remains essential and the breakdown of the Moscow negotiations could merely prod Hitler into speeding up the course of events.

A document found in the archives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Germany.

No. 338.

TASS COMMUNIQUE

August 20, 1939

The Polish newspapers *Polska Zbrojna*, *Express Poranny* and *Kurjer Warszawski* recently carried a report about differences of

* See Document No. 335.

opinion that have arisen in the course of the negotiations in Moscow between the Soviet Military Delegation, on the one hand, and the French and English Military Missions, on the other, in connection with the alleged demand on the part of the USSR for military assistance from England and France in the event of war in the Far East. TASS is authorized to state that this report is pure invention from beginning to end and that differences of opinion, which in fact exist, concern a completely different subject and have no relation whatsoever to the question of the Far East.

From *Izvestia*, No. 192 (6962),
August 20, 1939.

No. 339.

**RECORD OF THE MEETING OF THE MILITARY
MISSIONS OF THE USSR, BRITAIN AND FRANCE**

August 21, 1939

Opened at 11.03 a.m.

Adjourned at 5.25 p.m.

ADMIRAL DRAX (presiding): I declare the meeting open.

To begin with, I must tell the Marshal that in accordance with his wishes we have gathered today. In my opinion, however, we should have postponed the meeting for another 3 to 4 days. But we wanted to take advantage of today's meeting to discuss three or four important questions.

I must inform you that the powers of the British Mission have arrived and will now be read.

(Reads the text of the powers in English. The Russian translation will be attached on receipt of the written text.)

I pass to the second point. Since the Marshal wished for the meeting to take place, I would like to ask for his view about our further work.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: On behalf of the Soviet Mission I propose that we should adjourn not for 3 or 4 days, as requested by the English and French Missions, but for a longer term, all the more so since members of our Mission are engaged at this time with the autumn manoeuvres and in the hope that in the interim the question which interests all of us will be clarified. I have in

mind the receipt of replies from the Governments of Great Britain and France to the questions of the Soviet Mission. (Admiral Drax and General Doumenc confer.)

ADMIRAL DRAX: I ask the Marshal to specify the length of the adjournment more definitely.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I regret to say that I cannot specify the date, because, evidently, there is no practical need for us to meet until the British and French Missions get the reply from their Governments. I think that if favourable replies are to be received to our questions, our conference will have to convene as early as possible. If, however, the answers are unfavourable, I see no possibility of any further work, because the questions raised by us are, as I have previously informed this conference, of decisive, cardinal importance to us. If we do not get favourable replies to them there will scarcely be any need for us to meet again.

ADMIRAL DRAX: We appreciate the fact that the members of the Soviet Mission are very busy. We should be glad to provide a precise reply to the Marshal's questions, but I would ask for an interval to discuss the Marshal's proposal concerning the term of adjournment. (The Soviet Mission agrees to have an interval.)

An interval is announced.

(AFTER THE INTERVAL)

ADMIRAL DRAX: The General and I agree with reluctance to the Marshal's proposals as regards adjournment.

Before we part today, I wish to note on behalf of the British and French Missions that we were invited here to negotiate a Convention for military action. We therefore find it difficult to understand the action of the Soviet Mission, whose intention it apparently was to start out by raising difficult and important political questions. The Soviet leaders must have been well aware that the answers to these questions would require reference to our Governments and by them to other Governments. This is precisely the source of the delays which are undesirable from every point of view. The French and British Missions are therefore unable to accept any responsibility for the delays that have arisen.

As we may get answers from our Governments at any moment,

we would like to ask that the members of the Soviet Military Mission find the time to take part in further meetings.

In conclusion, we express the following opinion. We are ready to go on with our conference and feel that the time thus spent will not be wasted.

This is all we wished to say.

I repeat, we are ready to go on at any time you wish. (Admiral Drax read his statement from a typed text with pencilled notes and corrections.)

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I ask the Chairman for an interval so that we may consider our reply.

ADMIRAL DRAX: Before breaking up, there is another question which I would like to ask the Marshal.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Please do.

ADMIRAL DRAX: We feel that no statement should be made to the press indicating that the conference is adjourned *sine die*. We think that this would lead to unfortunate results, since it is our opinion that we shall resume the conference before very long.

(This hand-written statement was handed to Admiral Drax by General Doumenc. General Heywood translated it, and Admiral Drax read it out.)

The conference is adjourned until 4 p.m.

(AFTER THE ADJOURNMENT)

ADMIRAL DRAX: The session is resumed.

ARMY COMMANDER SHAPOSHNIKOV: The People's Commissar for the Navy, a member of our Mission, is very busy at the moment and cannot be present at this meeting.

ADMIRAL DRAX: We take note of this and regret his absence.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: In reply to the statement by the Anglo-French Missions I shall now read our own.

"In his statement the head of the British Military Mission, Admiral Drax, in the name of the British and French Missions raised several questions which the Soviet Military Mission considers it necessary to elucidate.

"1. The statement stresses the fact that the British and French Missions were invited to the Soviet Union to work out a military Convention. The Soviet Military Mission will explain the actual

state of affairs. The present conference of the Missions of Britain, France and the USSR was a natural consequence of the political conversations conducted by representatives of Britain, France and the USSR, the aim of which was to produce a joint plan to resist aggression in Europe. In connection with this, the Soviet Government has repeatedly stated that it cannot separate a political Pact and military Convention which must be the result of political and military talks between our countries. Having agreed with this view of the Soviet Government, the Governments of Britain and France sent their Military Missions to the USSR.

"2. The Anglo-French Military Mission, according to its statement, finds it difficult to understand the action of the Soviet Military Mission, whose intentions, in its opinion, consisted of at once putting forward difficult and important political questions.

"The intention of the Soviet Military Mission was, and still is, to agree with the British and French Military Missions on the practical organization of military co-operation of the armed forces of the three contracting countries. The Soviet Military Mission considers that the USSR, not having a common frontier with Germany, can give help to France, Britain, Poland and Rumania only on the condition that its troops are given right of passage across Polish and Rumanian territory, as there exist no other ways of making contact with the troops of the aggressor. In the same way British and American troops, in the last World War, could not have taken part in the general action with the French military forces, had they not had the opportunity of operating from French soil. Similarly, the Soviet Armed Forces cannot co-operate with the armed forces of Britain and France if they are not allowed on Polish and Rumanian territory. That is a military axiom. Such is the firm belief of the Soviet Military Mission.

"The British and French Missions, to our surprise, do not agree with the Soviet Mission about this. In this is our difference. The Soviet Military Mission cannot picture to itself how the Governments and General Staffs of Britain and France, in sending their Missions to the USSR for discussions on a military Convention, could have failed to give them precise and positive instructions on such an elementary question as the passage and action of the Soviet Armed Forces against the troops of the aggressor on the territory of Poland and Rumania, with whom Britain and France have appropriate military and political relations.

"If, however, this axiomatic question is turned by the British and French into a great problem demanding long study, this means that there is every reason to doubt their desire for effective and serious military co-operation with the USSR. In view of the above the responsibility for the delay in the military negotiations and for the interruption in these conversations naturally falls on the British and French sides."

(Prolonged conference between Admiral Drax and General Doumenc.)

ADMIRAL DRAX: We wish to have a short interval.
An interval is announced.

(AFTER THE INTERVAL)

ADMIRAL DRAX: In reply to the Marshal's statement I wish to say that if there were any doubt of our desire to come to a serious military agreement, we should have told you so frankly and immediately.

It seems to me that there is a misunderstanding in the minds of the Soviet Military Mission concerning our view of the Soviet plans. We are far from disagreeing with the three alternatives put forward by the Chief of the General Staff, Shaposhnikov. The political questions involved are being dealt with by our Governments.

But events are moving fast and in order to save valuable time we wish to hand you a few important questions, drawn up within the framework of the three alternatives. We ask you to study them, so that you may be in a position to give us your views on them at our next meeting. We are ready to discuss these questions at any time which suits you.

As regards my question of this morning, I want to ask you if you are ready to meet when we receive our reply from London and Paris.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: In view of the uncertainty of the situation regarding the receipt of the replies, it seems to me best not to decide now the question about the date of our meeting. It stands to reason that if the British and French Missions receive affirmative answers to the questions which we have put, the Soviet Military Mission is ready to meet and go into those questions

which we have so far only outlined and which still require detailed examination.

ADMIRAL DRAX: We are submitting to you in writing a number of questions and ask you to study them. We are also submitting some naval questions. *

I also ask the Marshal whether he has any suggestions about a statement to the press. I ask this because one official statement has already been made which was not agreed upon beforehand with the other Missions.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I consider that there is no occasion at the moment to undertake any mutual obligations with regard to a statement to the press. The Soviet Military Mission is not proposing to give any statements to the press about the proceedings at our conference. But it cannot guarantee that some information may not leak out to the press. As regards the Admiral's question about the statement which appeared in the press on our deliberations, the position is as follows:

The world press, including the British and French press, have frequently and in a very detailed manner suggested that difficulties in our negotiations have been caused by the raising by the Soviet Military Mission, or the Soviet Government, of the question of an Anglo-French guarantee of our frontiers in the Far East. I do not think that it is necessary here to talk about the spurious nature of this press campaign. This is the sole explanation of the official TASS statement that the question of the Far Eastern frontier, and military co-operation of the USSR and Britain and France in the Far East, had not been raised in our conferences and that there are differences on other issues. **

I do not see in this any violation of the agreement we arrived at not to give statements to the press about our proceedings. Nothing was said about our proceedings. (Admiral Drax confers with General Doumenc.)

ADMIRAL DRAX: We take note of the Marshal's statement concerning the TASS communication and thank him for his detailed reply.

May we conclude therefrom that our agreement to give no statements to the press without preliminary consultation of all sides still holds good?

* (*Sic*) Obviously the questions are meant which were handed on August 17.

** See Document No. 338.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I assume that our conference is adjourning for a more or less lengthy period. For this reason there is no need to tie ourselves down. However, I repeat—our Military Mission does not intend to give any information to the press.

ADMIRAL DRAX: We take note of this and state that for our part, the British and French Missions also have no intentions of making any statements to the press.

ARMY COMMANDER SHAPOSHNIKOV: We have received a number of questions from the British and French Military Missions. The Soviet Military Mission, for its part, has asked few additional questions. It reserves the right when work is resumed to ask the questions that it sees fit.

ADMIRAL DRAX: This is understood.

And now, since we have exhausted the programme of our meeting, I beg to be allowed to submit another five questions concerning the air force.

I agree with the Marshal's suggestion that our meetings be adjourned, but I still have one thing to add: I shall be surprised if the reply to the political question is delayed.

I declare the meeting closed.

QUESTIONS BY THE FRENCH AND BRITISH MILITARY MISSION CONCERNING THE AIR FORCE

August 21, 1939

1. At what speed can the Soviet Air Force be mobilized on their Polish and Rumanian fronts?

2. Does the USSR propose to work from its own air bases or from forward bases in Poland and Rumania?

3. Could the USSR supply Rumania and Poland with aircraft or materials for aircraft construction?

4. In the event of war does the USSR propose to help Turkey with aircraft and equipment?

5. Are the airdromes and landing strips, which would be occupied by the Soviet Air Force on the Western frontier of the USSR in the event of war, suitable for the operation of aircraft at all times of the year, including autumn, winter and spring? Is operation

only possible on a limited scale at all or some of these airdromes at certain periods of the year?

From the archives. Published in
International Affairs, 1959,
No. 3, pp. 155-158.

No. 340.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE BRITISH CHARGE D'AFFAIRES
IN FRANCE TO THE BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY**

August 22, 1939

[1.] French Government are instructing French Ambassador at Warsaw to make a final attempt either through M. Beck or Marshal Smigly-Rydz to persuade Poland to give General Doumenc *carte blanche* to give a pledge if only tacit on her behalf to admit Russian troops in the event only of Russia supporting Poland against German aggression. He is to urge that if as Poland may anticipate Russian reaction is unfavourable, responsibility for breakdown of Moscow negotiations which Poland will otherwise share will lie squarely with Russia; while if it is favourable it may be possible to limit scope of German-Russian agreement and make it compatible with Russian engagements to France and Great Britain.

2. French Ambassador is to recall that France has given Poland her guarantee * and helped her financially and with material. France therefore feels entitled to ask of Poland this sacrifice in which lies the last hope of preserving peace. He is to press the request with the greatest energy and to insist that Poland weigh the full consequences of refusal.

3. M. Bonnet asks that His Majesty's Government will urgently instruct British Ambassador at Warsaw to support strongly his French colleague. M. Daladier especially hopes that His Majesty's Government will send instructions at once.

From *Documents on British Foreign
Policy, 1919-1939*, Third Series,
Vol. VII, London, 1954, p. 117.

* See Document No. 161.

No. 341.**EXTRACT FROM A TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COM-
MISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR***August 22, 1939*

Today I have had occasion to talk to a large number of people, including Lloyd George, the Duchess of Atholl, Greenwood, Churchill, D'Egville (an English Parliamentary Whip) and others. My general impression is that the shock received by the English will do them good although it may take some time before they digest its significance.³³ Lloyd George is well disposed: he in fact thinks that the Soviet Government has displayed too much patience in the negotiations with England and France.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 342.**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
HEAD OF THE SOVIET MILITARY MISSION AND THE
HEAD OF THE FRENCH MILITARY MISSION***August 22, 1939*

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I ask General Doumenc to show me the document he has received from his Government, and of which I have been informed by a letter. I should also like to know if the English Mission has received a reply to the same question.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I have no document, but my Government has informed me that the reply to the basic, essential question is in the affirmative. In other words, the Government has empowered me to sign a military convention under which authorisation will be given for the passage of Soviet troops at the points specified by you, that is to say, the Corridor of Vilno, and, if the actual circumstances demand it, Galicia and Roumania.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Is that the French Government's message?

GENERAL DOUMENC: Yes, the French Government has given me these instructions.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: And the British Government?

GENERAL DOUMENC: I do not know if Admiral Drax has received a similar reply from the British Government, but I know that the Admiral is of opinion that the conference can go on.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Then the English Delegation knows of this communication?

GENERAL DOUMENC: Yes, I told the Admiral that the French Government's reply had arrived. And I am nearly certain that the same reply will be given by the English Government. But, as I am responsible for the military questions and Admiral Drax more particularly for the naval ones, this reply is sufficient to allow the work of our conference to proceed.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: It may be that the English Delegation agrees that General Doumenc should take charge of the military questions. But it seems to me that the English Mission has, if not a dominant role, at least an equal one, in all our conversations. Hence it will clearly be difficult for us to continue the work of the conference without a reply from the English Government to our question.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I think that the reply of the British Government will be here soon.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: There is another question in which I am interested. I apologise, General, but it is a very serious question and I find it essential to ask it.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I also desire to speak seriously and frankly with the Marshal.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: You have given no reply regarding the attitude of the Polish and Roumanian Governments in this matter. Are they being kept informed of the negotiations, or does the reply you have received come solely from the French Government, without previous communication to Poland and Roumania?

GENERAL DOUMENC: I do not know what conversations have taken place between the Governments. I can only repeat what my Government has told me. Taking the opportunity afforded by the present conversation, I would like to ask the following question: do you intend our conversations to proceed rapidly and to lead to the signing of a military convention? I came here for that purpose, but time is passing.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Undoubtedly, time is passing; but it is not our fault if the English and French representatives have taken up so much time over these questions.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I agree with you. It is possible that in the beginning we had difficulties; they were natural and were beyond our control. But I can assure the Marshal once again that I am ready to work as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I do not doubt that. During these days I have learnt to know you; I appreciate your sincerity and your desire to sign a military convention as soon as possible.

GENERAL DOUMENC: Rapidly and with mutual trust, as must be the case between soldiers who have a common enemy.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Yet eleven days have passed by, and all our activity has consisted in marking time. Therefore, I cannot agree to take part in further discussions until all the official replies have arrived. I do not doubt that the General has received an affirmative answer from his Government, but the position of Poland, Roumania and Great Britain is still unknown. Hence our further work can only lead to useless talk, which will do more harm than good from a political point of view. I am convinced that the Poles themselves would wish to take part in our discussions had they given their consent to the passage of Soviet troops. They would have insisted upon being included; their General Staff would not have desired to be left out of the examination of questions which concern them so nearly. As this is not the case, I do not think that they can be conversant with the matter.

GENERAL DOUMENC: That is possible, but I do not know and cannot say.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Let us wait until everything has been cleared up.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I will wait with pleasure, but I do not wish to wait in vain. I will be frank with the Marshal. It has already been announced that "someone" is to arrive shortly; such visits do not please me.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: That is true, but the responsibility rests with the French and English. The question of military cooperation with France has been discussed for several years, but has never been solved. Last year, when Czecho-Slovakia went under, we waited for a sign from France. Our troops were ready but the sign was not given.

GENERAL DOUMENC: Our troops were equally ready.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Then what can have happened? Over here not only were our troops ready, but the Government and the entire nation wished to aid Czecho-Slovakia and to fulfil the obligations laid down in the Treaties.

GENERAL DOUMENC: If the Marshal had been in France at that time he would have seen that everything was ready for a struggle. After recent European events, and if a Peace Front is to be created, it must be done now. I therefore repeat that I am at your disposal, and that I am ready to work when you wish, as you wish, and in the most practical way possible.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: If the English and French Missions had arrived with all their proposals in a concrete and clear form I am convinced that in five or six days we could have finished our work and signed the Military Convention.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I think that now we shall only need three or four days to sign the Military Convention. The situation is sufficiently clear. The statement made by General Shaposhnikov is an excellent basis on which to build the Convention. For my part I am ready to subscribe to the fundamental proposals made by General Shaposhnikov.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Apart from our proposals, there must also be Anglo-French suggestions. We still have to agree on very many practical points.

GENERAL DOUMENC: Quite. General Shaposhnikov said that he intended to put a series of questions. I will answer them with pleasure.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Please allow us to wait until the situation is clear, that is to say, until we have the British Government's reply and until the position of Poland and Roumania seems clear to us. Then we will meet again. If these things do not happen, then it will be useless for us to meet again, because in such a case no result will be possible. It is essential that the reply should indicate definitely that Poland is being kept informed. It is equally necessary that the British and French Governments' reply should be made in accord with the Polish and Roumanian Governments. We do not want Poland to boast that she has refused our aid—which we have no intention of forcing her to accept.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I will not lose sight of the Marshal's questions; as soon as I have received the replies, I will advise him. But at present I think that we, as soldiers working together, could

examine in sufficient detail the different forms that military operations might take. In this way we shall, in spite of everything, gain time.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: If the principal question is settled, all the others—if there is no intervening political event—can be disposed of without difficulty. Then we shall quickly be able to agree. But I fear one thing: the French and English sides have allowed the political and military discussions to drag on too long. That is why we must not exclude the possibility, during this time, of certain political events. Let us wait. The sooner we have the reply, the quicker we shall be able to decide definitely how to act in the future.

GENERAL DOUMENC: Under the present circumstances, time is precious. That is why I am ready to examine the draft Convention proposed by the Marshal, and to show the Marshal my proposal. Then it will be possible to discuss in a sufficiently concrete form the wishes of the different parties.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: We have put forward elementary conditions. What we submit for discussion gives us nothing but heavy responsibilities—to gather our troops and to fight the common enemy. Surely we cannot be obliged to beg for the right to fight the common enemy? As long as these questions are not settled, no discussions can take place.

GENERAL DOUMENC: If my Government have given me an affirmative reply, they have not done so lightly. If I now declare that my Government have said “Yes”, I consider that we can begin our work. Now the Marshal asks me about new political guarantees. I am ready to ask for them, but I fear that this will give the impression that we do not wish to sign the Convention quickly.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I'm afraid you misunderstand me. I have not spoken of new guarantees. I said only this: if nothing happens from a political point of view between now and then, we can agree quickly. As soon as the situation is clear and the answer to our question has been given by the French and English Governments, in concert with the Polish and Roumanian Governments, we shall be able to agree rapidly and to settle all the practical problems. But all this, I repeat, is based on the assumption that no political occurrence intervenes.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I understand the Marshal to refer to

a declaration or to some information from the Polish Government?

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: No, not that. I ask whether there is a reply approved by the Polish and Roumanian Governments, or merely a reply from the French Government on the following lines: "We have put the question to Poland and we hope to receive a reply in the affirmative, etc." That is no reply for us. It is a useless waste of time. I believe implicitly in the General and the General believes in his Government, but on this point we must be absolutely clear. We must have a definite reply from the Governments of these countries, showing that they agree to the passage of our troops.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I do not think that it is our wish to deceive you.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Naturally not. But we know the Poles well. The Poles, naturally, will also like to clear up some questions if there is no previous agreement with them; but neither you nor I know whether they have been informed of the matter at all.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I know them perhaps a little less well than the Marshal, but in spite of that I wish to ask whether you think it possible to begin our conference, or would you prefer to postpone it?

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: We have at present no subject for conversation. Until we receive a reply, all conversation is useless.

GENERAL DOUMENC: My opinion is different. No work, generally speaking, is useless. We have confidence in you and we think that this work is justified and useful. For example, the question of the Corridor of Vilno ought to be studied closely to find out all its advantages and drawbacks. That is useful, even if it becomes necessary afterwards to work jointly with the Poles as the Marshal suggested just now.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: I have already said that if the Poles had given an affirmative reply, they would have insisted on being present at our talks. As they have not done this, it means that they know nothing of the matter or that they do not agree.

GENERAL DOUMENC: I see that the Marshal has no intention of continuing our work in the next few days, and I can only take note of the fact. In spite of that, I am still convinced that we have good reason to continue our work.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Our Delegation has already given its reply. Until we receive a clear answer to the questions put, we will not work.

GENERAL DOUMENC: Practical questions are not always easily and rapidly disposed of. Practical questions also need to be studied closely, and I propose that we should continue this work. It will be useful to do so before the conclusion of the Convention, without, however, binding either of the parties.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: We cannot lose time over useless work. When complete clarity has been established and all the replies have been received, then we will work.

GENERAL DOUMENC: We have conversed together quite freely, but the subjects involved need great precision. I should be very glad if the Marshal would send me a record of our conversation—only for myself.

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV: Certainly. As soon as everything is settled on your side, let me know through General Palasse or write to me direct.

From Documents on British Foreign Policy. 1919-1939, Third Series, Vol. VII, London, 1954, pp. 609-613.

No. 343.

TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR

August 23, 1939

Yesterday's statement by the English Government about its loyalty to obligations in respect of Poland and the hastily conducted measures to prepare the country for wartime conditions (the evacuation of schools, street and house blackouts, the ban on exports of war materials and the like) have created in the country an atmosphere of great tension and anticipation of decisive events in the very near future. Government circles have not yet lost hope for a new Munich, and in this connection a certain amount of pressure is being brought to bear on Poland. However, the advancing by Germany of pressing demands con-

cerning not only Danzig but also the Corridor and Silesia is making the Munichmen's task much more difficult. The general mood, as far as it can be gauged from the press, the cinema, and meetings and conversations (today I again talked to a large number of people, including Benes, the Greek and Danish Ministers, several Conservative and Liberal Members of Parliament and so on), is such that if Poland should make up her mind to fight, England will be compelled to support her, although it is not yet clear in what form and on what scale.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 344.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES
IN JAPAN* TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

August 24, 1939

News of the conclusion of a Non-Aggression Pact between the USSR and Germany has made a strong impression here, causing obvious confusion particularly among the military and the fascist camp. Yesterday and today there have been continuous exchanges of visits and the Pact has been the subject of lively discussion among members of the Government, the Court and the Privy Council. Worth noting is the vigorous activity of Konoye **, Matsudaira *** and Kido ****. The newspapers are beginning to discuss, so far cautiously, the possibility of a similar pact between Japan and the USSR. In anticipation of this, yesterday and today dispatches from correspondents in Berlin have appeared under banner headlines saying: "It looks as if Germany, after the signing of the Pact, will try to get Japan to conclude a similar pact with the USSR"; "Before leaving for Moscow Ribbentrop spoke in favour of this to Japanese Ambassador Oshima." Many prominent figures are publicly

* N. I. Generalov.

** Japanese Prime Minister, June 1937-January 1939.

*** Minister of Japanese Imperial Court.

**** Japanese Minister of Welfare, 1938-39; Minister for Home Affairs, 1939.

admitting the inevitability of a radical reappraisal of Japanese foreign policy, notably *vis-à-vis* the USSR.

From the archives.

Chargé d'Affaires

No. 345.

**EXCERPT FROM THE DIARY OF THE SOVIET CHARGE
D'AFFAIRES IN GERMANY***

August 24, 1939

The First Secretary of the US Embassy, Mr. Heath, has called on me. He is extremely worried over the future of Poland. He is particularly interested in the policy of the Soviet Union in the event of Germany being at war with England and France.

In conclusion, he has expressed the hope that everything will end peacefully, in a second Munich, and that US President Roosevelt already plans to take certain steps.

From the archives

No. 346.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN
BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR**

August 26, 1939

Though military preparations are continuing at an accelerated pace and even in a deliberately conspicuous manner (in order to produce the appropriate psychological effect on the people), Munich-like sentiments can be unmistakably felt in the air since yesterday. The British Government, Roosevelt, the Pope, the Belgian King and others are trying feverishly to find some grounds for a "compromise" on the Polish question. The British

* N. V. Ivanov.

Ambassador in Berlin, Henderson, arrived in London today by plane and gave the Cabinet some kind of communication from Hitler the contents of which are kept secret so far. A meeting of the British Government has just ended; it discussed the communication but so far the Cabinet has taken no decision on it. Another government meeting is scheduled for tomorrow morning.

Ambassador

From the archives.

No. 347.

**MEMORANDUM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF THE USSR AND THE CHINESE AMBASSA-
DOR IN THE USSR**

August 26, 1939

Yang Tse said he had received a telegraphic reply from his Government. The Chinese Government welcomes the appointment of Panyushkin as Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the USSR in China.

I told Yang Tse that we wanted to speed up the reception of Comrade Panyushkin by the Chairman of the National Government and the presentation of his credentials, as this was important from the standpoint of the present international situation. A statement by our Ambassador in China to the effect that the Soviet Union supports the friendly Chinese people in their struggle for independence would have a positive impact on the Chinese people's struggle against Japanese aggression.

Yang Tse replied that he too considered it necessary to speed up the exchange of speeches. He would report this to his Government and was confident that it would agree with him on this matter. I said for my part that I would inform Panyushkin of this.

Yang Tse asked to be given such information as was possible about the present international situation. He had received a communication from his Government to the effect that the signing of the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact had pleased the Chi-

nese Government very much for this treaty would strengthen the Soviet Union and would undoubtedly be a blow to Japan. The Chinese Government had instructed him to clear up certain questions with us in connection with the Pact.

The Ambassador began with the question as to what effect this political event would have on the international situation.

I replied that in formulating its policy the Soviet Government had always been guided by a desire for peace and had never pursued aggressive aims. The conclusion of a treaty between the USSR and Germany had cut the ground from under the feet of some people in Europe, especially those who wanted to set Germany against the Soviet Union and the USSR against Germany. I thought it was possible to avert a military conflict between Germany and Poland though the relationships between those countries were very tense. The conclusion of a Non-Aggression Pact between the Soviet Union and Germany created an element of stability in the present unstable international situation.

As regards the Far East, as could be seen from the press, the Japanese Government was protesting against Germany's putting an end to the anti-Comintern pact.⁸ Japanese newspapers were saying openly that the Non-Aggression Pact between the USSR and Germany had led to Japan's isolation and to mounting difficulties for Japan, and this was undoubtedly of advantage to the liberation struggle of the Chinese people.

What conclusions could be drawn? (1) The Non-Aggression Treaty between the Soviet Union and Germany has put an end to the anti-Comintern Pact. (2) It has lessened the tension that existed in international relations prior to its conclusion.

Yang Tse asked whether it was true that the English and French Missions had left the Soviet Union. He wanted to know the results of the negotiations and whether they would be resumed.

I replied that the negotiations with England and France had been under way over a period of five months; the departure of the delegations was one episode in these negotiations. Delegations came and went, but the question of the struggle for peace remained. Their departure was not a result of the conclusion of a Non-Aggression Pact between the USSR and Germany, but the result of a lack of agreement on a number of questions. If England and France accepted the Soviet Government's proposals, there still might be a possibility of concluding a treaty with

them. The Soviet Union had treaties of non-aggression with Poland and with other countries, and these treaties remained fully in force. At the present time the negotiations were broken off, and their resumption depended on England and France.

Yang Tse asked how I assessed the statement by Chamberlain that England would not allow Germany to take over Danzig and whether I considered a clash between Germany and Poland to be possible.

I replied that the present situation was very tense; on both sides of the border there were hundreds of thousands of mobilized soldiers, and in such cases one incident was enough for hostilities to break out.

Japan, said Yang Tse, had found herself in an isolated position in the Far East, but precisely for that reason Japan would seek an agreement with England.

I replied that so far as could be judged by the Japanese press, Japan would seek co-operation with the USA and increase pressure above all on China, and then on England and the Soviet Union. The Japanese were maintaining a firm line aimed at enslaving China. It was hard to say what concessions the Japanese would make to the Americans. At present the Japanese were in a very difficult situation. Judging by the Japanese and foreign press, they were now very much confused. A Japanese government's statement on questions relating to its future policy was expected within the next few days. Now that she had seized Tientsin, Peiping, Shanghai, Shantow, Canton and tens of towns where England's financial and economic interests were very great, was encircling Hongkong and destroying English trade, seizing her transport, disorganizing her factories and banks, Japan would hardly accept a compromise with England, though sentiments of capitulation were very strong in England. This meant that the struggle between Japan and England would in all probability continue to grow more and more acute.

Before taking leave, Yang Tse expressed his gratitude for the information he had kindly been given and promised to forward it to his Government. In addition, in view of the complexity of the international situation, he asked to be kept informed about the developments. I replied that at present the international situation was indeed very complex and that this made all the more urgent the speediest possible formalization of Panyushkin as Plenipotentiary Representative so that he could systematically

inform the Chinese Government and the Government of the USSR on questions of interest to both Governments.

Deputy People's Commissar
for Foreign Affairs
Lozovsky

From the archives.

No. 348.

**INTERVIEW WITH THE HEAD OF THE SOVIET
MILITARY MISSION, K. Y. VOROSHILOV, ON THE
NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE MILITARY MISSIONS OF
BRITAIN AND FRANCE**

August 27, 1939

A correspondent of *Izvestia* submitted to the head of the Soviet Military Mission, Comrade Voroshilov, a list of questions, to which Comrade Voroshilov gave the following answers.

Q. What was the outcome of the negotiations with the Military Missions of England and France?

A. The negotiations were broken off because of the serious differences of opinion that were revealed. The Military Missions have left Moscow for home.

Q. May one know what these differences of opinion were?

A. The Soviet Military Mission considered that, since the USSR has no common frontier with the aggressor, it can only help France, England and Poland if its troops are allowed to pass through Polish territory, since there are no other routes by which Soviet forces can make contact with the forces of the aggressor. Just as in the last World War the English and American forces would not have been able to afford military co-operation to the Armed Forces of France, had they not been able to operate on French territory, so now the Soviet Armed Forces would not be able to afford military co-operation to the armed forces of France and England, unless they were admitted to Polish territory.

Despite its obvious soundness, the French and English Military Missions did not agree with the position of the Soviet Mission, and the Polish Government openly declared that it did not need any military assistance from the USSR and would not accept it.

This rendered impossible any military co-operation between the USSR and these countries.

Therein lie the differences of opinion, and that was what caused the consequent breakdown of the negotiations.

Q. At the time of the negotiations, was there any talk of helping Poland with raw materials and military supplies?

A. No, there was no talk of that. The question of assistance in the form of raw materials and military supplies is a commercial one and there is no need to conclude a mutual assistance pact, still less a military convention, in order to provide Poland with raw materials and military supplies. The United States of America and a number of other States have no mutual assistance pacts or military conventions with Japan and yet for the last two years they have been selling raw materials and military supplies to the Japanese, despite the fact that Japan is in a state of war with China. The type of assistance discussed at the time of the negotiations was not assistance with raw materials or military supplies but with troops.

Q. The diplomatic correspondent of the *Daily Herald* writes that the English and French Military Missions asked the Soviet Mission whether the USSR was prepared to assist Poland with aeroplanes and ammunition and to keep the Red Army in readiness on the frontier, and that the Soviet Military Mission replied to this question with the proposal "to occupy, immediately after the outbreak of war, Wilno and Novogrudek on the northeast and the Provinces of Lwow, Tarnopol and Stanislav on the southeast, so that, if required to do so, the Red Army could, from these areas, give military support to the Poles."

In your opinion, does this report by the diplomatic correspondent of the *Daily Herald* correspond to the facts?

A. That report is false from start to finish, its author is an insolent liar, and the paper which published this deceitful report by its diplomatic correspondent is a libelous paper.

Q. The Reuters Agency has announced on the radio: "Today Voroshilov informed the heads of the English and French Military Missions that, in view of the conclusion of a Non-Aggression Pact between the USSR and Germany, the Soviet Government considers that there is no point in continuing negotiations with England and France."

Does this announcement of Reuters correspond to the facts?

A. No, it does not. The military negotiations with England and

France were not broken off because the USSR had concluded a non-aggression pact with Germany; on the contrary, the USSR concluded the non-aggression pact with Germany because, amongst other things, the military negotiations with France and England had reached a deadlock as a result of insurmountable differences of opinion.

From *Izvestia*, No. 198 (6968),
August 27, 1939.

No. 349.

**TELEGRAM FROM THE ACTING MILITARY ATTACHE
OF THE USSR IN JAPAN TO THE RED ARMY GENERAL
STAFF**

August 31, 1939

With the advent to power of the Abe * Cabinet Japan's policy will, in our opinion, basically remain as it was before:

1. Continuance of aggressive actions on the mainland.
2. Intensification of the country's war preparation.
3. Expansion of foreign trade.
4. Establishment of friendly relations with countries that sympathize with Japan's true intentions, while maintaining an independent foreign policy.

It is to be expected that measures will be taken to bring about a settlement in relations with the USA and Britain and that a provocative policy in respect of the USSR will be continued.

L. Mishin

From the archives.

* Prime Minister of Japan. August 1939-January 1940.

No. 350.**SOVIET PRESS COMMUNIQUE ON THE LIQUIDATION
OF THE REMNANTS OF JAPANESE-MANCHURIAN
FORCES IN THE FRONTIER ZONE OF THE MPR**

September 1, 1939

According to a report issued by the Headquarters of the Mongolian-Soviet forces in the MPR, from August 5 to 17 in the area east of the river Khalkhin Gol skirmishes occurred between small reconaissance groups of the Mongolian-Soviet and Japanese-Manchurian forces. Several times during this period Japanese aircraft attempted to penetrate into the territory of the MPR, but these attempts were repulsed by the Mongolian-Soviet air force. In the air battles which occurred as the invading Japanese aircraft were being repulsed the Mongolian-Soviet air force shot down 31 Japanese planes, from August 5 to 17. The Mongolian-Soviet air force lost 7 planes.

On August 17, having mustered new forces, the Japanese-Manchurian troops attacked the positions of the Mongolian-Soviet forces on the eastern bank of the Khalkhin Gol, six kilometres east of the river, and attempted to occupy several important dominating positions.

Throughout August 17, 18 and 19 the Mongolian-Soviet forces beat off the attacks of the Japanese-Manchurian forces and threw them back to their initial positions, forcing them to go over to the defensive.

On August 20, the Mongolian-Soviet troops, together with the Mongolian-Soviet air force, mounted an offensive all along the line east of the Khalkhin Gol. Between August 21 and 28 the Japanese-Manchurian forces, surrounded on both flanks by the Mongolian-Soviet forces and sustaining heavy losses in manpower and materiel, were liquidated.

Attempts by small units of Japanese and Manchurians to resume the offensive were beaten back by the Mongolian-Soviet forces. On the night of August 28 and in the early morning of August 29 the remnants of the Japanese-Manchurian forces were liquidated on the territory of the MPR and the Mongolian-Soviet forces took up strong positions on a line following the state frontier of the MPR.

294 Manchurians with their weapons, led by officers of the 14th Infantry Regiment of the 1st Mixed Brigade of the Manchurian forces, voluntarily went over to the side of the Mongolian-Soviet forces.

In liquidating the Japanese-Manchurian units, the Mongolian-Soviet forces captured five 155-mm guns, seven 150-mm guns, twelve 105-mm guns, three 122-mm guns, fifty 75-mm guns, and sixty-seven 37-mm guns; altogether 144 artillery pieces, 67 heavy machine-guns, 98 light machine-guns, 36 mortars, 9,000 rifles, 12,000 shells of various calibre, 8 tanks, 8 armoured cars, 14 tractors, 68 trucks, and 19 motor-caps.

To help the ground forces under attack, large formations of the Japanese air force went into battle. In several air battles which took place from August 20 to 27 the Mongolian-Soviet air force shot down 164 Japanese aircraft, including 123 fighters, 36 bombers and 5 multiseater staff aircraft. In this period the Mongolian-Soviet aviation lost 16 aircraft.

In addition, on August 28 the Mongolian-Soviet air force shot down eleven Japanese aircraft, while the Mongolian-Soviet air force sustained no losses; on August 29, eight Japanese aircraft were shot down, while the Mongolian-Soviet air force lost one aircraft, and on August 30 twenty-one Japanese aircraft were shot down, while the Mongolian-Soviet air force lost one aircraft.

From *Pravda*, No. 242 (7927),
September 1, 1939.

1. The Munich Agreement on the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia was the outcome of the shameful policy of connivance at German aggression which the ruling circles of Britain, France and the USA had been pursuing for several years.

The danger of a German attack on Czechoslovakia became imminent after Germany's seizure of Austria. In a statement issued on March 17, 1938 the Soviet Government noted that the seizure of Austria posed a threat to Czechoslovakia. It expressed its readiness "to participate in collective actions ... aimed at checking further aggression". To these ends it proposed to the Governments of the Western countries that an international conference be convened (*Izvestia*, March 18, 1938).

The Soviet Government repeatedly assured the Government of Czechoslovakia that the Soviet Union would meet its obligations under the 1935 Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty of Mutual Assistance. In a conversation with C. Gottwald in mid-May 1938, J. V. Stalin said that the USSR would render military assistance to Czechoslovakia even without French participation if Czechoslovakia defended herself and requested assistance. This had not been envisaged in the Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty under which the Soviet Union was obliged to render assistance to Czechoslovakia together with France. In the critical days of September 1938 the Soviet Government repeatedly affirmed its readiness "immediately and effectively" to implement the Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty together with France (*New Documents on the History of Munich*, Moscow, 1958, p. 105).

The Western Powers—Britain, France and the USA—did not support the Soviet proposal for an international conference to work out practical measures to counter fascist aggression. In pursuing a policy of canalizing Germany's aggression towards the East, the Western Powers took the path of collusion with the Hitlerites at the expense of Czechoslovakia. The British Government was particularly active in this respect. During the May crisis it made clear to France and Germany that Britain would not fight over Czechoslovakia. In subsequent months, the British and French Governments exerted constant pressure on Czechoslovakia, while at the same time making a frenzied effort to "save" the world "at any

price"—even if it meant the division of Czechoslovakia. This purpose was served by Chamberlain's meetings with Hitler at Berchtesgaden and Godesberg (see Note 20), at which attempts were made to put the stamp of legal approval on international arbitrariness.

In their attempt to reach an understanding with Nazi Germany on the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, Britain and France received considerable encouragement from American diplomacy.

On September 29-30, 1938, a conference was held in Munich, attended by the heads of Government of four countries—Britain, France, Germany and Italy. At this conference, at which no representatives from Czechoslovakia were present, an agreement was reached on the detachment of the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia and its incorporation in Germany. The territory ceded to Germany under this agreement was divided into five zones. Four zones were to be occupied by the Hitlerites by October 7, 1938. In the fifth zone a plebiscite was to be held under the supervision of an international commission which would be set up in Munich and which would consist of representatives of the four Powers and Czechoslovakia. The four Powers undertook to guarantee Czechoslovakia's new frontiers. However, subsequent events showed that the promises to guarantee Czechoslovakia's frontiers and the setting up of the international commission were designed to deceive public opinion.

As a result of the Munich collusion Czechoslovakia lost about one-third of her territory and population. She was deprived of her natural boundaries and frontier fortifications and found herself disarmed in the face of the aggressor. She also lost her economically most developed regions and her main sources of mineral raw materials. The new frontiers cut across and interfered with the country's major transport links. The seizure by the Hitlerites of a part of Czechoslovakia's territory increased Germany's military strength.

At the same time the Munich Agreement considerably weakened the positions of other European states, particularly, France, who "lost her most reliable ally in Central Europe" (see Document No. 10). The Munich Agreement also strengthened the hand of the defeatist elements among the ruling quarters of the countries of Southeastern Europe.

The Munich Agreement rendered meaningless the Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty and greatly reduced the significance of the 1935 Soviet-French Treaty of Mutual Assistance. In effect, the British and French moves gave the *coup de grace* to the idea of collective security.

The Munich Agreement was illegal from the very beginning as it was incompatible with the basic principles of international law. The Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic signed on May 6, 1970, noted that "the Munich Agreement of September 29, 1938 was reached under the threat of aggressive war and the use of force against Czechoslovakia, that it constituted a part of Nazi Germany's criminal conspiracy against peace and a gross violation of the basic norms of international law and that therefore it is invalid from the very beginning, with all the consequences ensuing therefrom" (*Pravda*, May 7, 1970).

2. The Anglo-German Declaration signed on September 30, 1938 at Munich on Chamberlain's initiative was a solemn mutual non-aggression pledge by

Britain and Germany. It was a logical sequel to the Munich collusion between Chamberlain and Hitler. In return for Germany's undertaking not to attack Britain, the Chamberlain Government gave the Hitlerites a free hand in Eastern Europe, particularly in respect of the USSR. Both this Declaration and a similar Franco-German Declaration of December 6, 1938 (see Document No. 34) were a product of the entire Munich policy of Chamberlain and Daladier. They deluded broad circles of the public in Britain and France by creating the impression that the war menace had already passed.

Subsequent development proved how short-sighted were the policies of the British and French Governments which sought agreement with the Nazi aggressors at the expense of other countries and peoples.

3. A reference to the Anglo-German Naval Pact of June 18, 1935. The main points of that agreement were as follows: the German navy should not exceed 35 per cent of the tonnage of the aggregate naval forces of the British Commonwealth of Nations; a ratio of 35 : 100 was to be applied both to the general tonnage and to individual classes of warships; Germany, however, was entitled to a submarine fleet equal in tonnage to the aggregate tonnage of the submarine fleet of the British Commonwealth of Nations, but for the time being she undertook to maintain a submarine fleet not exceeding 45 per cent of the tonnage of Britain's (*Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, Series C, Vol. IV, pp. 323-326*).

The signing of the Anglo-German Naval Pact, whereby Britain unilaterally sanctioned the violation by Hitler of the military restrictions imposed on Germany by the Peace Treaty of Versailles, was clear evidence that the British Government was conducting a policy of connivance at German aggression. The increase of the German naval force permitted by the Pact posed a serious threat for the USSR and other countries situated along the Baltic Sea.

In December 1938 Germany told Britain that she was going to build a submarine fleet equal in tonnage to Britain's. In April 1939 Nazi Germany denounced the Anglo-German Naval Pact.

4. The Soviet Government rendered the Chinese people, who were waging a just struggle against the Japanese aggressors, both political and moral support, and considerable economic and military assistance.

In 1938 the Soviet Union signed two agreements with China (on March 1 and on July 1) under which the Soviet Government extended credit to the Chinese Government to the amount of 100 million US dollars for purchases of military equipment and supplies and other materials in the USSR.

In accordance with the agreement of March 1, 1938, the authorized representatives of the two Governments (A. I. Mikoyan, Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, and Yang Tse, the Chinese Ambassador in the USSR) signed in March 1938 three contracts for the delivery to China of military equipment and supplies worth approximately 50 million US dollars. Under these contracts, the USSR delivered to China 297 aircraft, 82 tanks, 425 guns and howitzers, 1,825 machine guns, 400 motor vehicles, 360,000 shells and 10 million rifle cartridges, and other military equipment.

Under the fourth contract concluded in accordance with the agreement

of July 1, 1938, the Soviet Union delivered to China 180 aircraft, 300 guns, 1,500 light machine guns, 500 heavy machine guns, 300 trucks, aircraft engines, spare parts, shells, cartridges, and other military equipment worth approximately 30 million US dollars (Central Archives of the Ministry for Foreign Trade of the USSR). For information on further Soviet assistance to China see Documents Nos. 250 and 251.

5. A reference to the Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty of Mutual Assistance of May 16, 1935. This Treaty was similar in content to the Soviet-French Treaty. However, a Protocol to the Treaty contained the reservation that the undertakings of mutual assistance would be effective only on condition that "France renders assistance to the party that falls victim to an attack" (*Pravda*, May 18, 1935).
6. A reference to the Soviet-French Treaty of Mutual Assistance of May 2, 1935.
7. Operation "Green" was Hitler's plan for the seizure of Czechoslovakia.
8. The Anti-Comintern Pact was concluded in Berlin on November 25, 1936 between Germany and Japan. According to the text of the Pact which was published at the time, its members undertook to inform one another about the activities of the Communist International and to wage a joint struggle against it. The main purpose of the Pact was indicated in a German-Japanese secret agreement which was concluded at the same time and which said that in the event of a conflict between one of the Parties to the Pact and the USSR they "will immediately consult on what measures to take to safeguard their common interests". The Parties to the Agreement declared that they "will conclude no political treaties with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics contrary to the spirit of this Agreement without mutual consent" (*Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. I, p. 734*).
 On November 6, 1937 the Anti-Comintern Pact was joined by Italy, on February 24, 1939 by Hungary, and on March 27, 1939 by Franco's Spain. Later it was also joined by several other states allied with Germany and Japan in the Second World War.
9. Speaking on the results of the Munich Conference before the National Assembly on October 4, 1939, Prime Minister Daladier of France attempted to justify the Munich collusion by saying that it had made possible the avoidance of the use of force, that it had given Czechoslovakia international guarantees of her security and so forth. Daladier called for an improvement of relations with Germany.
10. The Berlin-Rome Axis was a military-political alliance concluded by the fascist aggressors—Germany and Italy—in Berlin on October 25, 1936. Under the Agreement Germany recognized Italy's seizure of Ethiopia; the two states reaffirmed their recognition of the rebel government of Franco in Spain and devised measures to render it further assistance; and Germany and Italy agreed on the delimitation of spheres of economic penetration in the Balkans and the Danubian States. The creation of the Berlin-Rome Axis was the first step towards the formation of a legally constituted bloc of fascist aggressors. The next step was the signing of the so-called Anti-Comintern Pact by Germany and Japan on November 25, 1936 (see Note 8).

11. Turkish President Ataturk (Mustafa Kemal), leader of the Turkish people's liberation struggle against Anglo-Greek intervention and founder of the Turkish Republic, died on November 10, 1938. Together with Lenin, Ataturk laid the foundations of friendship and good-neighbourly relations between Soviet Russia and Turkey, which were embodied in the Moscow Treaty of March 16, 1921. Throughout his long tenure of office as President of Turkey Ataturk advocated the preservation and strengthening of friendship between Turkey and the USSR.
12. A reference to the Soviet Government statement to the Polish Government of September 23, 1938, in connection with the concentration of Polish troops at the frontier with Czechoslovakia. The statement warned the then reactionary Polish Government that if Polish forces invaded Czechoslovakia, the USSR would regard this as an act of aggression and it would denounce, without further warning, its Non-Aggression Pact with Poland (*New Documents Relating to the History of Munich*, Moscow, 1958, pp. 132-133).
13. After the Munich collusion the French Government continued its policy of rapprochement with Nazi Germany which ran counter to French national interests. On October 13, 1938, the French Ambassador in Berlin, François-Poncet, in a conversation with the State Secretary of the German Foreign Ministry, Weizsaecker, tried to sound out the possibility of a visit to Paris by German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop. In this connection he suggested the conclusion between Germany and France of a non-aggression pact, consultative agreement and a currency agreement (*Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. IV, pp. 436-437). The Government of Nazi Germany was not interested in concluding such far-reaching agreements with France and went no further than signing a Franco-German declaration similar in spirit to the Anglo-German Declaration of September 30, 1938 (see Document No. 2).

The Franco-German Declaration was a political agreement which was very much like a non-aggression pact and which in effect rendered meaningless the Soviet-French Treaty of Mutual Assistance of 1935. Noël, the then French Ambassador in Poland, later recalled that Bonnet told him in November 1938 of his intention "to denounce wholly and fully the agreements France had concluded in the East. Along with the Franco-Polish agreements he undoubtedly meant the Franco-Soviet Pact of Mutual Assistance as well."

Subsequent developments proved how nearsighted was the policy of the French Government at the time.

14. The Franco-Polish Treaty of Alliance was signed in Paris on February 12, 1921. Under it, if France and Poland, or one of them fell victim to an unprovoked attack, the two Governments were to devise measures for the joint defence of their countries. The Treaty was concluded to ensure the stability of the political situation in Europe established on the basis of the Versailles system of peace treaties and, notably, to guarantee the security of French and Polish frontiers. It was the first in a series of political and military treaties concluded by France with several countries of Eastern Europe (see Note 17) all of which served to formalize the dominant position of France in Europe. In the 1920s the Franco-Polish Treaty also served as an instrument in the anti-Soviet policy pursued by the two states.

15. On November 30, 1938 the Italian Parliament began a foreign policy debate. When Foreign Minister Ciano in his speech referred to the "natural strivings" of Italy, a group of fascist Members of Parliament and a crowd of Roman fascists assembled outside the building began shouting, "Tunis! Corsica! Savoy!" The French Ambassador who had been present at the meeting left the Parliament. These territorial demands against France were promptly caught up and backed by the Italian press. In December 1938 Italy denounced her agreement with France of January 7, 1935. Italy's demands against France reflected the aggressive plans of the fascist Government of Mussolini and further aggravated Franco-Italian imperialist contradictions. In reply to Italy's territorial demands French Prime Minister Daladier paid a special visit to Corsica and Tunis in early January 1939. The French Government, which had signed a Declaration of Non-Aggression with Nazi Germany on December 6, 1938 (see Document No. 34), believed itself to be in a sufficiently strong position and refused to make concessions to fascist Italy.
16. Having taken the path of preparing for a war to re-make the map of the world, the aggressor Powers—Germany, Italy and Japan—believed it necessary to turn the Anti-Comintern Pact (see Note 8) into a direct military alliance of the three Powers. From early 1938 Nazi Germany began taking a particular interest in this matter since she was actively preparing to seize Austria and then Czechoslovakia.

Several facts relating to the history of the preparations for the Three-Power Pact were reported by the Soviet military intelligence officer in Japan, R. Sorge, in his telegram of September 3, 1938. Oshima, the Japanese Military Attaché in Berlin, he wrote, had telegraphed to War Minister Itagaki that "Ribbentrop, after concerting the matter with the Italians, made a proposal to him for the conclusion of a tripartite political and military alliance in view of the tense situation in Europe. The Japanese General Staff and Prime Minister Konoye are none too keen to take it up, fearful of being entangled in European affairs. They would agree only if the alliance was directed against the USSR. Nonetheless both of them are almost inclined to accept."

During the Munich Conference Ribbentrop handed to Italian Foreign Minister Ciano the draft of a triple pact between Germany, Italy and Japan (M. Toscano, *Le Origini del patto d'acciaio*, Firenze, 1948, pp. 19-20).

Towards the end of October 1938 Ribbentrop went to Rome for talks with Italian Government officials about the conclusion of the pact. On January 2, 1939, Ciano informed Ribbentrop that Italy agreed to sign the pact but said that it was desirable to present it as a "peace pact" (*Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. IV, p. 545).

Under various pretexts, the Japanese Government kept delaying its reply to the triple pact proposal. This delay reflected the internal political struggle in Japan over the future direction of Japanese aggression (see Document No. 62). On March 12, 1939, R. Sorge reported that in the opinion of the German Ambassador to Japan, Ott, "the Japanese are ready at any moment to sign a pact directed solely against the USSR". In April 1939 the Japanese Government informed the Governments of Germany and Italy that it agreed to sign a pact directed against the USSR but did not believe it possible to conclude a pact directed simultaneously also

against Britain, France and the USA (M. Toscano, *Le Origini del patto d'acciaio*, pp. 104, 125).

The Japanese attitude caused resentment among the ruling circles of Germany and Italy. The Governments of those countries which were out to recarve the world, wanted to conclude a tripartite alliance directed not only against the USSR, but also against Britain, France and the USA. Hitler and Mussolini rejected the Japanese proposals to limit the sphere of the treaty.

In view of Japan's attitude Germany and Italy signed on May 22, 1939, a bilateral German-Italian Pact of military alliance ("The Pact of Steel") (*Documents on German Foreign Policy. 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. VI, pp. 561-564).

The Japanese Government finally decided, on September 4, 1940, to sign the three-power pact. The defeat of France and the weakening of British positions in the Far East prompted Japan to step up her aggressive actions. The Tripartite Pact, signed on September 27, 1940, said that "Japan recognizes and respects the leadership of Germany and Italy in the establishment of a new order in Europe", while "Germany and Italy recognize and respect the leadership of Japan in the establishment of a new order in the Greater East Asia". The members of the pact undertook "to assist one another with all political, economic and military means" in the event of either of them being at war with a Power not involved in the European war or in the Sino-Japanese conflict (*Documents on German Foreign Policy. 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. XI, pp. 204-205).

The main object of the Tripartite Pact was to co-ordinate the actions of Germany, Italy and Japan with a view to establishing world domination.

17. The Little Entente was a political alliance of the bourgeois Governments of Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Yugoslavia. It was formed after the First World War with the assistance of France. From the very outset the Little Entente was largely an instrument of French imperialism in Europe.
18. On December 22, 1930, Belgium, Denmark, Holland, Norway and Sweden signed in Oslo a convention under which they undertook not to raise their customs tariffs without prior consultations with one another. In 1932 the convention was signed by Finland, and in 1937 by Luxemburg. These countries came to be known as the "Oslo Group".
19. On the night of March 11 and in the early morning of March 12, 1938, German troops entered the territory of Austria. With the connivance of the Governments of the Western Powers the so-called Anschluss of Austria was thus effected.

The Soviet Union vigorously condemned the Nazi aggression against Austria. In a statement to the press on March 17, 1938, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, having condemned the forcible deprivation of the Austrian people of their political, economic and cultural independence, pointed out that "the present international situation confronts all peace-loving States and particularly the Great Powers with the question of their responsibility for the further destinies of the peoples of Europe, and not only Europe". The Soviet Union, he stated, "is

prepared to participate in collective actions which would be decided on together with it and which would have the aim of checking further aggression and eliminating the heightened danger of a new world carnage". The Soviet Government proposed "immediate discussions with other Powers, either within the League of Nations or outside it, of practical measures made necessary by the circumstances". The People's Commissar urged the Great Powers to take "a firm and unequivocal stand in respect of the problem of the collective preservation of peace" (*Izvestia*, March 18, 1938).

On the same day the text of the statement was communicated to the Governments of Britain, France, the USA and Czechoslovakia. Britain and France rejected the Soviet proposal. In its reply of March 24, the British Government said that it would not enter into any negotiations with the Soviet Union on the question of creating a collective front against the fascist aggressors. The US Government did not answer the Soviet proposal.

20. The so-called Godesberg Programme was presented by Hitler to Chamberlain on September 22, 1938, at Bad-Godesberg. In Hitler set forth his categorical demands for the immediate transfer to Nazi Germany of several regions of Czechoslovakia.

At Bad-Godesberg Hitler rejected all forms of control by Britain and France over the transfer to Germany of German-speaking districts of Czechoslovakia, refused to carry out a preliminary plebiscite and opposed the granting of international guarantees to Czechoslovakia (*Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. II, pp. 870-879).

Hitler's demands constituted such an overt act of aggression that Chamberlain was unable to obtain the consent of the Czechoslovak and French Governments to their being met.

21. President Hacha of Czechoslovakia and Foreign Minister Chvalkovsky were summoned to Berlin, where in the early morning hours of March 15, 1939, they were forced to sign a document on the liquidation of Czechoslovakia's independence.

On the same day German troops invaded Czechoslovakia and occupied the country. Czechia became a province of the German Reich, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Slovakia was detached from Czechia and turned into a puppet state dependent on Germany.

22. A reference to Poland's obligations under the Polish-Rumanian Treaty of Alliance of 1921.
23. In September 1938 Soviet troops were concentrated at the country's western frontiers owing to the threat of aggressive actions by Germany and Poland against Czechoslovakia (see Note 12).
24. In reality, however, Poland concerted her actions with the German Government which assured her that in the event of a Soviet-Polish conflict Poland could count on German assistance.
25. The Balkan Entente, formed on February 9, 1934, comprised Greece, Rumania, Turkey and Yugoslavia.
26. The Treaty signed between the RSFSR and Germany at Rapallo on April 16, 1922, has been interpreted in the history of international relations as

a renunciation by the German ruling circles of the unilateral orientation of German foreign policy towards the West, as a result of which she decided to establish normal and mutually advantageous relations with the Soviet Union. Under the Treaty of Rapallo, the RSFSR and Germany resumed diplomatic relations; the two Sides renounced compensation for military and non-military losses, and Germany recognized the nationalization of German property in the RSFSR. Provision was made for the development of economic ties between the two countries according to the principle of the most favoured nation treatment (*Documents on Soviet Foreign Policy*, Vol. V, Moscow, 1961, pp. 223-224).

The conclusion of the Treaty of Rapallo was an outstanding success for Soviet diplomacy in its struggle to establish peaceful relations with capitalist countries on the basis of equality and non-interference in one another's internal affairs. The Treaty of Rapallo was to Germany's advantage as well, as it restored the traditional economic ties between the two states and strengthened Germany's positions in the foreign policy field.

27. This inventory shows that the Soviet Union was to deliver to China 120 aircraft complete with battle equipment, shells and cartridges, 83 aircraft engines, spare parts for the aircraft and other military materials (Central Archives of the Ministry for Foreign Trade of the USSR).
28. On June 13, 1939, a Treaty was signed in Moscow between the Governments of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Chinese Republic on the realization of credit to the sum of 150 million American dollars.

Article I of this Treaty reads: "The Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics shall extend to the Government of the Chinese Republic credit to the amount of 150 million American dollars according to the exchange rate as of June 13, 1939 (one American dollar equals 0.88867 grams of gold), for purchases by the Government of the Chinese Republic of industrial goods and equipment of Soviet origin in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics." The Treaty provided that the Parties would conclude "contracts for various categories of deliveries of industrial goods and equipment on the basis of the credit". At the request of the Chinese Government the Soviet Government agreed to assume responsibility for the shipment of the purchased industrial goods and equipment to their destination in China.

This credit enabled China to make new purchases in the USSR of aircraft, guns, machine guns and other armaments, and also industrial goods, motor vehicles, oil products, etc. In accordance with the inventory appended to the published contract, the Soviet Union delivered to China 250 artillery pieces, 4,400 machine guns, 50,000 rifles, 500 lorries, approximately 16,500 aerial bombs, over 500,000 shells, 100 million cartridges, and other military supplies.

Furthermore, under three contracts subsequently concluded in accordance with the Treaty of June 13, 1939, the Soviet Union sent to China over 300 aircraft, 350 lorries and tractors, 250 artillery pieces, 1,300 machine guns and also large quantities of bombs, shells, cartridges, electrical equipment, navigation equipment, maintenance equipment, fuel and lubricants, and other military supplies to the sum of approximately 70 million American dollars (Central Archives of the Ministry for Foreign Trade of the USSR).

This Treaty attested to the fact that the Soviet Union gave extensive aid to the Chinese people in their struggle against the Japanese aggressors (see also Notes 4 and 27).

29. A reference to the Political Report of the German Ambassador in London, Dirksen, to the German Foreign Ministry of June 24, 1939, a copy of which he also sent on June 27, 1939, to Weizsaecker personally.

In that report Dirksen, describing the mood of the British ruling circles, noted their desire to reach understanding with Germany. He intimated that the British Government was using the Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations in Moscow as a cover for future and more serious negotiations with Germany. "There is a growing conviction," he wrote, "that building a non-aggression front must only be a foundation and prerequisite for a constructive policy towards Germany." The British believed, Dirksen pointed out, that gaining new allies and increasing armaments would give the British Government an opportunity to enter into discussion with Germany of German demands in respect of the colonies and on other matters from stronger positions than in Munich or in March 1939. In the Ambassador's opinion, this tendency was reflected in the speech of British Foreign Secretary Halifax in the House of Lords on June 8, 1939, in which he emphasized Britain's constant desire for mutual understanding with Germany. Dirksen regarded that speech as an attempt gradually to prepare "public opinion at home for an attempt at a constructive policy towards Germany" (*Documents on German Foreign Policy. 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. VI, pp. 781-782*).

30. Reporting on the composition of the Soviet Military Delegation, the French Military Attaché in the USSR, Palasse, wrote to the French War Minister, on August 7, 1939: "The fact that the Mission includes the People's Commissar for Defence of the USSR and the People's Commissar for the Navy, the Chief of Staff and his deputy, and the Commander of the Soviet Air Force shows the great importance which the Soviet Government attaches to these talks."

31. On August 11, 1939, before his conversation with Hitler, Italian Foreign Minister Ciano met with German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop at Salzburg. They discussed the question of war preparations and the co-ordination of policies towards Britain, France and Poland. Ribbentrop made no secret of Germany's intentions to "solve" the Polish question in the most immediate future. At one point Ciano asked: "What do you want: the Corridor or Danzig?" Ribbentrop replied: "Neither, not any more. We want war" (*M. Freund, Geschichte des Zweiten Weltkrieges in Dokumenten. Bd. III, Freiburg, 1956, S. 26*).

Besides their conversation on August 12, part of which is cited in this book, Hitler and Ciano met again on August 13 for talks. In that meeting Hitler emphasized that every successful individual action by one of the Axis partners had not only a strategic but also a psychological importance for the other partners and for the whole Axis. He was thereby referring to aggressive actions by both Germany and Italy (the seizure of Austria, Czechoslovakia, Abyssinia, Albania, etc.). In Hitler's view, this strengthening of the Axis Powers was of the greatest importance "for the inevitable clash with the Western Powers" (*Documents on German Foreign Policy. 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. VII, pp. 54-55*).

At this time Italy was not very enthusiastic about a possible German war with Britain and France which could be precipitated by a German attack on Poland, because Italy had not yet concluded her preparations for war. However, for the purpose of bringing pressure to bear on Britain and France, the final communique on Ciano's meeting with Hitler and Ribbentrop at Salzburg noted that "totalitarian friendship and common preparedness prevail between the Axis Powers".

32. On July 25, 1939 the British Government finally accepted the Soviet proposal to begin talks for the conclusion of an Anglo-Franco-Soviet military agreement. Announcing this to the Soviet Ambassador in London, Halifax said that the British Military Mission could leave for Moscow within seven or ten days but that its composition had not yet been decided upon (see Document No. 33). The French Foreign Ministry notified the Soviet Embassy in Paris on July 26 that the French Military Mission would be leaving for Moscow "within the next few days".

However, it was only on August 11 that the British and French military representatives arrived in Moscow.

Referring to the composition of the French Mission the Soviet Ambassador in France wrote to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs that the French Government had obviously set "a modest task". He also noted the following: "That it mainly consists of specialists testifies to the inspection purposes of the Mission as well, i. e. to their intention, above all, to find out the state our army is in" (The USSR Foreign Policy Archives).

Commenting on the composition of the British Mission, the Soviet Ambassador in Britain wrote to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs: "I feel that, judging by the nature of their official posts, the members of the Mission will not be able to decide anything on the spot and will refer everything back to London. It is also suspicious, and here I am again basing my judgement on the nature of their posts, that the members of the Mission can stay on in Moscow indefinitely. This does not seem to hold out much promise that the military talks would proceed rapidly" (The USSR Foreign Policy Archives).

From the start of the talks of the Military Missions it became clear that the British and French Governments did not really want to co-operate with the USSR. The fact that it had taken the Missions 17 days to get to Moscow, that they were made up of minor officials, and that the British Military Mission was not empowered to conclude a military agreement and not even to conduct negotiations, could not but give rise to doubts as to the sincerity of the intentions of the British and French Governments. These doubts grew still stronger when it became known that the British and French Military Missions did not have even a preliminary military plan for joint operations against a common enemy. Thus, the very first meetings of the Military Missions showed that the British and French Governments did not take a serious attitude to the talks with the USSR. They confirmed once again that Britain and France were more interested in talks about talks than in arriving at an understanding with the Soviet Union on co-operation between them against the fascist aggressors.

33. The "shock" which the Ambassador referred to was caused by the following communique which appeared on August 22, 1939, in the Soviet

press: "After the conclusion of the Soviet-German trade and credit agreement, the question arose of the improvement of political relations between Germany and the USSR. In an exchange of views on this question between the German and Soviet Governments it became clear that both Sides desired to ease the tension in the political relations between them, to avert the danger of war, and to conclude a Pact of Non-Aggression. In connection with this matter the German Minister for Foreign Affairs, Herr von Ribbentrop, will arrive in Moscow in a few days for talks" (*Izvestia*, August 22, 1939).
