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**THE RUSSIAN POLICY OF THE  
THIRD REICH 1939 - 1941  
(with special emphasis on  
military and strategic  
considerations)**

**By**

**Adnan Fawwaz**

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**THE THIRD REICH AND RUSSIA - FAWWAZ**

## A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Walid Khalidy for his valuable assistance during the preparation of this thesis.

Adnan Fawwaz

## PREFACE

This study is centered on the Russian Policy of the Third Reich from 1939-1941, i.e., from the destruction of Czechoslovakia to the German invasion of the Soviet Union. But it has been necessary to survey the previous periods i.e., 1919-1933 and 1933-1938 as a prerequisite to fully grasping the period under discussion. On the one hand, the Russian Policy of the Third Reich in the period 1939-1941 is but the logical culminating point of the Nazi policy towards Russia ever since the National Socialists came to power in 1933. On the other hand, Germany's geographical location in the heart of Europe provides a link between the Russian policy of the Third Reich in the period 1933-1941 and the Russian policy of Germany ever since the time of Bismark.

Many sources are available on the subject. These comprise documents, diaries and memoirs and a great number of secondary source-material. However, I have been denied a number of valuable works on the subject partly because

some of them are written in the German language and partly because a number of them though written in the English language are not available in the Jafet Library. Nevertheless, access to some of these works was possible through secondary source-material.

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CHAPTER I

Background: The Russian Policy Of The  
Weimar Republic 1919-1933

There have always been, among the Germans, two broad schools of thought regarding Russia. These could be traced as far back as 1860. One school thought of Russia as "the natural ally of Prussia," if war between Austria and France was to take place; while the other school entertained the idea of a Greater Germany which would include Austria with its "traditional hostility to Russia."<sup>1</sup> These two schools, however, were by no means rigid but assumed different versions by new international developments; and by the coming to the helm of the German State, of new personalities.

After Bismark achieved, German unity, he sought to provide security for Germany by bringing together Germany, Russia and Austria - Hungary in "one combination which would be unchallengeable in Europe," hence synthesizing the above-mentioned two schools. This came about in the "League of the

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1. Wheeler-Bennet, John W., The Nemesis of Power, (Macmillan and Co.Ltd., London: 1954), pp.119-20.

Three Emperors" which was formed in 1882. This League, however, soon encountered obstacles for, besides others, rivalries between Austria-Hungary and Russia over the Balkans had assumed critical proportions. As a result, Bismark urged upon the young Emperor William II to adopt the second best policy of maintaining the Entente with Russia "both as a counterpart to Austrian ambitions, and to prevent her (Russia) from falling into the arms of France,"<sup>2</sup> hence advocating a shift to the pro-Russian school.

Emperor William II failed to follow the advice of Bismark and was affected by the advocates of Greater Germany, and hence of an anti-Russian policy. The power of this school of thought retained dominance in Germany during the First World War, and the dynamism of its ideas culminated in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (March 1918) "by which it was intended to eliminate Russia as a political factor in European affairs."<sup>3</sup>

By the year 1918-1919, three important factors which had a great bearing on the German policy towards Russia,

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2. Ibid., p. 120.

3. Ibid., p. 120. See also, Cord Meyer, Henry, Mitteleuropa in German Thought and Action, 1815-1945 (Martemis Nyjhoff, The Hague:1955) pp.260-64.



emerged. These were: (1) The fact that Germany had lost the war; (2) The rise of Bolshevism in Russia; (3) The Treaty of Versailles.

After the German military and civilian authorities realized that the war was practically lost, they began to play with the idea of be-friending the West by offering their help in the destruction of Bolshevism in Russia. The Western Powers seemed to have accepted what the Germans had to offer for German troops were ordered to remain stationed in the Baltic provinces until further notice. But to the disappointment of the Germans, "This provision in the armistice terms did not lead to any leniency in shaping the Treaty of Versailles."<sup>4</sup> A mutual rupture of all diplomatic relations between Russia and Germany took place late in the Fall of 1918 on the pretext that the former was engaged in spreading Communist propaganda in Germany and hence was interfering in German domestic affairs.<sup>5</sup>

Nor was Russia's position better with regard to the Western Powers. France, on her part, was skeptical of Russia

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4. Hilger, Gustav, and Meyer, Alfred G., The Incompatible Allies, (The Macmillan Co., New York: 1953) p. 19.

5. Ibid., pp. 19-20.

as an ally, who was always dragging her into Balkan quarrels. But what made the situation more difficult was the new ideological taint that characterized Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution. Wars of intervention were entertained and even attempted by the Western Powers, at a time when they were still fighting Germany. Then, they contented themselves with trying to promote a 'cordon sanitaire' of the states on the western borders of Russia. But when the Western Powers realized that the 'cordon sanitaire' policy was not absolutely effective, they "finally resigned themselves to a policy of non-recognition morally sustained even when the door was grudgingly opened to some Russian trade."<sup>6</sup>

The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, disentangled themselves from the capitalist countries and embarked on international revolution. "In theory the relations between Soviet Russia and the European Powers remained those of suspended war:"<sup>7</sup> The Russians accusing the Western Powers of entertaining a war of intervention against Russia by drawing Germany with them; the Western Powers accusing the Soviets of fomenting Communist uprisings and, hence, interfering

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6. Taylor, A.J.P., The Origins of the Second World War, (Hamish Hamilton, London: 1961) p. 36.

7. Ibid. , p. 36.

in the domestic affairs of other countries. Furthermore, the Western Powers lost faith in Russia's power after its disastrous defeat at the hands of the Germans. They, also, believed that the Bolshevik revolution contributed, a great deal, to the disintegration of Russia's power.

Geography, too, played a role in the isolation of Russia from European affairs. The 'Cordon sanitaire' was in the early period after the war an important factor which contributed, to some extent, to the isolation of Russia. This had been foreseen by Balfour who told the Imperial War Cabinet on 21 March, 1917: "If you make an absolutely independent Poland.... you cut off Russia altogether from the West, Russia ceases to be a factor in Western politics or almost ceases."<sup>8</sup> This proved right, Russia was isolated from Europe, but on the other hand, Europe was also isolated from Russia, a state of affairs which the Russians themselves were anxious to achieve. For above all they wanted to be left alone in order to be able to consolidate their revolution.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand geography would not be a great obstacle to

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8. Ibid., pp. 36-37.

9. Ibid., p. 37.

the Russians in spreading their revolutionary ideas.

The French thought they had found a good substitute for their Russian ally in the states that comprised the 'Cordon sanitaire'. Clemenceau told the Council of Four: "Our firmest guarantee against German aggression is that behind Germany, in an excellent strategic position, stand Czeckoslovakia and Poland."<sup>10</sup> Thus the 'Cordon sanitaire' was to act as a double-edged sword which would isolate Russia and contribute to the encirclement of Germany.

It is quite obvious how the Germans felt about the terms of the Treaty of Versailles and their authors the Western Powers. Most Germans felt utterly humiliated at being sentenced responsible for the outbreak and consequences of the First World War. The loss, partition, annexation, occupation and demilitarization of German territory, together with the demand from Germany of fantastic sums of money and material as reparation dealt a formidable blow to German strength and moral. And what made the Germans more resentful was the creation of a Polish State right on the eastern borders of the Reich. This the Germans could not swallow. Consequently,

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10. Ibid., p. 37.

the two old German schools of thought were revived, although acquiring new versions. One sought Russia as the only way out of the German disaster; while the other still believed in negotiations with the Western Powers. Both schools contributed to the formation of German policy during the Weimar era in varying degrees.

Count Brockdorff-Rantzau<sup>11</sup> in his early career i.e., before he became German Ambassador to Russia, could be considered as representing the pro-Western school of thought, while Hans von Seeckt<sup>12</sup> could be considered as representing the pro-Russian one. Rantzau's early trend of thought is well depicted in a pro-memoria<sup>13</sup> which he wrote to the President and the Chancellor in which he warned against allowing England and France to be brought together by a German-Soviet military agreement or even a semblance of it. He believed that German rearmament could be achieved much more quickly, if Germany would play on "England's natural fear of France," than an

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11. A former Imperial German diplomat who had served as a Secretary of Legation at St. Petersburg, a counselor of Embassy at Vienna, a Consul General at Budapest and had finally headed the German Mission in Copenhagen during the war.
  12. Appointed Commander of the Reichswehr in 1920, and served in this capacity until October 9, 1926, when he resigned his post.
  13. Hilger and Meyer, op.cit., p. 91.

agreement with the Soviets. He believed that dealing with the Soviets would only benefit the latter at the expense of the Germans. Russia would have the upper hand in such an agreement because, on the one hand, the secrecy of such an agreement could easily be revealed by the Russians, thereby, discrediting Germany; and on the other hand, Russia could easily drag Germany into a hopeless war in the West by having the Soviet armies invade Poland. He went on to say that if the Russians wanted they could also push their troops inside Germany, not with the intention of liberating her from the Western Powers but to "push Asia's frontier as far as the Rhine."<sup>14</sup>

In his reply to the pro-memoria from Count Brockdorff-Rantzau to the Reich Chancellor,<sup>15</sup> von Seecht emphasised the important fact that Germany should follow an active policy in the international sphere. Her immediate interest was to befriend Russia. Von Seecht attacked the policy of appeasement and reconciliation toward France, for French policy, the General said:

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14. Ibid., p. 91.

15. Wheeler-Bennet, op.cit., pp. 133-137.

"is not quite indifferent as to whether we (Germans) ally ourselves with Russia or not, for in either case the complete destruction of Germany, not fully brought about, remains her objective, and this aim would be more difficult to achieve if Germany were supported by Russia."

Von Seecht believed that England was drifting toward a conflict with France for the interests of Great Britain in the Dardenelles, Egypt, and India were more important to her than the conflict on the Rhine. He did not believe that German friendship to Russia would have any effect on Britain's relations with France or on Britain's endeavour to find an ally. He thought that it was in Britain's interest to make Germany economically stronger and "given the rupture between England and France, England has every interest in France's neighbour becoming militarily stronger, and will just have to accept the situation if Germany derives this strength from the East." In short, von Seecht's thesis was that Germany's friendship to Russia would not alienate Britain in any way.

To von Seecht Poland was the core of the Eastern problem and her existence Germany would never tolerate. The only power that could aid Germany to eliminate Poland was the Soviet Union for she too could never tolerate Poland. Thus an understanding with Russia, should be reached, and the basis for

it should be the 1914 frontiers. Hence, Poland, which was one of the pillars of the 'Cordon sanitaire' policy (a policy which aimed at both isolating Russia and encircling Germany), was viewed by von Seecht as the focal point on which Russo-German friendship could be erected.

The Reich Government seemed to have adopted von Seecht's views for after economic collaboration between Russia and Germany were resumed in 1921, a political agreement signed at Rapallo cleared all the misunderstandings that had existed between the two countries and opened the way for an era of amicable relations which, although often interrupted, lasted until the coming to power, in Germany, of the National Socialist Party.

When Count Brockdorff-Rantzau became German Ambassador in Moscow he abandoned his views and embraced those of von Seecht. Nevertheless, his former trend of thought was embraced (although in an extremely revised fashion) by other Germans of whom Gustav Stresemann was perhaps foremost among them. Stresemann believed that the best way to solve Germany's problems was through cooperation with the West and fulfilling the obligations imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles.



On the other hand, Stresemann never thought of breaking with Russia but wished to hold her as a 'trump card' to be played against the West when the occasion came. Thus, Stresemann came up with a new version of synthesizing the pro-Western and the pro-Russian schools.

Hence, it would be said that the Reich Government (including Stresemann) saw eye to eye with von Seecht on certain aspects of foreign policy, in regarding the re-emergence of the Polish State, besides others, as the immediate factor necessitating their rapprochement with Soviet Russia regardless of the regimes that existed in the two countries. It was obvious to the German authorities that the creation of a strong Polish State allied to France would constitute a great menace to the Reich. "It would be infinitely more advantageous to Germany as a great power in Europe to have Russia as a contiguous neighbour, even if that country should remain Bolshevik."<sup>16</sup>

Thus Russia, to von Seecht, (and Stresemann), if allied to Germany, would serve three purposes:<sup>17</sup> First, she would act as a counter-checks to any Polish menace; secondly, she would contribute to Germany's bargaining power in the latter's relations with the West; and lastly, Russia could aid Germany in circumventing the

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16. Ibid., p. 122.

17. Ibid., p. 125.

military restrictions imposed upon the Reichswehr by the Versailles Treaty. Regarding the last point, Russia could be a great aid to the Germans since she was not a signatory to the Treaty of Versailles and was not bound by its provisions. The German General Staff, by coming to an agreement with the Red Army General Staff, would make the instruction of German officers on Russian soil in the branches prohibited to Germany by the Treaty of Versailles, possible. Moreover, Germany could establish aircraft and other factories in Russia so as to aid the rearmament of the Reichswehr. Lastly, German officers could train Red Army officers to prepare the Red Army for a possible future Russian- German conflict with the Western Powers.<sup>18</sup>

The Russians, on their part, were also interested to come to a military understanding with the Germans; for their defeat at the hands of the French and the Poles in 1920 stirred them to start building their armed forces on a sound basis. Besides, Poland too bothered the Russians. Lenin said after the Russian defeat:

"I am not fond of the Germans by any means, but at the present time it is more advantageous to use them rather than to challenge them. An independent Poland is very dangerous to Soviet Russia; it is an evil which, however, at the present time has also its redeeming

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18. Ibid., p. 125.

features; for while it exists, we may safely count on the Germans, because the Germans hate Poland and will at any time make common cause with us in order to strangle Poland... Everything teaches us to look upon Germany as our most reliable ally. Germany wants revenge and we want revolution. For the moment our aims are the same."<sup>19</sup>

Then Lenin made a staggering prediction:

"When our ways part, they (the Germans) will be our most ferocious and our greatest enemies. Time will tell whether a German hegemony or a Communist federation is to rise out of the ruins of Europe."<sup>20</sup>

(a) German-Soviet Military Collaboration.

Thus, Russia's defeat at the hands of the French and Polish forces made it clear to the Soviets that German military aid was vital. Hence, Lenin applied formally to the German Government (Ministry of Defense) for assistance in the re-organization of the Red Army.<sup>21</sup>

The German Ministry of Defence consented to give the Soviets military assistance and agreements were concluded in 1922 and 1923 by which the Soviet Union consented to grant different German armament corporations concessions to manufacture different types of weapons on its territory. Besides,

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19. Ibid., pp. 126-127.

20. Ibid., p. 127.

21. Ibid., p. 127.

German personnel were allowed to train in their different fields of specialization in the Soviet Union.<sup>22</sup> The scope of this collaboration, however, remained of a limited nature because it was supposed to be conducted secretly, in order, on the one hand, to escape the notice of the outside world, and on the other to escape the notice of the German Government itself so as to save the German Government and administration all possible embarrassment.<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, according to Wheeler-Bennet considerable long term advantages were derived from German-Soviet military collaboration. In the first place, German officers, really, benefited from their training on Russian soil in the art of aeronautics and tank warfare. In the second place, the Germans obtained important information from personal observation about the conditions of the Red Army, its composition, armament, training, etc...<sup>24</sup>

The political effects of such military-political thinking and activities were very considerable to Germany. To cite

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22. Graig, Gordon A., The Politics of the Prussian Army 1640-1945 (Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, London, 1955) pp. 409-415.

23. Hilger and Meyer, op.cit., p. 199.

24. Ibid., p. 130.

only one: during the Rhurkampf, when the Germans were facing French and Belgian threats, the Soviet Government let it be known in the Polish capital that they would mobilize if Poland "attempted any anti-German move such as the seizure of East Prussia."<sup>25</sup> This German-Soviet friendship, however does not mean that both countries were definitely tied to one another. Since, according to von Seecht, Poland was the axis of Russo-German cooperation, hence Germany was placed under the obligation to reciprocate action only against Poland.<sup>26</sup> Thus the area of conflict to which Germany was committed to reciprocate action with Russia in, was limited, leaving the Germans more or less free to initiate their own policies in other sectors.

However, with the settlement of the Rhur conflict and the acceptance by Germany of reparation payments as outlined in the Dawes plan, the history of Europe entered a new phase which affected, to a considerable extent, German-Soviet relations. The London Conference and the Dawes Plan indicated that the Western Powers (especially Britain) seemed to have shown some concern in Germany's economic revival. Besides, the

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25. Ibid., p. 139.

26. Ibid., p. 139.

Western Powers, once more, sought to engage Germany in international politics as a partner and "not merely as an object of negotiations." This, actually, gave the Germans some hope of settling their problems via the West and not via Russia.<sup>27</sup> Russia's position vis-a-vis Germany began to change as well. Lenin died in the year 1924. At the same time the Soviet Government was recognized by most of the Western Powers. Moreover, the reconstruction of the Soviet national economy toward the second half of the twenties as a result of the controversies over the NEP, marked the beginning of factional disputes within the Communist Part and culminated in the large-scale Stalin purges of 1937. Consequently, Soviet leaders were more concerned about their domestic affairs than the failures of the bourgeois world.<sup>28</sup>

Hence, the recognition of Russia and Germany's admission to the community of the Western Powers, had the effect

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27. Ibid., pp. 126-127.

28. Ibid., p. 127.

of making Germany and Russia less dependent on one another than before. "Instead, both tried to gain a maximum of advantages from the improved situation, even if it were at the expense of the old 'Schicksgemeinschaft.' German-Soviet relations thus assumed the nature of a sober political chessgame."<sup>29</sup>

Russia was resentful and indignant at the German swing toward the West; and the possibility of Germany joining the League of Nations. Russia's fear of the latter possibility stemmed from the possibility of German participation in sanctions against the Russians and of permission to Western troops to pass on German territory on their way to Russia. Thus German-Soviet relations seemed in a very low condition. Economic relations, too, were deteriorating, and the German-Soviet economic treaty under negotiation seemed threatened with collapse. The Germans labored hard to allay Soviet fears by guaranteeing that if Germany joined the League, she would not take part in sanctioning Russia but would in fact obstruct any such Western move. Thus by October 1925 the difficulties involved in the economic

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29. Ibid., p. 127.

discussions were at last ironed out and a German-Soviet economic treaty was signed.<sup>30</sup>

At the same time as the commercial treaty between Germany and Russia was signed, the German government concluded the Pact of Locarno. In it France re-affirmed her existing alliances with Poland and Czechoslovakia, and the parties to the Locarno Treaties agreed that France's obligations in these alliances would not constitute aggression against Germany.<sup>31</sup>

To reassure the Russians, who saw Locarno as a pact of capitalist states directed against the Soviet Union, the Germans signed the Treaty of Berlin renewing the agreement made at Rapallo.<sup>32</sup> It provided for "the settlement of all disputes arising between Germany and Russia amicably, for the observation of neutrality in cases of armed conflict and under no circumstances to take part in any economic or financial measures against the other by a third power."<sup>33</sup> Moreover, when Germany joined the League of Nations, Stresemann, in order to further reassure the Russians, declared that

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30. Ibid., p. 136.

31. Taylor, op.cit., p. 54.

32. Ibid., p. 55.

33. Wheeler-Bennet, op.cit., p. 142.



Germany would not in her disarmed state participate in sanctions. By this Stresemann had hit two birds with one stone: The policy of reconciliation with the West did not alienate Russia whose bond with the Reich was reaffirmed. "Thus were the Seecht and Stresemann policies welded together in a document (Berlin Treaty) which -- renewed by the Bruning government in 1931, and Hitler in 1933 -- became the recognized basis of the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939."<sup>34</sup>

By 1927, the Control Commission on German disarmament was withdrawn. Reparations were revised and reduced by the Young Plan in 1929; and external control of German finances was abandoned. The Rhineland was evacuated in 1930 -- five years ahead of time, but, according to Taylor, the Germans were not appeased. In 1929 the Young Plan was carried only against fierce national opposition.<sup>35</sup>

In 1928 the German Ambassador in Russia, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau died and was succeeded by Herbert von Dirksen, an ardent follower of von Seecht, Count Ranzau, and von Maltzan. Basically, German-Soviet relations in von

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34. Ibid., p. 142.

35. Taylor, op.cit., p. 57.

Dirksen's term as Ambassador neither improved nor deteriorated noticeably but became rather a matter of routine. The existing political and military agreements fixed the scope of these relations and gave them stability, with the exception of the economic sphere where economic collaboration between the two countries was intensified considerably.<sup>36</sup> The Soviet First Five-Year Plan demanded German economic and technical help and the Germans were generous in giving them.

In 1930, the German government granted the Soviet government credit amounting to 300 million R.M. In 1931, as a result of such a grant, German exports to the Soviet Union rose very sharply with imports from Russia sinking and causing a great disappointment in Moscow.

Such economic cooperation between Germany and the Soviet Union was a major factor which aided Hitler to surmount the economic difficulties caused by the great depression. Several important manufacturing firms especially in the field of tool machinery lived through the depression because Soviet orders kept them going. These, Hitler could

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36. Hilger and Meyer, op.cit., p. 235.

utilize in his rearmament efforts after 1933.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the Soviet Five-Year Plan helped to relieve German unemployment in providing work in Russia for thousands of German technicians and engineers, as specialists to aid the industrialization of the Soviet Union.<sup>38</sup>

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37. Ibid., p. 240.

38. Ibid., p. 240.

## CHAPTER II

### Background : The Russian Policy of The Third Reich 1933-1938

#### A. Nazi views on Russia and the East.

When Hitler and the National Socialists came to full power in 1933, a new version of the Russian policy of Germany came to light; for Hitler had brought along with him an ideology which had a great bearing on German foreign policy, and hence, on the German outlook towards Russia.

In 1937, Hitler summoned his chief associates and said to them: "The German problem\* can only be solved by way of force. There remain still to be answered the questions 'when' and 'how'."<sup>1</sup> What was the German problem; and what was its significance? To find our way to answering this question, the answering of another question is necessary and that is: Germany's problem according to whom? Who thought such a problem existed? The answer to this question (or questions) is not

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\* 1937 was the date when Hitler actually pronounced that a German problem existed. This does not mean that prior to that date there was no such problem. The German problem arose in 1923 when "Mein Kampf" was written; and ever since Hitler came to full power in 1933, his whole attitude was oriented towards solving it.

1. Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. I (published by the Department of State, Washington: 1949), p. 34.

difficult to provide for it is obvious that there was only one party and one Fuhrer at the helm of the German state. Hence the German problem was primarily a National Socialist problem and to depict such a problem one must search in the Nazi ideology. Hence, moreover, it was a National Socialist ideological problem, or a problem which was the reflection of National Socialist ideology.

Hitler's concept of the German problem is to be found, mainly, in his first and major work "Mein Kampf" which he wrote in 1924, the year of the occupation of the Ruhr basin by French and Belgian troops. It was only natural that his ideas were stained by an anti-French colour. But his anti-French attitude could be discarded as a political reaction to particular political issues; and one must look somewhere else for the real foci around which his major thesis, all the time revolved.

The main three foci of the Nazi (Hitler's) philosophy which were relevant to Nazi foreign policy, and closely related to one another, were the concepts of (1) race (purity of blood); (2) living-space; and (3) the folkish state.

(1) With regard to the first concept Hitler was very frank in propagating the idea that the German (Aryan) race was

the superior one among all the other races from the viewpoints of the purity of its blood, its creativity and productivity.

"All the human culture, [said Hitler] all the results of art, science and technology that we see before us today, are almost exclusively the creative product of the Aryan. This very fact admits of the not unfounded inference that he alone was the founder of all higher humanity, therefore representing the prototype that all we understand by word 'man'... If we were to divide mankind into three groups, the founders of culture, the bearers of culture, and the destroyers of culture, only the Aryan could be considered as the representative of the first group."<sup>2</sup>

This concept is reflected in Nazi foreign policy in Nazi enmity and contempt for other states which embody different and 'inferior races'; and more acutely, of states which, besides embodying inferior races, contain large numbers of Jews.<sup>3</sup>

Russia, for example, which embodied the Slavic race and contained a large number of Jews, was despised by the Nazis.

In this respect Hitler was quoted to have said on 21 May 1930: "...for us any cooperation with Russia is out of the question for there on a Slav-Tartar body is set a Jewish head."<sup>4</sup>

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2. Hitler, Adolf, Mein Kampf, translated by Ralf Manheim, (Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston: 1943), p. 290.
  3. Hitler does not believe that the Jews are a race at all for they according to him "lack those qualities which distinguish the races that are creative and hence culturally blessed." Ibid., p. 303.
  4. Quoted in Dallin, David J., Soviet Russia's Foreign Policy 1939-1942, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1952), p. 9.

(2) The concept of living-space was, according to Hitler, a corollary to the concept of race in the sense that the former should act as the container of the latter. The foreign policy of a folkish state, according to Hitler,

"must safeguard the existence on this planet of the race embodied in the state, by creating a healthy, viable natural relations between the nation's population and growth on the one hand and the quality and quantity of its soil on the other hand."<sup>5</sup>

He goes on to say:

"Only an adequately large space on this earth assures a nation the freedom of existence."<sup>6</sup>

Hitler, for example, admits the fact that France should be beaten but only as a step (i.e. means) in the solution of the general German problem of upholding the purity of the German race and providing for it the necessary living-space. Moreover this living-space, according to him, was not to be sought in colonies like the British had been doing, but on the main continent of Europe. By this, the unity of the German race would be preserved, since Hitler saw in geographical proximity a major factor contributing to such a unity.

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5. Ibid., pp. 643-644.

6. Ibid., p. 643.

"Much as all of us today recognize the necessity of a reckoning with France, it would remain ineffectual in the long run if it represented the whole of our aim in foreign policy. It can and will achieve meaning only if it offers the rear cover for an enlargement of our people's living-space in Europe. For it is not in colonial acquisition of a territory for settlement, which will enhance the area of the mother country, and hence not only keep the new settlers in the most intimate community with the land of their origin, but secure for the total area those advantages which lie in its unified magnitude."<sup>7</sup>

Now, where was that living-space that Hitler wished to acquire? Hitler went on and said:

"...We stop the endless German movement to the South and West, and turn our gaze toward the land in the East. If we speak of soil in Europe today, we can primarily have in mind only Russia and her vassal border states."<sup>8</sup>

To him Russia and her vassal border states, besides having rich and thinly populated lands, constitute a geographical continuity with the German Reich.

(3) The third major focus of the Nazi philosophy was that of upholding and defending the concept of the Volkish state, a concept directly related and connected to that of race.

7. Ibid., p. 653.

8. Ibid., p. 654.



This came into diametrical opposition with Bolshevism, and consequently was reflected in the international sphere in the enmity between Russia and Germany.

Hitler endeavoured to stress the diametrical opposition between Marxism and the Volkish philosophy by trying to point out their major points of difference. He interpreted Marxism as a political creed which gravely underestimated the 'basic racial forces' of society and the individual human being himself; and furthermore, brushed aside all racial differences. He also pointed out that Marxism attributed the culture-creating force to the state and viewed this force as a "product of economic necessities, or at best, the natural result of political urge for power." According to Hitler, this underestimation of racial considerations and the dogma of the equality of races became "a basis for a similar way of viewing peoples and finally individual men." To Hitler, the Marxist creed was composed of poisonous elements which Jew, Karl Marx prepared "into a concentrated solution for the swifter annihilation of the independent existence of free nations on this earth." All this was a systematic plan "to hand the world over to the Jews."<sup>9</sup>

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9. Ibid., p. 282.

Thus the Jews were not only associated with the Russian people but with the Communist creed itself.

Unlike Marxism, however, the folkish philosophy found "the importance of mankind in its basic racial elements." According to it, the state was only a means to the "preservation of the racial existence of man." Hence the folkish philosophy did not believe in an equality of races but saw great differences between them. Moreover, unlike Marxism, it recognized the races with the higher values and separated them from those with lesser values. In accordance with this separation it "promot[ed] the victory of the better and stronger, and demand[ed] the subordination of the inferior and weaker in accordance with the eternal will that dominat[ed] this universe." Furthermore, the folkish philosophy saw "not only the different value of the races, but also the different value of individuals. From the mass it [extracted] the importance of the individual personality, and thus, in contrast to disorganizing Marxism, it [had] an organizing effect." Moreover, unlike Marxism, the folkish philosophy saw race as the culture creative force and not the state. Nor did it see that this force was a product of "economic necessities" or "the

natural result of political urge for power"; but of race which was an embodiment of an idealized humanity. Since according to the folkish philosophy, the Aryan race was the culture-creative force, its preservation and enhancement was of paramount importance for the preservation and enhancement of what was sublime in human culture.<sup>10</sup>

1. Elaboration on basic themes in Mein Kampf.

Thus, this ideological gulf between Marxism and National Socialism was emphasized by Hitler on May 1935, when he said:

"The ideas by which we are governed are diametrically opposed to those of Soviet Russia. National Socialism is a doctrine which applies exclusively to the German people. Bolshevism lays emphasis on its international mission.... Both we National Socialists and Bolsheviks are convinced that there is a gulf between us which can never be bridged..."<sup>11</sup>

In view of this ideological contradiction, Hitler was never tired of reiterating to the German people his enmity to Marxism. At one time he had said:

10. Ibid., p. 283.

11. Hitler's words, edited by Gordon W. Prange (American Council on Public Affairs, Washington: 1944), pp. 255-57.

"For fourteen years I have continuously proclaimed to the German nation that I regard it as my task before posterity to destroy Marxism, and that is no empty phrase but a solemn oath which I shall follow as long as I live... This for us is not a fight which can be finished by compromise. We see in Marxism the enemy of our people which will cast and destroy without mercy..."<sup>12</sup>

At another instance he had said:

"Never forget that the rulers of present-day Russia are common blood-stained criminals; that they are the scum of humanity which favored by circumstances, overran a great state in a tragic hour... Do not forget that the international Jew who completely dominates Russia today regards Germany, not as an ally, but as a state destined to the same fate. And you do not make pacts with anyone whose sole interest is the destruction of his partner."

He went on to say:

"In Russian Bolshevism we must see the attempt undertaken by the Jews in the twentieth century to achieve world domination."<sup>13</sup>

Then he said:

"The fight against Jewish world Bolshevization requires a clear attitude toward Soviet Russia. You cannot drive out the devil with Beelzebub."<sup>14</sup>

12. Ibid., p. 254.

13. Mein Kampf, op.cit., p. 661.

14. Ibid., p. 662.

Alfred Rosenberg, too, was a fanatical anti-Russian, both from the view-point of their race, and that of their ideology:

"The victory of the unconscious Mongoloid elements in the Russian organism over the Nordic one and the eradication of this [Nordic] essence which seemed hostile to them."15

Moreover, Rosenberg was famous for an equation of his own which he contributed. It ran as follows: "Russia = Bolshevism = Jewry."16

Furthermore, Herman Goring in 1933, confirmed this basic hostility between Germany and Russia when he said:

"German rearmament started from the basic thought that a showdown with the Soviet Union was inevitable."17

This survey clarifies to a great extent what Hitler meant by the phrase: "The German problem..." I understand by it a problem which was ideological in essence. I also understand that the power that was hostile or naturally resisted the solution of such a problem was Soviet Russia.

15. Quoted in Dallin, op.cit., p. 8.

16. Ibid., p. 9.

17. Ibid., p. 9.

Now, the next part of the sentence: "can be solved only by way of force," clearly suggests the ultimate way that problem should be solved. This leaves the problems of building up German military and political power so as to enable the German State to measure up to its ideological aspirations when these came to be forcefully implemented; and the way such force was actually going to be employed. The preparation and employment of these means (i.e. the building up of German Power; and the actual employment of force) to the end Hitler had in view, implicate Hitler's grand strategic scheme.\*

The first obstacle to the building up of German military, economic and political power was the Treaty of Versailles. This Treaty was a politico-legal pincer that caught Germany around the throat and kept it humble and weak, and so, caused a great deal of resentment among the German people. By shattering the Treaty of Versailles, Hitler would achieve two objectives. On the one hand, he would achieve the military, economic and political power that was the pre-requisite for the implementation of the Nazi philosophy in its external sense, and on the other hand, he could

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\* See below, pp. 106-108.

enhance the cause of National Socialism and his regime inside Germany, thus implementing his Nazi philosophy in its domestic sense.

The shattering of the Treaty of Versailles required a great deal of political adroitness coupled with great risks based on foresight, and Hitler did not hesitate to use all of his political genius to achieve that end.

Hence, political manipulation was the major device in the hands of Hitler in liquidation the Versailles Treaty. Moreover, Hitler used his ideological enmity to Communism as another device to achieve such a liquidation. For by appearing anti-Communist and championing the cause of western civilization against the Communist menace aided, to a great extent, Hitler's political manipulations aimed at the abrogation of the Treaty of Versailles. Practically in every move that Hitler took in the international sphere he did not fail to assert his friendship to the Western Powers and lack of interest in their possessions, while at the same time attacking the Soviet Union and pointing out its threat to Germany and Western civilization. Thus in this phase (1933-1938), Nazi ideology which was the end in Hitler's foreign policy was

also used as a device to enhance the achievement of that end.

**B. The Eradication of the Treaty of Versailles.**

Hitler started his programme for the liquidation of the Treaty of Versailles by playing the French, the British and the Italians against one another. This game was always coupled with oratorical attacks on the Soviet Union, the ideological enemy of National Socialism; for (as previously mentioned) it was Hitler's intention to appear (which in fact he was) as anti-Communist as possible and as the champion of the cause of Western civilization against the red peril. The first two steps that Hitler intended to take were: Wrecking the Disarmament Conference; and moving out of the League of Nations.

Hitler had his opportunity for leaving the Disarmament Conference when the French proposed their readiness to accept parity in armament with the Germans if the latter would remain disarmed for a trial period of four years. Hitler knew that the British did not share the French views and did not want to have any future commitments; he also knew that Britain,



together with Italy, sympathized with the German cause. So, he abruptly left the Disarmament Conference. A week later he left the League of Nations.<sup>18</sup>

The National Socialist attitude toward the Soviet Union from the moment of their coming to power made it difficult to ratify the German-Soviet Conciliation Agreement of 25 January, 1931, and the Protocol of 24 June, 1931, prolonging the Neutrality Treaty of 24 April, 1926. But although these two agreements were finally ratified in 5 May, 1933, the Soviet Union began moving toward the status-quo camp.<sup>19</sup>

Although Hitler did not wish to break altogether with the Russians, for he had plans for using them in a later stage, he never stopped his oratorical attacks on the Soviet Union. His speeches in the electoral campaign which followed Germany's withdrawal from the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations, clearly showed his hostility to Russia.<sup>20</sup>

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18. Taylor, op.cit., p. 76.

19. Beloff, Max, The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, Vol. I, (Oxford University Press, London: 1952), p. 97.

20. Hitler's Speeches 1922-1939, Vol. II, edited by Norman H. Baynes, (Oxford University Press, London: 1942), pp. 1059, 1115-16, 1127.

Soviet Russia, for her part, was greatly alarmed by the National Socialist's coming to power in Germany. This alarm could be traced as far back as the Hitler-Papen cabinet of 1932-33. In a letter to State Secretary Bulow in January 1933, German Ambassador to Russia von Dirksen said:

"The concern as regards Herr von Papen has not disappeared here by any means and the National Socialist Party is considered to be strongly anti-Soviet -- perhaps not entirely unjustly, if one recalls the announcement of a publication about the Red Army in the Voelkischer Beobachter, in which Russia is called Germany's greatest enemy."<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, the Russians still held their conciliatory attitude toward Germany. This attitude was clear in the speech delivered by Molotov on 28 September, 1933, to the Central Executive Committee of the U.S.S.R. He had said:

"Remaining true to our principles of defending world peace and the independence of our country, the U.S.S.R has no reason to alter her policy toward Germany. However, many attempts have

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21. Ambassador Dirksen to State Secretary Bulow, Moscow, January 31, 1933. Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945, Series C, Vol. I, (Washington Government Printing Office, 1957), p. 14.

been made in the past year, on the part of the ruling group in Germany to revise relations with the Soviet Union."<sup>22</sup>

Litvinov and Stalin emphasized the same points.<sup>23</sup>

Mussolini's proposal to conclude a Four Power Pact to include the four Western Powers mainly, Great Britain, France, Italy, and Germany, alarmed the Soviet leaders to the verge of panic, for they had always feared such a Western combination and thought of it as a war of intervention against the U.S.S.R. This pact was wrecked by France whose reason was the withdrawal of Germany from the League of Nations. Nevertheless, this was a major factor that pushed the Soviet Union still more toward the status - quo camp and toward a rapprochement with France. Poland, on the other hand, fearing that the Western Powers were abandoning her, began considering a rapprochement with Germany. The result was the Germano-Polish Agreement of 26 January, 1934. This Agreement was a major factor that caused the U.S.S.R. to become more fearful of Germany, and pushed her to approach

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22. Beloff, Vol. I, op.cit., p. 98.

23. Ibid., pp. 98-99.

the Western camp.<sup>24</sup>

Another important factor that also served to push the Russians to the status-quo camp was the possibility of a Germano-Japanese rapprochement, the latter being, at that time, safely entrenched in Manchuria and at peace with China.<sup>25</sup> Equally important was Germany's opposition to the Eastern Pact (proposed on July 1934) which made it clear to the Russians that Germany deliberately wanted the East to remain free for her to maneuver in.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, the Soviet Union found it in her interest to join the League of Nations, an institution which she had always labelled a "bourgeois sham." She was officially admitted on September, 1934.

The next step that Russia took was to approach France; and a pact was signed between the two countries on 2 May, 1935.

Hilger, emphasizes that "the deep fear of Hitler's Germany was the essential guide to all Soviet foreign policy

24. Toynbee, Arnold J., Survey of International Affairs 1935, (Oxford University Press, London: 1936), Vol. I, p. 62.

25. Taylor, op.cit., p. 78. See also Beloff, Vol. I, op.cit., p. 99.

26. Beloff, Vol. I, Ibid., p. 99.

in the mid-1930's." He was, also, convinced that "Hitler's policy led Moscow to enter the League of Nations and conduct a painfully futile struggle for active collective security against the Axis. At the same time it made the Kremlin bend every effort to render the country strong politically, economically, ideologically, and militarily. A desperate race against time ensued which was carried on in a spirit of hysterical urgency. Enemies were seen everywhere around and inside Soviet Society."<sup>27</sup>

Thus, German-Soviet relations seemed to have fallen to a very low ebb. Even German-Soviet military collaboration which until 1933 was running, more or less, smoothly was suddenly broken off. In that year the Red Army suddenly demanded that the Reichswehr liquidate all of its enterprises in the Soviet Union; and shortly afterwards declined to allow Soviet officers to attend any further courses at the German War Academy.<sup>28</sup>

It was only economic relations, although greatly deteriorating, that provided the last link between the two

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27. Hilger, and Meyer, op.cit., p. 276.

28. Ibid., p. 257.

countries and prevented a complete break between Germany and Russia. Germany's heavy exports to Russia had dropped off sharply after 1932, although Russian exports to Germany remained more or less the same until the year 1936.<sup>29</sup>

When, in October 1934, Count von der Schulenberg succeeded Nadolny as German Ambassador in Moscow, he found himself in a very difficult situation for the relations between his country and the Soviet Union were in a lamentable situation. His new policy was to follow a "cautious course" and make the best of what was possible. By this attitude Count von der Schulenburg contributed a great deal in making his country live through the crisis of its relation with the Soviet Union, and thus paved the way for a possible future understanding with Russia.<sup>30</sup>

Hitler saw in the friendship of Poland a greater advantage to Germany than that of one with Soviet Russia. Mr. Lipski had reported after a meeting with Hitler on 22 May, 1935, that "in his (Hitler's) eastern policy, the

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29. Beloff, Vol. I, op.cit., pp. 95-96.

30. Hilger and Meyer, op.cit., p. 275.

Chancellor took up the position that a rapprochement with Poland was more advantageous to Germany than uneasy relations with Russia."<sup>31</sup>

Hitler justified his attitude towards Poland to the German people by the words:

"Without taking the past into account, Germany has concluded a non-aggression pact with Poland. This is more than a valuable contribution to European peace, and we shall adhere to it unconditionally."<sup>32</sup>

It is, however, evident that there was more to such a pact than Hitler's declared concern about European peace.

In the first place, Hitler had chosen the anti-Bolshevik theme from the very start and decided to play on it to the end. He couldn't possibly take a hostile attitude towards Poland without, hopelessly, exposing all of his eastern rear. Besides, Poland's friendship would exentuate and sharpen his already planned attitude toward Bolshevism for Polish-Soviet enmity was an already established fact.

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31. Beloff, Vol. I, op.cit., pp. 101-102.

32. Hitler's Words, op.cit., p. 189.

Moreover, by befriending Poland, Hitler hoped to win the favors of the West (and especially Great Britain) for, on the one hand, the Polish State was favored in Western circles, and, on the other hand, Hitler would appear sincere in his principle of enmity to Bolshevism by upholding such a principle at the expense of befriending a country on whom the Germans had territorial demands.

On the practical side, Hitler did not fear a Russian attack on the Reich for, Russia was still militarily weak, and she was separated from Germany by other states. What Hitler really feared was a Polish move on his eastern frontier and particularly Silesia. His pact with the Poles offered Germany great security. Another practical reason was that by concluding a non-aggression pact with Poland, Hitler would counteract the rapprochement between France and the Soviet Union and make the Danube agreement proposed at Stresa untenable.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, by concluding a non-aggression pact with Poland, Hitler would drive a permanent wedge between the latter and Russia, a wedge which Hitler hoped to take great advantage of in the future. A

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33. Beloff, Vol. I, op.cit.,



fourth practical reason would be to drive a wedge between Poland and France and bring the former out of the French system altogether.

A year after joining the League of Nations, Russia concluded a pact with France. The Russian intention was, to obtain increased security with the minimum increase in their obligations. They certainly overrated French moral and material strength and thought that it was profitable to stay on the right side of international law.<sup>34</sup>

The French on the other hand did not intend to take the Russian alliance seriously, for they were still mistrustful of the Soviets and had a low opinion of Russian strength. Moreover, they knew that such a move did not please the British and were very anxious not to lose British support no matter how little it was. According to Taylor, "The Franco-Soviet rapprochement was a reinsurance, no more."<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, this move annoyed the Nazis, and some of the leading statesmen in the Reich, including Neurath and von Bulow, felt

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34. Taylor, op.cit., pp. 78-79.

35. Ibid., p. 79.

inclined to normalize their relations with the Soviets. Only Hitler turned a deaf ear to these plans. His general motive was still primarily, to appear as the defender of Western civilization against Communism. His short-run safeguard was that he knew that the Russians could not undertake any action against the Reich since they were separated from Germany by Poland; on the other hand Hitler was convinced that the Russians did not want to do anything. "On the contrary, they had gone to the French side because they believed that this made fewer demands on them and entailed fewer risks than remaining friendly to Germany."<sup>36</sup>

The next step that Hitler envisaged to build German power was the reintroducing of military conscription in the Reich. This he accomplished in 1935, justifying his action by pointing out to the increasing strength of Soviet Russia.

"The German Government," he said, "must however, to its regret, observe that for months past there has been taking place a continuous increase in armaments on the part of the rest of the world. It sees in the creation of a Soviet-Russian Army of 101 divisions, i.e., an admitted peace strength of 960,000 men, an element that could not have been contemplated at the time of the conclusion of the Treaty of Versailles."<sup>37</sup>

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36. Ibid.

37. Hitler's Speeches, op.cit., p. 1209.

Hitler, moreover, stressed Germany's peaceful intention and reiterated his hostility to, and lack of faith in, the Soviet Union. In May 1935, Hitler said:

"Nobody in this unified and disciplined state wants war. Moreover, nobody here will take any step to cause war. We are ready and always have been, to sign any document whose full requirements can be foreseen. We will sign non-aggression pacts with all the world, but we will not sign a multi-lateral pact of mutual assistance in the East. In no circumstances would Germany fight for the Bolsheviks. Rather than sign such a pact I would hang myself."<sup>38</sup>

The implications that one could get from this talk are two-fold. In the first place, Hitler wanted to display his anti-Bolshevik attitude to the Western Powers. In the second place, Hitler, who never wanted to have any multi-lateral treaty commitments in the East, used Soviet Russia as a scapegoat to wreck such a scheme. Thus, it would seem that National Socialist enmity to Bolshevism and Hitler's blunt admission of it was a great help to him both from the view-point of practical expediency and as a device from which he derived emotional support.

The next step that Hitler envisaged to strengthen

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38. Ibid., p. 1214.

Germany was to remilitarize the Rhineland. His chance came when first the Stresa front broke on Italy's triumph in Ethiopia, and, his excuse came when the French Chamber ratified the Franco-Soviet Pact on 27 February, 1936, although his troops had already moved into the Rhineland. In a speech that Hitler delivered on March, 1936, he said:

"This new Franco-Soviet agreement, introduces the threatening military power of a mighty empire into the center of Europe by the round-about way of Czechoslovakia; the latter country<sup>39</sup> having also signed an agreement with Russia..."

He also made a very friendly gesture to Poland in which he seemed to renounce Germany's claim to the Polish corridor. He said:

"We feel it unpleasant for instance that access to the sea, accorded to a nation of 33,000,000 should cut through former territory of the Reich; but we recognize that it is not unreasonable, because it is impossible to deny so large a state an approach to the sea."<sup>40</sup>

By the remilitarization of the Rhineland, Hitler had imposed a defensive policy on the French whether they liked it or not, and the British felt relieved now that Locarno

39. Ibid., p. 1288.

40. Hitler's Words, op.cit., p. 189.

was shattered for they would not anymore be dragged into war for the sake of a country in Eastern Europe as had happened in 1914. Only Litvinov proposed sanctions against Germany, "and his advocacy was in itself enough to damn the proposal."<sup>41</sup>

Thus Hitler, by his adroit diplomacy was able, by the year 1936, to shatter most of the provisions of the Versailles Treaty and altogether wreck the provisions of Locarno.

Although German and Italian policies were not, by any means, harmonious especially over Austria and Hungary, Italy felt it beneath her dignity to approach the Western Powers after the Abyssinian conflict. The only feasible way was for her to draw towards Germany but on an "abstract" basis. Both Italy and Germany felt that by drawing together they would be able to extract concessions for themselves from the Western Powers. The result was the Rome-Berlin Axis of 27 October, 1936, in which both Germany and Italy only emphasized their "ideological" similarity.<sup>42</sup>

At the same time, Hitler followed a similar policy

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41. Taylor, op.cit., p. 100.

42. Ibid., pp. 110-111.

with Japan. As was the case with Italy, German and Japanese interests were by no means harmonious, for Hitler wanted to push the Japanese against Russia and Great Britain, without himself straining his relations with China. Japan, on the other hand, "would no more tolerate Germany in the Far East than any other European power. Each intended the other to provide the conflict so that it could collect the reward."<sup>43</sup> The solution that was provided by Ribbentrop was the Anti-Comintern Pact of 17 November, 1934: a manifestation of their solid stand against Communism without any practical obligation on any of the two sides. It was never intended to be, at least on the part of Japan, an anti-Russian alliance.<sup>44</sup>

The Russians became dreadful of a double war in the Far East as well as in Eastern Europe. They felt, more than ever before, that they should now draw to the Western Powers. But although the West thought of accepting Russia, they hesitated to take such a step due to their fear of Communism. Russia, it is true was admitted to the League and concluded a pact with France, but nothing more was envisaged by the

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43. Ibid., p. 111.

44. Ibid., p. 111.

Western Powers. They wished to remain neutral with regard to the struggle between Communism and Fascism tending generally to throw their weight on the Fascist side.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the year 1936, which marked the beginning of the great purges in Russia lessened Western confidence in the Soviet system and strengthened their conviction that Russia was really useless as an ally, and that her system would not survive any strain.<sup>46</sup>

The Western Powers, on the other hand, embarked on strengthening their own defensive position in order to be able to check any future German aggression. The British changed their two-sided guarantee under the Treaty of Locarno to a straight guarantee to France if the latter should be directly attacked. This guarantee was greatly weakened by Belgium's reversion to her pre-1914 position of neutrality.<sup>47</sup>

Hence we could say that there was a marked dichotomy between Western political conception and that of Soviet Russia. The latter's policy as advocated by M. Litvinov was a straight division between peace-loving nations and aggressors, and followed the dictum of the indivisibility of peace. By this

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45. Ibid., p. 112.

46. Ibid., p.112 and Beloff, Max, The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, Vol. II, (Oxford University Press, London, 1952), p. 2.

47. Taylor, op.cit., pp. 113-114.

they envisaged to solve all international problems through cooperation between the peace-loving nations only (excluding the so-called aggressors); and to consider every problem as inseparable from the general European situation. While the Western Powers wanted to draw the so-called aggressors too; and insisted on handling each dispute on its own merit.<sup>48</sup>

The Spanish Civil War which broke out in 1936, dragged Italy and Germany to the help of Franco, and Soviet Russia to the help of the Republic. This war did not upset the balance of power in Europe but caused strains in the relations of Great Britain and the Russians. The former wanted the war to end as quickly as possible, and did not care about the outcome. She believed that Russian help to the Republic was prolonging the war. The Russians, on their part, interpreted the British attitude as one favoring the triumph of Fascism.<sup>49</sup>

Thus, when Hitler remilitarized the Rhineland and felt secure on his Western front, and secured the (at least moral) backing of Italy and Japan, he turned his attention

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48. Beloff, Vol. II, op.cit., p. 2.

49. Taylor, op.cit., p. 125.



towards the East to solve the Austrian, Czech, and Polish problems as a prelude to the general conflict by which he envisaged to "solve the German problem."

He was really finished with the West for the time being, and stressed this satisfaction by a friendly appeal to France. On 18 March, 1936, Hitler said:

"Germany had steadily given the assurance, and I solemnly repeat this assurance here, that between ourselves and France, for example, there are no quarrels that are humanly thinkable."<sup>50</sup>

On 21 February, 1938, he stressed the fact that:

"Germany has no further territory in Europe to claim from France, a point I have frequently stressed. We hope the regaining of the Saar district has now definitely closed the chapter of Franco-German territorial disputes."<sup>51</sup>

Hitler's first move in the East was the Anschluss with Austria. Before achieving that, Hitler settled the border dispute with Mussolini, definitely, on the Brenner. He, also by his adroit maneuvering, made sure that the

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50. Hitler's Words, op.cit., p. 193.

51. Ibid., p. 193.

Western Powers would not interfere. The solving of the Czech question seemed more difficult than that of Austria, for Czechoslovakia's system of alliances was formidable at least on paper.<sup>52</sup> She had, in 1925, signed an alliance of mutual defense with France. She also had an alliance with Soviet Russia signed in 1935, which, however, functioned only if France acted first. Furthermore, she was a party to the Little Entente, an alliance mainly directed against Hungary.

Benes was a Westerner in his outlook, for he was a follower of Masaryk, who had won independence for Czechoslovakia not with Russian, but with Western assistance. Hence, Benes neglected the Russian alliance and considered it, not a substitute but a supplement to the French one.<sup>53</sup>

Moscow had asserted that she would fulfill her treaty obligations and act if France acted first. But the Western Powers especially Great Britain did not desire to see the Soviet Union involved in European politics.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, they did not believe (to their pleasure) that the Soviet Army could,

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52. Taylor, op.cit., p. 154.

53. Ibid., p. 151.

54. Ibid., p. 158.

in any way, aid in checking Hitler.<sup>55</sup> In a letter from Chilston, the British Ambassador at Moscow, dated 19 April, 1938, to the British Foreign Office, Chilston had said:

"The Red Army, though no doubt equal to a defensive war within the frontiers of the Soviet Union, is incapable of carrying the war into the enemy's territory... I personally consider it highly unlikely that the Soviet Government would declare war merely in order to fulfill their treaty obligations or even to forstall a blow to Soviet prestige or an indirect threat to Soviet security.... The Soviet Union must be counted out of European politics."<sup>56</sup>

Now, whether the Soviet Union would really have fulfilled her treaty obligation and come to the assistance of Czechoslovakia if called upon, cannot be established for no such call was made; and, consequently Russia's moral position was greatly enhanced for she had always declared her willingness to fulfill such obligation provided the French acted first.

The Czechoslovakian crisis was finally solved in the Munich settlement which was the culminating point of the Western Policy of appeasement to Hitler. The Czechoslovak Republic was destroyed and in its place, Hitler created the

55. Ibid., p. 158.

56. Ibid., p. 158. (Quoted from Documents on British Foreign Policy Third Series, No. 148).

satellite state of Slovakia.

Poland's role throughout all this crisis was greatly favorable to the Germans. "Poland, though still nominally allied to France, had stretched the non-aggression pact far in Germany's interest. Thanks largely to her, the Franco-Soviet pact had never become a reality."<sup>57</sup> Since it seemed that Poland would never have given permission to Russian troops to pass through her territory to come to the aid of Czechoslovakia. She was herself interested in the Czechoslovakian district of Tasin and hated Russia too much to have Russian troops pass through her territory.

Thus, from this general survey, it would be concluded that after the coming to power in Germany, of the National Socialists, the Russian policy of the Weimar Republic was suddenly reversed. From 1919 to 1925, a rapprochement with Russia was envisaged as the only device by which to extract concessions from the West, neutralize Poland, and aid Germany to rearm and develop its economy. From 1925 to 1932, fulfillment of Western demands was envisaged as a device by which to save Germany; but Russia was still kept as a "trump card"

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57. Ibid., p. 114.

to be used against the West and as a device to neutralize Poland.

Hitler came to power with an ideology which he hoped to promote, but only after Germany became strong again. The provisions of Versailles strangled Germany and Hitler hoped to eliminate them first. Hitler's ideological enemy was Communism; and he took advantage of that to shake off the provisions of Versailles. Thus Nazi ideology and foreign policy supplemented one another in the period 1933-1938, i.e., the period of the liquidation of the Treaty of Versailles. Thus as von Seeckt saw Germany's salvation in Russia's friendship; Hitler saw Germany's salvation in Russia's enmity and so declared ideological war on her but not to the point of no return, for he foresaw that Russia could be the salvation of Germany in the future and hence, he did not break altogether with her. The thin lines of continuity between Seeckt, Stresemann and Hitler was that none broke away completely from Russia and all saw in Russia some value although in different degrees and at different times.

When Hitler had finished with Versailles and thought himself strong enough to start implementing his Nazi ideology

i.e., expansion in the East; he again picked Seecht's Policy; for in 1939, he saw that Russia could offer him a great strategic advantage.

### CHAPTER III

#### The Prelude To The Nazi - Soviet

##### Non-Aggression Pact

The speech which Hitler delivered in the Reichstag on April 28, 1938, was, in a sense peculiar, for it was the first speech in which Hitler did not attack the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup>

On October 3, of the same year, a dispatch from the German Embassy in Moscow indicated that the failure of Litvinov's policy of collective security would not remain without consequences on Soviet Policy. Moreover, the dispatch also said that a more positive Soviet attitude toward Germany might be possible "arising out of the consideration that France has lost much of her value as an ally and that a more aggressive attitude on the part of Japan may be expected..."<sup>2</sup>

This dispatch was written by the German Counselor of Embassy in Moscow and it was certainly a reflection of his

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1. Shirer, William L., The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, (Secker and Warburg, London: 1961), p. 476.
  2. Counselor of Embassy (Tippelskirch) to Counselor of Legation Schliep, Documents on German Foreign Policy Series D, Vol. IV, Oct. 3, 1938, (His Majesty's Stationary Office, London: 1951), pp. 602-603.

personal evaluation. But if one reads between the lines, he might determine that the Germans would show a somewhat positive reaction to a Soviet change of policy in their favor if such a change was manifested.

Three weeks later, Count von der Schulenburg, the German Ambassador in Moscow informed the German Foreign Office that he intended to approach the Russians and try to discuss with them the questions disturbing German-Soviet Relations; and that he found that the adequate time for such a step would be the beginning of the negotiations on the 1939 German-Soviet agreement on trade and payments.<sup>3</sup>

According to Shirer, it is quite unlikely that the Ambassador had envisaged such a step on his own, "in view of Hitler's previous extremely hostile attitude toward Moscow. The hint must have come from Berlin."<sup>4</sup>

Hitler's speech of April 28, to the Reichstag, the dispatch, and the Ambassador's memorandum are all indications that Germany would consider normalizing its relations with the Soviet

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3. Memorandum by the Ambassador in the Soviet Union, Moscow, October 26, 1938. Ibid., p. 607.

4. Shirer, op.cit., p. 476.



Union. But still, it is very difficult to determine what was in Hitler's mind at that state. Did he really think that it was time to start implementing his plans for the solution of the German problem; and did he hope to gain Russia for that purpose? This cannot be definitely established, for until that time, Hitler had not yet laid his cards on the table.

The Germans were hoping to improve their trade relations with Russia as a first step to normalizing their political relations with her. For the Germans really needed to have Russia's raw materials.<sup>5</sup>

Although there was promising talk, the renewal of the economic agreements which expired at the end of 1938, was faced with a dead-lock. The immediate reason was that the two countries could not agree where to hold the negotiations.<sup>6</sup> The real reason, however, was that the Germans simply could not supply the Russians with their share of the goods.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the dead-lock over the renewal of the economic

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5. Memorandum by the Director of the Economic Policy Department, Berlin, November 4, 1938, Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series D, Vol. iv, op.cit., p. 608.
  6. Shirer, op.cit., p. 476.
  7. Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series D, vol. iv, op.cit., p. 631.

agreements did not end the matter. Indications showed that Russia too was reconsidering her stand regarding the Western Powers and Germany.

On March 10, 1939, Stalin delivered a speech at the first session of the Eighteenth Party Congress in Moscow. Schulenburg made a report of the speech and dispatched it to Berlin. He was of the view that it was "noteworthy that Stalin's irony and criticism were directed in considerably sharper degree against Britain than against the so-called aggressor states and in particular Germany."<sup>8</sup> Schulenburg had further interpreted Stalin to have said that the Western Powers were aiming at diverting the aggressors "to other victims." He also quoted Stalin to have said that the Western Powers were saying to the Germans:

"Just start a war with the Bolsheviks, everything else will take care of itself. This looks very much like encouragement ... it looks as if, the purpose ... was to engender the fury of the Soviet Union against Germany ... and to provoke a conflict with Germany without apparent reason..."<sup>9</sup>

Then Schulenburg quoted Stalin to have concluded two guiding

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8. Ibid., p. 477. The above was quoted by Shirer from the Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series D, vol. vi, pp. 1-3.

9. Ibid., p. 477.

principles:

- "1. To continue to pursue a policy of peace and consolidation of economic relations with all countries.
2. ...Not to let our country be drawn into conflict by warmongers, whose custom it is to let others pull their chestnuts out of the fire."<sup>10</sup>

This speech, although it does not indicate any major break between Russia and the Western powers, manifests the Soviets' intention to reorient their policy towards a new course. Nevertheless, Stalin did not lose hope of uniting with the Western Powers in order to check Nazi aggression. On March 15, i.e. three days after the German troops had occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia, Moscow proposed a "six-power conference to discuss means of preventing further aggression and Chamberlain turned it down as 'premature'."<sup>11</sup> This certainly frustrated the Soviet authorities. Furthermore, Stalin's suspicion towards the Western Powers was further enhanced when the British government, on March 31, gave a unilateral guarantee to Poland. This might have given Stalin

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10. Ibid., p. 477.

11. Ibid., p. 478.

the idea that the British preferred the Poles to the Russians; and that they were still resolved to keep the Russians out of European politics.<sup>12</sup>

From the general situation, the Western moves, and Stalin's speech, the Germans and Italians began to "glimpse certain opportunities." Goering told Mussolini on April 16, that Stalin's speech had impressed him. He also said that he "would ask the Fuhrer whether it would not be possible to put out feelers cautiously to Russia ... with a view to rapprochement." He, moreover, reminded the Duce that there had been "absolutely no mention of Russia in the Fuhrer's latest speeches." Mussolini agreed with Goering's assertion, and said:

"The object would be to induce Russia to react coolly and unfavorably to Britain's effort at encirclement, on the lines of Stalin's speech ... Moreover, in their ideological struggle against plutocracy, and capitalism, the Axis powers had, to a certain extent, the same objectives as the Russian Regime."<sup>13</sup>

This attitude on the part of the Axis leaders clearly indicates a major turn in their policy regarding the Soviet Union. Still, until that date, no clear indication of the

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12. Ibid., p. 468.

13. Ibid., pp. 478-488, as quoted from Documents on German Policy, Series D, vol. vi., pp.259-260.

real reason for the change in German and Italian attitudes except, maybe, the fear of "Britain's efforts at encirclement" had been given. On the other hand, the change on the part of the Russians could possibly be traced. Stalin's speech of March 10, 1939, clearly depicts the Russian point of view. Efforts at rapprochement were continued on both sides, although the Russians made one last bid to the Western Powers.

On April 16, the Soviet Union "put forward the suggestion that a three-power pact should be concluded between the USSR, Great Britain, and France, for the protection of countries menaced by Fascist aggression. The Soviet Government added that the agreement which it proposed could be embodied in three acts: in the first place, an agreement between the three powers for mutual assistance; in the second place, the conclusion between them of a military convention which would give to the mutual assistance pact real strength, and finally a guarantee by the three powers to all states between the Baltic and the Black Seas."<sup>14</sup>

This move on the part of the Russians was coupled with another move in the direction of the Axis powers. In an interview between the Russian Ambassador in Berlin (Merekalov) and the State Secretary in the German Foreign Office (Weizacher),

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14. Beloff, vol. ii, op.cit., pp. 234-35.

the latter reported that the Russian Ambassador asked him frankly what he thought of German-Russian relations. After some friendly gestures on the part of Weizacher, the Russian Ambassador went on to say that:

"Russian policy had always moved in a straight line. Ideological differences of opinion had hardly influenced the Russian-Italian relationship, and they did not have to prove a stumbling block with regard to Germany either. Soviet Russia had not exploited the present friction between Germany and the Western democracies against us, nor did she desire to do so. There exists for Russia no reason why she should not live with us on normal footing. And from normal, the relations might become better and better."<sup>15</sup>

These two Russian gestures could only mean that the Russians did not expect the Western Powers to react positively to their proposals, and hence, they sought the reorientation of their stand with regard to the Germans. On the other hand, if the West should accept the Russian proposals, then the Soviets would hardly have committed themselves to the Germans not to revert to their original stand of checking German aggression via the West. As it turned out, Chamberlain hesitated.

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15. Memorandum by the State Secretary in the German Foreign Office (Weizacher) April 17, 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939-1941, edited by Raymond Sontag and James Beddie, Documents from the archives of the German Foreign Office (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1948), pp. 1-2.

about the Russian proposals, and this was enough for Stalin to shift his stand once and for all. The first thing he did was to dismiss Litvinov as Chairman of the Office of Foreign Commissars and to appoint Molotov, the Chairman of the Council of the People's Commissars, in his place. The abrupt dismissal of Litvinov, who had been the principal advocate of the idea of collective security, the League of Nations, and military alliances with the Western Powers to check German aggression, was very obvious to all.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, of significance to the change of the Russian attitude was the fact that Litvinov was a Jew, while Molotov was not. The dismissal of the former and the appointment in his place of the latter was an indication that the Soviets were willing to come to an understanding with the Germans.<sup>17</sup>

On May 8, the British government replied to the Russian proposals of April 16, for a military alliance, and their answer was "virtual rejection." This sealed the Russian conviction that the West could never be relied on to check

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16. Shirer, op.cit., p. 480.

17. Ibid., p. 481.

German aggression, and caused them to seek the Germans further. "If Chamberlain could appease Hitler, could not the Russian dictator?" On May 17, Astakhov, the Soviet Charge D'Affaire, at the Russian Embassy in Berlin, saw Dr. Julius Schnurre, the German Foreign Office expert on East European economic affairs, and after discussing Russian trade relationships with the Reich, turned to political matters. Schnurre reported Astakhov to have said that:

"There were no conflicts in foreign policy between Germany and Soviet Russia, and that therefore there was no reason for any enmity between the two countries. It was true that in the Soviet Union there was a distinct feeling of being menaced by Germany. It would undoubtedly be possible to eliminate this feeling of being menaced and the distrust in Moscow. During this conversation, he also again mentioned the treaty of Rapallo. In reply to my incidental question, he commented on the Anglo-Soviet negotiations to the effect that under the present circumstances, the result desired by England would hardly be achieved."<sup>18</sup>

The Germans also felt that the Russians were changing their stand toward them when the German Ambassador to Moscow reported Molotov to have said to him that "The Soviet Government could only agree to a resumption of the [economic] negotiations if the necessary 'political bases' for them had been constructed."<sup>19</sup>

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18. Foreign Office Memorandum by Schnurre, Berlin, May 17, 1939. Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939-1941, op.cit., p. 5.

19. Memorandum by the German Ambassador to the Soviet Union (Schulenburg), Moscow, May 20, 1939, Ibid., p. 6.



This makes the fact, that the Russians were seeking such a political basis, obvious.

On May 22, Mussolini had suddenly and intuitively "committed himself irrevocably to Hitler's fortunes." On that day a treaty was signed between Italy and Germany the military character of which was emphasized by a sentence in the pre-amble which Hitler had insisted on inserting. It said that the two nations "united by the inner affinity of their ideologies ... are resolved to act side by side and unite forces to secure their living-space."<sup>20</sup> Article III read:

"If contrary to the wishes and hopes of the High Contracting Parties, it should happen that one of them becomes involved in warlike complications with another Power or Powers, the other High Contracting Party would immediately come to its assistance as an ally and support it with all its military forces on land, at sea, and in the air."<sup>21</sup>

#### Germany and Poland and Hitler's Strategic Plans.

Prior to the occupation of the whole of Czechoslovakia by German troops, it had been noted that German-Polish relations were very cordial. Hitler wanted them that way, for his policy was that of isolating his victims before finishing them off.

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20. Shirer, op.cit., p. 483.

21. Ibid., p. 483.

Poland's friendship was of great help to Hitler in solving the Austrian and the Czechoslovakian problems. When Austria was incorporated into the Reich, and when on March 15, 1939, the Germans in defiance of the Munich Agreement attacked Prague and virtually the whole of Czechoslovakia came under their control, all eyes were turned to the supposed next victim -- Poland. Hitler, however, thought that Poland was still of some use to him and wished to retain its friendship at least for the time being. On the 21st of March, i.e. less than a week after the occupation of Prague, he offered a definite solution to the German-Polish question. This he made openly in a speech to the Reichstag on April 28, 1939. He said:

"After the problem of Danzig had already been discussed several times, some months ago, I made a concrete offer to the Polish government. First [that] Danzig returns as a Free State into the framework of the German Reich, [and] second [that] Germany receives a route through the Corridor and a railway line at her own disposal possessing the same extra territorial status for Germany as the Corridor itself has for Poland. In return ... Germany is prepared to accept at the same time the present boundaries between Germany and Poland and to regard them as ultimate, [and] to conclude a twenty-five year, non-aggression treaty with Poland..."<sup>22</sup>

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22. Extract from Herr Hitler's Speech to the Reichstag on April 28, 1938. Documents Concerning German-Polish Relations and the Outbreak of Hostilities Between Great Britain and Germany on September 23, 1939. (Printed and Published by His Majesty's Stationary Office, London, 1939) p. 22.

What was perhaps in Hitler's mind was to come to an understanding with Poland and win her to the German side for a future German-Polish showdown with Russia. On March 21, von Ribbentrop had emphasized to Lipski, the Polish Ambassador in Berlin, "that obviously an understanding between us [Germany and Poland] would have to include explicit anti-Soviet tendencies. He affirmed that Germany could never collaborate with the Soviets and that a Polish-Soviet understanding would inevitably lead to Bolshevism in Poland."<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Germany proposed a "military union" with Poland. This was camouflaged in paragraph five of the proposals,<sup>24</sup> which Hitler made public in his speech which he delivered on the 28th of April.<sup>25</sup> The Poles, realizing what Hitler was aiming at, had rejected the proposals on the 26th of March. They were not satisfied with that, but informed Potemkin, the Acting Commissar for Foreign Affairs, when he was visiting Poland early in May, that Hitler had proposed to them a joint German-Polish partition of Russia

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23. Dallin, op.cit., p. 15. (Quotation taken from Polish White Book, Doc. No. 16).

24. Paragraph 5 of Hitler's proposals stated: "To guarantee the independence of the Slovak State by Germany, Poland and Hungary jointly -- which means in practice the reunification of any unilateral German hegemony in this territory." Extract from Herr Hitler's speech to the Reichstag on April 28, op.cit., p. 22.

25. Ibid., p. 15.

to the effect of separating Georgia from the Soviet Union, annexing Russian Ukraine to Polish Ukraine, etc.<sup>26</sup>

By this Poland broke away from seeking her security and interests in Germany's friendship and reverted back to her original stand with the Western Powers. On the other hand, she also wished to normalize her relations with the Soviet Union and win her too against the Germans. On May 13, 1939, Polish Foreign Minister Beck, after conversing with Deputy-Commissar Potemkin, reported that the Soviet government took an understanding attitude to their (Polish) point of view with regard to Polish-Soviet relations which were then developing quite normally. Beck also said:

"The Soviets realize that the Polish government is not prepared to enter into any agreement with either one of Poland's great neighbours against the other, and understand the advantages to them of this attitude. M. Potemkin also stated that in the event of an armed conflict between Poland and Germany, the Soviets will adopt 'une attitude bienveillante' towards us."<sup>27</sup>

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26. Ibid., p. 16.

27. Telegram from Minister Beck to the Polish Embassy in Paris on his conversation with Deputy Commissar Potemkin regarding the Soviet attitude in the event of an armed conflict between Poland the Germany. Documents on Polish-Soviet Relations 1939-1945, vol. i, 1939-1943, (General Sikorski Historical Institute, printed and bound by Butler, Tanner Ltd., London, 1961), Doc. No. 19, p. 28.

What the Poles did regarding the German proposals was to submit counter-proposals to the German government which Hitler did not reply to until one month later. When on March 31, the Poles concluded talks with the British aiming at mutual assistance, Hitler declared in the speech on April 28, that such Anglo-Polish understandings were incompatible with the spirit of the German-Polish Agreement of January, 1934, and thus it was no longer binding.<sup>28</sup> As for the Polish counter-proposals, the Polish government learned from the same speech and from the subsequent German memorandum "that the mere fact of the formulation of counter-proposals [on the part of the Poles] instead of the acceptance of the verbal German suggestions without alteration or reservation had been regarded by the Reich as a refusal of discussion."<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, on May 5, the Polish government replied to the German Memorandum of April 28. In the reply, the Polish government endeavoured to refute the German accusations and declared that the Anglo-Polish talks were by no means incompatible with the German-Polish Agreement of 1934.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, on the same day when the

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28. German Government Memorandum handed to the Polish Government on April 28, 1939, Ibid., pp. 24-27.

29. Ibid., p. 34.

30. Memorandum communicated to the German Government by the Polish Government on May 5, 1939, in reply to the German Government Memorandum of April 28, 1939. Ibid., pp. 32-35.

Polish counter-proposals were issued, the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs delivered a speech in the Polish Parliament in which he said that his government regarded the German proposals as a demand for "unilateral concessions." He also said that the Polish government was ready to discuss any issue that the Germans would bring up, but two conditions should prevail: "(1) Peaceful intentions" "(2) Peaceful methods of procedure."<sup>31</sup>

Hitler seemed to have really meant what he said, that the Polish counter-proposals meant a refusal of discussion, for no answer to the Polish memorandum of May 5 was presented by the Germans. [Instead Hitler seemed to have great strategic and political plans. Those he disclosed to his close associates in a conference on May 23, 1939.] By this time, there were three points which were clear to Hitler. In the first place, Italy was his ally; secondly, a rapprochement was in the process of being worked out with Russia, and Russia was expected to be won over to the Axis or at least neutralized; and thirdly, Poland would not cooperate with him.

On May 23, Hitler [opened his monologue] by emphasizing

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31. Speech made by M. Beck, the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs in Parliament on May 5, 1939. Ibid., pp. 27-32.

that Germany's economic problem could not be solved except by acquiring more living-space in Europe, and this he believed could not be accomplished except by invading other countries, i.e., by war.

"Further successes can no longer be attained without the shedding of blood ... Danzig is not the subject of the dispute at all. It is a question of expanding our living space in the East, of securing our food supplies and also of solving the problem of the Baltic States ... There is no other possibility in Europe ... If fate forces us into a showdown with the West, it is invaluable to possess a large area in the East. In wartime we shall be even less able to rely on record harvests than in peacetime."<sup>32</sup>

He went on to say:

"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 the Czech affair. There will be war."<sup>33</sup>

He went on to say that this decision might well result in a war with Britain and France, for "the Polish situation [was] inseparable from a conflict with the West." Should Russia side with the West, said Hitler: "I would be constrained to attack

32. Shirer, p. 484.

33. "Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal," Nuremberg, 14 November, 1945 -- 1 October, 1946, vol. ii, (published at Nuremberg, Germany, 1947), p. 134.

Britain and France with a few annihilating blows." One might deduce from this that Hitler was ready to go on with the war despite the fact that Russia might side with the West, and hence, he would repeat the strategic folly of the First World War of conducting the war on two fronts. Nevertheless, he also mentioned in the same speech indications to the contrary. If Hitler was to attack the West before Poland or both simultaneously, he said that he would be worried about his rear, for he believed that Poland's "internal power of resistance to Bolshevism [was] of doubtful value as a barrier against Russia. The Polish government [would] not resist pressure from Russia." Therefore, he thought it more convenient to finish Poland first, and in order to do so "...the Soviet Union must be induced to cooperate directly or indirectly in the isolation of Poland if this isolation [was] to be achieved."<sup>34</sup> He went on to say: "It is not impossible that Russia will show herself to be disinterested in the destruction of Poland."<sup>35</sup>

There was some sort of contradiction in the way Hitler presented his views to his associates. He seemed to be ready

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34. De Mendelssohn, Peter, The Nuremberg Documents, (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London 1946), p.239.

35. Quoted in Wheeler-Bennet, op.cit., p. 438.



to conduct a war on two fronts, and on the other hand, he was seeking to isolate Poland. Nevertheless, the general conclusion that one might reach is that Hitler was trying to avoid a conflict on two fronts by neutralizing Russia at the expense of Poland.

#### Further Nazi-Soviet Rapprochement.

By May, 1939, the British seemed to have reconsidered their stand vis-a-vis Russia. The necessity of coming to an understanding with the Soviets was pointed out by Mr. Churchill, when on May 19, he said in the House of Commons that Moscow had made "a fair offer ... more simple, more direct, more effective" than Chamberlain's proposals and urged the government "to get some brutal truths into their heads. Without an effective Eastern front, there can be no satisfactory defense in the West, and without Russia, there can be effective Eastern front."<sup>36</sup> Chamberlain had to reconsider his stand (i.e. his skeptical attitude towards Russia) in view of the fact that many other British politicians shared Churchill's views. But to the surprise of the Western envoys, Molotov took "a very cool view"<sup>37</sup> of an Anglo-French draft for a pact of mutual assistance,

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36. Shirer, op.cit., pp. 489-90.

37. Ibid., p. 490.

a military convention and guarantees to the countries threatened by Nazi Germany, presented to him on 24 May. However, the change of the British attitude toward Russia and the possibilities of a pact between Britain and France and Soviet Russia alarmed the Germans.

On May 26, Ribbentrop drafted instructions to the German Ambassador in Moscow to tell Molotov that "a real opposition of interests in foreign affairs [did] not exist between Germany and Soviet Russia (and that) the time had come to consider a pacification and normalization of German-Soviet Russian foreign relations..." Moreover, the German Ambassador was to indicate to the Kremlin that in case of a Polish-German conflict, Russia's interests would be taken into consideration."<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, the Germans planned to draw the attention of the Russians to the fact that a Soviet alliance with Great Britain would not benefit them for Britain was not in a position to offer Russia "a really valuable quid pro quo, no matter how treaties may be formulated," for the German West Wall rendered all assistance in Europe impossible. "The Ambassador was also to hint that the Germans were convinced that Britain would

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38. Quoted in Ibid., p. 491.

"once more remain faithful to her traditional policy of letting other powers pull her chestnuts out of the fire."<sup>39</sup>

Count Von Schulenburg was also to emphasize to Molotov that Germany had "no aggressive intentions against Russia" and, further, to convey to the Russians that Germany was not only ready to reopen economic negotiations but to "return to normal in political relations."<sup>40</sup> However, this dispatch was never sent to Schulenburg, for the Fuhrer had suddenly changed his mind. This did not mean that Hitler abandoned his rapprochement to the Soviets, but he really thought that this dispatch meant going too far and was afraid that the Russians would rebuff him. The best way was to continue approaching the Russians but in a more cautious way. Another factor which caused the Germans to approach the situation more cautiously was that the Japanese considered their relations with the Russians somewhat "problematical." Italy, too, was following a hesitant attitude. This was indicated in a dispatch from the German Foreign Office to the German Ambassador in Moscow, which said:

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39. Quoted in Ibid., pp. 491-492.

40. Quoted in Ibid., p. 492.

"The possibility of success is considered here to be quite limited, so that one must weigh whether a very open statement in Moscow, instead of being beneficial, might not rather be harmful and perhaps produce a peal of Tartar laughter. In weighing the whole chain, namely, a gradual conciliation between Moscow and Tokyo, is regarded by the Japanese as distinctly problematical. Rome was also very hesitant, so that eventually the disadvantage of the proposed far-reaching steps was regarded as a determining factor."<sup>41</sup>

This dispatch was not sent to Schulenburg until May 30.

Probably Weizsacher was waiting to see if the Fuhrer would change his mind. When it was dispatched, a footnote was added which meant that the Fuhrer did alter his stand a little:

"To my lines above I must add that now, with the consent of the Fuhrer, a distinctly limited exchange of views with the Russians will take place by means of a conference which I am to hold today with the Russian Charge. You will, of course, be officially informed of developments. I need, therefore, not go more deeply into the matter here."<sup>42</sup>

The change in the German attitude came about when on May 29, there was a meeting between Ribbentrop, State Secretary Wezsacher, Frederich Gaus, Head of the Legal Department, and Italian Ambassador Attolico, in which the question of Russian

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41. The State Secretary in the German Foreign Office (Weizsacher) to the German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg), Berlin, May 27, 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., p. 9.

42. P.S. Berlin, May 30, 1939, Ibid., p. 10.

rapprochement was discussed. Attolico was of the view that timid German feelers to Moscow would not pay off in view of the fact that a Russian-British-French combination was not far off. This really stirred the German politicians, particularly Ribbentrop and Weizsacher, who realized the validity of Attolico's argument.<sup>43</sup> Consequently Ribbentrop and Weizsacher realized that the latter should arrange a meeting with Astakhov, the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires, and inform him that "further clarification of Molotov's views on the subject of resuming economic negotiations seemed relevant and desirable." The German State Secretary would then refer to the Russian Chargé d'Affaire's past mention of the possibility of "normalizing" Germany's relations with Russia. In this respect, "Wezsacher would develop the theme that although Germany saw no unsurmountable obstacle to such a possibility, the real intentions of the Soviet government would be clarified in view of the negotiations which the Soviets were conducting with Great Britain."<sup>44</sup>

On the same day, Ribbentrop asked for Hitler's approval

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43. Weinberg, Gerhard L., Germany and the Soviet Union 1939-1941, (Leiden, E.J. Brill, Netherlands, 1954), p. 30.

44. Ibid., p. 31.

of the approach which he and Weizsacher proposed to follow with the Soviets, and got it.<sup>45</sup> Weizsacher did have the meeting with Georgi Astakhov, the Russian Chargé d'Affaires, and although both did not wish to commit themselves, Weizsacher sensed that the Russian Chargé d'Affaires, after feeling his hints, indicated somewhat that his government did have the tendency to come to a closer political and economic understanding with the Germans.<sup>46</sup> On the same day, a very important telegram was dispatched to the German Ambassador in Moscow. It was important because it marked a definite reorientation in the German policy towards the Soviet Union:

"Contrary to the policy previously planned, we have now decided to undertake definite negotiations with the Soviet Union ... I got the impression from the conversation [with Astakhov] that the statements of Molotov<sup>47</sup> should not be considered as intentional refusal. Instructions for further treatment of the subject are being held in reserve."<sup>48</sup>

45. Ibid., p. 31.

46. Memorandum by the State Secretary in the German Foreign Office (Weizsacher), Berlin, May 30, 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., pp. 12-15.

47. Molotov had said on May 20, that "the Soviet government could only agree to a reservation of the negotiations (economic negotiations with the Germans) if political bases for them had been constructed."

48. The State Secretary in the German Foreign Office (Weizsacher) to the German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg), Berlin, May 30, 1939, Ibid., pp. 15-17.

This change of the German attitude seemed to have had some effect on the Russians, for on the next day, i.e. May 31, Molotov, while addressing the Third Session of the Supreme Soviet, blamed the Western Powers for their hesitation. Although he still offered to come to an agreement with them, he put forward great obligations on the Western Powers which were unlikely to be accepted:

- "1. Conclude a tripartite mutual assistance pact of a purely defensive character.
2. Guarantee the states of Central and Eastern Europe, including all European states bordering on the Soviet Union.
3. Conclude a definite agreement on the form and scope of the immediate and effective aid to be afforded each other and the smaller states threatened by aggression."<sup>49</sup>

As for Germany, Molotov said:

"While conducting negotiations with Great Britain and France, we by no means consider it necessary to renounce business relations with countries like Germany and Italy ... At the beginning of 1939, the People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade was informed that a special German representative, Herr Schnurre, was leaving for Moscow for the purpose of these negotiations. Subsequently, the negotiations were entrusted to Herr Schulenburg ... but they were discontinued on account of disagreement. To judge by certain signs, it is not precluded that the negotiations may be resumed."<sup>50</sup>

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49. Quoted in Shirer, op.cit., p. 490.

50. Quoted in Weinberg, op.cit., p. 32.

Clearly, as far as the Soviets were concerned, economic negotiations might be continued, and since Molotov himself had said that political understanding should be the basis of any economic understanding, it could be deduced that the Russians were willing to establish political understanding with the Germans. Thus, one could say that by the end of May, 1939, some sort of basis for negotiations between the Germans and the Russians had been established, and the period of "soundings and feelers" had come to an end.

All through the month of June, the Germans and the Russians were busy conducting preliminary talks for a Russo-German trade agreement. By June 27, there were, however, still traces of mistrust in the Soviet attitude toward Germany. This attitude was clearly depicted by Count von Schulenburg, the German Ambassador in Moscow. In a telegram by Schulenburg to the German Foreign Office, the Ambassador explained the Soviet attitude by saying that Mikoyan did not want to break off negotiations with the Germans, but wished to have them under control. For the Soviets believed that if they were to start the negotiations at that particular stage, the Germans would gain political advantage from them, for the British and Polish



attitudes would certainly be influenced. They feared that once the Germans gained these political advantages, they would "again let the negotiations lapse."<sup>51</sup>

Two days later Schulenburg had a meeting with Molotov in which the former tried to clarify the German stand and to assure the Soviet Union that Germany had no aggressive designs on either Russia or the Baltic States. Molotov's reaction indicated interest, but his conversation was reserved and non-committal.<sup>52</sup>

On the other hand, negotiations between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union were underway. However, two points seemed to threaten the whole process of negotiations with deadlock. This was made clear by the Soviet account of the June-July talks that were conducted between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union.<sup>53</sup> The Soviet Union wanted the guarantees to cover cases that involved direct, as well as indirect,

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51. The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, June 27, 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., pp. 24-25.

52. The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, June, 29, 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, Ibid., pp. 26-27.

53. Beloff, Max, Vol. ii, op.cit., p. 254.

aggression.<sup>54</sup> The Western Powers rejected this concept on the ground that the concept of indirect aggression as the Soviets conceived it was so wide that the Western Powers would be burdened with unlimited liabilities which might necessitate their intervening in the domestic affairs of other states, for any change of government in any state could be interpreted as an indirect threat to the Soviet Union's security. The other point that caused dead-lock in the negotiations was the insistence of the Soviets that a military convention should be concluded simultaneously with the political agreement between the three powers. The Anglo-French position, on the other hand, was that these two were not necessarily inseparable and should not be tied together. They felt that such a military convention could be concluded after the political agreement had been signed.<sup>55</sup>

Talks between the Western Powers and the Russians were resumed in Moscow on July 1, in which the British proposed that no names of countries to be guaranteed should be included

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54. By the term "indirect aggression," the Soviets had in mind that an aggressor might use the territory of a state bordering the USSR with or without the consent of the government of that state to launch an attack against the Soviet Union. Ibid., p. 254.

55. Quoted in Ibid., p. 254.

in the treaty itself, but should be included in a separate annex. The Soviets seemed to have accepted the British proposals, but insisted that Holland and Switzerland should not be included among the countries to be guaranteed by the Soviet Union. This guarantee would come after mutual assistance pacts were concluded between Poland, Turkey, and the Soviet Union.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, the Soviet Union insisted that the "guarantees to be offered to the Baltic States should cover the eventuality of what the Soviet government called 'indirect aggression.'"<sup>57</sup> Here the British seemed hesitant, but were persuaded by the French to agree to the Soviet proposal.<sup>58</sup> Although, at that stage, agreement between the Soviets and the Western Powers seemed not far off, the obstacle came from the smaller countries themselves. On July 1st, the Finnish Prime Minister made a strong protest against such schemes. Three days later, the Dutch government objected to the proposed guarantee, particularly since the Soviet Union was involved. While on July 7th, another official protest came from the Swiss government.<sup>59</sup>

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56. Ibid., p. 256.

57. Ibid., p. 257.

58. Ibid., p. 257.

59. Ibid., p. 257.

Meanwhile, new instructions (after approval by Hitler) were sent to the German Embassy in Moscow on about July 8th. These provided for further concessions in the economic field but showed reserve in the political one.<sup>60</sup> Such a change in the German attitude, in favour of concession to the Soviets, could be interpreted in the light of the British and French attitudes and in the light of the attitude of the Axis powers themselves.

By the first of July, the German-Polish problem had become very acute. By that time, too, the French and British attitudes had stiffened considerably. On July 1, George Bonnet, the French Foreign Minister, made a formal declaration to the effect that "any action, whatever its form, which would tend to modify the status quo in Danzig, and so provoke armed resistance by Poland, would bring the Franco-Polish Agreement into play and oblige France to give immediate assistance to Poland."<sup>61</sup> On July 3, the German Ambassador in London reported that the British attitude was similarly firm.<sup>62</sup>

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60. The Counselor of Embassy of the German Embassy in the Soviet Union (Tippelskirch) to the German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg), Berlin, July 12, 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., pp. 30-31.

61. Quoted in "The Last Months of Peace, 1939," by Raymond J. Sontag, in Foreign Affairs, vol. 35, April, 1957, pp. 517-518.

62. Ibid., p. 518.

Although the German officials tended to believe that the British and the French would not fight for Poland, these statements might have caused the Fuhrer to doubt the complete certainty of his former convictions.

The attitude of Italy and Japan, too, did not indicate solidarity with their German partner. As was mentioned previously, the Italians were always trying to push through into the Germans' minds that Italy was not then ready to embark on a general war in view of its state of unpreparedness.<sup>63</sup> As for Japan, "The German Ambassador in Tokyo warned that continued pressure for alliance against Britain was likely to weaken Japanese willingness to make an alliance even against Russia."<sup>64</sup>

In view of the firm stand of Britain and France, and in view of the unreliable attitude of Germany's allies, this caused the German officials to believe that Russia "was becoming of central importance in the war of nerves."<sup>65</sup>

On the 10th, Hilger, the Counselor of the German

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63. Ibid., p. 518.

64. Ibid., p. 518.

65. Ibid., p. 518.

Embassy in Moscow, submitted to Mikoyan the new proposals sent by Berlin as "Germany's last concession and as a token of German good faith in the negotiations."<sup>66</sup>

The answer of the Soviet government was not given until two weeks had passed. The Soviet government must have thought the matter over and must have come to the conclusion that the Germans were serious in their dealing with the Soviets, and that the "political bases" for the resumption of economic negotiations could be considered as existing.<sup>67</sup> This was indicated by the Soviet response to the German proposals, when on July 21st, the Soviets informed the German Ambassador that Babarin, the Soviet trade delegate, would call on Schnurre on the next day to declare that his government had authorized him to start negotiating an economic treaty with Germans.<sup>68</sup> On July 22, Babarin did visit Schnurre, whereupon the German government telegraphed Schulenburg that all negotiations with the Soviet government could now be resumed, for Germany was

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66. Weinberg, op.cit., p. 36.

67. Ibid., p. 37.

68. Ibid., p. 37. Cited in Weizsacher to Schulenburg, July 22, 1939, IMT for the Far East, Defense Document 1633 (Exhibit 2724), p. 1.

then ready for "outspoken concessions."<sup>69</sup> On the same day, the Soviet press officially announced the resumption of negotiations on commerce and credit between Germany and the Soviet Union.<sup>70</sup>

Two days later, the Soviets convened with the British and French negotiators and proceeded with their talks toward a political agreement. In these talks both sides seemed to have reached a political agreement, agreeing to include the naming of the Baltic states in the protocol of the Pact. Moreover, both agreed that negotiations for a military agreement should be conducted alongside the political one, and on July 25th, the British and the French accepted dispatching military and naval negotiators to Moscow for discussion.<sup>71</sup>

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69. Ibid., p. 37. Ibid., 1633 (Exhibit 2724).

70. The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, July 22, 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., p. 32.

71. According to "well-informed" sources in Paris, quoted by the German Ambassador there, the change of the Western attitude on this point was caused by their desire to prevent a complete stalemate in their negotiations with the Russians. On the other hand, the Western powers believed that Hitler would not "move in the Danzig affair" while his talks with Moscow were not successfully terminated. The main point was that the Western powers felt that military talks would give the Russians more confidence and hence enhance the prospects of a political agreement. Nevertheless, the Western powers felt that in the military discussion, Russia "will broach not only the problem of the Border States, but also the awkward problem of tolerating military assistance by Poland and Roumania." Footnote no. 2. in Beloff, vol. ii, op.cit., p. 262.

Only one point remained to be cleared, and that was the definition of the term "indirect aggression." The dead-lock was reached here and no military negotiation could help both parties to overlook the settlement of this important political point.

With Ribbentrop's approval, Schnurre convened with Astakhov and Babarin on the 27th of July.<sup>72</sup> Astakhov mentioned that close "collaboration and community of interest in foreign policy" did exist in the past between Germany and the Soviet Union, but the Russians now felt uneasy about the Anti-Comintern Pact, Germany's relations with Japan, Germany's abrogation of the Munich settlement, and the free hand that Germany had acquired in Eastern Europe. The Russians were also menaced by the assumption that the Baltic countries, Finland, and Roumania, were in Germany's sphere of influence. The Russians could not believe that a rapid shift in German policy toward the Soviet Union was possible, but rather that only a gradual change could be expected. The Germans, on their part, tried to allay Russia's fear by denying that Germany's

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72. Foreign Office Memorandum, Schnurre, Berlin, July 27, 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., pp. 32-36.



policy with regard to the Baltic States, Eastern Europe, and Japan was directed against the Soviet Union. Moreover, both countries had in common "their opposition to the capitalist democracies." Schnurre did not object to normalizing German-Soviet interests gradually, but he was afraid of an understanding between Russia and the Western Powers in the meantime:

"The time was opportune now, but would not be after the conclusion of a pact with London. This would have to be considered in Moscow. What could England offer Russia? At best, participation in an European war and the hostility of Germany, but not a single desirable end for Russia. What could we offer, on the other hand? Neutrality and staying out of a possible European conflict, and, if Moscow wished, a German-Russian understanding on mutual interests which, just as in former times, would work out to the advantage of both countries."

Further instructions came from Berlin to the German Ambassador in the Soviet Union telling him to ascertain what were the effects of the Schnurre-Babarin talks on the Soviet leaders. Moreover, Schulenburg was urged to seek new talks with Molotov. The instructions also said:

"If it should develop that Molotov abandons the reserve thus far maintained by him, you can advance another step in your presentation and state somewhat more precisely what was expressed generally in the memorandum."

The instructions went on:

"This concerns particularly the Polish question. In any development of the Polish question, either in a peaceful manner as we desire it or in any other way that is forced upon us, we would be prepared to safeguard all Soviet interests and to reach an understanding with the Moscow government. If the talk proceeds positively in the Baltic question too, the idea could be advanced that we will adjust our stand with regard to the Baltic in such a manner as to respect the vital Soviet interests in the Baltic."<sup>73</sup>

From this dispatch, one could see that the Germans were really eager to reach an understanding with the Russians as soon as possible. Two events happened at the end of July which seem to have urged the Germans to such a positive action. In the first place, the German Army General Staff submitted to the Fuhrer its plans for the Polish campaign. Soon afterward, Hitler fixed the 'final date' for the attack on the 26th of August, 1939.<sup>74</sup> By this, the Fuhrer committed himself to a definite date for the opening of hostilities, and thus put himself in a disadvantageous position vis-a-vis the Soviet

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73. The German Foreign Office to the German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg), drafted by Von Weizsacher, Berlin, July 29, 1939, Ibid., p. 36.

74. Quoted in Rossi, A., The Russo German Alliance, (Chapman & Hall, London, 1950), p. 21.

Union, for he had to gain her neutrality before that date; otherwise, his strategic plans would not have great chances of success. Thus, a more positive approach to Russia seemed necessary.<sup>75</sup> The second event was the decision taken by the British Cabinet around the 24th of July, and announced by Chamberlain in the House of Commons on the 31st of July, to send a military mission to the Soviet Union.<sup>76</sup> "In Berlin, they were soon fairly reassured about the real nature of the military talks in Moscow, but they would have liked to be completely reassured because of the eminence of the war against Poland."<sup>77</sup>

Nonetheless, the Schnurre-Astakhov-Babarin talks did provide a solid background for the higher diplomats of both countries when they began to discuss in a concrete manner the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact.

By the beginning of August, something concrete had been reached between the Germans and Russians, i.e., it was more or less established that peace between the two countries

75. Ibid., p. 21.

76. Although, as was mentioned before, a deadlock had already been reached in the Anglo-French-Russian talks.

77. Ibid., p. 23.

was no longer the point at issue. Instead the question of delimiting the spheres of interest of both States became the major issue at stake.<sup>78</sup> The German officials were trying their best to make the Russians understand that Germany would recognize Russia's interests in the Baltic and in Poland, while the Russians, although still suspicious of Germany's commitments to Italy and Japan, were trying to make the Germans clarify their position about Lithuania as well.<sup>79</sup> Although the Germans did not seem to clarify the Lithuanian position, the conversations went on quite smoothly.<sup>80</sup>

On August 11, Ribbentrop bluntly informed Ciano (who arrived at Salsburg on that day) that Germany would not accept any compromise anymore and answered Ciano's question on whether Germany wanted Danzig or the Corridor: "Not any more. We want war."<sup>81</sup> Ribbentrop also informed Ciano that "talks of a very definite character are proceeding between Moscow and Berlin."<sup>82</sup> When Ciano met Hitler on the next day,

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78. Rossi, op.cit., p. 26.

79. Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., pp. 39-41.

80. Rossi, op.cit., p. 27.

81. Ciano, Count Calitseo, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, Translated by Stuart Hood, (Odhams Press, London, 1948), p. 299.

82. Ibid., p. 298.

the latter was supposed to have said that in order that the German conquest of Poland might be possible, it was necessary to isolate the latter from the West as well as from the East. Poland was already isolated from the West, for any Western move to support Poland would have to be carried out through Holland (since the German fortifications in the West ran from the Swiss borders up to the Dutch frontier), and Hitler did not believe that the Western Powers would violate Holland's neutrality.<sup>83</sup> With regard to Poland's getting support from the East, Hitler held the view that:

"The Russians will not make any move. The Moscow negotiations<sup>84</sup> have been a complete failure. On the other hand, Russo-German contacts are proceeding very favourably, and in the last few days there has been a Russian request for the dispatch of a German plenipotentiary to Moscow to negotiate the friendship pact."<sup>85</sup>

On the same day (August 12), the British and French military delegation met with the Soviet delegates. But, according to Rossi, "the die had therefore been cast when these talks began. The question of a political understanding between Russia and

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83. Rossi, op.cit., pp. 30-31.

84. Meaning the Russo-Western negotiations

85. Ciano, op.cit., p. 302.

Germany was in fact already settled."<sup>86</sup> Rossi also has the belief that even if, instead of William Strang, Lord Halifax himself had gone to Moscow,

"the situation could only have been changed if the British Foreign Minister had been able to offer Stalin a free hand in the Baltic States and Bessarabia, and a slice of Poland - all without the risk of war. As such a proposal could not possibly have come from London and Paris, whoever was sent to negotiate, the agreement between Germany and Russia was certain to go through from the very fact that the policies of Hitler and Stalin had the same ends in view. These ends would have had to be changed, and no one had the power to change them but Hitler and Stalin themselves."<sup>87</sup>

On August 14, Moscow indicated to the Germans that the Soviets were interested in discussing "the individual groups of questions that had heretofore been taken up." These included "economic negotiations, questions of the press, cultural collaboration, the Polish question,<sup>88</sup> and the matter of the old German-Soviet political agreements. Such a discussion, however, could be undertaken only by degrees..."<sup>89</sup> Moreover, the Soviets proposed Moscow as the suitable place

86. Rossi, op.cit., p. 32.

87. Ibid., p. 33.

88. This was actually the most important question.

89. The German Foreign Office to the German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg), Berlin, August 14, 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., pp. 48-49.

for conducting these discussions.<sup>90</sup> This actually implied that the Soviet authorities had definitely made up their minds to come to an understanding with the Germans. This could be further illustrated when, on the next day, Schulenburg reported Molotov to have told him that "the Soviet government warmly welcomed German intentions of improving relations with the Soviet Union (and) now believed in the sincerity of these intentions."<sup>91</sup> Molotov also told the Germans "that it was very important for the Soviet government in connection with the intended trip of the Reich Foreign Minister to Moscow to obtain an answer to the question of whether the German government was prepared to conclude a non-aggression pact or something similar with the Soviet Union."<sup>92</sup> He reminded the Germans that on "an earlier occasion there had been mention of the possibility of a resurrection and revival of earlier treaties" and wanted to know their stand on that.<sup>93</sup>

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90. Ibid., p. 49.

91. The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, August 16, 1939, Ibid., pp. 52-53.

92. Memorandum by the German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg), Moscow, August 16, 1939, Ibid., p. 56.

93. Ibid., p. 56.

Schulenburg replied that the Germans were "really considering a new order of things either in connection with what had gone before or perhaps on an entirely new foundations."<sup>94</sup> Molotov was also in favor of quick action "so that the march of events would not confront [both parties] with accomplished facts."<sup>95</sup>

Ribbentrop's answer came on the same day when he

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94. Ibid., p. 56.

95. Ibid., p. 56.

It is here convenient to outline shortly the Russian motives behind their acceptance to sign a pact with Hitler. (1) After the Munich Conference, Russia realized that the Western Powers were not serious in checking Hitler. (2) Since Russia was threatened by an immediate invasion after the elimination of Czechoslovakia, Stalin felt that if he signed a pact with Hitler, the latter would attack Poland and hence a long exhaustive war between the Western Powers and Hitler would break out. By this Russia (a) would divert Hitler to the West; (b) would obtain a breathing space and have time to rearm, since Stalin did not expect that France would be easily crushed. ("Foreign Policy in the Third Reich" by Herman Lutz, in Current History, Vols. 27-28, April 1955, p. 233); (c) would be sure to have the support of the Western Powers later on, for if Germany decided to attack the Soviet Union at a later stage the West would have been irrevocably engaged in a war with Hitler that they would not abandon Russia to the Germans. (3) Such a pact would give Russia the opportunity to prepare herself for a defensive 'war in depth'. This was the major reason behind Stalin's insistence upon having the Baltic States and Eastern Poland within the Soviet sphere of influence. By having those states, Stalin aimed at achieving 'an advanced defensive position against Germany beyond the existing Russian frontiers.' ("Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin: Soviet Concepts of war", by Edward Mead Earle;



instructed Schulenburg to inform Molotov that the latter's points "were" in accordance with German desires; Germany was ready to conclude a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union, and if the Soviet Government so desired, one which would be irrevocable for a term of twenty-five years."<sup>96</sup> Schulenburg was also to tell Molotov that Ribbentrop, was ready to fly to Moscow on the 18th with full powers to negotiate with the Soviets.<sup>97</sup>

The Soviet reply came on the 18th. Molotov stated:

"The government of the USSR is of the opinion that the first step towards such an improvement in relations between the USSR and Germany could be the conclusion of a trade and credit agreement. The government of the USSR is of the opinion that the second step, to be taken shortly thereafter, could be the conclusion of a non-aggression pact or the reaffirmation of the neutrality pact of 1926, with the simultaneous conclusion of a special protocol which would define the interests of the signatory parties in this or that

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in Makers of Modern Strategy, edited by Edward Mead Earle, Princeton University Press, Princeton: 1960, p. 359). (4) Stalin hoped that by coming to an understanding with Germany, the latter would mediate between Russia and Japan and thus Japanese pressure on Russia's eastern frontiers would be reduced. (5) Russia had expansionist designs which could only be secured by the help of Germany, Germany weakened by an exhaustive war with the Western Powers.

96. The Reich Foreign Minister to the German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg), Berlin, August 16, 1939, Ibid., p. 58.

97. Ibid., p. 18.

question of foreign policy which would form an integral part of the pact."<sup>98</sup>

Molotov was also pleased with the idea that Ribbentrop should come in person to conduct such talks, for this indicated Germany's serious intentions.<sup>99</sup> On the same day, Ribbentrop telegraphed Schulenburg and instructed him to urge Molotov to speed up the negotiations for:

"German-Polish relations were becoming more acute from day to day... The Fuhrer considers it necessary that we be not taken by surprise by the outbreak of a German-Polish conflict while we are striving for a clarification of German-Russian relations. He therefore considers a previous clarification necessary, if only to be able to consider Russian interests in case of such a conflict, which would, of course, be difficult without such clarification... We therefore have the greatest interest in having my visit to Moscow take place immediately."<sup>100</sup>

On August 20, the trade treaty was signed in the German capital. This made it plain that the political agreement was not far off.<sup>101</sup> Hitler was getting impatient with the Poles and wanted the political agreement with the Russians to be

98. The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, August 18, 1939, Ibid., p. 60.

99. Ibid., p. 60.

100. The Reich Foreign Minister to the German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg), Berlin, August 18, 1939, Ibid., pp. 61-63.

101. Rossi, op.cit., p. 36.

concluded as soon as possible. To this effect, he wrote Stalin a letter asking him to see Ribbentrop on the 22nd or at the latest on the 23rd.<sup>102</sup> Hitler had accepted the text of the pact proposed by Molotov, but there remained the secret protocol the text of which had to be agreed on, on the spot.<sup>103</sup> Stalin's reply to Hitler's demand was in complete agreement.<sup>104</sup> So Ribbentrop left Berlin for Moscow and reached the Russian capital on the 23rd of August, 1939. "The last meeting of the Anglo-French-Soviet military committee took place in Moscow on the 21st in an atmosphere of farewells."<sup>105</sup>

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102. The Reich Foreign Minister to the German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg), Berlin, August 20, 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., p. 66.

103. Ibid., p. 66.

104. The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, August 21, 1939, Ibid., p. 69.

105. Rossi, op.cit., p. 37.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Pact; An Evaluation

#### Of German Motives

##### The Pact

The German delegation reached the Soviet Union on the evening of the 23rd, and instantly convened with the Russians. Among the topics discussed were Japan, Italy, Turkey, England, France, and the Anti-Comintern Pact.<sup>1</sup> Regarding Japan, Stalin remarked that the Japanese attitude had been very provocative lately, but if Japan desired peace, then "so much the better." Ribbentrop offered to mediate between the Japanese and the Russians. Stalin accepted on the condition that the Japanese should not feel that the initiative came from the Soviets.

With regard to Italy, Stalin inquired whether Italian aims were only confined to Albania or whether Albania was the first step to further expansion. Ribbentrop answered that

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1. Memorandum of a conversation held on the night of August 23 to 24, between the Reich Foreign Minister, on the one hand, and Herr Stalin and Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, Molotov, on the other hand, Moscow, August 24, 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., pp. 72-6.

Italy wanted Albania for strategic purposes, and that Mussolini was a strong man and could not be intimidated. Moreover, Ribbentrop informed Stalin that Mussolini was in favor of a German-Soviet non-aggression pact. Turkey was discussed next, and both agreed that the Turks were unreliable and were following a vacillating policy. Next, England was discussed. Stalin and Molotov indicated their ignorance as to what the British military mission in Moscow really wanted. Ribbentrop spoke of England as militarily weak and as a country which always endeavoured "to let others fight for its presumptuous claim to world domination." He also accused the British of always trying to disrupt good German-Soviet relations. Stalin agreed to Ribbentrop's statement. He further "expressed the opinion that England, despite its weakness, could wage war craftily and stubbornly." Regarding France, Stalin expressed the opinion that the French Army was strong and could not be disregarded. Ribbentrop pointed out that the French Army was numerically at a disadvantage vis-a-vis the German Army and that the West Wall was far stronger than the Maginot Line. He also said that "if France attempted to wage war with Germany, she would certainly be conquered." While discussing the Anti-Comintern Pact, Ribbentrop pointed out the fact that

such a pact was by no means directed against the Soviet Union, but against the Western democracies. Stalin indicated that he understood this fact and said "that the Anti-Comintern Pact had in fact frightened the city of London and the small British merchants."

On the same night the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact was drafted and signed by both the Soviet and the German leaders. This Pact comprised a Treaty of Non-Aggression and a Secret Additional Protocol.<sup>2</sup>

The Treaty of Non-Aggression (a typical treaty of its kind) which comprised seven articles, aimed at the establishment of friendly and peaceful relations between the two countries by providing that both countries desist from committing acts of aggression against one another; and refrain from aiding a third Power, if this Power became engaged in a war with one of the High Contracting Parties; and that both countries should settle their differences amicably and by negotiations. The Treaty, however, was to be valid for ten

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2. See Appendix A for full text of Non-Aggression Treaty and the Secret Protocol which accompanied it.

years, and was to be automatically renewed for another five years, in so far as one of the High Contracting Parties did not denounce it one year prior to the expiration of this period.

By the Secret Protocol, however, the Soviet and the German spheres of influence were delimited in the Baltic States, Poland and Southeastern Europe. Regarding the Baltic States (Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), the two Parties recognized that their spheres of influence was marked across the northern boundary of Lithuania; and both recognized the interest of Lithuania in the Vilna area. Regarding Poland, the spheres of influence of Germany and the U.S.S.R. were "bounded approximately by the line of the rivers Narew, Vistula, and San," and both agreed that the possibility of creating an independent Polish State would be determined in the course of further political developments and by friendly agreements. With regard to Southeastern Europe, attention was called "by the Soviet side to its interest in Bessarabia, (while) the German side declar[ed] its complete political disinterestedness in these areas."

The text of this Protocol gives an impression that

Hitler had given up all his dreams in Eastern Europe. In fact by signing this Treaty he had consented to bring into that area a power which was ideologically alien to National Socialism. One would ask: To what extent was this Treaty consistent with Hitler's grand strategic scheme by which he planned to solve the German problem?

#### An Evaluation of German Motives.

By 1939, Hitler had achieved great things for Germany without shedding a drop of blood. He had succeeded in bringing Germany to a point of political and strategic preparedness to enable her to start embarking on the forceful - final solution of the German question. Hitler achieved all that by employing revolutionary political - strategic concepts that were seriously undermined by earlier German strategists.

Hitler's strategic thinking contrasted with those of earlier German strategists like Clausewitz's disciples and Ludendorff. The latter believed that the art of war was to seek battle and destroy the enemy's forces at the first opportunity while taking no account that war "might be dictated by enlightened self-interest, by the desire for an issue profitable to the



nation..."<sup>3</sup> Ludendorff believed that "policy should be rightly controlled by strategy - which is like saying the tool should decide its own task."<sup>4</sup> Hitler, on the other hand, transcended the strategic concepts of earlier German strategists by combining both policy and strategy "in one person."<sup>5</sup>

According to Liddel-Hart, this combination of the two functions in one person gave Hitler "an unlimited opportunity, such as no pure strategist would enjoy, to prepare and develop his means for the end he had in view."<sup>6</sup> Hitler, moreover, grasped the fact that "in the human will lies the source and mainspring of conflict." And that "for a state to gain its object in war it has to change this adverse will into compliance with its own policy. Once this is realized, the military principle of "destroying the main armed forces on the battlefield which Clauswitz's disciples exalted to a paramount position fits into its proper place..."<sup>7</sup>

Hitler did employ this strategic conception first, in order to gain power inside Germany, and, later in his foreign

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3. Liddel-Hart, B.H., Strategy, The Indirect Approach, (Faber & Faber Ltd., London: Mcmliv), pp. 224-25.
  4. Ibid., p. 225.
  5. Ibid., p. 225.
  6. Ibid., p. 225.
  7. Ibid., p. 227.

undertakings. We can feel that in practically all the success that Hitler achieved, he was able - by different means including psychology, force, the threat of force, bluff etc... - to break the will of his enemies to resist and hence isolate them and neutralize their effectiveness. One means that Hitler utilized in his strategic maneuvering from 1933 until the beginning of 1939, was (as we have seen) to stress his ideological enmity to Communism. By this he succeeded in playing on the feelings of the Western Powers who were always mistrustful of the Communist menace. This point will be pursued later on.

By 1937, and, definitely, by 1939, Hitler realized that the ground had almost been prepared for the actual employment of his armed forces in battle so as to achieve the final solution of the German problem. Politically, he had secured the friendship and help of two great nations, Italy and Japan. He had at least temporarily paralyzed the will of England and France and intimidated them. Strategically, Hitler had remilitarized the Rhineland and built up the West Wall. He had also shattered the French system of pacts which aimed at encircling him, by annexing Austria and occupying Czechoslovakia. He, moreover, succeeded in building up a formidable Army and Air Force and

an efficient Navy. He had, moreover, succeeded in unifying the German people behind his leadership and the National Socialist doctrine. In fact Hitler realized that it was then the time to start a war before Germany began to decline, militarily, economically and spiritually which he believed was certain to happen after his death. But there remained one last obstacle in the way of the implementation of such a step; and that was Soviet Russia. One last political - strategic maneuver had to be successfully employed to neutralize that Power. Why did Hitler want to neutralize Soviet Russia? What was Russia's strategic importance to Hitler's war endeavour?

By May 1939, the strategic situation confronting Hitler was as follows: A hostile but hesitant French Army on his Western Front. A hostile but unprepared England across the Channel. A hostile and 'indignantly provocative' Poland on his Eastern Front. Lastly, a hostile, powerful and ideologically alien Soviet Russia further East. This latter was also in the process of negotiating an agreement with the Western Powers. Thus the Reich seemed to be hopelessly encircled. Now, the problem was: Could the 'Wehrmacht' conduct a war on all those fronts simultaneously? One thing was certain: The French and the British would join the war against Hitler if he committed his

armies against the East, for they would then have a greater possibility of success. In the speech which Hitler delivered on May 23, 1939, he did mention that he would conduct such a war if he was forced to, but that he preferred not to. One wonders whether Hitler really meant what he said in this respect. He probably only intended to convince his military staff that the power of the 'Wehrmacht' was impregnable and could tackle all military possibilities. In fact, he probably knew only too well that the German Army could not live up to such a task. This was certainly the conviction of the German Generals themselves who always pointed out to him the danger for Germany, if she engaged herself in a war on two fronts.

General von Brauchitsch, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army had plainly told the Fuhrer on July 23, that Germany could probably fight a successful war against the Poles, British and French forces combined, but that she would not have much chance of winning if she had to fight against Russia as well.<sup>8</sup>

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8. Liddell-Hart, B.H., The German Generals Talk, (William Marrow & Co., New York, 1948), p. 34.

Walter Gorlitz is of the view that Brauchitsch's remark did have a great effect on Hitler and strengthened his belief that in order to solve the Polish question successfully, Russian benevolence should be purchased. Gorlitz, Walter, The History of the German General Staff, 1657-1945, (Frederick A., Praeger, New York, 1961), p. 347.

The general impression of the German officers towards a two-front war is depicted by General Heinz Guderian when he wrote:

"...In any case it is not with the knowledge of hindsight that I can declare that the attitude of the Army was very grave indeed and that, had it not been for the Russian pact, there is no telling what the Army's reaction might not have been."<sup>9</sup>

Hence, Hitler could consider the political - strategic road almost paved for the employment of the actual fighting as long as the conflict did not develop along two fronts simultaneously.

Now, if a double-front war was undesirable, what other alternatives could Hitler have for waging a successful war? He knew very well that if he got engaged in war with Russia and Poland, the French would not hesitate to attack him through his western frontiers. The other possibility was to fight the Western Powers first and then turn East. But in such a situation he would still have Poland and Russia threatening his rear, as he faced West. He had said himself:

"The Polish situation is inseparable from a conflict with the West... Poland's internal power of resistance to Bolshevism is doubtful. Thus Poland is of doubtful value as a barrier against Russia. The Polish government will not resist pressure from Russia."

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9. Guderian, General Heinz, Panzer Leader, (Michael Joseph, London: 1954), p. 66.

The strategic situation thus confronting Hitler seemed insoluble. But not entirely. While Britain, France and Poland could be considered as constant obstructing factors to his war for the solution of the German problem, Russia could still be considered a variable for she was not yet definitely committed to the Western Powers. Hence if Russia was not yet committed and the possibility of neutralizing her existed, then Poland should be the first target to be eliminated if any military operation in the West was to succeed. But the main problem here was how to isolate Poland before attacking her by dissociating Russia from the Franco-British-Polish combination. We have seen in this chapter how the German rapprochement with Russia proceeded very slowly and cautiously on both sides, and how it was hindered at times and spurred at others by international developments. We have also seen how Hitler suddenly became more insistent on a quick understanding with Russia after he had fixed the 'final' date for the invasion of Poland. Thus, it is clear that Russia was of paramount strategic importance to Hitler's war plans. But conversely and ironically, Russia was also of paramount strategic importance to Western war plans.

Russia's strategic value to the West was evident in the

talks between the Western military authorities. When the Czechoslovakian crisis was at its crucial moment, the French Air Minister and the Commanding General of the French Air Force formally advised Premier Daladier that the French Air Force was not in a position to undertake battles against the German Air Force. On April 9, 1939, the French Premier, the French Foreign Minister and the Supreme Command discussed the military problem in the Mediterranean and the conclusion they reached was that the French Air Force could undertake offensive bombardment action against Italian bases.<sup>10</sup> All these considerations and conclusions on the part of the military and political Western authorities were mainly based on the assumption that Russia might side with the West and hence support Poland. "The idea seems to have been that while Russia would help Poland against a German attack, France should in the meanwhile finish Italy."<sup>11</sup> Hence it is clear from the Western talks that Russia was of paramount strategic importance to the Western defenses; but were the Western Powers certain to get Russia's

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10. "The Military Causes of World War II" by Stefan T. Possony in the Origin and Consequences of World War II, edited by Floyd A. Cave and Associates, (The Dryden Press, Inc., New York: 1948), p. 433.

11. Ibid., p. 433.

support, in view of the Russian ambiguous stand at that stage? The Western attitude too seems ambiguous in this respect. One would wonder what was the strategic basis of the Franco-British guarantee (in April) to Poland, Rumania and Greece; one feels like jumping to the conclusion that the Western Powers were really depending on Russian military help; but this is certainly a matter of speculation. Possony is in favour of the idea that the Western Powers were really looking forward to Russian support for he says that the independence of Poland and Rumania could have been defended only by the Soviet Union.<sup>12</sup>

Liddel-Hart agrees with Possony that the independence of these countries could have only been defended by the Soviet Union and therefore believes that the Anglo-French guarantee to them before obtaining a pact with Russia was a strategic folly.<sup>13</sup> Actually, this Western move was really ambiguous. Were the Western Powers really sure about Russian support? Or was it a step taken to frighten Hitler and deter him from further aggression? Probably both. We have seen in surveying the Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations that the Western Powers

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12. "The Military Causes of World War II," by Stephen T. Possony, op.cit., p. 433.

13. Liddel-Hart, Strategy, The Indirect Approach, op.cit., p. 230.



were aiming to obtain Soviet cooperation, but we have also seen how the Western Powers were not willing to give in to all of Russia's demands. One thing is certain, however, and that is: The Western Powers did realize that they should do something about it but only when the German Foreign Minister was on his way to Moscow to sign the non-aggression treaty with the Soviets. By then it was too late.<sup>14</sup>

We have seen from surveying the strategic situation, how valuable Russia was to the protection of the independence of Poland and the Western position in general. By glancing back at the situation of Germany, we can also see the great advantage that Hitler had derived from Russia's neutrality. In this latter respect it is pertinent to quote two speeches. One by Hitler, the other by Admiral Raeder. After the conclusion of the Polish campaign on November 23, Hitler said

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14. In defense of his policy before the Constituent Assembly in 1946, Daladier declared that the British and the French had by August 1939, altered their stand toward the Soviet Union and were willing to give in to Soviet demands. To this effect, Daladier declared that he telegraphed the head of the French military mission in Moscow, General Doumenc and instructed him to sign the military convention. But when Doumenc requested an interview with Voroshilov, the latter put him off. Soon after, Doumenc heard that Ribbentrop was on his way to Moscow. "Twenty Years of Russo-German Relations 1919-1939" by John W. Wheeler-Bennet in Foreign Affairs, Vol. 25, October 1946, p. 42.

to his Commanders-in-Chief:

"What has been desired since 1870, and considered as impossible of achievement has come to pass. For the first time in history we have to fight on only one front. The other front is at present free. But no one can know how long that will remain so. At present Russia is not dangerous. She is weakened by many incidents today. Moreover, we have a pact with Russia. Pacts, however, are only kept as long as they serve their purpose. Russia will hold herself to it only as long as she considers it to be her advantage. Let us, therefore, think of the pact as securing our rear..."<sup>15</sup>

Two days later, Raeder, the Chief of the Navy, held a briefing meeting with the heads of his department and summed up the situation as follows:

"Russia is not able to act at the present time. As long as Stalin is in the government, a positive attitude is certain. Changes are possible after years of inner consolidation, especially in the event of the overthrow or death of Stalin. The expansion of Russian interests in the direction of the Persian Gulf is supported by Germany. The Northern States under joint German-Soviet pressure, will stay neutral. The South Eastern States, under Soviet pressure will equally remain neutral. Germany in the East, has no military commitments. For the first time in fifty years a one-front war is possible."<sup>16</sup>

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15. De Mendelesohn, op.cit., p. 242.

16. Ibid., p. 246.

Hitler, furthermore, did not worry about any possible future pressure on the part of the Soviet Union on him when his armies would be engaged against the West, for he had complete confidence in the power of the 'Wehrmacht.' Germany's military superiority will retain its status for a long time "and that, for that reason alone Stalin would feel obliged to adhere to the existing treaties."<sup>17</sup>

Another advantage which the German-Soviet non-aggression pact and the commercial treaty signed between these two countries, accorded Hitler, was the guarantee to Germany of minerals and foodstuffs from Russia. This would enable the Reich to live through a long war and a possible British blockade of the German ports.

"We need not be afraid of a blockade" said Hitler on August 22, when Ribbentrop was on his way to Moscow to sign the non-aggression Pact with Russia, "The East will supply us with grain, cattle, coal, lead and zinc."<sup>18</sup>

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17. Shirer, op.cit., p. 308.

18. Speech by the Fuhrer to the Commanders in Chief, on August 22, 1939, in DGFP, 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. VII, (Department of State Washington, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1956) p. 204.

The possibility of a Pact with Russia, moreover, gave Hitler great hopes and caused him to form certain assumptions. One assumption was that the pact would cause the leading statesmen of the Western world to fall due to the fear and indignation of public opinion in Britain and France. In their places, Hitler hoped to see more moderate and more conciliatory statesmen.<sup>19</sup> Another was that the pact with Russia would discourage the Western Powers to even think of declaring war on Germany while the latter was attacking Poland.<sup>20</sup>

19. Gesevius, Hans Bernd, To The Bitter End, (The Alden Press, Oxford, 1948), p. 365.

20. In this respect many historians are of the view that Hitler did not expect the West to declare war on him while he was eliminating Poland in view of the fact that he concluded the pact with Russia.

"The Last Months of Peace, 1939", by Raymond J. Sontag in Foreign Affairs, Vol. 35, April 1957, p. 512.

Bullock, Alan, Hitler, A Study In Tyranny, (Odhams Press Ltd., London 1952), p. 475.

Gorlitz, op.cit., p. 348.

"Foreign Policy in the Third Reich" by Herman Lutz, op.cit., p. 233.

Butler, J.R.M., Grand Strategy, Vol. II (Her Majesty's Stationary Office, London: 1957).

Keitel, during the Nuremberg Trials, denied that France would have fought in the event of a German attack on Poland. When he was asked what the Germans expected the French would do, Keitel answered: "We never thought the French would fight; why should we? They did not even make a move against our couple of divisions on the Maginot line. It just looked as if the French simply did not want to fight."

Gilbert G.M., Nuremberg Diary, (The New American Library, New York: 1961), p. 335.

But still, should we assume that Hitler eliminated, altogether, the possibility that the British and the French would come to the support of Poland even though Russia was neutralized? According to Trevor-Roper, Hitler did not eliminate this possibility and was ready to meet the challenge if it came.

"One compromise solution suggested to us" said Hitler in his speech of August 22, "was that we should change our convictions and make kind gestures. They talked to us again in the language of Versailles. There was a danger of losing prestige. Now the probability is still great that the West will not intervene. We must take the risk with ruthless determination."<sup>21</sup>

Hitler hoped to eliminate Poland very quickly and turn to the West.<sup>22</sup> If, however, the West did intervene, then Hitler's pact with Russia would all the same retain some value for it

21. Speech by the Fuhrer to the Commanders-in-Chief, on August 22, 1939, DGFP 1919-1945, Vol. VII, op.cit., p. 202.

22. "Hitler's Gamble" by H. Trevor-Roper, in Current History, Vol. 194, Sept. 1954, p. 43.

If we look at the situation in retrospect we see that after the pact was publicly announced, England confirmed its obligation to Poland by signing a Mutual Assistance Treaty with her. This was definitely an indication that Britain and France would declare war if Hitler attempted to invade Poland. Hitler realized this and ordered the attack on Poland which was scheduled on August 26, to be postponed. He was hoping to bring England around by other means. When he failed, however, he attacked on September 1.

(guaranteed as previously mentioned) his eastern front thus denying Poland any help from that direction. Hence his pact with Russia, in any case, served as a major device in isolating Poland.

Many historians view the Hitler - Stalin Pact through other perspectives. Walter Hofer, for example, believes that the non-aggression pact did not crystalize definitely "until he (Hitler) was impelled to see that the alliance with Japan would not be possible for the time being. But that he was prepared to pay such an enormous price for the sake of this single goal is beyond all rational understanding." Hofer finds it very difficult to detect any motive of national interest at work there and indicates that one can only understand this Pact in terms of Hitler's own character, for Hofer sees some consistency in the pact with Russia and Hitler's previous behavior: "Whenever he had sought out a victim, he had concentrated so intently upon the problem of dispatching the victim that all other considerations were forced into the background."<sup>23</sup>

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23. Hofer, Walter, War Premeditated 1939, (Thames and Hudson, London: 1955), pp. 37-38.

Bullock, similarly, attributes the signing of the Non-Aggression Pact to Hitler's character:

"To sign a treaty with the government he had hitherto treated with unremitting hostility, at the very moment when the British and French missions were still negotiating in the Russian capital -- this was the sort of revenge which appealed to his vanity."<sup>24</sup>

Hofer and Bullock, however, would seem to underestimate the strategic significance that the pact with Russia had for Hitler. They moreover, do not sufficiently take into consideration Hitler's premediated designs on Russia herself and the Eastern provinces that he had left to her. It is true that the price that Hitler paid the Soviets in return for their neutrality, was far too high (this is realized in the secret protocol which was attached to the non-aggression pact, in which the two Powers' respective spheres of influence were delimited). By this, Hitler had abandoned all his dreams in the East and the whole concept of his Lebensraum which was after all, the aim behind the whole war. It is true that the pact caused violent protests in Tokyo for Hitler's understanding with Russia was an apparent breach of the Anti-Comintern

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24. Bullock, op.cit., p. 479.

Pact. Still all of this could be understood in the light of Hitler's strategic situation on the eve of the war. Only if Hitler's grand strategy (which in its military aspect was just a means and which should be tackled on its own ground, devoid of ideological preferences) is understood, could the pact be clearly interpreted. Is it not quite clear through Nazi ideology that a conflict with Russia was inevitable? And did not Hitler himself say that "pacts are only kept as long as they serve their purpose?" To this effect Earle speaks of Hitler:

"These were deviations from the main line of action, dictated by momentary expediency, for Hitler understood the necessity of sacrificing temporary or lesser, to a greater objective."<sup>25</sup>

Thus, there can be little doubt that the rapprochement with Russia was considered by Hitler as a sine qua non if a conflict on two fronts was to be avoided, and war for the solution of the German question by the Reich, had, after all, been planned as inevitable.

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25. "The Nazi Concept of War" by Edward Mead Earle, in Makers of Modern Strategy, edited by Edward Mead Earle, (Princeton University Press, Princeton: 1960), p. 509.



With regard to Bolshevism and its incompatibility with National Socialism, von Hassel reported Hitler to have said that,

"he was in no wise altering his fundamental anti-Bolshevist policies; one had to use Beelzebut to drive away the devil; all means were justified in dealing with the Soviets, even such a pact as this is a typical example of his conception of 'Realpolitik'."26

It is here convenient to re-establish the link with what was mentioned in Chapter II, when Nazi ideology and its relation to foreign policy was discussed. We have seen how National Socialist ideology, in the period of the liquidation of the Treaty of Versailles, which was the end in Hitler's foreign policy, was also used as a device to achieve the enhancement of that end. In the phase following the liquidation of the Treaty of Versailles, however, Hitler no longer found it within his interest to openly attack the Soviet Union, for he thought that Soviet Russia could be utilized to enhance his military-strategic position, that position, which was in itself a means in his grand strategic scheme which aimed at the destruction of Soviet Russia itself at a later stage.

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26. Hassel, von Ulrich, The von Hassel Diaries, (Hamish Hamilton, London: 1948), p. 66.

## CHAPTER V

### The Implementation Of The Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact.

The Germans launched their invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939. The 'Wehrmacht' poured into Poland from three fronts: north, south and west. Three days later Britain and France declared war on Germany.

The Germans, were eager to see the Soviet armies march into Poland;<sup>1</sup> while the Russians preferred not to commit themselves at this stage and saw it wiser to wait and see.<sup>2</sup> The German insistence on the entry of Russian troops into Poland could be interpreted in the following manner: The Germans still seemed worried about the Russian attitude, and by involving Russian troops in Poland, they hoped to commit the Russians to their side once and for all. The Russian attitude of wait and see could be interpreted as a reflection of a state of indecision

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1. The Reich Foreign Minister to the German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) Berlin, Sept. 3, 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., p. 86.

2. Ibid., p. 87.

in the Russian capital as to how the war would develop. When by September 8, the Germans reached the outskirts of Warsaw, the Russian attitude began to change. Quick action against the Poles was contemplated for they became worried lest once the Germans had crushed Poland they would be reluctant to give up the territories allotted to the Soviet Union. They also feared that the Germans would sign a separate treaty with Poland before they could step in. If this were to happen, then Russian's entry into Poland could but only be labelled aggression in the eyes of the world.<sup>3</sup> Another factor which pushed the Russians to take action against Poland was their fear lest the German occupation of Poland would result in the formation of a pro-Nazi Government.<sup>4</sup>

When the Soviet Union decided that it was time for her to interfere, she began searching for a pretext. On September 8, the Kremlin conveyed to the Poles that the negotiations for war material which had been taking place between the two countries were closed.<sup>5</sup> On the next day, Molotov sent the Germans a

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3. This caused the Russians to inquire formally whether the Germans were about to sign a treaty with the Poles. The Germans, however, reassured the Russians that no armistice was contemplated. Rossi, op.cit., p. 53.
  4. Lukacs, John A., The Great Powers and Eastern Europe, (American Book Company, New York: 1953), p. 254.
  5. Telegram from Ambassador Grzykowski to Minister Beck on conversation with Commissar Molotov and the Soviet refusal to supply arms to Poland, Moscow, Sept. 8, 1939, Documents on Polish-Soviet Relations 1939-45, op.cit., p. 43.

message in which he congratulated the Reich Government on the fall of Warsaw.<sup>6</sup> Molotov, moreover, told Count Schulenburg that "Soviet military action" would be forthcoming.<sup>7</sup> On September 12, Pravda attacked Poland for mistreating the minorities in the country, and on September 14, Isvestia protested that Polish aircraft had been regularly violating the Soviet frontiers.<sup>8</sup> But still, the Russians had concluded treaties with Poland; and they did not want to appear as aggressors against the Polish State. The only pretext that Russia sought (after consulting the Germans), was to indicate that the Polish State would fall apart (after the occupation of Warsaw) and that she had to interfere in order to safeguard the Ukrainians and the White Russians against the German threat.<sup>9</sup> The Russians were indeed in a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, they wanted the 'Wehrmacht' to crush Polish resistance

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6. The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow Sept. 9, 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations op.cit., p. 89. In fact Warsaw did not fall until Sept. 27. According to Rossi, the Germans conveyed this false information to the Soviets in order to incite them to join. Rossi, op.cit., p.55.
  7. The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, Sept. 9, 1939, Ibid., p. 90.
  8. Lukacs, op.cit., p. 236.
  9. The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, Sept. 10, 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., p. 91.

to give them the pretext to step in; and to reduce to the minimum any Polish resistance to their own armies. On the other hand, they were afraid that once the German-occupied Poland they would not move out again. By September 14, the German front line extended a good distance beyond the partition line mentioned in the Secret Protocol. Moreover, German spearheads were reported operating one hundred miles beyond the Vistula River.<sup>10</sup>

The Russians after receiving word from the Germans, (on September 16) that Warsaw was about to fall<sup>11</sup> declared that the Polish State no longer existed and that all treaties concluded with her were nul and void. On the 17th of September, Russian troops crossed the Polish frontiers<sup>12</sup> with relatively weak forces (the Polish Army had been practically liquidated by the 'Wehrmacht')<sup>13</sup>. The Germans, on their part, were pleased that the Russians had, at least, moved into Poland, although

10. Lukacs, op.cit., p. 250

11. The Reich Foreign Minister to the German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg). Berlin, Sept. 15, 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., pp.93-94.

12. The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, Sept. 17, 1939, Ibid., p. 96.

13. Rossi, op.cit., p. 59.

they regretted that they had not been able to move in sooner.<sup>14</sup>

The entry of the Russian Army into Poland, although late, proved helpful to the Germans for the resistance of the Polish Army was further shortened by the Soviet move into its rear. The Soviet Army's tactics were especially designed to "make the formation of a Polish Army abroad impossible ... and thus involved the loss of at least 200,000 to 300,000 soldiers who later would have been of great service in the West."<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, the process of the liquidation of the Polish Army did not pass without causing minor friction between the Germans and the Russians. The Russians were always suspicious that the Germans would not respect the terms of the Secret Protocol of 23 August. On September 18, Stalin had told Schulenburg that, although, he had no doubt of the German Government's good intentions, "his concern was based on the well-known fact that all military men [were] loath to give up occupied territories."<sup>16</sup> Schulenburg made his best to allay

14. Weinberg, op.cit., p. 54.

15. Quoted in Rossi, op.cit., p. 59.

16. The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, Sept. 18, 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., p. 98.

those fears and asserted that the Germans would honour their obligations towards the Soviet Union.<sup>17</sup> On the same day, however, an incident occurred which caused Stalin to become more suspicious of the Germans. It happened when the Soviet Military Attaché in Berlin went to the headquarters of the OKW to inquire about the positions of the German Army in Poland. Keitel and Jodl were absent, so he asked General Walter Warlimont, who headed the National Defence Department, to give the information. Warlimont was not aware of the German-Soviet Secret Protocol, and merely indicated the German position on the map.<sup>18</sup> The Soviet Officer was misled by what Warlimont said and reported to Moscow that the Germans were intending to violate the Secret Protocol.<sup>19</sup> When Molotov received this news he was very disturbed and on September 19, summoned Schulenburg to his office and protested about this German move. Schulenburg did his best to deny the news, and requested permission to clarify that matter with the German Foreign Office. Eventually,

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17. Ibid., p. 98.

18. The German positions in Poland were well beyond the line of partition.

19. Weinberg, op.cit., pp. 55-56.  
Rossi, op.cit., p. 59.  
Warlimont Document, Book V, pp. 54-55.

assurance did come from General Koestring, the German Military Attaché in Moscow, and later from Ribbentrop himself.<sup>20</sup> But as a matter of fact, the Germans were not completely innocent in this respect, for on the same day the German Foreign Office instructed Schulenburg to try to persuade the Soviets to consent to the redrawing of the line of partition in such a way as to enable the Germans to obtain the area of Borislav-Dorkolycz which was rich in oil wells.<sup>21</sup> When Schulenburg brought up this suggestion to Molotov, the latter rejected the proposal on the ground that that area lay within the Soviet sphere.<sup>22</sup> Instead Stalin had formulated other propositions, most important of which was the dropping of the original plan of creating a residual Polish State to act as a buffer. Only a partition line would constitute the final German-Russian frontier. Moreover, Stalin suggested that the partition could be improved by being drawn further east of the Narew-Vistulla-San line. By this, Warsaw would not be reduced to a frontier city and hence any possible German-Russian friction would be avoided. The

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20. Rossi, Ibid., p. 59.

21. Weinberg, op.cit., p. 56.  
Rossi, op.cit., p. 62.

22. Weinberg, op.cit., p. 56.  
Rossi, op.cit., p. 62.



new partition line would be drawn along the rivers Narew, Bug and San.<sup>23</sup> By this the province of Lublin together with the greater part of the Warsaw province would go to Germany, while Russia would have Lithuania transferred to her sphere of influence. Stalin also said that the Russians would "take up the solution of the Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian problems."<sup>24</sup>

What Stalin had in mind by offering these suggestions was, possibly, to give Germany the Suwalki region of Poland to reconcile the Germans to the loss of the Borislav - Droholycz area.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, Stalin would have given the Germans more territory which was strictly Polish and which would be very difficult for him to assimilate with Russia, in return for Lithuania. "It was better to hand over these provinces to Germany and acquire from this 'transfer' the enormous advantage of a radical settlement of the Baltic problem on lines desired by Russian policy ever since the time of Peter the Great."<sup>26</sup>

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23. The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, Sept. 20, 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., p. 101.

24. The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, Sept. 25, 1939, Ibid., pp. 102-103.  
Finland was not mentioned by the Russians.

25. Weinberg, op.cit., p. 57.

26. Rossi, op.cit., p. 65.

The Germans agreed to all these suggestions and on September 27, Ribbentrop flew to Moscow to undertake the fourth partition of Poland. The Germans had their own reasons for accepting Stalin's proposals. One important reason which was shared with the Russians, was their fear of an independent Polish State as a potential source of friction.<sup>27</sup> Secondly, Ribbentrop felt that the area west of the Vistula (which was offered by Stalin) was richer in resources than the area east of the Vistula.<sup>28</sup> Thirdly, Ribbentrop was attracted by the idea that Germany would be the only power which could solve the Polish problem the way it liked.<sup>29</sup> Fourthly, Ribbentrop was hoping to press the Russians to consent to supply Germany with the annual oil output of the district of Borlislav - Droholyecz which the Germans had wanted to annex.<sup>30</sup> In the last analysis the Germans after the elimination of the Western

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27. Ibid., p. 65.

28. Ibid., p. 68.

29. Ibid., p. 68.

30. This concession was granted by the Soviets during their talks with the Germans. The Reich Foreign Minister to the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Soviet Union (acknowledging the receipt of his letter), Moscow, Sept. 28, 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., p. 109.

The Soviets, moreover, consented to cede the southwestern corner to the Germans. 'Secret supplementary protocol' to the German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty, signed Sept. 28, 1939, Ibid., p. 107.

Powers, would be free to concentrate their armies in the East and impose their will by force.

A. The Moscow Agreements.<sup>31</sup>

On September 28, 1939, the Moscow Agreements were signed. These constituted a German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty establishing the boundary definitely along the rivers Pissa, Narew, Bug and San; a Confidential Protocol which dealt with population exchange between the Germans on one side and the Ukrainians and White Russians on the other;<sup>32</sup> and a Secret Supplementary Protocol which reaffirmed the Boundary and Friendship Treaty and amended the Secret Protocol of August 23, in order to include the new changes.

After the Moscow Agreements were concluded, a joint Declaration of the two governments said that after Germany and Russia had "definitely settled the problems arising from

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31. See Appendix B.

32. By this, Germany hoped to undertake the task of German 'national integration.' Actually, the Germans repatriated to the Reich more than 437,000 Germans.

the collapse of the Polish State" and created a firm foundation for a lasting peace in Europe, there was no longer any reason for the continuation of the war between Germany and the Western Powers. Both the Soviet Union and Germany would thereby work jointly to achieve the termination of the war. The Declaration concluded:

"Should however, the efforts of the two governments remain fruitless, this would demonstrate the fact that England and France are responsible for the continuation of the war; whereupon, in case of the continuation of the war, the Governments of Germany and the U.S.S.R. shall engage in mutual consultations with regard to necessary measures."<sup>33</sup>

Two other agreements were concluded between the Russians and the Germans. One preparing coordination of mutual trade and production; and one providing for transit facilities granted to Germany on the vital railroad line running from Levow to Rumania, and other facilities for traffic to Iran, Afghanistan and the far East. Moreover, Germany was also to profit from the oil production in the newly Russian acquired Droholycz Oil Field in South Eastern Poland.

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33. Declaration of the Government of the German Reich and the Government of the U.S.S.R. of September 28, 1939, Moscow, September 28, 1939, Ibid., p. 108.

B. The Peace Campaign And German-Soviet Political Cooperation.

After the conclusion of the Polish campaign, Hitler, in conjunction with Stalin, offered the Western Powers peace.<sup>34</sup> On the 26th of September, the whole German press started a peace campaign with such headlines as: "Why do France and Britain want to fight now?" "Nothing to fight about." "Germany wants nothing in the West" etc...<sup>35</sup> On the same day, Hitler told the Swedish industrialist Dahlerus: "If the British actually want peace they can have it in two weeks without losing face... but they will have to hurry."<sup>36</sup> But Halder indicates in his diary that on the 25th (i.e. before the Peace Campaign) he had received notice of the Fuhrer's plan to attack in the West.<sup>37</sup> On the 27th, Hitler summoned his Commanders-in-Chief and informed them that he intended to attack in the West as soon as possible, "since the Franco-British Army was not yet prepared." Braughitsch, testified that Hitler had even set the date of the attack on November 12.<sup>38</sup>

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34. See above, p. 134.

35. Shirer, William L., Berlin Diary, (Alfred A. Knopf, New York: 1941) p. 223.

36. Quoted in Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, op.cit., p. 639.

37. Ibid., p. 640.

38. Ibid., p. 640.

As a matter of fact, Hitler did not wait for the British reply, for on October 10, he summoned his Commanders-in-Chief and read to them his famous directive No. 6, in which he insisted on an immediate attack in the West. Hitler's attitude seems really paradoxical; for he was offering the Western Powers peace, and at the same time preparing for an immediate offensive. Count Ciano, records in his diary, his interpretation of Hitler's attitudes after a meeting between the two, which took place on October 1, in Berlin:

"...Today to offer his people a solid peace after a great victory is perhaps an aim which still tempts Hitler. But in order to reach it he had to sacrifice even to the smallest degree, what seems to him the legitimate fruits of his victory, he would then a thousand times prefer battle."<sup>40</sup>

Was Hitler really hopeful that the British and the French would capitulate to this extent and offer him peace after he had invaded an occupied Poland? Did he expect this to happen without the slightest sacrifice on his part? This is doubtful. But supposing he did expect this miracle to happen what would happen to the 'German question'? Would he abandon

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39. Quoted in Ibid., p. 641.

40. Ciano, Count Galitseo, Ciano's Diaries, edited by Hugh Gibson, (Doubleday and Company, Inc., New York: 1946), pp. 154-55.

On October 6, Hitler delivered a speech to the Reichstag which was the culminating point of the German campaign for peace after the destruction of Poland. In it Hitler reiterated what had already been appearing in the German newspapers since the 26th of the previous month.

"Germany has no further claims against France.... I have refused even to mention the problem of Alsace-Lorraine... I have always expressed to France my desire to bury forever our ancient enmity and bring together these two nations both of which have such glorious pasts..."

Regarding Britain, Hitler said:

"...I have devoted no less effort to the achievement of Anglo-German friendship. At no time and in no place have I ever acted contrary to British interests... I believe even today that there can only be real peace in Europe and throughout the world if Germany and England come to an understanding."<sup>39</sup>

On October 12, the British answer came rejecting Hitler's peace offer; and the Nazi officials declared, the following day, that the British had rejected the German offer for peace and hence they were responsible for the continuation of the war.

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39. Quoted in Ibid., p. 641.

its solution for good? Or would he still carry it out? If he would have carried it out how would he have guaranteed that the Western Powers would not attack him in his rear when he had become embroiled in a life and death struggle in the East? Hitler seems to give the answer to this puzzle in his Secret memorandum to Directive No. 6, which he issued in October 6.

"...The German war aim is the final military dispatch of the West, that is, the destruction of the power and ability of the Western Powers ever again to be able to oppose the state consolidation and further development of the German People in Europe.

As far as the outside world is concerned, this eternal aim will have to undergo various propaganda adjustments... This does not alter the war aim. It is and remains the destruction of our Western enemies.

By no treaty or pact can a lasting neutrality of Soviet Russia be insured with certainty. At present all reasons speak against Russia's departure from neutrality. In eight months, one year, or even several years, this may be altered. The trifling significance of treaties has been proved on all sides in recent years. The safeguard against any Russian attack lies...in a prompt demonstration of German strength."<sup>41</sup>

If Hitler wanted war with the Western Powers to finish with them once and for all and be free to work on the further

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41. Quoted in Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, op.cit., pp. 644-645.



development of the German people in Europe, why was he offering peace? The answer to this question could be interpreted in the following manner: Hitler did not expect the Western Powers to accept peace on his own terms and he thought that he would not lose anything by offering it. In fact he would gain.<sup>42</sup> By offering to terminate the war and by the Western rejection of his offer to do so, he would put the blame for the continuation of the war on the Western Powers themselves.<sup>43</sup> By this Hitler hoped not only to appear as a pacifist in the eyes of the world, but also to overcome the opposition of most of the German officers who were hesitant about opening an offensive in the West. Hitler also would not ignore the German people themselves who were very anxious to have peace. Hitler realized that he could "oppose Russia only when (he was) free in the West" and in order to free himself in the West, he should eliminate the West militarily. Hitler had his way. On October 10, 1940, the Germans occupied Denmark.<sup>44</sup> At the same day they invaded Norway. On May 10, the 'Wehrmacht' invaded Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg as a

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42. This is a typical example of Hitler's indirect strategic approach.

43. See above p. 136.

44. The Danes did not fight but accepted the German ultimatum of the previous day.

preparation to the invasion of France. Five days later the Dutch capitulated and the French front was penetrated. On June 9, Norwegian resistance ended and the British evacuated Norway. On the 14th of the same month, the Germans entered Paris, and on August 8, the Battle of Britain started.

As for the Soviets they too had carried on the peace campaign and did not lose any opportunity to cooperate politically with their German partners. The joint German-Soviet declaration for peace has been noted. Other means were used by the Russian to show their good will to the Germans. One means which Stalin utilized was to incite the Communist Parties abroad to agitate for peace.<sup>45</sup> Another device was to carry a campaign through the Soviet press asking Germany and the Western Powers to come to terms. For example, on September 30, Pravda said:

"There is no justification for a war between France and Britain on the one side and Germany on the other, a war which is quite meaningless... It is up to France and Britain to end the war which was begun against the will of their people."<sup>46</sup>

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45. Rossi, op.cit., p. 80.  
Dallin, op.cit., pp. 78-79.  
Beloff, Vol. II, op.cit., pp. 288-289.

46. Quoted in Rossi, op.cit., p. 81.

Izvestia followed the same line.<sup>47</sup> Pravda, furthermore, published a statement by Stalin on November 30, in which he said:

"(1) It was not Germany who attacked Britain and France, but Britain and France who attacked Germany; (2) After military operations had begun, Germany approached the British and the French Governments with an offer of peace. This had had the support of the Soviet Union; (3) The British and the French Governments had brusquely rejected the German proposal and the U.S.S.R.'s efforts for a settlement; that was the truth."<sup>48</sup>

Moreover, Stalin had taken a concrete diplomatic move to enhance his peace campaign, when on October 10, the Soviet Ambassador in Brussels, suggested to the American Ambassador there that the belligerents should terminate the war and reach an agreement on the basis of the status quo. The American reply, however, was unfavorable.<sup>49</sup>

Russia was also trying to aid Germany from the ideological point of view. The Soviet Union was always pointing out that the two ideologies Communism and National Socialism were not incompatible and need not hamper military, political and economic relations between the two countries. Besides, the

47. Ibid., p. 81.

48. Quoted in Ibid., p. 82.

49. Weinberg, op.cit., p. 64.

Russians had declared that the war which Britain and France were waging was an imperialist war whose sole aim was the preservation of their colonies and deny them to Germany.<sup>50</sup> The Communist Party in Germany gave full backing to the Hitler regime and strongly agitated against the West.<sup>51</sup>

The Soviet attitude has been the subject of much speculation. Rossi is of the view that Stalin really wanted peace and was sincere in his peace campaign, arguing that if peace had been attained the Soviet Union would have been represented at the new Munich where she too would have dictated her terms.<sup>52</sup>

According to Weinberg, the Soviets realized that "in the period of uneasy balance following a peace treaty. The Soviet Union would presumably benefit from the position of being sought by both sides as an ally in the new difficulties which would certainly arise."<sup>53</sup> Another argument cited in Beloff, is that the Soviets feared a quick German victory in

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50. Rossi, op.cit., pp. 83-84; and Dallin, op.cit., p. 80.

51. Beloff, Vol. II, op.cit., p. 289.

52. Rossi, op.cit., p. 84. This is also presented as one argument in Weinberg, op.cit., p. 62.

53. Weinberg, Ibid., p. 62-63.

the West, a victory which would have been detrimental to their security. Therefore the Soviets preferred a negotiated settlement from which Stalin hoped to act as the holder of the balance.<sup>54</sup>

These arguments could be convincing if viewed in isolation from the general context of the European political and strategic situation. Would Stalin have really gained from the termination of hostilities between the Western Powers and Germany? The answer is no for the following reasons: In the first place, if a negotiated peace between Germany and the West were to take place, Stalin would have found himself confronted with the bulk of the German Army uncommitted in the West and ready to march eastwards (since Poland had already been eliminated). In the second place Stalin would have found himself pressed by time; for the three or four years which he had relied on to rearm (during which he had hoped Germany would be fighting a war of attrition with the Western Powers) would in the best of cases have been reduced to six months. In the third place, Stalin would have been confronted with a much stronger Germany at the beginning of 1940 than the Germany of

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54. Cited in Beloff, Vol. II, op.cit., p. 292.

August 1939. Germany had by 1940, annexed a great part of Poland hence gaining more land and resources. Moreover, the German Army had gained a lot of experience during the Polish campaign.

On the other hand, the Russians had big designs in Eastern Europe. Their claims had been recognized by the Germans while the latter were entangled with Poland and the Western Powers. It is doubtful that these designs would still be recognized by a Germany at peace with the Western Powers; or by the Western Powers at peace with Germany. It is true that Russia had obtained a larger share of Polish territory by militarily occupying that territory. But she still had designs on Finland, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Bessarabia, which the Soviet Union badly needed for her 'defense in depth' against the 'Wehrmacht.'<sup>55</sup> It is doubtful whether Britain and France would have allowed the Russians to take over these territories. Nor is it likely that the Germans would have allowed her to do so. The Western Powers, moreover, would not have allowed her to take these territories even if she promised

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55. When the Soviet Union started the peace campaign she had not yet acquired any concrete concessions from Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Finland.

to side with them against the Germans. But assuming that the Western Powers would have allowed her to take these territories in return for her siding with them, the Soviets would have found themselves engaged against the Germans too soon. The French Army did not move against the Germans while the latter were attacking Poland, how would Russia have guaranteed that the French Army would move against Germany while the latter would be attacking her?

The previously mentioned argument (that Russia was afraid of a quick German victory over the West and hence preferred a negotiated peace to a victorious Germany) does not conform to well known facts. It is difficult to reconcile this argument with Stalin's reaction after the quick capitulation of France where he was shocked by the unexpected rapidity of the German victory.<sup>56</sup> It is also difficult to reconcile this argument with the fact that while Germany was in the process of fighting France there were no signs of Russian concentration of troops on the German-Soviet border; while an urgent order for mobilication had been issued on the

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56. Kenan, George F., Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-1941, (D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., New Jersey, Princeton: 1960) p. 107; and Beloff, Vol. II, op.cit., p. 292.

unexpected news of the German victory over France.<sup>57</sup> These facts clearly indicate that Stalin did not expect the Germans to be victorious in such a short time, and therefore the above argument seems invalid.

Now one would ask: If Stalin did not want peace between Germany and the Western Powers, why was he agitating for it? The answer to this question would seem that Stalin did not expect the Western Powers to react favorably to such agitation. One thing was indicative of the expected failure of the peace campaign was the fact that that campaign was mainly fought through the Communist Parties abroad. Stalin knew that the mere fact that such a campaign was fought by these parties<sup>58</sup> was enough to render it fruitless. Moreover Stalin was certain that the West would never do business with Hitler anymore, and were determined to check him once and for all. Knowing this Stalin carried on the campaign to win the favors of the Germans whom he needed to build up his armies and industry and whose consent he also urgently needed to expand in the Baltic. He

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57. Reports to the effect of Soviet mobilization came to Hitler through his secret service. "Light on Nazi Foreign Policy" by De Witt C. Boole, op.cit., p. 144.

58. The Western Powers at that time were very mistrustful of the Communist Parties operating in their respective countries.



would also appear in front of the whole world as the champion of the cause of peace. Stalin knew that the only way to keep the Germans away was through the Germans themselves when the latter would be fighting a long war of attrition with the Western Powers; and not through the Western Powers.

C. German-Soviet Economic Co-operation.

In the Moscow Agreements of 28 September, the Soviets and the Germans agreed on two general points of economic importance. The first was that the Soviet Union was to deliver to Germany raw materials in exchange for German manufactured goods "over an extended period."<sup>59</sup> The other point was that Germany was to receive more oil, and was promised transit facilities across Soviet territories.<sup>60</sup>

However, new economic agreements were envisaged. Negotiations by representatives of both Governments started on October 8, in the Russian capital, and lasted for over four months. The general points that were discussed were mainly that Russian world have to increase its deliveries to Germany

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59. See above p. 134.

60. See above p. 134.

in return for a huge compensating scheme -- which would involve the construction in Russia of many plants over a period of five years.<sup>61</sup> The discussion over these points dragged on for some time. However, agreements on other issues were reached very quickly and were settled by different treaties. For example the issue of grain fodder supply to Germany was settled and agreement on it signed on October 24. As to this agreement, Germany was expected to receive beside other items, one million tons of feed grain.<sup>62</sup> In addition, agreements were reached between private German firms (under official German control) and the Soviet officials.<sup>63</sup>

On February 11, 1940, the Commercial Agreement between Germany and the Soviet Union was finally signed. It provided mainly, for large quantities of cotton, oil, phosphate, iron, chrome ore, manganese ore, platinum and lumber to be sent to Germany.<sup>64</sup> In the Confidential Protocol attached to the Treaty, Russia, moreover, promised the Germans that she would try to

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61. Beloff, Vol. II, op.cit., p. 293, and Weinberg, op.cit., p. 66.

62. Beloff, Vol. II, op.cit., p. 293, and Weinberg, op.cit., pp. 66-67.

63. Weinberg, Ibid., p. 67.

64. Ibid., p. 70.

buy metals and other goods for Germany abroad. Furthermore, the Confidential Protocol also stipulated Russian agreement to undertake the transit of one million tons of soybeans from the Far East with a fifty percent reduction of the charge on the freight besides Germany being assured transit rights from the Middle and Far East across Russian railways.<sup>65</sup>

Germany on the other hand, had to deliver large quantities of manufactured goods and provide for various schemes for the construction of whole plants in the Soviet Union.<sup>66</sup> Coal was also an important item which Germany had to deliver in large quantities.<sup>67</sup> The German deliveries were to extend over a period of 27 months, while the Russian deliveries extended over a period of 18 months.<sup>68</sup>

The Russian deliveries to Germany during the period covered by the agreement were quite impressive amounting to a total of 800 million Reichswarks worth of commodities.<sup>69</sup> The

65. Ibid., p. 70.

66. The military items would be surveyed in the next topic -- 'German-Soviet Military collaboration.'

67. Ibid., pp. 70-71.

68. Memorandum of the German-Soviet Commercial Agreement signed on February 11, 1940, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., p. 131.

69. Rossi, op.cit., p. 110.  
Hilger gives the estimate of 600 million Reichmarks.

most important Russian deliveries were 900,000 tons of mineral oil,<sup>70</sup> 100,000 tons of cotton,<sup>71</sup> 500,000 tons of phosphates,<sup>72</sup> 100,000 tons of Chromium ore,<sup>73</sup> 500,000 tons of iron ore, 300,000 tons of scrap and pig iron, 2.4 metric tons of platinum and other items.<sup>74</sup>

D. German-Soviet Military Co-operation.

Perhaps the greatest contribution on the part of the Russians to the Germans was that "for the first time in fifty years, Germany has not to consider a war on two fronts." Hitler had told Count Magistrate that the success of the German Army in the West entailed good relationship with Russia.<sup>75</sup> Keitel testified at Nuremburg that during the campaign in the West the maximum number of German divisions in the East did not exceed seven.<sup>76</sup>

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70. Rossi, Ibid., p. 110.  
Hilger, op.cit., p. 316.

71. Rossi, op.cit., p. 110.  
Hilger, op.cit., p. 316.

72. Hilger, Ibid., p. 316.

73. Ibid., p. 316.

74. Ibid., p. 316.

75. Rossi, op.cit., p. 91.

76. Ibid., p. 93.

Another military contribution on the part of the Russians was their declaration of disinterest in the German invasion of Norway. She even "showed understanding for the German measures."<sup>77</sup> Count Schulenburg reported that the Soviet attitude towards German military successes was very positive.<sup>78</sup> The German occupation of Norway on the other hand was a great military help to the Russians themselves. Stalin and Molotov had always been worried about the possibility of a British and French occupation of Norway which would have brought about a Russo-West conflict over Finland.<sup>79</sup>

Moreover, there existed military cooperation in another sense. The Russians offered some of their ports to the German Navy. For example, on the 6th of February, 1940, the German Naval Attaché in Moscow communicated with Berlin and informed the German Government that the Russians were willing to give permission to a German auxiliary cruiser

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77. De Mendelssohn; op.cit., p. 250.

78. The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, April 9, 1940, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., p. 138.

79. Memorandum by the German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) Moscow, April 11, 1940, Ibid., p. 140.

"Ship 45" to use the Siberian route in its voyage to the Far East. Actually "Ship 45" did sail on the 25th of August, 1940, "by the Siberian sea-route, with Russian help."<sup>80</sup> Another type of Russian military aid to Germany was the great benefit that the Germans derived from using the port of Murmansk and the aid that the Russians showed in this respect. When war broke out many German ships that were in the North Atlantic went to Murmansk. From there the German ships sailed back to the German ports along the Murman and Norwegian coasts. Russian cooperation was a great factor in ensuring the safety of those ships; The Russian authorities would delay Allied ships until these German ships were out of their range and safely on their way home.<sup>81</sup> One important case was that of the German liner 'Bremen.'<sup>82</sup> The port of Murmausk was of Great aid to the Germans in another respect. This Soviet Port was more than once used to equip German auxiliary cruisers while on raiding expeditions against British shipping.<sup>83</sup> Another military aid to the Germans was the Soviet offer of a naval base on the

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80. Rossi, op.cit., p. 96.  
Weinberg, op.cit., p. 83.

81. Weinberg, Ibid., p. 78.

82. Ibid., p. 78.

83. Ibid., p. 79.

Western Litza Bay near Murmansk, a base referred to by the Germans as 'Bases Nord.' This base was mainly used by the Germans as a stopping place for their submarines. But its value to the Germans as a supply base was really felt when the latter were attacking Norway.<sup>84</sup>

The Germans, on their part, had to supply the Russians with arms, technical aid and other manufactured goods. They, however, indicated to the Soviets their inability to satisfy all Soviet demands in this respect for the simple reason that they couldn't afford it while they were at war with the Western Powers. The Soviets, subsequently, reduced their demands but still pressed for quantities that the Germans could not possibly dispense with. Lists of many items which the Germans were supposed to deliver to the Soviet Union were attached to the Soviet-German Economic Treaty of February 11, 1940, and it was clear that naval equipment constituted most of these items.<sup>85</sup> Among these items were the cruiser 'Luetzow,' the plans for the 'Bismark,' plans for a large destroyer, a long schedule of ship-building materials, various kinds of

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84. Ibid., pp. 81-82.

85. Ibid., p. 76.

naval guns and gun equipment, hydrographic equipment, several small ships, naval turrets of the heaviest caliber, and other categories of material for the Soviet Navy.<sup>86</sup> "In these ways the Germans were to contribute to the building up of the Russian Navy."<sup>87</sup>

The exact volume of German deliveries to the Soviet Union could not be accurately assessed due to the lack of documents on the subject. Nevertheless, substantial German deliveries to the Soviet Union are known and can be assessed to some extent. Besides the cruiser 'Luetzow' which was sold for one hundred million Reichsmark, the Germans delivered a considerable amount of the promised naval equipment. "At least large sections of the turrets were delivered, as well as heavy-caliber naval ammunition, submarine equipment and many other items from the lists attached to the economic treaty."<sup>88</sup> Still Russia was demanding more and more from Germany. Some officers in the German admiralty wanted to go as far as possible to fulfill the Russian demands, but Hitler

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86. List copied from Ibid., p. 77.

87. Ibid., p. 77.

88. Ibid., p. 77.



seemed too reluctant to cooperate with Russia in this field. Raeder testified at Nuremberg that the Russians were pressing the Germans to hand over not only the 'Luetzow' but also 'Prince Eugen', the plans for 'Bismarck' and 'Tirpitz' and gun turrets of the heaviest caliber. "It almost looked as if the Soviet Union were trying to take a friendly hand in relieving potential pressure on the British Navy, but she was certainly working hard towards establishing some sort of naval balance between herself and Germany."<sup>89</sup> Raeder had also said that the Fuhrer instructed the German Navy not to retard naval armaments under any circumstances. Thus the German Admiralty refused to sell the 'Seydlitz', the 'Prince Eugen' and a number of the heavy turrets.<sup>90</sup>

E. Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Finland.

The Secret Protocol attached to the German-Soviet Non-Aggression pact of August 23, 1939, gave a free hand to Russia in the Baltic area. When the second world war was

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89. De Mendelssohn, op.cit., p. 247.

90. Ibid., p. 248.

launched as a result of the German invasion of Poland, the Soviet Union started working on taking her spoils in the Baltic littoral while the opportunity was still available. Three days prior to the Moscow Agreements of September 28, Molotov informed Schulenburg that if the German Government consented "the Soviet Union would immediately take up the solution of the problem of the Baltic countries in accordance with the Protocol of August 23, and expected in this matter the unstinting support of the German Government." Stalin expressly indicated Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, but did not mention Finland.<sup>91</sup> The Soviets, however, did not wait for the German answer and on September 27, demanded from the Estonian Government an alliance with Soviet Russia entailing a naval base at Baltischport and an air base on the Estonian islands.<sup>92</sup> On the same day the Estonian Foreign Minister informed the Germans that "the Estonian Government, under the gravest threat of imminent attack, perforce is prepared to accept a military alliance with Soviet Union."<sup>93</sup> On the next day an Estonian delegation

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91. The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, September 25, 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., p. 103.

92. The German Foreign Office to the German Embassy in the Soviet Union, Berlin, September 27, 1939, Ibid., p. 103.

93. The German Foreign Office to the German Embassy in the Soviet Union, Berlin, Sept. 27, 1939, Ibid., p. 104.

flew to Moscow to negotiate with the Russians.<sup>94</sup> In the Treaty of Mutual Assistance which was duly signed between the Estonians and the Russians, the former were to receive arms from Russia, in return for granting the Soviet Union air and naval bases on the island of Dago, Osel and on the Port of Paldiski.<sup>95</sup> Actually, this Soviet triumph over Estonia was greatly facilitated by the German attitude towards both countries. This fact was made clear by the Estonian Foreign Minister, Selter, when he told Munters, the Latvian Foreign Minister that,

"the great concessions made to the Soviet Union were unavoidable because Germany had refrained from exercising any political influence on the (Soviet-Estonian) negotiations and had not replied to the Estonian request made on the basis of the Estonian-German Non-Aggression Pact that she state her position."<sup>96</sup>

Latvia's turn came next. Molotov summoned Munters, the Latvian Foreign Minister, to Moscow and informed him that

94. Ibid., p. 104.

95. Tarulis, N. Albert, Soviet Policy Toward The Baltic States 1918-1940, (University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana: 1959), p. 152.

96. The Minister in Latvia to the Foreign Ministry, Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. VIII, (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1951), p. 198.

the Soviet Union needed Latvian naval bases that remained operative all year round. To him Stalin said:

"...I tell you frankly, a division of spheres of interest has already taken place. As far as Germany is concerned, we could occupy you. However, we want no abuse -- Ribbentrop is a sensible person... The territory having a Russian minority could also be taken away from you, but we do not raise that question."<sup>97</sup>

Thus, Latvia was forced to sign a Treaty of Mutual Assistance and a Secret Protocol with Russia, on October 5. This was modelled on the Soviet-Estonian Treaty of a week before.<sup>98</sup> Lithuania followed suite on October 11.<sup>99</sup>

As for Finland, up till October 2, 1939, she was always told by Germany that she had nothing to worry about with regard to the Russians.<sup>100</sup> By October 9, however, the German attitude began to change for they started indicating to the Finns that they ought to settle matters peacefully with

97. Tarulis, op.cit., p. 154.

98. Ibid., p. 155.

99. In return for the Soviet bases, the Soviets undertook to give Wilmo back to the Lithuanians. Wilmo was duly evacuated by the Soviet Army.

100. Tanner, Väinö, The Winter War, (Stanford, University Press, California 1950), p. 21.

the Russians.<sup>101</sup> The Russians considered the Gulf of Finland as of great strategic importance to the Soviet Union. Stalin, in his negotiations with the Finns, mentioned England and Germany as possible future invaders through the Gulf.

"You ask what power might attack us" said Stalin to the Finnish delegation which was negotiating in Moscow on October 15, "England or Germany. We are on good terms with Germany now, but everything in this world may change... England is pressuring Sweden for bases right now. Germany is doing likewise. When the war between those two is over, the victorious fleet will come into the Gulf."<sup>102</sup>

In this respect Churchill seemed convinced that the Russian advance in the Baltic was "clearly necessary for the safety of Russia against Nazi menace... An Eastern front has been created which Nazi Germany does not dare assail."<sup>103</sup>

When the Russo-Finnish negotiations seemed fruitless, Russia on November 26, began provoking frontier incidents with

101. Memorandum by the State Secretary, Berlin, Oct. 2, 1939, Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. VIII, op.cit., p. 195. The State Secretary to the Legation in Finland Berlin, Oct. 9, 1939, Ibid., pp. 250-251. Tanner, op.cit., pp. 82-83.

102. Quoted in Tanner, Ibid., p. 27.

103. Quoted in Lukacs, op.cit., p. 275.

Finland. On November 28, The Soviet Union openly denounced her Non-Aggression pact with Finland which was concluded in 1932, and on November 30, invaded the country without declaring war. The position of Germany with regard to Finland was at that time neutral but as Lubacs labels it: a "hostile "type of" neutrality."<sup>104</sup>

On December 14, Russia was expelled from the League of Nations; France, Britain and the United States proclaimed their sympathy with Finland, but what they could do in terms of military help to Finland was very little considering the distance involved and the German blockade.

The Finns on their part, unexpectedly, resisted the Russian assault, and the war seemed to become prolonged. The prolongation of the Russo-Finnish war caused a change in the German attitude towards both countries. The Germans saw it wise to bring the war to an end; so they sought to mediate between the two belligerents.<sup>105</sup> This change of

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104. Ibid., p. 275.

105. Memorandum by the Minister to Finland, Berlin, February 13, 1940, Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. VIII, op.cit., p. 774.

German attitude could be interpreted from the strategic point of view in the following manner: Germany became worried lest the prolonged conflict between the Russians and the Finns would cause the West to intervene in the Baltic;<sup>106</sup> for the British and the French were thinking of sending troops to Finland,<sup>107</sup> the only obstacle being that Sweden (under German pressure) refused to allow allied troops to pass across their country on their way to Finland.<sup>108</sup> In this respect, Germany faced the possibility of having Russia as her ally in the war. For by coming to the help of Finland, the Allies would have found themselves at war with Russia. Germany did not want Russia to become her ally because, on the one hand Germany thought she did not need the military help of the Russians against the Western Powers. Hitler was convinced that he would finish them off single handed.

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106. "...If forces of the Powers with whom we were at war should arrive in Sweden or Norway en route to Finland. That would be an issue of importance to us." Memorandum by the Director of the Political Department, Berlin, February, 1940, Ibid., pp.761-762.

107. Lukacs, op.cit., p. 282.

108. The Minister in Sweden to the Foreign Ministry, Stockholm, Jan. 9, 1940, Document on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. VIII, op.cit., pp. 633-634. Memorandum by the State Secretary, Berlin, Jan. 12, 1940, Ibid., p. 282.

On the other hand, he was looking forward to a conflict with Russia.<sup>109</sup> So why have her around as an ally.

Then the Germans began allowing for Italian shipping to pass the German blockade on their way to Finland,<sup>110</sup> and this, according to Lukacs, caused the first major rift in Russo-German relations which until that time were very smooth.<sup>111</sup> When the Kremlin protested against this move, the Germans denied it and hastened to dispell Russian apprehensions.<sup>112</sup>

By March 12, Finland had submitted to Russia's harsh terms<sup>113</sup> and an agreement was signed by which Russia gained a great deal. Finland surrendered the Karelian Isthmus, with its famous Marnerheim line, Vuguri, and the Western shores of

109. The defeat of Russia (at the earlier stages of the Russo-Finnish war) in the face of the Finns, gave the German General Staff a very bad impression of the Russian Army as a fighting force; and this (as we will see in the next chapter) was a major factor which encouraged the Germans to invade the Soviet Union.

110. Lukacs, op.cit., p. 281.

111. Ibid., p. 281.

112. Memorandum by the Reich Foreign Minister, Berlin, December 11, 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., pp. 130-131.

113. Russia at that stage could have occupied the whole of Finland but preferred to terminate the war for fear of being engaged in a war with the Western Powers. Weinberg, op.cit., p. 90. There is no indication that Hitler's attitude influenced the Russians to prefer a settlement.



Lake Ladoga, an area in the north east central region, and granted the Russians a thirty-year lease on the strategic island of Hangoe for a naval base.<sup>114</sup> Thus Russia's "Baltic position was strengthened strategically and she commanded the main Danube mouth. Moreover, she had gained a valuable buffer area for her coming struggle against Hitler."<sup>115</sup> Although Hitler was not very happy about Russia acquiring such a strong position in the Baltic, he was, nevertheless, satisfied that the termination of the Soviet-Finnish war prevented any future allied landing in the area.

Thus, by the beginning of 1940, the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact had yielded considerable fruits to both the Germans and the Russians. To Hitler, the Pact proved of great military and strategic value. His flank was secure when he was fighting Poland, while his rear was secure while fighting France. Moreover, Russian benevolent attitude in the Baltic was a great military aid to Hitler; and Russian deliveries of raw material to Germany was an important factor in weakening

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114. The Minister in Finland to the Foreign Ministry Helsinki, March 13, 1940, Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. VIII, op.cit., pp. 914-915.

115. Fifield, Russel H., Geopolitics in Principle and Practice (Gin, Boston: 1944), p. 133.

the effect of the British Blockade. On October 22, the German Chief of Naval Operations was quoted to have said:

"The importance for us of Russia's economic aid is decisive. Their offer was so generous that the economic blockade is almost bound to fail."<sup>116</sup>

Russia's political aid to Germany, although intensive, did not benefit the Germans much. But Hitler was not counting on any political aid from Russia. He was mainly interested in Russia's military-strategic and economic aid and he got them. These were the main motives which pushed Hitler to sign the Non-Aggression Pact with Russia. After the fall of France, however, the pact seemed to have almost exhausted its usefulness. Now a new approach to Russia was envisaged by Hitler.

Stalin too gained from the Pact. In the first place, beside precipitating a European war, he diverted Hitler to the West and hence avoided engaging himself in the war in its first phases. He got a great deal in Eastern Europe and the Baltic and hence prepared himself for the future war with Hitler by acquiring the territory he needed for a 'defensive

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116. Quoted in Rossi, op.cit., p. 110.

war in depth.<sup>†</sup> He, also, got substantial military equipment and technical aid from the Germans.<sup>117</sup> And most important of all he gained the breathing space to build up his economy and defenses.<sup>118</sup> After the German victory over France, Stalin, too, could not view the Pact through the same perspectives as those of August 1939, for some of the basis for it had crumbled with the defeat of the French Armies.

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117. Stalin was quoted to have said in February 1940: "If we -- Russia and Germany -- go on collaborating like this for another four or five years, Russia would be able to produce enough raw materials to supply two Germanies." Quoted in Rossi, Ibid., p. 110.

118. This, however, was upset by the quick Nazi victory over France.

## CHAPTER VI

### The German Decision To Attack Russia

#### A. Hitler's Intention To Destroy Russia.

The intention to destroy Russia existed in Hitler's mind as early as 1923. Thereafter it began to crystalize gradually. In his conference of 1937, Hitler conveyed to his Generals his irrevocable decision to wage war for the acquiring of living-space for the German race in the East.<sup>1</sup> The main country Hitler intended to obtain that living-space from was Soviet Russia. On August 22, 1939, that is on the very same day the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact was being concluded in Moscow, Hitler, in a speech to his Generals said:

"...My pact with Poland was only meant to stall for time. And besides, Gentlemen, with Russia will happen just what I have practiced in Poland. After Stalin's death we shall crush the Soviet Union."<sup>2</sup>

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1. 'The Hossbach Memorandum' Berlin, Nov. 5, 1937. Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series D, Vol. I, op.cit., pp. 29-39.

2. Quoted in Lukacs, op.cit., p. 245.

On October 18, that is less than two months after the signature of the Non-Aggression Pact, Halder wrote in his diary that the Fuhrer had instructed the army to regard the conquered Polish territory "as an assembly area for future German operations."<sup>3</sup> On November 23rd, of the same year, Hitler's speech to his Commanders-in-Chief also indicated that the intention to invade Russia occupied his mind: "We can oppose Russia only when we are free in the West."<sup>4</sup> General Jodl, in the speech which he delivered at Munich sometime after the defeat of France, stated that Hitler had always kept the danger of an approaching Bolshevist East in mind, "and even as far back as during the Western Campaign" informed him of his fundamental decision to take steps against this danger the moment their position made it at all possible.<sup>5</sup> Raeder's memorandum to Admiral Assmann of January 10, 1944, refers to a similar point. "The Fuhrer" wrote Raeder "very clearly had the idea of one day settling accounts with Russia... Doubtless his

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3. Quoted from Halder's Diary in Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, op.cit., p. 296.
  4. De Mendelssohn, op.cit., p. 246.
  5. Ibid., p. 248.

general ideological attitude played an essential part in this. Raeder went on to say that the Fuhrer had stated to him in 1937 that Russia should be eliminated as a Baltic Power and instead diverted in the direction of the Persian Gulf. The Russian measures against Finland probably further strengthened him in this idea."<sup>6</sup> All these documents clarify that the intention to attack Russia existed in Hitler's mind and that he was determined to take steps in the hope of fulfilling it, though no final decision or actual plan of operation had been decided upon as yet.

B. The Date of the German Invasion of Russia: Political-Military Considerations.

(a) England's position and Hitler's attitude towards Russia.

When France was defeated, Hitler began hoping that Britain would sue for peace. In a speech delivered to the Reichstag on July 19, he took the initiative himself and officially offered England peace.

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6. Ibid., p. 254.

"In this hour, I feel it to be my duty before my own conscience to appeal once more to reason and common sense in Great Britain as much as elsewhere. I consider myself in a position to make this appeal since I am not the vanquished begging favors, but the victor speaking in the name of reason. I can see no reason why this war must go on."<sup>7</sup>

Hardly an hour later, the BBC broadcast the answer. It was a "determined No," and three days later, Lord Halifax, in a broadcast, officially rejected Hitler's peace offer.

The Fuhrer was amazed by Britain's rejection of his peace offer and began to search for reasons behind the British attitude. On July 22, he summoned his Generals and conveyed to them his views on Britain's insistence on continuing the war.<sup>8</sup> The main points which Hitler raised (which were significant in regard to Russia) were: First, that England put great faith in Russia; second, that she hoped to create trouble in the Balkans through Russia to cut off the Germans from their fuel supplies and hence to paralyze the Luftwaffe; and third, to gain the same ends

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7. Quoted in Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, op.cit., p. 755.

8. Quoted from Halder's Diary, in Weinberg, op.cit., p. 110.

by inciting Russia against the Germans." Hitler, also, held the belief that "Stalin was flirting with Britain" to keep her in the war and pin down the Germans, with a view to gaining time and take what he wanted knowing he could not get it once peace was concluded. "He had an interest in not letting Germany become too strong." But Hitler admitted, however, that there were no indications of any "Russian aggressiveness" against the Reich. Irrespective of this Hitler declared that Germany's attention must be turned "to tackling the Russian problem" and the preparation of plans to that end. The object of such planning was to destroy the Russian Army and take as much Russian territory as possible so as to disable the Soviets from launching air raids on Berlin and Silesian industries. This penetration into the enemy territory, moreover, would enable the Luftwaffe to smash Russia's strategic areas. The political aim behind this, continued Hitler, would be to solve the question of the Baltic States which were a "permanent thorn in the flesh," by bringing them into a federation; and to incite Finland to join the war against Russia. The Ukranian States and White Russia would be subdivided into territorial units.



In the meanwhile, the plans for an invasion of Britain were being worked out. However many technical obstacles were being encountered for there was a marked lack of concord between the three branches of the German Armed Forces on the plans under discussion.

On July 31, however, an important conference between Hitler and his military chiefs<sup>9</sup> took place in which Hitler reiterated his views about the general strategic situation. "Britain's hope lies in Russia and the United States," said Hitler. "If Russia drops out of the picture, America, too, is lost for Britain, because the elimination of Russia would tremendously increase Japan's power in the Far East." He went on to stress, Russia's strategic importance to Britain's war efforts:

"All that Russia has to do is to hint that she does not care to have a strong Germany, and the British will take hope, like one about to go under, that the situation will undergo a radical change within six or eight months... Russia's destruction must therefore be made a part of this struggle... Standing still for the following winter would be perilous. So it is better to wait a little longer, but with the resolute determination to eliminate Russia. This is necessary also because of the contiguity of the Baltic. It would be awkward to have another major power there."

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9. Quoted from Halder's Diary in Ibid., p. 115. Also quoted in Dallin, Alexander, German Rule in Russia, 1941-1945, (Macmillan & Co., Ltd., London: 1957), pp. 13-14, and in Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, op.cit., p. 798.

Hitler scheduled the date for the invasion in the Spring of 1941. But still no final date or actual plan of operation had been agreed upon as yet.

The impression that one would get from reading these instructions is that Hitler suddenly decided to attack Russia mainly as a result of Britain's insistence on continuing the war, so as to prevent both Britain and Russia from coming to an understanding; and that in order to bring Britain itself to her knees.<sup>10</sup>

But were there really any indications that Russia and England might come to an understanding? No available document points to that possibility. In fact Russians attitude towards England was very cool and reserved, while she was doing her best to be friendly and cooperative with the Germans.<sup>11</sup> To show Russia's good will, Molotov had handed Schulenburg a

10. Weinberg and Rossi (besides other historians) are convinced that Britain was the cause of Hitler's decision.  
Weinberg, op.cit., p. 117.  
Rossi, op.cit., p. 131.

11. Although friction between Germany and Russia in the Baltic and the Balkan began to be felt at about the same time, yet, until June 1941, Russia never showed any signs of wishing to come to an understanding with Britain. In fact her attitude towards England remained cool and reserved until the very end.

written document of the conversation between Sir Hafford Cripps and Stalin that had taken place on July 12, 1940. The document disclosed that Cripps had told Stalin that,

"Germany was striving for hegemony in Europe and wanted to engulf all European countries." This, said Cripps "was dangerous to the Soviet Union as well as England. Therefore, both countries ought to agree on a common policy of self-protection against Germany and on the re-establishment of the European balance of powers."

Stalin replied that,

"he was not of the opinion that German military successes menaced the Soviet Union and her friendly relations with Germany. These relations were not based on transient circumstances, but on the basic national interests of both countries."<sup>12</sup>

This document clearly suggests that Stalin was not contemplating (at least at that time) to walk out on Germany. What were Hitler's worries founded on? Was his decision to attack the largest European Country, just to forestall an uncertain future possibility of a Russo-British combination, a rational one? If Hitler's main goal was just to conquer Britain, were

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12. The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, July 13, 1940, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., p. 167.

there not other means of doing so without invading the vast territories of the Soviet State? A strategic drive into North Africa down to the Suez Canal, for example, would have cut the life-routes of Great Britain and made her vulnerable to him.<sup>13</sup>

If Hitler's main strategic goal was to subdue Britain, then such a drive would have had a greater possibility of success in the long run. As a matter of fact this was not Hitler's grand strategic goal, but his immediate tactical one. This was why Hitler insisted on carrying a direct assault on the British Isles to be carried out in a quick manner for he was in a hurry to turn his full attention eastward to achieve the final solution of the German problem.

As indicated earlier, Hitler had mentioned that he intended to attack the Soviet Union even before France was defeated and before he realized that England would stand firm after France's defeat. Hence the main reason behind the German decision to attack Russia was not England but

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13. This was suggested to Hitler by Brauchitsch, Halder and Raeder, Weinberg, op.cit., p. 122.

Hitler's own ideology; though he did not explicitly mention this on July 31. Hitler had started the whole war for the sake of obtaining living-space for the German race;<sup>14</sup> and although by 1940, he had won great victories, he had not yet obtained the lands in Eastern Europe that he had dreamed of.

Hence, although Hitler's tactical aim at that stage was still the annihilation of Britain by a direct assault which he believed could be achieved in a short time, he thought it convenient to start the preparations for the invasion of Russia.

Now Russia's own attitude in the Baltic and the Balkan<sup>15</sup> threatening Hitler's flanks and oil supplies at the same time when he was attempting to carry out 'Sea Lion';<sup>16</sup> and the difficulties encountered by 'Sea Lion' itself,\* caused Hitler to start thinking of invading Russia even before defeating Britain. By this Hitler hoped primarily to defeat Russia which was the major enemy of the German race, and at the same time, hoped to paralyze Britain whose defeat was a tactical necessity and was by no means the end of his grand strategic scheme.

14. Dallin speaks of the German destruction of Russia as Hitler's 'historic mission'. Dallin, German Rule in Russia, op.cit., p. 13.

15. This question will be dealt with under the next heading.

16. See Table 1.

\* See Table 1.

(b) Germany, Russia and the Baltic.

When the Russians received news that the French Army was collapsing, they "stepped up their diplomatic activity." Their first move was in the Baltic. Russia began to reinforce her military forces on the Baltic-German borders, on the borders of Lithuania and on the shores of the Black Sea.<sup>17</sup> By the end of June 1940, the Soviets had decided to incorporate the Baltic States; and started approaching the Germans on the subject. On June 18, Molotov received Count von der Schulenburg and after congratulating him on the great success of the Wehrmacht in France, informed him that the Soviet Union had reinforced her troops in the Baltic.<sup>18</sup> This move on the part of Molotov aimed, on the one hand, at showing the Germans that German military successes had not alarmed the Soviet Union, and on the other hand, at indirectly conveying to the Germans the Soviet intention of incorporating the Baltic States at a time where the Germans could not do anything about it due to their pre-

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17. Dallin, Soviet Russia's Foreign Policy 1939-1942, op.cit., p. 243.

18. The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, June 18, 1940. Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., p. 154.

occupation in the West.<sup>19</sup>

The Germans, although they did nothing to divert the Russians from their determination at incorporating the Baltic States, were beginning to feel concerned about the possibility of losing those countries to the Soviet Union; for the economic value of those states was felt by the Germans even during their war against France.<sup>20</sup> The Russians, however, went ahead and (by the end of July) incorporated Latvia, Estonia and the whole of Lithuania. The incorporation of the first two States did not produce any negative reaction on the part of the Germans; but when it came to Lithuania, difficulties started.<sup>21</sup> The Russians, by incorporating the whole of Lithuania, had violated the Moscow Agreements which stipulated that the area around Mariampol was to be ceded to the Germans. The Russians only promised the Germans compensation in other sectors.<sup>22</sup> This question was not settled until

19. Dallin, Soviet Russia's Foreign Policy, 1939-1942, op.cit., p. 243.

20. Foreign Office Memorandum, Berlin, June 17, 1940, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., p. 153.

21. Weinberg, op.cit., p. 99.

22. The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, July 13, 1940, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., p. 166.

January 10, 1941,<sup>23</sup> and the delay on the part of the Germans in settling it indicates the beginning of the change in the German attitude towards the Soviet Union.<sup>24</sup>

(c) Finland, Rumania and the Danube.

In his talks to his Generals on July 22nd and 31st, Hitler had mentioned Finland as an important ally in the invasion of the Soviet Union. Hence when by the summer of 1940, Hitler felt that the Russians were aiming at incorporating Finland too, he promptly began taking measures to prevent such a development.<sup>25</sup> By August 14, Hitler decided to strengthen Finland by supplying her with large quantities of anti-tank mines. On August 18, the Finns consented to allow the Germans to send some Luftwaffe personnel across Finnish territories to the Kirkenes area of Norway.<sup>26</sup> On August 26, Hitler informed Brauchitsch of his decision to occupy Petsamo so as to forstall any possible Russian move against Finland.

23. 'Secret Protocol' Moscow, January 10, 1941, Ibid., pp. 267-277.

24. Weinberg, op.cit., p. 121.

25. Ibid., p. 127.

26. Ibid., p. 127.



And on August 29, Goering and Thomas agreed to send speedy supplies to the Finns.<sup>27</sup> At some time while all these steps were being taken, Ribbentrop summoned the Russian Ambassador in Berlin and began alluding, "rather cautiously, to German interests in Soviet-Finnish relations."<sup>28</sup> On September 22, a German-Finnish diplomatic agreement on transit to German troops and equipment across Finland was signed.<sup>29</sup> All these moves on the part of the Germans were not conveyed to the Russians and by this, Germany had acted in contravention to the Secret Protocol of August 23, 1939. These moves greatly alarmed the Russians and caused them to inquire formally of the German Government to clarify its attitude towards Finland.<sup>30</sup> And from this time until November 1, 1940, many agitated telegrams were exchanged to no avail between Berlin and

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27. Ibid., p. 127.

28. Ibid., p. 127.

29. Ibid., p. 127.

30. The German Chargé in the Soviet Union (Tippelskirch) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, October 4, 1940, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., pp. 203-204.

Moscow on the Finnish problem.<sup>31</sup> Thus, Finland too, caused a major rift in the relations of Germany and Soviet Russia and was one factor which contributed to the fixing of the date of the German invasion of Russia.

Another rift between Germany and the Soviet Union occurred with regard to Rumania. By June 1940, the Russians were in a hurry to solve the Rumanian question too. On the 23rd of that month, Molotov summoned Schulenburg and conveyed to him the Soviet desire to solve the Bessarabian question, and claimed Bukovina as well ostensibly on the grounds of the Ukranian origin of its population.<sup>32</sup> Molotov demanded German agreement on this and expected an answer from the

31. 'Foreign Office Memorandum' October 8, 1940, Ibid., p. 205.

The German Chargé in the Soviet Union (Tippelskirch) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, Oct. 10, 1940, Ibid., pp. 206-207.

The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, Nov. 12, 1940, Ibid., p. 217.

The Finnish question was also a great source of disagreement in the Soviet-German negotiations in Berlin on November 12, 1940.

32. The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, June 23, 1940, Ibid., p. 155.

German Government by June 25,<sup>33</sup> The Germans, who felt the menace of Soviet aggrandisement in the areas where they too had interests, had to acquiesce to the ceding of Bessarabia, but objected to the ceding of Buchovina which was not allotted to the Soviet Union in the Secret Protocol of August 23.<sup>34</sup> When the Germans began to show their uneasiness, Molotov, then, suggested a compromise by which the Soviets would restrict their claims to the northern part of Buchovina. It was on the basis of this agreement that the Russians prepared their ultimatum to Rumania. Consequently, Germany advised the Rumanian Government to yield to Soviet demands.<sup>35</sup>

When the Germans finished with France and had only England to deal with, they turned their attention to the Balkans and the Danube to check Russia's advances. The

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33. The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, June 23, 1940, cited in Rossi, op.cit., p. 133.

34. The German Foreign Office to the German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) June 25, 1940, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., pp. 158-159.

35. The Foreign Minister to the Foreign Ministry, June 27, 1940, Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series D, Vol. X, (Government Printing Office, Washington: 1957), pp. 27-28.

Germans turned east with a provocative attitude, since they had already tentatively decided on war with Russia. The effect of such an attitude was that Moscow's attitude too became provocative. The result was that the situation became more and more complicated. The first thing that Hitler did was to enforce a settlement of the disputes between Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria. This came about in the Vienna Award by which Germany and Italy forced Rumania to cede a large strip of Transilvania to Hungary and to give Dabrudja to Bulgaria. They afterwards decided to guarantee the new Rumanian frontiers. "As Hungarian and Bulgarian claimes have now been met, this guarantee could only be directed against Russia,"<sup>36</sup> Russia protested against the action that Germany had taken in the Vienna Award and declared that by such an action, the German Government "had violated Article 3 of the Non-Agression Pact, which provided for consultation. The Soviet Government had been confronted with accomplished facts by the German Government."<sup>37</sup> As an

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36. Rossi, op.cit., p. 130.

37. The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, September 1, 1940, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., pp. 180-181.

answer to the Russian protest, Ribbentrop pointed out that "so far as Berlin was concerned, the zones of interest between the two countries had been fixed once and for all in the Secret Protocol of 23rd August, and Russian interests in the Balkans had been finally settled by the ceding of Bessarabia."<sup>38</sup> On September 21, 1940, Molotov, issued a memorandum in which he declared that on the contrary, Russia still had considerable interests in the Balkans. Molotov again protested that in the Vienna Award, Germany had taken decisions with regard to countries (Hungary and Rumania) adjoining the frontiers of Russia without the latter being consulted, and that this, constituted an explicit violation of Article 3 of the Non-Aggression Pact of August 23, 1939.<sup>39</sup>

In these circumstances Hitler became very worried about the Russian attitude, his main concern being to secure the Rumanian oil fields for himself. The only thing for him to do was to start working for the control of the whole

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38. The Reich Foreign Minister to the German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) Berlin, September 3, 1940, Ibid., pp. 181-183.

39. Memorandum by the German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) September 21, 1940, Ibid., pp. 189-194.

Danubian and Balkan regions. The German did not want Italy to meddle in Balkan affairs and so advised the Italians not to undertake any action against Yugoslavia and Greece,<sup>40</sup> while they "were busy on their own behalf trying to obtain what they wanted."<sup>41</sup> In September, a German military mission went to Rumania, "a move directed as much against the British as against the Russians."<sup>42</sup> Some of the duties of the mission as mentioned in the Operational Order of the German High Command of September 20, 1940, was that of preparing the way for the deployment of German troops "in the event of our being forced into war with Soviet Russia."<sup>43</sup>

After this move, the Russians were so worried that Molotov sent Ribbentrop a note in which he expressed his disappointment in Germany's friendship. He said:

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40. The Ciano Diaries, op.cit., p. 285.

41. Rossi, op.cit., p. 153.

42. Ibid., p. 153.

43. Memorandum concerning the German Military Mission in Rumania, 20 September, to 18 October, 1940. Document NG 143. Exhibit 33, Trials of War Criminals (TMWC) Vol. XII, case 11, U.S.V. von Weizsacher (Nuremberg: October 1946-April 1949, For sale U.S. Government Printing Office Washington) p. 1253.

"If Germany wanted Russia's friendship she should not try to outflank her in Finland and Rumania."<sup>44</sup>

Germany, in order to sooth Russia's fears, invited Molotov to Berlin. On October 21, Stalin accepted the invitation.

Molotov came to Berlin on November 12, 1940,<sup>45</sup> and had conversations with Ribbentrop and Hitler. During the discussions, Hitler and Ribbentrop tried to divert Russia's aspirations towards Eastern Asia. Molotov refused all these proposals and insisted that Russia had interests in Rumania, Finland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, the Bosphorous and the Dardanelles. Molotov stressed the strategic significance of the straits indicating that what Russia wanted was security from attack through the straits which was England's "historic getaway for attack on the Soviet Union." On

44. Quoted in Lukacs, op.cit., p. 323.

45. Memorandum of the Conversation Between the Fuhrer and the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars Molotov in the presence of the Reich Foreign Minister, (and others), Berlin, November 13, 1940, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., pp. 226-234.

For part of the discussion see also Rubinstein, Alvin, "Molotov's Demands on Hitler" in the Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union, ed. by (Random House, New York: 1960), pp. 154-155.

November 15, Russia was invited to join the Three Power Pact.<sup>46</sup>  
She accepted provided the following conditions were fulfilled:<sup>47</sup>

- "(1) provided that the German troops are immediately withdrawn from Finland, which under the compact of 1939, belongs to the Soviet Union's sphere of influence...
- (2) Provided that within the next few months, the security of the Soviet Union in the Straits is assured by the conclusion of a mutual assistance pact between the Soviet Union and Bulgaria...and by the establishment of a base for land and naval forces of the U.S.S.R. within range of the Bosphorous and the Dardanelles by means of a long term lease.
- (3) Provided that the area south of Batum and Baku in the general direction of the Persian Gulf is recognized as the center of the aspirations of the Soviet Union.

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46. A Three Power Pact had already been concluded between Italy, Germany and Japan on September 27, 1940.

47. The German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) to the German Foreign Office, Moscow, November 26, 1940. Ibid., pp. 258-259.



- (4) Provided that Japan [renounces] her rights to concessions for coal and oil in Northern Sakhalin.

From that day, Hitler realized that he should fix the definite date, of the invasion of the Soviet Union, as early as possible.

By November 1940, large-scale German troop movements into Rumania began. On January 8, 1941, Count Schulenburg reported to Berlin that the Russians were "likely to be alarmed" by such large-scale troop movement into Rumania. But he was instructed by von Ribbentrop not to open the discussion himself but to wait for the Russians to do so; and if the Soviets did approach him, he was to justify the move by referring to the British moves in Greece.<sup>48</sup> On January 8, 1941, Hitler was reported to have said that "the Soviet attitude concerning the eminent German action in Bulgaria was not yet clear, and that the Soviet Union required Bulgaria itself for the assembly of troops for an advance on the

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48. The Reich Foreign Minister to the German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg) January 10, 1941, Ibid., p. 267.

In a letter from Ribbentrop to Stalin on October 13, 1940, this same view was pointed out. Document 290, Exhibit 215, TMWC, Vol. XII, op.cit., p. 1259.

Bosphorous."<sup>49</sup>

A conference in Moscow was 'apparently' held at about the same time. It consisted of the Soviet envoys to Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Rumania and Hungary. On January 12, a public warning to Bulgaria was dispatched from Moscow. This warning was also meant for German ears.<sup>50</sup> On January 17, the Soviet Government submitted a note to Weizsacker which ran as follows:

"The Soviet Government had stated repeatedly to the German Government that it considers the territory of Bulgaria and of the Straits as the Security Zone of the U.S.S.R. and that it cannot be indifferent to events which threaten the security interests of the U.S.S.R. In view of all this, the Soviet Government regards it as its duty to give warning that it will consider the appearance of any foreign armed forces on the territory of Bulgaria and of the Straits as a violation of the security interests of the U.S.S.R."<sup>51</sup>

Weizsacker's reply was distinctly non-committal.<sup>52</sup>

Throughout February, 1941, Hitler continuously

49. Beloff, Vol. II, op.cit., p. 360.

50. Ibid., p. 360.

51. The State Secretary in the German Foreign Office (Weizsacker) to the Reich Foreign Minister, Berlin, January 17, 1941, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., pp. 268-269.

52. Beloff, Vol. II, op.cit., p. 361.

tried to win Yugoslavia over to the tripartite alliance but in vain. By 28 February, Bulgaria gave German troops free passage through its territory and publicly announced its siding with the Axis. The strategic consequence of this was that Yugoslavia was almost enveloped. Yugoslavia could not but give way. But all of a sudden, the legitimate Yugoslav Government which had consented to side with the Axis Powers was overthrown by a group of army officers and the new regime refused to submit to Germany. Moreover, Yugoslavia proceeded to sign an agreement with the U.S.S.R. Germany, then had to solve the Yugoslav and Greek questions by force.<sup>53</sup>

On April 6, 1941, the Wehrmacht invaded Yugoslavia (the code name 'Operation Marita' was given to the Yugoslav and Greek campaigns); and by the end of the month both countries had collapsed. On May 31st, Crete was occupied. All these activities were preparations for 'Operation Barbarossa' for by these occupations, the right flank of 'Operation Barbarossa' was strongly protected against an attack from the Near East by Great Britain.

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53. Wilmot, Chester, The Struggle for Europe, London, 1952, pp. 76-77.

On the 21st, the following telegram was sent to the German Ambassador in Moscow which read:

"The Reich Foreign Minister to the German Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Schulenburg).

Telegram:

Berlin, June 21, 1941.

Very Urgent, State Secret, By Radio.

For the Ambassador personally.

- (1) Upon receipt of this telegram, all of the cipher material still there is to be destroyed. The radio set is to be put out of commission.
- (2) Please inform Herr Molotov at once that you have an urgent communication to make to him and therefore, like to call on him immediately. Then please make the following declaration to him.

and here is the resumé of the dispatch itself.

"To sum up, the government of the Reich declares: that the Soviet Government, contrary to the obligations it assumed,

- (1) has not only continued, but even intensified its attempts to undermine Germany in Europe;
- (2) has adopted a more and more anti-German policy;
- (3) has concentrated all its forces in readiness at the German border. Thereby the Soviet Government has broken its treaties with Germany and is about to attack Germany from the rear, in its struggle for life. The Fuhrer has therefore, ordered the German Armed Forces to oppose this threat with all the force at their disposal."

Please do not enter into any discussion of this communication. It is incumbent upon the government of Soviet Russia to safeguard the security of the Embassy personnel.<sup>54</sup>

Ribbentrop

On June 22, at 3:30 A.M., the German Army invaded the Soviet Union.

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54. Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., pp. 347-348.

C. The Military Aspects of the Decision to Attack Russia.

During the period between July 21 and July 31, 1940, Hitler had many discussions with Keitel (and probably Jodl) about the possibility of an attack on Russia in the Fall of 1940. Keitel, however, repeatedly pointed out the fact that the possibility of an attack on Russia that Fall was unpractical for technical reasons, and suggested as an alternative the Spring of 1941.<sup>55</sup> On the 29th of July, Hitler told Jodl that he agreed with Keitel as to the impracticability of an invasion against Russia that Fall and instructed him to work out plans for an invasion in the following Spring. The order was drafted and issued on August 1940, under the title "Aufbau Ost" or Reconstruction East, although many issues were still under discussion.<sup>56</sup>

On July 31, in his talks to his Generals, Hitler elaborated on the military aspect of the decision to invade Russia. He emphasized that the major goal of the campaign would be not to occupy Russian territory but to wipe out "the very power to exist of Russia." Two drives would do the job.

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55. Weinberg, op.cit., p. 112.

56. Ibid., p. 112.

One in the south to Kiev and the Dneiper River; the second in the north through the Baltic States and then downwards towards Moscow. Hitler calculated that the whole operation would not require more than 120 Divisions, which would keep 60 Divisions for the defense of Scandinavia and the West.<sup>57</sup>

Order "Aufbau Ost" included instructions for the beginning for the transfer of troops to the East. Towards the end of June, the Eighteenth Army of General Kuchler had already been ordered to move to Poland.<sup>58</sup> Now fifteen more divisions were to be transferred.<sup>59</sup> The reason for the transfer, given by Keitel, was to "guarantee the protection of Rumanian oilfields in the event of a sudden demand for intervention."<sup>60</sup> The actual working out of the detailed planning for the invasion of Russia was begun towards the end of August, for von Paulus, a witness before the Nuremberg Tribunal, testified that he first heard of the

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57. Quoted from Halder's Diary in Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, op.cit., p. 748. In Weinberg, op.cit., pp. 115-116, and in Dallin, German Rule in Russia, op.cit., pp. 13-14.

58. Weinberg, op.cit., p. 108.

59. Dallin, German Rule in Russia, op.cit., p. 14 and Martienssen, Anthony, Hitler and his Admirals, (Secher and Warburg, London: 1948), pp. 181-182.

60. Martienssen, Ibid., pp. 181-182.

proposed attack on Russia on September 3, 1940, when he became Quarter-Master-General of the General Staff. The Chief of Staff at that time was Halder, who, according to Paulus, handed over to him the plan for the attack, "in so far as it had already been prepared," and told him to examine the possibilities of the attack. The forces required were about 130-140 Divisions.<sup>61</sup> Von Paulus also testified that the plan had been in preparation for the previous two or three weeks.<sup>62</sup> It seems from von Paulus' testimony that Hitler had changed his mind about the number of Divisions to be employed in the East adding to them 10-20 Divisions. While the plan was being worked out, more re-enforcements were sent to the East. On September 6, Hitler instructed the High Command to complete the re-enforcement of the German Army in the East by the end of October. The instructions also said that this regrouping must not give Russia the impression that the Germans were planning an offensive in the East "but she must at the same time be made to understand that at any moment. [The Germans

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61. TMWC, Vol. VII (blue series) Proceedings, 5 February 1946 - 19 February, 1946 (Published at Nuremberg, Germany 1947), pp. 254-255.

62. Ibid., p. 256.



had [ ] considerable forces at [their] disposal with which to protect their interests, especially in the Balkan against a Russian attack." The High Command ought to conceal the actual strength of the forces in the North and at the same time exaggerate the forces concentrated on the Balka borders, "particularly the armoured divisions."<sup>63</sup> According to Rossi, the Germans hoped not to "alarm Russia too quickly, but to induce her all the same to remain passive in the Balkans."<sup>64</sup> Hence, the Germans would not risk a war before they were prepared for it and at the same time they would have the opportunity to 'wait and see.'<sup>65</sup>

When on November 12, 1940, the discussions with Molotov were going on, Hitler issued from his headquarters 'War Directive No. 18' which contained among other topics the following:

"Political discussions have been initiated with the aim of clarifying Russia's attitude for the time being. Irrespective of the results of these discussions, all preparations for the East which have already been verbally ordered, will be continued. Instructions on this will follow as soon as the general outline

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63. Trial of Major War Criminals, Vol. III, (blue series) Proceedings 1 December - 14 December, 1945, (Published at Nuremberg, Germany, 1947) pp. 331-332.

64. Rossi, op.cit., p. 130.

65. Ibid., pp. 130-131.

of the Army's operational plans has been submitted to and approved by me."<sup>66</sup>

This quotation indicates that although by November, 1940, Hitler was still not definite about the date of the invasion of Russia due to his preoccupation with 'Sea Lion,'<sup>67</sup> he was eager to finish the preparations for the invasion of the Soviet Union.

On December 5, 1940, Keitel, the Chief of the German Armed Forces, reported to Hitler on the planned operation in the East. The Fuhrer liked the plan and added that the primary goal was to prevent the Russians from withdrawing on a closed front. Hitler was also of the view that the eastward advance should be continued until Reich territory was out of range to the Red Air Force, and so that the Luftwaffe could be enabled to bomb and destroy Soviet war industrial territories. "The first commitment of forces should take place in such a way as to make possible the annihilation of strong enemy units." Hitler continued that

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66. De Mendelssohn, op.cit., p. 258.

67. See Table I.

it was essential that the Red Army should be prevented from taking up positions in the rear again. He also was certain that 130-140 divisions as planned for the entire operation were sufficient.<sup>68</sup>

On December 18, 1940, Hitler issued his famous Directive No. 21.<sup>69</sup> In it Hitler laid down the final military objectives of the Russian campaign. "The German Armed Forces must be prepared to crush Soviet Russia in a quick campaign before the end of the war against Britain." He then went on to specify the basic tasks of the Army, Navy and Air Force. The Army was to employ all its available units while holding as a reserve those units protecting the occupied territories. The Air Force was to endeavour to free strong units for the support of the Army so as to achieve the completion of the ground operations and so as to prevent the enemy from damaging eastern German territories. The Air Force was also to protect the areas dominated by the Germans

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68. De Mendelssohn, op.cit., p. 258.

69. Directive No. 21, 'Operation Barbarossa', December 18, 1940, Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., pp.260-264. Also Directive No. 21, Doc. 446-PS, Exhibit 341, TMWC, Vol. XII, U.S. V. Weizsaecker, op.cit., pp. 1261-1262.

against enemy Air attacks. On the other hand, air raids against Britain and especially the supply for the attacking planes must not be allowed to break down. The Navy too, while assisting the Russian campaign, should continue operations against Britain. If occasion arose, Hitler would order the concentration of troops for action against the Soviet Union eight weeks before the intended beginning of operations. Preparations that required more time were to begin presently and should be completed by May 15, 1941. Hitler further instructed his military staff to exercise great caution so that the intention to attack would not be revealed. The operations should be conducted in such a way as to drive deep wedges in the enemy lines by tanks and prevent Russian units from withdrawing into, "into the open wide spaces of Russia." The task of Rumania together with the forces concentrating there, was defined as "pinning down the opponent on the other side and, in addition reducing auxiliary services in the rear areas." In conclusion the directive stressed the following point:

"It must be clearly understood that all orders to be given by the Commander-in-Chief on the basis of [that] directive are precautionary measures, in case Russia should change her present attitude towards [the Germans]."

This last quotation gives the impression that Hitler was still contemplating as late as December to avoid a showdown with Russia if the latter should change her attitude towards Germany. But what good would a change in Russia's attitude have done? Hitler by December had abandoned 'Sea Lion,'<sup>70</sup> and the momentum of the transfer of German troops to the East had become so intense that any change of plans would have resulted in chaos. Thus, this quotation could only be interpreted as an endeavour on the part of Hitler to create a smoke screen to persuade his skeptical generals to believe that it was Russia who was responsible for the war.

On February 3, 1941, a war council<sup>71</sup> was held to draw the final plans of coordination between 'Operation Barbarossa'<sup>72</sup> with those in the Balkans and Africa ('Marita' and 'Sunflower'). In that Conference, the German General Staff gave its estimate of Russia's strength. It is important to mention here that the appraisal of the fighting quality of the Russian Army was based on its performance during the Russo-Finnish war. Inadequate consideration was given to the progress made by the

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70. See Table I.

71. De Mendelssohn, op.cit., pp. 268-269.

72. The code-name of the invasion of Russia.

Russians since then. Hitler himself estimated Russian strength at 100 divisions, 25 cavalry divisions, approximately 30 mechanized divisions. The German strength was about the same but far superior in quality. Among the leading Soviet military personalities, Timoshenko was the only outstanding figure.

Hitler also estimated that:

- (1) There was German superiority in tanks, infantry and artillery.
- (2) The Russians were superior in number; the Germans in quality.
- (3) Any retreat could be only made on a small scale since the Baltic States and the Ukraine were vital to the Russians for supply purposes.

As for the manner in which the campaign was to be conducted,<sup>73</sup> Hitler put it simply and clearly to his Commanders-in-Chief of the East and the Heads of the Armed Forces:

"The war against Russia will be such that it cannot be conducted in a knightly fashion. This struggle is a struggle of ideologies and racial differences

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73. Quoted in Wheeler-Bennet, op.cit., p. 513.

and will have to be waged with unprecedented, unmerciful and unrelenting harshness.<sup>74</sup> All officers must rid themselves of old-fashioned and obsolete theories. I know that the necessity for making war in such a manner is beyond the comprehension of you generals, but I cannot and will not change my orders and insist that they be carried out with unquestioning and unconditional obedience."

Then Hitler gave the secret order for the liquidation of commissars attached to Soviet Army-units. Since this constituted a breach of International Law, the Fuhrer formally absolved officers of the German Army from guilt "provided that the breaking of civil law such as murder, rape or robbery was not involved."

On May 1, a top secret order was issued from Hitler's headquarters which fixed the date of the attack on Russia definitely on the 22nd of June 1941.

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74. It is convenient to note here that such an order was not given in any of Hitler's Western campaigns, and the German attitude in the West was relatively "knightly" for only few cases of breaches of international law came up. This also confirms the fact that Hitler's real and final war was in the East and there he intended to stay.

## CONCLUSION

Ever since the 18th century, Russia constituted a factor of great importance with regard to Germany's foreign policy; and German statesmen were always divided into two broad schools of thought as to how to approach the Russian problem. This was mainly engendered by the fact that Germany lay in the heart of the European continent. One school thought that an entente with Russia was the soundest course that Germany could follow, while the other found the salvation of Germany in a pro-Western (and hence an anti-Russian) orientation. The ideas of these two schools were projected in Weimar Germany with the former gaining the upper hand, until, the coming to power of Gustav Stresemann in 1925 when the two schools were successfully synthesized.

Hitler came to power with a grand strategic scheme (which was the combination of policy, strategy and ideology in his person) by which he envisaged to solve the German problem. The German problem, however, was ideological in



essence for it rotated around three Nazi ideological foci-- the concepts of race, folkish state and living-space. The power that was hostile or naturally resisted the solution of such a problem (i.e., the implementation of these three concepts) was Soviet Russia, and Hitler believed that the ultimate military annihilation of that Power was imperative.

Hitler's grand strategic scheme entailed (in the period when Germany's military and political power was being built up as a preparation for the actual employment of military force), besides playing the Western Powers one against the other, the adoption of an anti-Russia policy. By this Hitler caught up with the anti-Russian German school of thought. When by 1939, Hitler believed that Germany was then ready to start employing military force for the solution of the German problem provided such a force was not to be employed on two fronts simultaneously, his grand strategic conception necessitated a temporary reversion to the pro-Russian school. For Hitler found out that Russia could provide him with a great strategic advantage. Hitler found it necessary to clear up Poland and his Western front before turning

back East, and in order to achieve that he sought to neutralize Russia. The Soviet Union was neutralized by the Non-Aggression Pact; and the elimination of Poland and France was successfully accomplished. There remained Britain; and Hitler sought its annihilation by a direct assault to be achieved in a quick manner for the East was calling. While Hitler was encountering difficulties in fighting the British, Russian was expanding in the Baltic and the Balkans threatening his flanks and oil supplies, and building up its military power. By December 1940, however, when the Battle of Britain was not yielding fruits, and the Russian threat seemed menacing, Hitler decided to finish Russia before the end of the war with Britain. This move was a departure from Hitler's grand strategic scheme for it entailed a war on two fronts, and hence sealed the doom of the Third Reich.

Appendix A \*

August 23, 1939

Treaty of Non-Aggression Between Germany and the Union of Soviet  
Socialist Republics

The Government of the German Reich and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics desirous of strengthening the cause of peace between Germany and the USSR, and proceeding from the fundamental provisions of the Neutrality Agreement concluded in April 1926, between Germany and the USSR, have reached the following agreement:

## ARTICLE I

Both High Contracting Parties obligate themselves to desist from any act of violence, any aggressive action, and any attack on each other, either individually or jointly with other powers.

## ARTICLE II

Should one of the High Contracting Parties become the object of belligerent action by a third power, the other High Contracting Party shall in no manner lend its support to this third power.

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\* The text of the above cited non-aggression pact and the following accompanying secret protocol has been reproduced from Nazi-Soviet Relations, op.cit., pp. 76-78.

## ARTICLE III

The Governments of the two High Contracting Parties shall in the future maintain continual contact with one another for the purpose of consultation in order to exchange information on problems affecting their common interests.

## ARTICLE IV

Neither of the two High Contracting Parties shall participate in any grouping of powers whatsoever that is directly or indirectly aimed at the other party.

## ARTICLE V

Should disputes or conflicts arise between the High Contracting Parties over problems of one kind or another, both parties shall settle these disputes or conflicts exclusively through friendly exchange of opinion or, if necessary, through the establishment of arbitration commissions.

## ARTICLE VI

The present treaty is concluded for a period of ten years, with the proviso that, in so far as one of the High Contracting Parties does not denounce it one year prior to the expiration of this period, the validity of this treaty shall automatically be extended for another five years.

## ARTICLE VII

The present treaty shall be ratified within the shortest possible time. The ratifications shall be exchanged in Berlin. The agreement shall enter into force as soon as it is signed.

Done in duplicate, in the German and Russian languages.

Moscow, August 23, 1939.

For the Government  
of the German Reich:  
V. Ribbentrop

With full power of the  
Government of the USSR:  
V. Molotov

**Secret Additional Protocol**

On the occasion of the signature of the Non-Aggression Pact between the German Reich and the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics the undersigned plenipotentiaries of each of the two parties discussed in strictly confidential conversations the question of the boundary of their respective spheres of influence in Eastern Europe. These conversations led to the following conclusions:

(1) In the event of a territorial and political rearrangement in the areas belonging to the Baltic States (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the northern boundary of Lithuania shall represent the boundary of the spheres of influence of Germany and the USSR. In this connection the interest of Lithuania in the Vilna area is recognized by each party.

(2) In the event of a territorial and political rearrangement of the areas belonging to the Polish state, the spheres of influence of Germany and the USSR shall be bounded approximately by the line of the rivers Narew, Vistula, and San.

The question of whether the interests of both parties make desirable the maintenance of an independent Polish state and how such a state should be bounded can only be definitely determined in the course of further political developments.

In any event both Governments will resolve this question by means of a friendly agreement.

(3) With regard to Southeastern Europe, attention is called by the Soviet side to its interest in Bessarabia. The German side declares its complete political disinterestedness in these areas.

(4) This protocol shall be treated by both parties as strictly secret.

Moscow, August 23, 1939.

For the Government  
of the German Reich:

V. Ribbentrop

Plenipotentiary of the  
Government of the USSR:

V. Molotov

## APPENDIX B

German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty

The Government of the German Reich and the Government of the U.S.S.R. consider it as exclusively their task, after the collapse of the former Polish state, to re-establish peace and order in these territories and to assure to the peoples living there a peaceful life in keeping with their national character. To this end, they have agreed upon the following:

ARTICLE I.

The Government of the German Reich and the Government of the U.S.S.R. determine as the boundary of their respective national interests in the territory of the former Polish state the line marked on the attached map, which shall be described in more detail in a supplementary protocol.

ARTICLE II.

Both parties recognize the boundary of the respective national interests established in article I as definitive and shall reject any interference of third powers in this settlement.

ARTICLE III.

The necessary reorganization of public administration will be effected in the areas west of the line specified in article I by the Government of the German Reich, in the areas east of this line by the Government of the U.S.S.R.

ARTICLE IV.

The Government of the German Reich and the Government

of the U.S.S.R. regard this settlement as a firm foundation for a progressive development of the friendly relations between their peoples.

ARTICLE V.

This treaty shall be ratified and the ratifications shall be exchanged in Berlin as soon as possible. The treaty becomes effective upon signature.

Done in duplicate, in the German and Russian languages.

MOSCOW, September 28, 1939.

For the Government  
of the German Reich:  
J. RIBBENTROP

By authority of the  
Government of the U.S.S.R.:  
W. MOLOTOW

Confidential Protocol

The Government of the U.S.S.R. shall place no obstacles in the way of Reich nationals and other persons of German descent residing in the territories under its jurisdiction, if they desire to migrate to Germany or to the territories under German jurisdiction. It agrees that such removals shall be carried out by agents of the Government of the Reich in cooperation with the competent local authorities and that the property rights of the emigrants shall be protected.

A corresponding obligation is assumed by the Government of the German Reich in respect to the persons of Ukrainian or White Russian descent residing in the territories under its jurisdiction.

MOSCOW, September 28, 1939.

For the Government  
of the German Reich:  
J. RIBBENTROP

By authority of the  
Government of the U.S.S.R.:  
W. MOLOTOW

Secret Supplementary Protocol

The undersigned Plenipotentiaries declare the agreement of the Government of the German Reich and the Government of the U.S.S.R. upon the following:

The Secret Supplementary Protocol signed on August 23, 1939, shall be amended in item 1 to the effect that the territory of the Lithuanian state falls to the sphere of influence of the U.S.S.R., while, on the other hand, the province of Lublin and parts of the province of Warsaw fall to the sphere of influence of Germany (cf. the map attached to the Boundary and Friendship Treaty signed today). As soon as the Government of the U.S.S.R. shall take special measures on Lithuanian territory to protect its interests, the present German-Lithuanian border, for the purpose of a natural and simple boundary delineation, shall be rectified in such a way that the Lithuanian territory situated to the southwest of the line marked on the attached map should fall to Germany.

Further it is declared that the economic agreements now in force between Germany and Lithuania shall not be affected by the measures of the Soviet Union referred to above.

MOSCOW, September 28, 1939.

For the Government  
of the German Reich:  
J. RIBBENTROP

By authority of the  
Government of the U.S.S.R.:  
W. MOLOTOW

Secret Supplementary Protocol

The undersigned plenipotentiaries, on concluding the German-Russian Boundary and Friendship Treaty, have declared their agreement upon the following:

Both parties will tolerate in their territories no Polish agitation which affects the territories of the other party. They will suppress in their territories all beginnings of such agitation and inform each other concerning suitable measures for this purpose.

MOSCOW, September 28, 1939.

For the Government  
of the German Reich:  
J. RIBBENTROP

By authority of the  
Government of the U.S.S.R.:  
W. MOLOTOW



APPENDIX CD. German Order of Battle, June 1941, and the Invasion.\*

The invading German army was composed of three major sub armies that were to pour into Russia from three different places:

Army Group South, was under Field-Marshal von Rundstedt, who had under his command four armies and General Von Kleist's first Panzer Group. The task of Army group south was to move eastwards, south of the Pripet Marshes, with concentration of effort in its left wing; and objective Kiev.

Army Group Center. Under Field Marshal Von Bock. It was aligned north of the pripet marshes and was to advance on Moscow.

Army Group North, was under Field-Marshal Ritter von Leeb. It was drawn up between Suwalki and Memel, whence it was to march on Leningrad and then turn south.

Air Force. Each army group had an air fleet assigned to its support. These were the 4th Air Fleet under Colonel-General Löhner, with Army group south; the 2nd Air Fleet, which was the strongest of the three, under Field-Marshal Kesselring in support of army group center; the 1st Air Fleet under Colonel-General Koller, with army group north. The total strength of the three armies were: 135 divisions composed of 80 infantry divisions, 15 motorized infantry divisions, 17 panzer divisions and 1 cavalry division.

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\* "Moscow," by General Gunther Blumentritt, in William Richardson and Seymour Freidin, The Fatal Decisions, London, 1956.

APPENDIX DZero Hour as narrated by General Gunther Blumentrit.

Tension rose steadily on the German side. By the evening of the 21st, we assumed that the Russians must have realized what was happening, yet across the River Bug on the front of the Fourth army and second Panzer group, that is to say between Brest-Litovsk and Lomza all was quiet. The Russian outposts were behaving quite normally. At a little after midnight, when the entire artillery of the assault divisions and of the second wave too was already zeroed in on its targets, the international Berlin-Moscow train passed without incidents through Brest-Litovsk. It was a weird moment. Three hours later we watched the German fighter planes take off and soon only their tail lights were visible in the East. As 03.30, which was Zero hour, approached, the sky began to lighten, turning to a curious yellow colour, and still all was quiet.

A 03.30 hours our entire artillery opened up. And then what seemed a miracle happened. The Russian artillery failed to respond. Only very rarely did a gun open fire from the far bank. Almost at once our signals intercept service listened into a Russian message, 'we are being fired on.' What shall we do? They heard the reply from the senior headquarters to whom this request for orders was addressed, 'You must be insane. And why is your signal not in code?'

Within a few hours the assault divisions were across the Bug, tanks were being ferried over, pontoon bridges were being built, and this almost entirely without any interference on the part of the enemy. There could be no doubt that the Fourth army and Second Panzer group had achieved complete surprise.

Russian losses from June 22 to October 13, in army group center's sector only as a result of superior German

tactics (Blitzkrieg and Pincer technique) was astounding.

By July 2nd, the first battle was for all interests and purposes won. The haul was astounding, 150,000 prisoners taken, some 1,200 tanks and 600 guns captured or destroyed.

The result of the Battle of Vyasma which was fought between the 2nd and the 13th of October, was that army group center captured 650,000 prisoners and the Russians lost 5,000 guns and 1,200 tanks.

The number of prisoners taken, and of war materials captured or destroyed by Army Group Center since the opening of hostilities was assuming astronomical proportion. The same story was repeated in the sectors of Army Groups North and South.

TABLE I

A Chronological table  
relating 'Barbarossa'  
to 'Sea Lion.'

Germany and Britain\*  
June 1940

First half of the month:  
 The prospects of the invasion of Britain were discussed and difficulties began to be encountered.

Germany and Russia  
June 1940

Second half of the month:  
 Russia re-enforced her troops in the Baltic.

23rd: Tension over Buchovina started. Towards the end of the month. The beginning of transfer of German troops to the East.

July 1940

2nd: Hitler issued his first directive on the invasion operation.

16th: Directive No. 16 - Preparation for landing operation against Britain. British Air Force was considered to be very efficient.

July 1940

Towards the end of the month: Russia incorporated Latvia, Estonia and the whole of Lithuania. Tension started over Mariampol.

31st: Hitler, after speaking of Russian menace in the Baltic and a possibility of a Russo-British combination, conveyed his intention to invade Russia.

\* Data taken from Wheatley, Ronald, Operation Sea Lion, (at the Clarendon Press, Oxford: 1962), pp. 29,32,33, 42,45,64,73,83,86,95,97.

Germany and Britain  
November 1940

During the whole of the month: Hitler still considered the idea of undertaking 'Sea Lion' in the Spring, and the General Staff considered it an operation of decisive importance.

Germany and Russia  
November 1940

12th - 15th: Deadlock in Nazi-Soviet negotiations.

12th: War Directive No. 18 for the invasion of Russia.

15th: Large-scale German troop movement to Rumania started.

December 1940

5th: Hitler told Branchitsch that he no longer considered the execution of 'Sea Lion' possible.

December 1940

18th: Directive No. 21. Hitler finally decided on war with Russia.

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