THE ANGLO-POLISH GUARANTEE: A REVIEW OF BRITISH MILITARY AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO POLAND MARCH 31-SEPTEMBER 7, 1939

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CHAPTER ONE

THE DANZIG PROBLEM AND THE ANGLO-POLISH RAPPROCHEMENT

On September 1, 1939, the German Wehrmacht violated the frontiers of Poland. Three days later, both Great Britain and France entered the conflict, according to their obligations, participating in the most horrendous struggle in the annals of modern history. It was the Anglo-Polish Guarantee which forced Great Britain to the front in the protection of an Eastern European nation and to continue the age-old British concept of balance of power. It shall be the theme of this paper to assess the willingness of Great Britain to fulfill its responsibilities to her Polish ally.

The beginning of the conflict which would confront Germany on the one hand, and Poland, Britain, and France on the other had its origins with Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, especially Point Thirteen, which announced: "An independent Polish state should be erected . . . which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea."[1] It would be the question of Poland's "free and secure access

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[1]Samuel Flagg Bemis, A Diplomatic History of the United States (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), p. 619.

to the sea" which would be the major issue between Poland and Germany and eventually between Germany and the Western democracies on September 3, 1939.

Thus the creation of the Free City of Danzig played a significant role in the development of hostilities in the closing months of 1939. To understand the importance of Danzig a question must be asked: What role did Danzig play within the German Empire? Danzig was an integral part of the Empire, since it had been the capital of West Prussia, as well as the headquarters of the German XVII Army Corps. In 1904, a polytechnical institute was opened which made Danzig a center of higher learning. Danzig had been totally a German city since the Hanseatic League. The character of the city did not change drastically until the end of World War I.

Prior to the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, fifteen percent of Danzig's population was composed of German pensioners. Over one-half of the city's population was employed either in commerce or government service. Ninety-six percent of the population was of German nationality, the other four percent being of Polish extraction.

Danzig was also a thriving commercial center in which more than two million tons of trade passed through the port annually, consisting of agricultural products and timber. Into Danzig came finished products such as tools, fertilizers, and raw materials. To cope with this expanded trade,

extensive harbor repairs were made during the decades before World War I. Even a rail network leading from the docks, called the Kaiserhafen, was completed in 1903. Despite all these improvements, Danzig ranked fifth among German ports in tonnage, and thirteenth among German Baltic ports in tonnage of incoming ships.[2]

There was a great deal of ill-feeling between certain German Baltic ports and Danzig. During 1919, representatives from Koenigsberg met representatives from the German Foreign Ministry and informed them that a return of Danzig would have a negative impact upon the development of their city.[3] Thus, it was apparent that certain segments of German society believed Danzig was expendable.

Following the armistice on November 11, 1918, the status of Danzig slowly began to take shape. This was especially evident in relation to the complexion of the Polish minority, which indicated that Danzig would be Polish according to President Wilson's pronouncements. The German Foreign Ministry and the German people were gravely concerned about this Gordian Knot. As a consequence of losing this battle for the retention of Danzig, the German people believed that they were being castigated for losing the war, a contradiction of Wilson's Fourteen Points.

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[2]Christoph M. Kimmich, The Free City (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 2.

[3]Ibid., p. 19.

The German Foreign Ministry was determined to impede any attempt to remove Danzig from the Reich. The first step the Foreign Ministry took was to create an agency designed to collect all the information which the German negotiators would need to defend the idea of self-determination of peoples as expressed in Point Thirteen of Wilson's Fourteen Points. This agency was directly responsible to the Foreign Minister and was headed by Johann Von Bernstorff, one-time German Ambassador to the United States. This intelligence gathering apparatus was referred to as the Friedens Kommission, or Friko, and it opened its doors first in Berlin, but then branched out in the eastern regions which were administered by the Polish Republic. According to one recent historian, "thus charged, the Friko set to work. It held meetings, questioned experts, and assembled statistics in quest, among other things, for a proper answer on Poland's access to the sea."[4]

The Germans originally hoped that the issue could be settled directly between themselves and Poland outside of a peace conference. The Foreign Ministry sent Count Harry Kessler to Warsaw. He offered many proposals to Pilsudski which would facilitate the German designs on Danzig. The Poles, on the other hand, after first being receptive, changed their attitude to one of distrust. They viewed Kessler's visit as a direct threat to Polish sovereignty,

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[4]Ibid., p. 18.

and after a series of public demonstrations, Pilsudski asked for his recall.[5]

The Foreign Ministry then began to prepare to alter any possible settlement in the East which the German government saw as a threat to German interests. All levels of the German government took part in creating attachments to Danzig. Kimmich notes what the Foreign Ministry attempted to accomplish in the East:

> Above all, the Foreign Ministry was convinced that, if it could establish the validity of its claim to Danzig, this validity would perforce extend to the corridor. For the Germans saw Danzig and the corridor as an indissolvable geographic and economic unit: the coveted land bridge to East Prussia.[6]

The German Ministry of Interior called for a gathering of all other agencies in an attempt to stabilize relations with Danzig. The Ministry of Finance declared that they were willing to grant a substantial loan to Danzig, and other agencies agreed to follow suit.[7]

When the Treaty of Versailles went into effect on January 10, 1920, Danzig fell under the jurisdiction of the Allied Powers. Despite the absence of Allied representatives, the change of administration proceeded without incident. Authority was then placed within the confines of

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[5]Harold Von Riekhoff, German Polish Relations (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1971), p. 29.

[6]Kimmich, p. 35.

[7]Ibid.

the municipal government.[8] The German government agreed to contribute enough financial assistance to maintain the necessary communication networks between Germany and the Free City. This was not the sole means used to cement the vital political links between both parties: as witnessed by the number of monetary loans granted by Berlin to the Free City.

Heinrich Sahm, the Lord Mayor of Danzig, had no qualms about tying the fate of Danzig to that of the Reich. Kimmich notes that as a result of Sahm's position, Danzig was now unable to develop a truly independent course vis-a-vis both Germany and Poland.[9] As a consequence, Danzig would attempt to maintain the status quo within the Free City and impede all Polish attempts at encroachments.[10]

Berlin continued its physical presence within the Free City by maintaining a Consul, who was changed in 1921 to Consul General. This developed into another avenue of German intelligence, which was used to maintain a form of pseudo-control of Danzig's foreign policy. Also, the German government hoped to sustain a level of German culture, property, and inhabitants in the East which was referred to as Deutschtum. The Foreign Ministry used this as a vehicle to protect threatened German interests in the Polish Corridor. Danzig was the perfect location for such German assistance,

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[8] Ibid., p. 23.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., p. 45.

since this aid would possibly reinforce the German minority within the lost Eastern territories against Polish attempts to integrate those areas.[11]

Among the Allied and Associate powers, there had been a dispute concerning the fate of Danzig even before the end of the war. The French were basically concerned with turning Poland into a useful ally. They believed this could be accomplished by the creation of a "Free City" on the Baltic for the Poles, with ample guarantees for the German inhabitants, but the British had serious reservations about becoming engaged in any solution which to them seemed unattainable. Lloyd George noted:

> The proposal of the Polish Commission that we should place 2,100,000 Germans under the control of a people which is of a different religion and which has never proved its capacity for stable self-government throughout its history, must, in my judgment, lead sooner or later to a new war in the east of Europe.[12]

The Foreign Office warned much earlier in December, 1918, "that for the sake of Poland's own future, we must firmly oppose exaggerated Polish claims."[13] Balfour believed that Poland should be granted free zones in Danzig and navigational rights on the Vistula as the best solution to the Danzig question. The American government's position was adequately stressed within Wilson's Fourteen Points.

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[11]Kimmich, pp. 34-35.

[12]Von Riekhoff, p. 18.

[13]Kimmich, p. 4.

The Allies did develop a specific position on the future of Danzig. The primary reason why it was chosen as a free city was its strategic location, as well as its geographic position on the mouth of the Vistula. Danzig was also the hub of a highly organized railway network inhabited by a large Polish population. On November 15, 1920, Danzig was declared a Free City. Two days later, Viscount Kikujiro Ishii outlined before the League a course of action the League should follow for the Free City. The Ishii report declared that the League should guarantee the Danzig Constitution. This would allow for the development of an independent posture which would insure the territorial and political integrity of Danzig from any foreign aggressor.[14]

Following the separation from Germany, the Free City's foreign policy fell under the helm of Heinrich Sahm, the Lord Mayor. Sahm's primary aim was to maintain Danzig's independence, especially in regard to Polish encroachment. Despite Sahm's sympathy to the German cause, he realized that any overt action by Danzig against Poland would possibly lead to its incorporation into the Polish Republic.

The most pressing of all problems which confronted Danzig was its financial condition. The German government, as already mentioned, granted a number of loans to the Free City as a means of aiding the German population in maintaining

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[14]John Brown Mason, The Danzig Dilemma: A Study in Peacemaking by Compromise (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1946), p. 78.

its German identity. An example of this was the granting of a massive loan to keep the ship yards and arsenals in operation in September, 1919. It was estimated that without the Reich's financial assistance, about 25,000 persons would lose their jobs and emigrate from Danzig, and the vacant industrial property would then be awarded to Poland under Article 107 of the Versailles Treaty.[15] The German government was also concerned with possible Bolshevik intrigues if large numbers of workers were left unemployed.

During the period of 1919-1920, the German government granted almost unlimited financial aid to the Free City, but this course was slowly beginning to change between 1920-1925. The economic plight of Germany forced Berlin to alter its policy. Kimmich averred that the mammoth loans which were granted to Danzig before the financial collapse were "no longer conditional."[16]

Despite these hardships the German government was prepared to bear this burden for the sake of the German minorities in the Eastern provinces. A factor which greatly affected the economic welfare of the Free City was the exonomic condition of the Polish Republic, since Danzig was the center of the Polish export trade for both agricultural and industrial products.[17]

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[15]Kimmich, p. 40.

[16]Ibid. [17]Ibid., p. 24.

In this respect, one must examine the origins of the ill-feelings between the Polish Republic and Danzig since the Versailles settlement. Following the separation of Danzig from the Reich, Sir Reginald Tower, a seasoned British diplomat, was assigned as chief allied administrator for the Free City during the early 1920's. His major objectives were to create an economic convention concerning the lowering of tensions and creating a more balanced understanding of the economic rights of both parties. It is interesting to note that the Poles were critical of Tower's effectiveness, while the people of Danzig were more congenial to his appointment, since he came from a nation which opposed the wild claims of the Polish Republic.[18]

Tower realized after arriving in Danzig that an effort to reach some form of economic accord between Poland and Danzig would be extremely difficult. The Poles, at the first meeting, in May, 1920, proposed that they control the harbor, communication centers, and custom houses. They also put forth the idea that the Polish currency be introduced as legal tender of the Free City, as well as the establishment of a permanent Polish garrison within the confines of Danzig. The proposals made by the Danzig Senate were in complete disagreement from those submitted by Warsaw. The Danzigers were determined, as seen in their draft proposals, to halt any Polish interference in their domestic affairs. Also,

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[18]Ibid., p. 24.

the Senate wanted Warsaw to recognize the independence of the Free City and allow for a joint operation of the transportation and communication networks. According to Kimmich, the treaty accorded the Poles "an opportunity and nothing more for the development of Polish foreign trade through the Free City."[19]

The lines of battle were drawn between Danzig and Poland over the economic issue. The struggle would never improve, and what both sides perceived to be their main objectives highlighted the growing tension between both parties over the Polish-Danzig Convention of 1920. The Danzigers realized that their ties to the Reich were severed, and they were determined not to make any significant concessions to the Poles. The Danzig Senate realized that the Poles were more powerful than they, and the only weapon Danzig could muster was to apply to the League of Nations for complete sovereignty, which would effectively regulate Polish claims within the Free City.

The Poles were striving for a convention which would allow the Polish Republic to use her economic strength to manipulate the fate of the Free City. The Polish government's objective no doubt was to obtain a complete triumph in the controversy which would lead to the incorporation of Danzig into the Polish Republic. This would in itself be a

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[19]Kimmich, pp. 25-26.

significant victory for the Warsaw regime.[20]

The Poles were extremely concerned about their outlet to the sea, and they were justified in their concern. An example which indicated their interest was demonstrated by Danzig's control over the dock facilities during the Russo-Polish War in 1920. At one point, the German dock workers sympathized with the Bolsheviks and refused to unload or handle Allied war material destined for the defense of Poland.[21] So, despite any sympathy Allied leaders had for Danzig, they were well aware of the position which Danzig held over Poland.

The Polish-Danzig Convention was finally signed under the supervision of the League Council on November 9, 1920. Poland was able to obtain "free and secure access to the Baltic." The Convention also created a Customs Union which allowed Poland to legislate and set tariffs. The revenues raised were to be allotted to each participant according to the Polish-Danzig Convention of 1920. The custom service itself fell under the realm of the Danzig administration, but the final security was allotted to the Polish government. Access to the harbor facilities was placed under the auspices of the Harbor Board, which was to have equal membership between both parties. A chairman who was totally uninvolved

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[20]Ibid.

[21]Von Riekhoff, p. 29.

with both signatories would be chosen to administer the operation.[22]

The convention also granted Poland the right to direct the foreign affairs of the Free City. The Poles were guaranteed the privilege of maintaining a representative of the Polish government in Danzig attached to the High Commissioner's office. The Poles were, furthermore, allowed the establishment of both postal and telegraphic communications centers through the port facilities. This would become a testing point for complete control of Danzig by Poland. Both parties agreed to respect the civil liberties of the respective minorities within their jurisdiction.

In October, 1921, representatives from Danzig met in Warsaw to formalize the various provisions of the convention. Primarily, the Warsaw Agreement, as this was called, reaffirmed the various provisions which already were assigned to each signatory, but it handicapped any formal settlement by clouding such a complicated economic system in verbose diplomatic jargon.[23] Thus it became apparent that any attempt to reach a just settlement which would completely satisfy each party was doomed to failure. From these discussions both sides developed expectations in regard to the role of both the League and the High Commissioner. It is

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[22]Kimmich, pp. 29-30.

[23]Ibid.

pertinent then to understand the friction which would emerge from the High Commissioner and League Council rulings.

The High Commissioner was the representative of the League in Danzig. The Commissioner was not concerned with the internal affairs of the Free City, but mainly the foreign activities of Danzig and how they pertained to the constitution as outlined by the League Council. His basic function was to settle the various disputes which emerged between both Danzig and Poland. Any discussion which was made by the High Commissioner was subject to an appeal before the League Council. A decision by that body was final and binding to both parties. It should be noted that there were no provisions to coerce a party to accept a League ruling. One of these rulings concerned the resolution which was accepted by the League on June 22, 1921, which allowed Polish troops to maintain order within Danzig. This threat haunted the minds of most Danzigers and was especially compounded by the presence of Polish naval units with their berths in the harbor of the Free City. The High Commissioner normally would have to first seek instructions from the League Council before he would seek the assistance of Poland to maintain domestic order.[24] This was a direct threat to the Sahm's influence since he sought to reach some form of accommodation between Danzig and the Polish government.

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[24]"German-Polish Relations," Foreign Policy Association, III (1927), pp. 173-74.

Following the separation with the Reich, Danzig did not break with the fatherland. This was most evident in the composition of the Danzig civil service and other governmental agencies. According to the Versailles Treaty, German laws would remain in effect within the Free City, as stipulated under Article 116 of the treaty. Kimmich notes that this trend was even maintained in its predominant German character, even within the Union's leadership posts.[25] The enthnographic character of Danzig's political parties had not altered, and those parties which were important in the Reich were also popular in the Free City.

The largest of Danzig's political parties was the Social Democrats (S.P.D.), and the fortunes of the S.P.D. in the Free City followed the fate of their German comrades. As a consequence of the general decline of the S.P.D., the Communists and the National Socialists did gain a larger percentage of voter support at the expense of the S.P.D. The only party which was able to maintain its position, and eventually gain strength, was the Catholic Center.[26]

It is from developments such as these that a foreign policy emerged between Danzig and Poland. Danzig's political structure was by no means a shallow duplicate of the Weimar government. Between 1920 and 1933 the proper relation between Danzig and Poland was under constant scrutiny by the Free

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[25]Kimmich, p. 23.

[26]Ibid., pp. 52-53.

City's Senate and Volkstag, as well as surfacing in the doctrines of Danzig's political parties. The coalition which dominated the government of the Free City between 1920-1923, the Nationalist-Conservative coalition, had been basically hostile toward a rapprochement with Warsaw. Once the Socialists gained control of the Volkstag in 1923, and once again between 1928-1930, it was much more conciliatory toward Poland. The socialists planned to use the lessening of tensions as a means of fostering an economic recovery for the Free City.[27]

As has been mentioned, the primary architect for the development of Danzig's foreign relations had been the Senate, especially in regard to the Free City's position to Poland. The Senate improperly believed that despite the fact that the Free City greatly profited from Polish maritime trade, Polish influence should be maintained at a minimum. Of course, such a philosophy harbored by the Danzig Senate would meet with stiff Polish resistance since Warsaw would not allow an alien state to impede Polish maritime traffic.[28] Such a position was considered by the League's High Commissioner, Haking, in 1921. He concluded that the Poles had a legitimate right to have a guarantee to protect Polish maritime interests, but he also declared that Poland did not have the right to control the Free City. According to Haking, Danzig was not created for the sole benefit of Poland,

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., p. 120.

but if it was, it would have been included in the Eastern provinces ceded to Poland by the Versailles Treaty.[29]

Basically, the position taken by the Senate was the archtype detailed by the German government. Berlin was pleased by the level of economic activity taking place in Danzig due to the Polish export trade. Berlin was overly concerned that Danzig did not compromise itself by the wooing of Warsaw politically through this new financial boom.[30]

Many in Danzig were also concerned about this problem. This involved the sovereignty of the Free City. As has been mentioned, the Poles attempted to impede the independence of Danzig. Warsaw feared that Poland's "free and secure access" to the Baltic would be severed if Danzig was to choose its own destiny. The problem was further compounded by the Danzigers own lack of understanding concerning the need for Polish trade, and the level of jurisdiction Poland held over the Free City.[31]

As a consequence, to avoid a possible Polish annexation of the Free City, both Germany and Danzig believed that the League of Nations must take an active part in preserving the status of the Free City. Sahm worked with astute diplomatic

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[29]Mason, p. 120.

[30]Kimmich, p. 53.

[31]"German-Polish Relations," Foreign Policy Association, 1927 (III), pp. 174-175.

skill "to keep the League involved and turn it into a bulwork against the Polish danger."[32]

The Danzigers argued their case by proclaiming that the Allies in calling Danzig, a "Free City", affirmed the sovereignty of Danzig. They also noted that since the League of Nations guaranteed the constitution of Danzig, this was an indication of the League's acknowledgement of Danzig's independence. To further their claim of sovereignty, the Free City indicated the various treaties and obligations to which Danzig was committed since its severance from Germany.

The Danzigers even noted the High Commissioner's monumental decision in 1924 concerning the sovereignty of the Free City. "Danzig is a state in the international sense of the word and is entitled to the use of expressions denoting that fact."[33] The Danzig Senate, with the apparent battle won over the sovereignty issue, began to institute statutes concerning citizenship, alien registration, and alien property ownership, as a means of insulating Danzig from any future Polish encroachments.

In such a milieu, friction continued between Poland and Danzig. These points of contention usually centered around the Harbor Board, the Customs Union, and the building of the rival port of Gydnia. The two principal disputes

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[32]Kimmich, p. 54.

[33]Ibid., p. 55.

which were characteristic of the positions of both parties had been the Westerplatte incident and the Mailbox Affair. Of these, the issues involved in the mail crisis were most typical.

The possibility of a Polish takeover of the Free City first became apparent during the Ruhr Crisis of 1923. Sahm, as Lord Mayor, was extremely anxious that Poland might conceivably attempt the incorporation of Danzig into the Polish Republic, as Lithuania did in relation to the German city of Memel. Sahm's apprehensions were justified when in July, 1923, the Polish government claimed that the High Commissioner had absolutely no authority to judge the domestic issues of Poland, and the High Commissioner had no jurisdiction to determine what issues fell within the High Commissioner's realm of responsibility concerning Polish policy directed towards the Free City. The League Council was quick to end this threatened dispute by declaring that the High Commissioner should decide for himself what issues fell within his jurisdiction.[34]

The problem concerning the mail can be traced to the convention of 1920. It was by that agreement that Poland was recognized to have the distinct authority to establish a communication network through Danzig. The Mail Crisis then should be seen in the light of a direct effort on the part of the Polish government to intimidate Danzig, and

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[34] Ibid., p. 60.

force the Danzigers to realign their foreign policy objectives toward the League and the Weimar regime.

On the morning of January 5, 1925, the Danzig population awoke to discover that Polish mailboxes appeared at their street corners which were stamped in both Polish and German "Letters to Poland only."[35] The Danzig Senate had received a warning that day which was dated January 3, 1925, announcing there would be an extension of Polish mail services. This immediately aroused the indignation of the German population who quickly replaced the Polish eagle with the old imperial colors of Germany.[36]

The action of the Poles exposed them to the possibility that the League would condemn their behavior and force Poland to renounce their exaggerated claims. Legally, the Danzigers were justified in their endeavors to halt the Polish encroachment. Earlier, High Commissioner Haking determined that Polish postal services be solely limited to the Danzig port facilities and that they be extended only to Polish officials within the Free City. Haking's decision stressed that the Polish postal services were not to duplicate the Danzig postal system. Based upon this earlier decision, Commissioner MacDonnell issued a ruling on February 2, 1925, that any Polish postal service which was extended beyond the port facilities was unjustified.[37]

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[35] Ibid., pp. 61-62. [36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., p. 63.

The Poles immediately appealed the decision of MacDonnell, and the League Council failed to honor MacDonnell's ruling. The council sent the issue before the International Court, and after a review of the matters presented by both parties, ruled in the favor of Poland.[38]

The major significance of the Mail Crisis was that it further highlighted the German and Danzig sense of alienation from the world community, as well as excessive German fears that Poland intended to gain the sovereignty of the Free City. The failure of the League to adequately resolve the impasse in the Mail Crisis and Danzig-Polish relations indicated the total weakness of the League and the lack of authority found in the High Commissioner's office. It would be the lack of teeth in enforcing the High Commissioner's decisions which would further increase the Free City's feelings of insecurity and isolation.[39]

In the Westerplatte incident, it was apparent that German's admission to the League was a great asset in her favor as a means to protect Danzig from Polish encroachments. The issue at hand first became evident in 1921, when the League pressed Danzig to grant the Poles the right to develop a munitions depot within the Free City. After diplomatic negotiations had broken down between both sides, the League granted the Westerplatte to the Poles for their munitions depot. Of course, the Danzigers feared that the Polish

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[38]Ibid., p. 64. [39]Ibid., p. 65.

military contingent of eighty-eight officers and men would attempt to gain control of the Free City.[40] Thus a possible test over the question of Danzig's sovereignty would seem to be the next stage in the drama of Danzig-Polish relations.

It soon became evident that Danzig was preparing to assert its sovereignty over the military depot at the Westerplatte. The Danzig Senate was aided in this direction by the German mission to Geneva. The heart of Danzig's case was that Poland did not have extra-territorial rights over the military depot, and as such, Danzig had the legal right to maintain jurisdiction over that outpost.[41]

The Poles countered the opposing arguments raised by Danzig, since they believed that their authority derived from resolutions passed by the League Council. In the beginning, Danzig's position had been extremely tenuous, as the League had backed the Polish claim. Gustav Stresemann, the German Foreign Minister, averred that before any decision could be reached, the issue should be reviewed by a select committee of international jurists to determine the legal ramifications of the matter.[42]

This committee later vindicated Stresemann, but the Polish government appealed for a review of the dispute to the International Court at the Hague. When the court declared in favor of Poland, the League Council began a campaign to

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[40] Ibid., p. 99. [41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

ask the Polish representative to withdraw his petition, since an unfavorable decision would place the League in serious disrepute. The Polish government would not hear of it, and not until external pressure was exerted by the British Foreign Secretary, Austin Chamberlain, and from the French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, did the Poles withdraw their petition from the International Court.[43] When Poland realized that they were totally isolated and unsupported, they accepted the committee report and attempted to reach a negotiated settlement as recommended by the League Committee.

A remarkable consequence of the dispute between Danzig and Poland concerning the Westerplatte had been the degree of control exerted by the German government in the domestic affairs of the Free City. By mid-1927, the Socialists planned to remove Sahm because of his failures in foreign policy. When news of this turn of events reached Berlin, the Foreign Ministry directed its representative in Danzig to notify members of the ruling coalition that Sahm was the embodiment of Deutschtum and his presence in the government was considered indispensable. This warning was further directed to the Socialist party when they gained control of the Danzig Senate in January, 1928. This level of control over the internal affairs of the Free City was an example of the power the German government could exert in Danzig.[44]

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[43] Ibid., p. 99-100. [44] Ibid., pp. 100-101.

This subtle atmosphere continued vis-a-vis Poland and Germany till the National Socialist takeover in January, 1933. Basically, the National Socialists attempted to regain some semblance of order in regard to their Eastern neighbors. Hitler had more important matters to which to direct his attention, such as the recovery of the Saarland and remilitarization of the Rhineland.

Prior to the takeover, the Poles wished to impress the British and the French, as well as the Germans, concerning their treaty rights in Danzig. It was apparent that Pilsudski would manufacture an incident to demonstrate the vulnerability of Danzig to both the Western democracies and the Papen government in Berlin.

On June 14, 1932, Pilsudski sent orders for the Polish Destroyer, Wicher, to enter the harbor at Danzig to pay homage to the British flotilla. Pilsudski was attempting to reinforce Poland's right to direct Danzig's foreign affairs. The Wicher was sent to Danzig with that in mind, regardless of the mounting anti-Polish feelings within the Free City.[45]

In the beginning, nothing was made of the incident even after the Wicher entered the harbor without notifying the Danzig Senate. The repercussions of this Polish maneuver had a lasting impact upon the Poles when they discovered how

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[45]Z. J. Gasiorowski, "Did Pilsudski Attempt to Initiate a Preventive War in 1933," Journal of Modern History, XXVII (1955), pp. 131-151.

isolated they had allowed themselves to become in the international community. In the next major crisis, the fate of Poland would be at stake.

As this incident progressed, the Poles discovered how isolated they had become in Europe. Both the British Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, and the French Premier, Edward Herriot, warned the Polish Foreign Minister Aleski, that any such recurrence would find the Poles forever isolated from the Western powers.[46]

This dispute was terminated by negotiations. It was hoped for a time that the Poles would, in exchange for far reaching privileges within the Free City, relax their economic boycott of Danzig. Unfortunately, the Warsaw government was determined to adhere to its policy of brinkmanship and would not relax its lethal boycott against Danzig. With the Poles, it would have to be all or nothing.

It was an atmosphere of hostility that Hitler would inherit from the discredited Weimar regime. The fear of a new united militaristic Germany on Poland's Western frontier created a sense of urgency that some immediate response was called for. This threat also highlighted Poland's isolation from the Western powers and forced the Poles to work to revive the Franco-Polish spirit of cooperation.

In Warsaw, many of the Polish colonels who became the pillars of the Pilsudski regime were concerned about the

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[46]Kimmich, p. 120.

maintenance of the dictatorship in the face of the renewed policy of the National Socialists. The Polish government was especially aware of the numerous bellicose pronouncements directed towards Germany's Eastern neighbors during Hitler's rise to power. This led to speculation that the possibility of a Polish pre-emptive strike against Germany was plausible as a means to nullify any threat to Poland from that quarter.

It should be noted that Pilsudski evidently was not as concerned with the Hitler threat as he was with the attitude of the Western powers, as seen during the Wicher incident. Pilsudski feared that this would alter the future development of the Polish Republic. Zygmunt J. Gasiorowski believes that Pilsudski was extremely concerned about the prevalent attitude of the Western powers "who were willing to pay nearly any price for the conciliation of Germany . . . especially if that price was to be paid with Eastern European territories."[47]

According to John Wheeler Bennett, Marshall Pilsudski warned Daladier in March, 1933, that the rate of German rearmament was fast becoming a menace to the future of Europe. He then proposed that a joint effort by Britain, France, and Poland would be necessary to end this problem. Wheeler-Bennett asserted that Pilsudski was even prepared to manufacture the incident which would be the casus belli for a "preventive war" against Nazi Germany.[48]

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[47]Gasiorowski, p. 139.

[48]John Wheeler-Bennett, Munich: Prologue to Tragedy (New York: Viking Compass, 1948), p. 282.

Daladier made no apparent negative response to this proposal, and in Warsaw, the rumor was that a Four-Power Alliance was created with Pilsudski's recommendation in mind. What really occurred behind the scenes was an Anglo-French desire to reach an understanding with Germany at the expense of Poland.[49]

Pilsudski was hoping that these rumors would reach Berlin since he had serious reservations concerning the desire and the ability of the French to help check the growing might of Germany. On April 21, 1933, a force of 35,000 men paraded before Pilsudski in full battle attire celebrating the fourteenth anniversary of the liberation of the city of Vilna.[50] Despite the fact that Vilna was extremely dear to Pilsudski, this was a very large contingent even for the Polish dictator. The purpose of this demonstration, no doubt, was to instill in the German hierarchy the awareness of a possible Polish attack on the German Eastern frontiers.[51]

Apparently the purpose of this smoke screen of rumors was to make the German government more receptive to Polish diplomatic maneuvers. These maneuvers were primarily designed to force the German government to develop and nurture more friendly and less bellicose relations with their Eastern

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[49] Ibid., pp. 282-283.

[50] Gasiorowski, P. 146.

[51] Ibid.

neighbors.[52]

But despite Pilsudski's belligerent gestures, it would have been almost impossible for Poland to follow through with any military action. The basic reason was that Poland was seriously entangled in an economic depression, which the government attempted to combat with extreme fiscal restraint. These measures made it impossible for the Polish government to mastermind either a full, or even a partial, mobilization. The only possible way in which the Poles could manage a war would be to obtain financial aid from abroad. Gasiorowski avers that Pilsudski saw Hitler as less of a threat than his predecessors. He also maintains that Pilsudski considered Hitler and his cronies as "nothing but windbags," and at the time of Hitler's seizure of power, he saw the Führer as no direct challenge to the future of Poland. Pilsudski preceived that Germany was too weak from internal dissension to be a real danger.[53]

Thus whatever Pilsudski's motive may have been, the apparent results are most significant. From this period of the German conquest of Czechoslovakia, German-Polish relations were primarily stable and free, though full of latent hostility.

During the middle 1930's, Great Britain attempted to revise the Versailles Treaty and reach some form of accommodation with Germany. This policy commenced with Stanley

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[52]Ibid., p. 151. [53]Ibid., pp. 149-150.

Baldwin, but Neville Chamberlain, the future prime minister, was considered its architect. This revisionist policy was referred to by its critics as appeasement, but much of the criticism concerning this phase of Chamberlain's foreign policy is totally unjustified. To determine the impact of appeasement upon international affairs, an understanding of Chamberlain's motives are first in order.*

The Germans were able by a series of bloodless victories to remilitarize the Rhineland in 1936 and annex Austria in 1937. In these two major diplomatic triumphs, the Western democracies made little, or no effort to halt the tide of German expansion. But in 1938, Neville Chamberlain would lead a receptive France into some attempt at an accommodation with Adolf Hitler as a means to placate German ambitions and to halt a Europe which seemed destined to become engaged in another conflict, just twenty years from the conclusion of the last holocaust. Chamberlain believed that if Britain became involved in this conflict, she would suffer the same horrendous casualties that occurred during World War I. The Prime Minister was determined to avoid this blood-letting if at all possible.

Chamberlain was also aware of Britain's state of rearmament, and realized that Britain needed more time to close

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*See Bibliographical Essay at the conclusion of this paper for A. J. P. Taylor's revisionist interpretation and the traditional viewpoints on Anglo-German relations.

the gap with the Germans in reference to tank and aircraft production. As a result he altered Britain's foreign policy objectives. Thus it should be indicated that Chamberlain's goals for appeasement were not solely to reward Hitler, but to negotiate with the Germans from a position of strength and still allow Britain time to re-arm. But many of Chamberlain's opponents declared that the Prime Minister compromised the vital security of Great Britain simply to avoid war with Germany. T. Desmond Williams finds, however, that Chamberlain introduced both appeasement and rearmament almost simultaneously.[54]

The undoing of appeasement would first become apparent with the Sudeten Crisis and the Munich Settlement of 1938. The main issues of the Sudeten Crisis need not concern us, but the attempts of Chamberlain to reach some form of accommodation with Hitler would mark the beginning of the end of any effort to reach a peaceful agreement with Hitler. It will be this failure which would lead the British to dangerously play their hand at brinkmanship as an expediency to halt German expansion.

The Sudeten Crisis began in May, 1938, and continued to highlight European affairs until Britain, France, Italy, and Germany gathered in Munich during September 29-30. To the average Englishman, it seemed that the Germans did have

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[54]T. Desmond Williams, "Negotiations Leading to the Anglo-Polish Alliance," Irish Historical Studies, 10, (1956), pp. 60-61; for the options which Chamberlain faced, see the bibliographical essay at the conclusion of this paper.

a legitimate claim to the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia since the German minority in that region wished to be incorporated with their fellow Germans in the Reich. But this was a logical application of the principle of self-determination of peoples which became a major tenet of the Versailles settlement. Many Britons asked whether this was not the same principle which was applied to Germany's Eastern provinces in 1919.

With a rationale based on assumptions of this character, Neville Chamberlain made three historic visits to see Hitler as an attempt to sustain the fragile peace which the Western powers were so concerned with maintaining. These visits were significant, for it was the first time a British Prime Minister would leave Britain to try his hand at personal diplomacy to save a Europe which apparently was headed for another general war. Chamberlain often remembered the days of July and August, 1914, and assumed that if Herbert Asquith and Sir Edward Grey had made the slightest effort to appeal directly to Kaiser Wilhelm II, the great war could have been avoided. The present Prime Minister was determined that he would not make the same mistake. Chamberlain intended that their blunders were not to be repeated. He would avoid a major European war if at all possible.

The morning following the Munich Conference, Chamberlain met with Hitler. It was here that Hitler first erred. Chamberlain presented Hitler with a document which read:

> We regard the agreement signed last night and the Anglo-German naval agreement as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again. We are resolved that the method of consultation shall be the method adopted to deal with any other questions that may concern our two countries.[55]

Both Hitler and Chamberlain supported this statement, and upon Chamberlain's return to London, he proclaimed to the waiting multitudes, "This is the second time that there has come back from Germany to Downing Street peace with honour. I believe it is peace in our time."[56]

This was the apex for both the appeasers and appeasement. Shortly following the Munich Conference and Chamberlain's declaration concerning "peace in our time," there began a series of rumblings from both within and without his cabinet. Winston Churchill, the epitome of that indomitable British character, ascertained the impact of the Munich settlement upon both his Tory friends and cohorts:

> Among conservatives, families and friends in intimate contact were divided to a degree the like of which I have never seen. Men and women long bound together by party ties, social amenities and family connections glared upon one another in scorn and anger. The issue was not settled by cheering crowds which had welcomed Mr. Chamberlain back from the airport or blocked Downing Street and its approaches;

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[55]A. J. P. Taylor, English History 1914-1945 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 429; see Appendix for the chronology of the period to place those developments in proper perspective.

[56]Ibid., p. 430.

> nor by the redoubtable exertions of the Ministerial Whips and partisans.[57]

It was such an atmosphere that led Duff Cooper to resign his cabinet post as First Lord of the Admiralty in the Chamberlain government. From mid-August to the conclusion of that fateful month, Cooper became increasingly aware that some action must be taken to indicate to Hitler that Britain was determined to adopt some measure that was designed to halt German expansion. Cooper ascertained that "a suitable warning would be to bring our crews of our ships up to full complement, which would amount to semi-mobilization."[58] But he discovered that the cabinet did not wish to make a decision and he became aware that his views were not in agreement with those of his colleagues.

Duff Cooper also believed that British foreign policy vis-a-vis Germany was greatly influenced by Nevile Henderson, who, according to Cooper, was a bit hysterical. Cooper indicated that on September 12, during the Sudeten Crisis, the Foreign Office was preparing to take a strong position about war. The Foreign Office sent a message to Henderson which he was directed to deliver to the German government. Henderson, according to Cooper, replied to the Foreign Office quite hysterically, "imploring the Government not to insist upon his carrying out these instructions, which he

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[57]Winston Churchill, The Gathering Storm (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin, 1948), p. 324.

[58]Alfred Duff Cooper, Old Men Forget: The Autobiography of Duff Cooper (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1954), p. 225.

was sure would have the opposite effect to that desired."[59] The Government faltered; Cooper averred that the Government at this time included the "P.M., Simon, Halifax and Sam Hoare."[60] Cooper credits the failure of the British government to take a more firm stand toward Germany to Nevile Henderson, since he continued to argue for appeasement.

Henderson in his own account, Failure of a Mission, described why he informed His Majesty's Government that such a warning, as made by Duff Cooper, was extremely dangerous:

> He [Adolf Hitler] was in the midst of his whole Nazi Army and after May 21st he was not for a moment going to allow it to be thought that he was subject to any further external dictation. It was my absolute conviction then, and with enlightenment of time it was even more so, that, firstly, he would have declined on the ground of all his other numerous engagements to receive me if I had asked for a special audience; and that, secondly, if I had given him through Ribbentrop any official warning--which must have become public property--the effect would have been to drive him right off the deep end and would have made aggression on Czechoslovakia unavoidable.[61]

Henderson was not about to admit a personal mistake. Even with the added advantage of hindsight, he could not see the apparent failure of his position. He noted that those who believed that Britain would have been in a more advantageous position to challenge the power of Germany in 1938, rather than in 1939, were wrong. According to Henderson, Britain was not in a better position to defy the

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[59] Ibid., p. 226. [60] Ibid.

[61] Nevile Henderson, Failure of a Mission (New York: G. P. Putnams, 1940), pp. 149-150.

Nazis before the Munich Accord. Henderson stressed the rationale in which his assumptions were based:

> It is not enough merely to be guided by the facilely [sic] popular agreement that the only thing in principle to say to a dictator is 'No,' and to say it as publicly as possible. As I wrote at the time, 'If ever we aspire to call Hitler's bluff, let us first be quite prepared to face the consequences.' Was France, not to mention England, prepared to face them in September, 1938?[62]

France, however, was not prepared for foreign adventures. Both Daladier and Bonnet were more concerned with France's internal situation.[63] Duff Cooper noted that even if the French became engaged in a land war with Germany, he doubted Britain would have become involved in such a struggle.[64] With the Munich Agreement, Chamberlain was now allowed additional time for Britain's rearmament program to expand. But it was apparent that Germany would now be the dominant power in Europe.

Chamberlain did have other considerations in mind when he faced the possibility of going to war with Germany in September, 1938. A significant concern of the Prime Minister was the question of the extent of support Britain could receive from her dominions. Lord Halifax averred that many critics of the Prime Minister simply bypassed this thorny issue. In his autobiography, he said:

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[62] Ibid., p. 151.

[63] T. D. Williams, p. 62.

[64] Cooper, pp. 224-225.

> That in the event of war in 1938 South Africa had declared against participation, and the attitude of Canada was to say the least of it uncertain. So the British Commonwealth, which was unanimously behind war in September, 1939, would certainly not have been united for war in 1938.[65]

Chamberlain was confronted with other problems. One which needed his direct attention was the condition of his Conservative Party. Following Munich, Chamberlain was proclaimed the savior of world peace. It was simple for not only the British people, but most of the other democracies assumed that peace was truly at hand. With Chamberlain's return from Munich, he reassured a war weary people of the prospect of peace, but also successfully silenced his severest critics within his own party, namely Duff Cooper and Winston Churchill. When it became visible that Hitler was after bigger and better things in Eastern Europe, Chamberlain was forced to make a hasty readjustment.

This revolution in Chamberlain's foreign policy occurred shortly after Hitler ordered the occupation of the rest of Czechoslovakia. Halifax, normally an extremely cautious fellow, was determined to inform the Prime Minister that if he did not take some type of immediate action, he could face a rebellion within the ranks of his own party. The British people, as well as his colleagues in the House of Commons, demanded action. Birkenhead, Halifax's biographer, assumes

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[65]Edward Frederick Lindley Wood, Earl of Halifax, Fullness of Days (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1957), p. 208.

that, knowing Chamberlain's character, this was an incredible accomplishment.[66] Chamberlain then proceeded to amend his Birmingham speech of March 17, 1939, which forecasted events which greatly altered the course of British foreign policy.

This change had been manifested in the German violation of the Munich Agreement on March 15, 1939. This was a serious blow to those who had championed the now discredited policy of appeasement with Germany. Thus, when news reached Westminster that German troops crossed the Czech border, it became evident that new departures in foreign policy were called for. It was those measure in part which contributed to the outbreak of World War II.

Immediately following the Munich Settlement, the Foreign Office was seriously concerned with the possibility of further German adventures in Europe. The question now was in what direction would the Germans turn--East or West.

The Foreign Office was in a rather confused state as shown by their grave concern of German expansion between September 30, 1938, and March 14, 1939. The British during this period were receiving wild reports concerning future German action. Karl Goerdeler, Burgermeister of Leipzig and an ardent anti-Nazi, had been a major source of these rumors. He was an extremely reliable source, since he was able to maintain a rather precise picture of German aggression in

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[66]Earl of Birkenhead, Halifax: The Life of Lord Halifax. (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1965), p. 432.

ugust-September, 1938. On November 6-7, 1938, Goedeler, hrough an intermediary, warned that the Fuhrer was preparing or a grandiose program of world domination which would nclude the subjection of Holland, Belgium, and Switzerland.[67]

Other reports reached the Foreign Office, even more randiose than this. Kirkpatrick, the First Secretary o the British Embassy in Berlin, reported that Hitler had pproved the preparations for the peace time bombing of London. This was supposed to be the famed blitzchlag, an ttack without warning. According to Kirkpatrick, the signal or the impending attack would be the sending of a book atalogue to Kirkpatrick's favorite London club. When irkpatrick informed M15 of this, it caused a minor panic. he British did take this seriously enough to place an nti-aircraft battery at Wellington Barracks, in plain view rom the German Embassy.[68]

The British Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin, Sir George Ogilvie-Forbes, noted that if any serious disturbances occurred within the Reich, the British should become aware of another round of German aggression. He believed that the next German adventure would no doubt be in the East. Ogilvie-Forbes indicated that a German drive to the West was quite

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[67]Sidney Aster, 1939: The Making of the Second World War (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), pp. 39-40; Gerhard Ritter, The German Resistance: Carl Goerdeler's Struggle Against Tryanny (New York: Praeger, 1958), pp. 83-85.

[68]Aster, pp. 43-44; Ritter, p. 130.

possible, but this was dependent upon the political condition in France as well as how strongly France would adhere to its treaty obligations with Eastern Europe.[69] Ogilvie-Forbes concluded his December 29 dispatch to Halifax with this observation:

> I cannot yet say whether Herr Hitler, as a result of this visit, is relying on France taking no military action in support of Poland or Soviet Russia against German aggression; but, with the completion of the Western defenses and French preoccupation over Italy, I think that he [Hitler] would be prepared to repeat the risk which he accepted last September.[70]

In the same dispatch, the military attaché, F. N. Mason-MacFarlane, assumed that even though it was apparent that Hitler had not decided on his next military adventure, both the Army and Air Force were going at full speed to be prepared for all eventualities.[71]

In the same enclosure, Mason-MacFarlane asserted that some sources indicated that the Germans were pressing the Poles to align themselves with the Germans for an invasion of Byelorussia in the spring of 1939. The same source ascertained that the Poles would not fall into line and the Germans would attack Poland at the earliest possible opportunity. Mason-MacFarlane noted that the Germans could view the Ukraine as a feasible military objective in the summer of 1939. All these possible German moves were

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[69]Ogilvie-Forbes to Halifax, December 29, 1938, DBFP, 3, III, No. 505.

[70]Ibid. [71]Ibid.

connected to the German need for Lebensraum in the East.[72]

In Paris, the British Military Attaché related a view held by the French. According to the French, on December 30, 1938, the Germans would not dare to attack France, in case of war, but they would no doubt try to gain control of Holland as a means of maintaining a proper base for future U-boat operations against Britain. The Germans could then maintain a defensive position for the remainder of the war.[73] It would be such absurdities as these which flooded the Foreign Office before the German occupation of Prague on March 15, 1939.

The occupation of Prague was a slap in the face for Neville Chamberlain, who prided himself on his personal diplomacy and trust in Adolf Hitler, despite the numerous warnings from the Conservative back benchers. Chamberlain was determined that this would not happen again.

On the afternoon of March 15, Halifax appeared before the House of Lords to discuss the breach of the Munich Agreement. This is significant since Halifax himself was utterly astonished by this German move:

> I do not want to make any specific charges as to breach of faith, but I cannot admit that anything of the kind that has now taken place was in our minds at the time of Munich or was in any way contemplated. Even though it may now be claimed

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[72] Ibid.

[73] Philip to Halifax, December 30, 1938, DBEP, 3, III, No. 509.

> that what has now taken place has occurred with the acquiescence of the Czech Government.[74]

The British were determined somehow to become once again tied to the continent. They had their chance with the announcement of a German ultimatum to Rumania. On the morning of March 17, the Rumanian Minister to Great Britain was informed of the excessive economic and political demands made by Germany. Viorel Virgil Tilea then proceeded to inform the Foreign Office of this German maneuver and inquired if His Majesty's Government could possibly come to Rumania's assistance. When Tilea left the Foreign Office, he was certain that the British would not openly assist Rumania.[75]

But, the Foreign Office, after repeated discussions with the Rumanian Minister, indicated that something could be arranged, much to the delight of Tilea. Tilea then proceeded to influence as many British policy-makers who were devotedly anti-German as he could, namely, Sir Robert Vansittart and Sir Alexander Cadogan. Vansittart was much more sympathetic to the Rumanians, and he inquired if Tilea could possibly leak his story to both the London and New York papers--to directly influence public opinion in favor of the democracies.[76] With the famous "Tilea Affair," the British

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[74]Birkenhead, p. 433.

[75]Aster, pp. 61-62.

[76]Ibid., pp. 64-65.

were now ready to make a major effort to halt or impede future German expansion.

On March 18, 1939, Chamberlain called for a cabinet meeting at 10 Downing Street. The Prime Minister proceeded to warn the members of his cabinet that Britain was now entering a critical period in Europe. Halifax elaborated Tilea's story and the likelihood that it could be refuted. Chamberlain described his position toward Europe. He noted that his Birmingham speech of March 17 was a turning point in British foreign policy. Chamberlain intended this change should act as a challenge to Germany and to determine if the Germans were set upon the domination of Europe. The cabinet agreed with the Prime Minister, especially Halifax, Simon, Hore-Belisha, and Lord Chatfield. They believed Britain should not make this stand alone, but were determined to know which nations would join them in this venture.[77]

Some of these cabinet members had their own views on which nations should be contacted for entering this alliance. Leslie Hore-Belisha hoped both Poland and Russia would be contacted, but the Prime Minister would not hear of it. Chamberlain declared "Poland was very likely the key to the situation."[78] Chamberlain was overruled by the cabinet, and the Poles, Yugoslavs, Russians, Greeks, and Turks were notified. After this inquiry was made, those governments cabled Westminster to determine what precisely the British

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[77] Ibid., pp. 77-79. [78] Ibid., pp. 79-80.

had on their minds.[79]

In the course of events, the Russians were eventually dismissed since, according to Chamberlain, any diplomatic gesture to the Soviets would alienate Italy and many of the Eastern European states that Chamberlain was determined to protect.

On March 24, the Polish Ambassador, Count Edward Raczynski, made an official call on Halifax at the Foreign Office. Raczynski was asked to make Poland's reply to the British statement of March 20. The Count inquired if His Majesty's Government was prepared to make an official bilateral agreement of a confidential nature to consult in case of further German aggression.[80]

Meanwhile, in Berlin, the Polish Ambassador Joseph Lipski had been approached by the French Ambassador Robert Coulondre. Coulondre averred the next possible German blow would strike either Poland or Rumania or even possibly France and Britain. Lipski then proceeded to leave Berlin on March 19, 1939, with the intention of resigning the post of ambassador when he arrived in Warsaw.[81]

Sources close to Lipski believe that his desire to resign came during the October 24, 1938, meeting with both

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Roman Debecki, Foreign Policy of Poland 1919-1939: From the Rebirth of the Polish Republic to World War II (New York: Praeger, 1962), p. 136.

[81] Jozef Lipski, Diplomat in Berlin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 452.

Hitler and Ribbentrop at Berchtesgaden. Ribbentrop, at this conference, placed before Lipski a program which would lead to the basic solution of problems between Berlin and Warsaw. The first of these proposals centered upon the reunion of Danzig with the Reich. Poland in return would still maintain control over the railway and economic facilities there.

The German Foreign Minister indicated his desire to establish the building of an extraterritorial highway and railroad across Pomerania. In exchange, Ribbentrop was willing to allow for the extension of the Polish-German agreement for twenty-five years, as well as a German guarantee of the Polish-German frontiers. In conclusion, Ribbentrop wished that the Poles, as a sign of good faith, would enter into a joint agreement toward the U.S.S.R. on the basis of the Anti-Comintern Pact. Lipski informed the German Foreign Minister that Poland would never agree to the reunion of Danzig with the Reich, but agreed to notify Colonel Beck of these proposals.[82]

While in Warsaw, Lipski became aware of the likelihood for an Anglo-Polish rapprochement. Lipski discovered that Beck also planned a trip to London. Lipski agreed to keep this information confidential. On March 20, 1939, he returned to Berlin and had another meeting with Ribbentrop on the following afternoon. Ribbentrop once again reiterated the German proposals of October 24. Lipski indicated that it

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[82]Lipski, pp. 453-454.

was impossible to continue these discussions since the Polish government was not interested in any change in the status of the Free City.[83] Ribbentrop warned that this "could not be regarded by the Führer as satisfactory."[84]

As these diplomatic maneuvers were in progress, Colonel Beck was preparing behind the scenes a plan to bolster the Polish frontiers. The Polish Foreign Minister was determined to play both Germany and the U.S.S.R. off against one another as a means of maintaining the integrity of Poland. In this light, it is possible to understand Poland's acceptance of the British commitment.

The Poles were in a rather desperate position vis-á-vis both Germany and the U.S.S.R. The Poles remained adamant that they could sustain their own sovereignty and not be the tool of their more powerful neighbors. Beck wanted above all to be the power broker between Germany and the U.S.S.R. He placed Russian assistance to Poland on the same plane as a German attack. Likewise, he believed that if he committed Poland to an anti-German front, it would force Germany to attack Poland. But he did not want Hitler to believe that he could force his terms upon Warsaw. Beck would only be able to implement this policy by refusing to give as T. D. Williams notes "either his heart or his head to either of the two great fronts which were then lining up in Europe."[85]

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[83] Ibid., p. 508.

[84] Aster, p. 91.

[85] Williams, pp. 160-161.

Beck was willing to make his diplomatic move after the October 24 meeting between Hitler and Lipski, as well as the final dissolution of Czechoslovakia on March 15 and the incorporation of Memel on March 22. Warsaw was extremely disturbed with the destruction of the rump state of Czechoslovakia, since the Poles hoped that Czechoslovakia would be either independent or a Polish puppet. With the extension of the German customs union to Slovakia it blocked the principal Polish trade route to the Danube. This further isolated Poland by allowing a common frontier between Poland and Hungary, which the Poles considered a German satellite. A Polish newspaper, at the time, had compared this to a barbed-wire fence.[86]

The Poles were further alarmed when Germany signed a treaty with Lithuania which allowed for the return of Memel to the Reich. The Poles were then faced with the Slovak protectorate on March 23 and the German-Rumanian trade agreement. Polish public opinion was one of extreme disapproval and one which demanded effective counter-measures to these German maneuvers. Since these attacks were directed against Beck himself, he realized quick and decisive counter-measures were called for to protect his political future and Poland's interests.[87]

It is interesting to note that during the Munich Crisis,

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[86] Ibid., pp. 86-87.

[87] Debecki, pp. 135-136.

the Poles made excessive demands upon Czechoslovakia as indicated by Oliver Harvey. He reported that the Poles hounded Czechoslovakia to cede more territory to Poland; he also considered this play "á la Hitler," which forced the Czechs to submit.[88] The Poles were then later concerned about their economic lifeline to the Danube, which was severed by the Slovakian protectorate that the Poles inadvertently helped to create.

During the end of March, 1939, the Poles began to call up various classes of reserves, despite the fact that the Polish Western frontier was grossly unprepared for a German attack. The Polish military planning up until 1938 gave Poland's Eastern frontier high priority. The Polish General Staff prepared elaborate plans which centered upon a possible Soviet attack. The Polish military in 1936 began to make some attempts to prepare the Western frontier, but the West failed to reach a level comparable to the East.[89] The Polish Army at this time remained stationary at 280,000 men.[90] The mechanized and motorized units in the Polish Army were of very poor quality, and the standard of equipment was very low. The only armored units the military had at this point were primarily used for reconnaissance. The Polish military

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[88]Oliver Harvey, The Diplomatic Diaries of Oliver Harvey, ed. by John Harvey (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970), p. 20

[89]Bohdan B. Budurowyez, Polish-Soviet Relations (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 49.

[90]Ibid., p. 83.

in 1939 was deficient in anti-tank guns, anti-aircraft guns, and aircraft of advanced quality.[91]

Colonel Jozef Beck, the Polish Foreign Minister, was prepared to grasp at anything the British would propose. In this light, it can be easily understood why Colonel Beck instructed his ambassador in London to ask Halifax on March 24 if Britain would be willing to agree to a bilateral accord to halt German aggression. Chamberlain now had his deterrent, but he also tied Britain to a very unstable ally. As a result, within six months, Britain would be drawn into a war she was totally ill-prepared to handle for the future of a nation she could not guarantee.

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[91] Ibid., pp. 83-84.

CHAPTER II

CREATION OF THE ANGLO-POLISH GUARANTEE

Toward the end of March, the Foreign Office began to receive reports of German troop movements along the Polish frontier. The British government now was gravely concerned since Poland figured so importantly as the second front to be used against future German aggression. Many in the Foreign Office believed that Beck was playing a game of duplicity, much like the intrigue which had taken place during the Munich Crisis. According to A. J. P. Taylor, this was precisely the game Beck had in mind; "though they were negotiating secretly with Hitler over Danzig [January, 1939] they believed that they could hold their own in these negotiations without outside assistance."[1]

Many British political figures did not know what to make of Colonel Beck. Some believed the Polish Foreign Minister was capable of nearly everything from instigating the outbreak of war to surrendering the vital interest of Poland at the slightest whim of the German Fuhrer. The Foreign Office became concerned when the Germans unleashed a massive press campaign against Poland on March 28. This was compounded by

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[1]Taylor, English History, p. 442; Roger Parkinson, Peace for Our Time: Munich to Dunkirk--The Inside Story (New York: David McKay, 1971), p. 90

the interview with Ian Colvin of the News Chronicle on March 29 who mentioned that the Germans might be planning a move against Poland.[2]

Colvin related to the Foreign Office that he heard from an extremely reliable source that the Germans were moving military supplies into Pomerania near the city of Bromberg at the border of the Corridor. The British intelligence agency predicted that the Germans would strike Poland, possibly within twelve hours after the completion of this transition of materials.[3] It may be possible that at this point, Chamberlain considered granting a guarantee to Poland.[4]

After repeated cabinet meetings on March 29 and March 30, Chamberlain reached a conclusive policy which he hoped would block a blow which was directed toward Poland. He was able on the March 31 meeting to impede any attempt by the Labor Party opposition, led by Hugh Dalton, Arthur Greenwood, and A. V. Alexander, to make the slightest reference to the U.S.S.R. in his proposed guarantee. Lord Halifax was then instructed to confer with the Soviet ambassador, Ivan Maisky. Halifax asked the Soviet ambassador if the Soviet Union would be prepared to approve of Chamberlain's declaration. Of course Maisky refused and indicated that

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[2]Williams, p. 169.

[3]Aster, p. 100.

[4]Parkinson, p. 126.

the British were foolhardy, at best, to assume that the Germans could be stopped by an alliance of Britain, France, and Poland.[5]

The stage was now set. At 3:00 P.M. on March 31 Chamberlain addressed the House of Commons and elaborated on what has been referred to as the Anglo-Polish Guarantee. Chamberlain noted:

> In order to make perfectly clear the position of His Majesty's Government in the meantime before those consultations are concluded, I now have to inform the House that during that period, in the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence, and which the Polish Government accordingly considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish Government all support in their power. They have given the Polish Government an assurance to this effect.[6]

The Prime Minister informed the members of Parliament that the French government concurred in this decision. The Prime Minister stated falsely that the Soviet government also approved of this gesture.

On April 3, 1939, Beck left Warsaw for conversations with His Majesty's Government which were designed to improve upon the guarantee of March 31. In many respects Beck was not disappointed, but it became quite apparent how difficult it would be for both Chamberlain and Halifax to tie the Polish Foreign Minister to the idea of collective security.

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[5]Aster, p. 112.

[6]Ibid., pp. 112-113.

Beck arrived at Victoria Station on April 4, and, after a short ceremony, he was taken to the office of the Foreign Secretary at Whitehall. From this first conversation with Colonel Beck, Halifax could see that the Polish Foreign Minister was opposed to many of the major tenets of foreign policy which Chamberlain and Halifax held most dear.

Beck destroyed any hope that the Western democracies would be able to tie both the U.S.S.R. and Poland into a united front against Germany. Chamberlain and Halifax favored a form of Soviet aid to Poland since they perceived that direct aid to Poland was virtually impossible. Beck emphatically opposed this position. From the minutes of that meeting it is possible to construct Beck's view concerning the Soviet Union. One argument used was that any attempt to bring the Soviets into these discussions would possibly force Germany into a more belligerent position. The idea of the Communist ideology being repugnant to Poland can best be seen from the minutes:

> He [Beck] recalled what Marshall Pilsudski had said, namely, that when thinking of Germany and Russia it was necessary to take into account not only their interests, but their ideologies. For this reason the question of Soviet Russia required to be handled with great caution and by special methods.[7]

Beck was not impressed by the Soviet military establishment when questioned by Halifax. The minutes adequately describe what must have been an interesting conversation:

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[7]Beck's visit to London, April 4-6, DBFP, V, No. 1.

> Lord Halifax asked what value M. Beck placed upon the Soviet military forces and upon the Soviet transportation system as a means of transit.
>
> M. Beck replied that the second question was really one for experts, but the Polish government had not a very high opinion of Soviet Russia from either point of view. In the autumn of 1938 four Soviet army corps had moved towards the Polish frontier, but Poland had not thought it necessary to move a single detachment.[8]

The British were concerned about developing a Polish-Rumanian alliance as a means of creating a second front which would alleviate their dependence upon the U.S.S.R.; Beck held a different position. The Polish Foreign Minister averred that he was gravely troubled about keeping Hungary out of the German camp. He felt that the best means to do this would be to avoid a Polish-Rumanian alliance which would only threaten Hungary. He believed that the only conceivable way for the development of closer Polish-Rumanian relations would be by direct talks between Warsaw and Bucharest.[9] This seemed to halt the British plan for developing a second front since their premises rested upon two suppositions: 1) development of a military alliance between Poland and Rumania, and 2) the supply of the Poles by direct aid from or through the U.S.S.R.

Early during this meeting Colonel Beck did make one issue certain. He indicated that he agreed with Lord Halifax that this was a bilateral arrangement, not a unilateral guarantee. He agreed that Poland was prepared to enter any reciprocal engagement.[10] In all reality this would be far

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[8] Ibid. [9] Ibid. [10] Ibid.

from reciprocal when the question would be raised on September 1, 1939.

In the afternoon of April 4, Beck met the Prime Minister in his room at the House of Commons. The discussions which took place between Chamberlain and the Polish Foreign Minister were much more detailed and presented a more thorough understanding of the Polish position in relation to the Soviet Union, Rumania, and Danzig.

Chamberlain attempted to use all the diplomatic skill that he could muster to have Beck agree to possible Soviet aid in the event of Anglo-German hostilities. Chamberlain, at one point, inquired if Poland, after her munitions were exhausted, was prepared to accept Soviet aid. Colonel Beck replied rather pointedly as indicated by the minutes:

> M. Beck explained that Poland was in a position that required her to conciliate two opposing ideas; in the first place, she had to be well prepared to ward off any possible attack; in the second place, she had to act in such a way to make such an attack less likely. The more difficult the situation was, the more simple was the system that imposed itself upon her. On the one hand she would, if attacked, defend herself, even if half the country was occupied. On the other hand, she would make the strongest efforts to avoid bringing upon her people the catastrophe which they suffered during the World War.[11]

Chamberlain dogged Beck continually in an attempt to get Beck to realize the significance of the Soviet Union; all of this was to no avail. At another juncture of the conversation the

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[11]Visit of Polish Foreign Minister, April 4, 1939, DBFP, V, No. 2.

Polish position was made clear.

> His [Beck's] attitude might be expressed by saying that, so far as Poland was concerned, two things were essential, that she should not be dependent on Germany and that she would not be dependent upon Soviet Russia.[12]

Beck stressed to the Prime Minister that this warning was also made in both Berlin and Moscow. Chamberlain noted that he would halt this line of discussion, but he wished to make it plain that Beck realized that war might ensue.[13]

Once more the Poles became evasive when the discussion turned to the question of Rumania. Beck, in many cases, basically restated many of his earlier arguments. Chamberlain asked if Poland wished to leave Rumania out of this agreement. Beck declared that there had been two areas which he thought would impede an agreement at that time. The first was that Poland and Rumania were already allies, and he did not want to open a major policy discussion without conferring with the Rumanian government. The second was his desire to create a less rigid system which would not jeopardize any other possibilities that might occur. Beck also elaborated that he did not desire to lose the cherished friendship which had developed between Budapest and Warsaw through the centuries.[14] A viable Polish-Rumanian alliance would, in the eyes of Colonel Beck, force Hungary into the arms of the Germans.

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

Once again Chamberlain marshalled his powers of persuasion as a means for Beck to realize the gravity of the situation. Chamberlain presented the Polish Foreign Minister with a theoretical problem, one which could occur. This concerned the possibility that Germany might deliver an ultimatum which would force Bucharest to answer simply yes or no. The consequences would be that Bucharest and the rest of Rumania would be either occupied or laid in ruins. Beck replied: "supposing it did happen, the answer was that it was for the Rumanians to decide."[15] Chamberlain tried to impress upon Beck that if the Poles did not take a more realistic approach to a Polish-Rumanian alliance, Poland could be faced with an extensive frontier with Germany. The minutes indicated Beck's position:

> M. Beck pointed out that the additional frontier would be quite short, and would be in mountainous territory, which could be held with a small force. As regards to oil supplies, Poland had sufficient for her needs.[16]

Chamberlain then attempted to ascertain the Polish position over Danzig. Beck informed the Prime Minister that there were no negotiations presently in progress between Germany and Poland in regard to Danzig. Beck impressed upon Chamberlain the fact that he wished to reach an agreement with the Germans if at all possible. Lord Halifax inquired as to the type of settlement the Poles wished to make. Beck indicated that he favored a bilateral agreement which would

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[15] Ibid. [16] Ibid.

maintain a free government for the local population and a guarantee for the economic rights and interests of Poland. Beck noted that the German government recently confirmed those rights.[17]

Chamberlain turned to another interest relating to the question of Danzig--the Corridor. The Prime Minister inquired if Poland was preparing to accept the German proposal of an "autobahn" across the Corridor. Beck replied:

> Poland would never tolerate any extra-territorial system in connexion with such an "autobahn"; but, on the other hand, she was quite prepared to facilitate transit by making arrangements about visas, customs, duties, & c.[18]

Chamberlain asked the Polish Foreign Minister if the Germans had made any demands in that regard, and Beck denied that the Germans had done so. He agreed that if any changes took place, he would keep the Foreign Secretary abreast of those developments.[19]

These conversations, which extended from April 4-6, 1939, developed the framework of the Anglo-Polish understanding which first emerged on March 31, with the Anglo-Polish Guarantee. On April 5, Halifax noted, after a discussion with the Polish ambassador, that Beck, "would prefer that Rumania rather than Poland should be overrun by Germany."[20]

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Aster, p. 126.

This quote demonstrated the strain which emerged from those conversations between Poland and Great Britain. It is interesting that in many cases Colonel Beck was not straightforward with either Great Britain or France regarding German proposals and Polish counterproposals relating to both Danzig and the Corridor.[21] This did not seem to deter the Prime Minister from continuing his attempt at maintaining a balance of power in East Central Europe.

Colonel Beck had grounds for self confidence with the passage of the Anglo-Polish Guarantee and subsequent understanding between the two nations. Anna Cienciala asserts: "Colonel Beck can congratulate himself on having achieved a long-cherished object of Polish diplomacy--the commitment of Great Britain to Polish independence."[22] This agreement was much too fragile; the Polish Foreign Minister would have to work continually to bind Great Britain closer to the interests of Poland.

In reality, Beck had elaborate designs for the Anglo-Polish agreement. He hoped that the agreement would force Berlin into more meaningful negotiations over the Corridor and the Free City. If this failed and war ensued, the Poles could count upon the aid of Great Britain. Beck saw that by

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[21]Williams, p. 158; Foreign Office Memorandum, May 7, 1939, DBFP, No. 361.

[22]Anna M. Cienciala, Poland and the Western Powers: A Study in the Interdependence of Eastern and Western Europe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), p. 224.

a closer arrangement with the British, the French would be forced into acknowledging the Franco-Polish alliance, another facet in the defense of Poland.[23]

What was the Polish Foreign Minister's reaction to the guarantee of March 31? It was evident that he was not going to allow this opportunity to slip by without tying Great Britain to the fate of Poland. Thus when he traveled to London for the Anglo-Polish conversations, he was prepared to sign any document and make any deal to insure the continuation of the Prime Minister's statement of March 31. Beck described his motives eloquently when he said:

> In view of the English readiness to sign an open alliance (a temporary one straight away to come into force immediately) I made it my own responsibility to accept this form of agreement, in order not to spoil such an opportunity, which might not so easily occur again.[24]

The Poles were able to offer one ingredient which was significant in the development of British hopes in creating a balance of power in Eastern Europe: they would oppose German demands on their homeland. Anthony Eden noted the anti-German attitude of the Poles by April 4, 1939:

> First Beck emphasized that Poland would in no circumstances submit to German rule, nor be included within the German sphere of influence. At the moment the Polish government was controlled by an inner cabinet of Four, and at a recent meeting they had all been agreed as to this and had determined that they would rather see

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[23] Ibid., p. 230.

[24] Colonel Jozef Beck, Final Report (New York: Robert Speller and Sons, 1957), p. 176.

> half the country devastated than submit to German rule . . . .[25]

The Anglo-Polish Guarantee elicited different reactions from contemporaries. Lord Halifax believed that though the guarantee was not basically reciprocal, it failed to enhance the likelihood of an understanding between Germany and Poland, and it left Rumania out of any anti-German front; but it was the best agreement the British could make with the available information at the time.[26]

Alexander Cadogan indicated that the guarantee was the result of military inadequacies: "Our own military capabilities were deplorably inadequate. We were being swept along on a rapid series of surprises sprung upon us by Hitler with a speed that took one's breath away."[27] It was those events, he believed, which drove Chamberlain to make his guarantee to Poland, but he commented, "Of course, our guarantee could give no possible protection to Poland in any immediate attack upon her."[28] It did allow an escape for Chamberlain: "in the event of a German attack on Poland he would be spared the agonizing doubts and indecisions. You might say that was cruel to Poland."[29]

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[25]Anthony Eden, The Reckoning (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964), p. 57.

[26]Parkinson, p. 126.

[27]Alexander Cadogan, The Diaries of Sir Alexander Codogan, ed. David Dilks (New York: G. P. Putman's, 1971), pp. 166-167.

[28]Ibid. [29]Ibid.

Nevile Henderson assumed the Prime Minister had no other alternative than "a firm stand had to be taken somewhere and force opposed by force."[30] If the process was not averted, Poland, Hungary, and Rumania would follow the fate of Austria and Czechoslovakia. Henderson noted, "Berlin was already talking of reconstituting prewar Austria-Hungary and governing the whole of Central Europe from Berlin."[31]

Others opposed the guarantee with lucid arguments. The Rumanian Foreign Minister, Viorel Tilea, declared, "Poland was less suitable as a rallying point for European solidarity than any other country."[32] Lord Beaverbrook, the Canadian newspaper magnate, stated, "This was a pledge that should not have been made, that could not be honored, and which defied the bounds of practical reality when it was entered into."[33]

What was the justification for the opposition to the guarantee? One reason could possibly be the devious diplomacy which Chamberlain ventured upon. Reynolds notes that if the declaration of March 31 openly stated that Britain was prepared to defend Polish claims to the Corridor and Danzig, they would receive little support from the British public. Instead, Chamberlain spoke of the whole of Europe falling into

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[30]Henderson, P. 226.

[31]Ibid.

[32]P. A. Reynolds, British Foreign Policy in the Inter-War Years (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1954), p. 151.

[33]A. J. P. Taylor, Beaverbrook: A Biography (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), p. 391.

the clutches of Nazi domination.[34]

The dominions to a large extent opposed the guarantee. Keith Middlemas declares that only Australia was prepared to back the cabinet's change of policy, and the rest of the dominions openly opposed the new departure. Middlemas relates that "No attempt was made by the cabinet to educate them for the new role Britain would play in Europe."[35]

This was the same argument used by Beaverbrook in his condemnation of the guarantee. He went a step further, however. Beaverbrook and Lloyd George agreed that any agreement with Poland would be meaningless without the assistance of the Soviet Union. A. J. P. Taylor believes, "Here was a foretaste of the line which Beaverbrook would take during the war itself."[36] Beaverbrook's formula, according to Taylor, was rather simple:

> The best thing for Great Britain was to keep clear of European affairs, but if she insisted on becoming involved it must be in wholehearted alliance with Soviet Russia. No war was best of all, but in case of war, Great Britain must see to it that Russia won and Germany lost.[37]

Beaverbrook echoed the feelings of many in Chamberlain's cabinet that the Anglo-Polish Guarantee was not a radical

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[34]Reynolds, p. 151.

[35]Keith Middlemas, The Strategy of Appeasement: The British Government and Germany 1937-39 (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1972), p. 442.

[36]Taylor, Beaverbrook, p. 391.

[37]Ibid.

departure in British foreign policy. On March 31, Beaverbrook, in an article in the Evening Standard, declared that the guarantee did not apply to any future changes concerning the frontier of Poland. Beck threatened if a government denial of this report was not published, he was prepared to cancel his visit of April 4.[38] The Poles took this accusation quite seriously.

Many in government and the House of Commons agreed with Beaverbrook, especially Lloyd George. When Chamberlain informed Lloyd George that Poland was his intended "second front", the fiery Welshman burst into laughter and warned the Prime Minister, "your statement of today [is] an irresponsible game of chance which can end up very badly."[39] In the principal diplomatic posts of Warsaw and Berlin, warnings were made concerning the folly of Poland blocking Germany militarily, as well as possible Polish duplicity.

Nevile Henderson in Berlin warned that it was impossible for either the British or the French to aid the Poles with enough military stores to withstand a German attack. He said:

> No physical courage would avail against the superiority afforded by those technical and material advantages. It could only be a question of at most a few months before Poland would be overwhelmed . . . .[40]

Like the critics of Chamberlain, Henderson noted that the

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[38]Cienciala, p. 226.

[39]Aster, p. 115.

[40]Henderson, pp. 227-228.

only way Poland could be effectively aided was through the intervention of the Soviet Union.

In Warsaw, Kennard cabled Halifax on March 30 and voiced his opposition to the Anglo-Polish Guarantee. Kennard was concerned with the possibility of Poland provoking Germany to make a belligerent move:

> It is of course unlikely that [the] Polish government would deliberately provoke Germany. But in present state of feelings here possibility of some impulsive action cannot altogether be excluded.[41]

Kennard wanted the word "unprovoked" before the words "action were taken."[42] Halifax noted Kennard's objections, but indicated he would not alter Chamberlain's address to the House of Commons; he also informed Kennard why he failed to change the Prime Minister's address:

> I decided not to insert the word "unprovoked," because I felt that the German technique of aggression is so insidious that it might well be that Poland might in certain circumstances be driven in self-defense to commit a technical act of aggression.[43]

The Anglo-Polish understanding had significant results for the future of British foreign policy. The British by their rapprochement with Poland doomed their endeavors to create a four-power alliance to halt German expansion in Eastern Europe. The British then had to abrogate their plans for a Soviet alliance. Maxim Litvinov, the Soviet Foreign Minister,

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[41]Williams, p. 181.

[42]Ibid. [43]Ibid.

was even prepared to sign a declaration of such a nature, when Colonel Beck made his confidential statement concerning an Anglo-Polish bilateral agreement.[44]

The British government could have easily abandoned Poland, not only for the Teschen incident, but also for the lack of truthfulness concerning German-Polish negotiations over Danzig and other related issues. The British were extremely anxious to learn the results and conclusions of the January 5, 1939, meeting at Berchtesgaden between Beck, Hitler, and Ribbentrop.

Hitler, at this meeting, was conciliatory with the Polish Foreign Minister and did not wish to alienate the Poles. The Führer did mention Danzig and the Corridor issues, but he insisted that if an agreement could be reached he was willing to guarantee the frontiers of Poland, in the same manner as that of Alsace-Lorraine and the South Tyrol. Beck stressed the impact that the return of Danzig would have on Polish public opinion, irrespective of the guarantees made concerning the Polish interests in the Free City. Colonel Beck asked for time to think about the matter. It should be noted that the British were unable to discover what had taken place at this meeting.[45]

In a separate discussion the following day with

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[44]Budurowycz, p. 147.

[45]Conversations between Hitler and Beck, January 5, 1939, DGFP, V, No. 119.

Ribbentrop, Beck indicated that he was upset by "the tactics of little faits accomplis which have already affected Polish rights" in Danzig.[46] The German Foreign Minister subsequently redirected to Colonel Beck the proposals which were made to Ambassador Lipski on October 24, 1938, concerning the incorporation of Danzig into the Reich and the construction of an extra-territorial highway across the Corridor to East Prussia. Ribbentrop, after noting the Polish Minister's fears of Soviet aggression, asked Beck "whether he did not want to accede to the Anti-Comintern pact some day." Colonel Beck answered that this was not possible at the present time, "since the Polish police handled the activities of the Comintern, and Poland also wished to maintain the peaceful relations with Russia which were necessary for her security."[47]

Beck minuted concerning the January 5 discussion with Hitler that "the Chancellor then discussed the Danzig question, and emphasized that as a German city, sooner or later it must be returned to the Reich."[48] This was not entirely true as found in the German summary of this high-level meeting. Hitler acknowledged that some form of accomodation had to be reached in regards to Danzig:

> Thus, for example, in the case of Danzig there might conceivably be a settlement by which this city would be brought into the German political

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[46]Conversations between Ribbentrop and Beck, January 6, 1939, DGFP, V, No. 120.

[47]Ibid.

[48]The Polish White Book, No. 48.

> community again in accordance with the will of its population; naturally the Polish interests, especially in the economic field, would have to be fully protected.[49]

Ribbentrop noted, "The results were not particularly encouraging, although Beck's attitude was not altogether negative."[50]

In Warsaw, Sir Howard Kennard, the British Ambassador, attempted to discover what had taken place between Colonel Beck and the German leaders. Kennard indicated that he found the Polish Foreign Minister "extremely evasive," and when questioned concerning Danzig, Beck related "that there had been no detailed discussion of this question."[51] Beck did inform the British Ambassador that he found Hitler calm, but Kennard believed:

> [The] German government may not wish at the present time to offend Polish susceptibilities and possibly M. Beck lacked the courage to attempt to bring matters to a head as regards Danzig, Ukraine, or any other delicate question.[52]

The British government was in a serious predicament: How could they keep the peace and still halt German expansion? This was a problem without a definite answer. The British could have allowed Hitler to dominate Eastern Europe, and

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[49]Conversations between Hitler and Beck, January 5, 1939, DGFP, V, No. 119.

[50]Joachim von Ribbentrop, The Ribbentrop Memoirs (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1954), p. 100.

[51]Kennard to Simon, January 11, 1939, DBFP, III, No. 531.

[52]Ibid.

thus neutralize the growing power of the Soviet Union. Likewise, both the British and the French could have developed their own military potential to such a level as to act as a deterrent to German aggression towards the West. If the British chose the latter course, the Poles would have been forced to reach a compromise with the Germans over Danzig, and if war did occur, it would have been a localized affair. The guarantee to Poland did not decrease the possibility of war with Germany; it actually increased the likelihood of such a conflict.

Another problem which the foreign policy makers at Whitehall had to contend with was the fact, or even the likelihood, that the Anglo-Polish agreement might stiffen Poland into not negotiating with Germany over Danzig. No doubt this must have entered the minds of the individuals at the Foreign Office. On April 20, 1939, Halifax informed Kennard of the state of Anglo-Polish negotiations during Beck's visit. After his meeting with Beck, Halifax indicated, "As His Majesty's Government have now given a guarantee to Poland, it is natural that we should keep an eye upon the situation."[53] It is apparent that the British placed a great deal of faith upon the judgment of the Poles, and Halifax concluded, "As I understand it, he [Beck] has no desire to close the door to reasonable and free negotiations, but he is

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[53]Halifax to Kennard, April 20, 1939, No. 151, FO 417/39, C 5547/55/18.

not prepared to discuss under threat or to accept any improved solution."[54] In the eyes of the Foreign Secretary, the Anglo-Polish agreement was meant to strengthen Beck's position in negotiating with the Germans, but was this truly a practical or feasible policy to follow with the highly romantic and patriotic Poles?

Shortly after Beck's visit to London and the announcement of the Anglo-Polish agreement, William Bullitt, the American Ambassador to France, met with Colonel Beck, who was visiting Paris. It was evident from this discussion, which was held on April 7, 1939, that Colonel Beck had a limited understanding of the danger that Poland confronted. From this conversation, Beck related that the German leadership was no doubt "furious with him," and he had "no idea what Hitler would do." It was made clear that Beck would rather settle the basic problems with Germany through negotiations. Bullitt also reported:

> He [Beck] called my attention to the fact that up to date Hitler had taken no action against a strong state that was courageous enough to defend itself. He did not believe that in the end Hitler would decide to attack Poland.[55]

Beck, according to the American Ambassador, did add that he was in no way ready to make Poland a tool of either the Soviet Union or Germany.[56]

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Bullitt to Hull, April 7, 1939, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1939, I, No. 678. Italics added.

[56] Ibid.

While Colonel Beck was in London during the first week in April, Joseph P. Kennedy, the American Ambassador to the Court of St. James, held a series of conferences with the Polish Foreign Minister. Kennedy noted that when the question of the Soviet Union arose, Beck was extremely evasive. Kennedy came to the same conclusion as Bullitt that Beck did not want Poland "to be a tool for either Russia or Germany." The American Ambassador surmised, "At the same time he does not want to be a direct cause of plunging the world into war and hence his willingness to do everything in reason to try and work out some plan with Germany."[57]

The following day Kennedy met with Halifax, and the Foreign Secretary related the problems he had in attempting to get Beck to realize the need for Poland to accept Russian aid. Kennedy related that Halifax had,

> . . . pressed Beck as to whether he would not want tanks, aeroplanes and ammunition, at least, from Russia if Poland were attacked and, even with that as bait, Beck said no: that he has no confidence that conditions in Russia would permit any help that would be worth-while.[58]

The question of Soviet aid to Poland was of crucial importance to the British. Whitehall strategists realized two significant aspects regarding aid to Poland. The first was that the Baltic would be closed to Allied shipping and an alternate route had to be found, preferably through Rumania.

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[57]Kennedy to Hull, April 5, 1939, Ibid., No. 447.

[58]Kennedy to Hull, April 6, 1939, Ibid., No. 448.

Second, the British wished to overlook, even though most dispatches noted, the weakness of the Polish military and military preparations along the Polish frontiers.

The British assumed that one stumbling block was the Polish chiefs-of-staff, but even though Warsaw abhorred the Soviet Union, the Poles might in time realize the value of Russia as a source of material supply.[59] The British believed that a major obstacle in Poland's refusal of Soviet assistance was Warsaw's desire not to antagonize Germany. The policy-makers at Whitehall hoped that the Polish chiefs would no doubt alter their stance if Poland was engaged in a war with Germany.[60]

The Poles did have some legitimate fears relating to Russian assistance. During Poland's turbulent past, the Poles experienced three partitions before September, 1939. Douglas Colyer, the British Air Attaché in Paris, related to the Foreign Office conversations which he had with the French concerning the Polish fear of the Russians entering Poland. He maintained that the Poles were concerned that they would be unable to expel the Russians from their country despite the outcome on the battlefield.[61] Likewise, the Poles held other Eastern European nations, such as the Rumanians, in contempt. Kennard was concerned that if the Poles did not

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[59]Great Britain, Public Records Office (London), Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee 903, mt. 292, May 15, 1939, CAB 53/49.

[60]COS 909, mt. 297, min. 1, June, 1939, CAB 53/49.

[61]Phipps to Halifax, May 9, 1939, DBFP, V, No. 608.

make a decision rather quickly about possible assistance from Russia, nothing would keep Poland from being overrun by the Germans.[62]

During May, the British were reacting to the German claims on Poland and the mounting pressure on Danzig. One major problem that the British faced was Poland's tendency to underestimate the strength of Germany. Kennard informed Cadogan that the Poles no doubt would be in for a "rude shock, if it comes to hostilities." Kennard also noted, "But I do not think that we should do anything to discourage the calm firmness which they are showing at present."[63]

The Poles even assumed that the Anglo-Polish Guarantee had a conciliatory effect on Berlin. Halifax inquired from Count Raczynski, the Polish Ambassador, as to whether there were any negotiations with Germany over Danzig on April 20. Count Raczynski replied that there were no negotiations at the present, but if there was any good will in Berlin an agreement could be achieved in no time. Halifax was made aware that the Poles would accept no settlement which allowed for the incorporation of Danzig into the Reich:

> It would be intolerable if the Germans insisted on the incorporation of Danzig into the Reich, but short of that there should be good possibility of an agreement which, while assuring the Polish rights, would give reasonable satisfaction to Germans in Danzig.[64]

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[62]Kennard to Halifax, May 2, 1939, DBFP, V, No. 340.

[63]Ibid.

[64]Great Britain, Public Record Office (London), Foreign Office 417/39, Halifax to Kennard, April 20, 1939, No. 150, C 5696/54/18.

Raczynski wished to dispel the view that the Anglo-Polish Guarantee had resulted in a stiffening of the Polish attitude. Halifax agreed with the Polish Ambassador, "On the contrary, we supposed that it would be easier for M. Beck to negotiate from strength and possibly to find reasonable concessions that would be acceptable to his country."[65]

The British held any German demands on Poland, especially relating to Danzig, in disrepute. The British believed that the Germans were primarily attempting to sabotage the Anglo-Polish rapprochement, and if Britain did not come to the assistance of Poland, Poland would meet the same fate as Czechoslovakia. Danzig was only part of the question which separated both Germany and Poland. Kennard noted that Danzig is "inseparable from that of the so-called Corridor, i.e., the Polish province of Pomorze."[66] Kennard indicated that the story of Polish-German negotiations regarding the Free City was always associated with other claims relating to the Corridor.[67]

On March 27, Kennard met with the German Ambassador, Helmut von Moltke, and asked if there were any negotiations being held between Warsaw and Berlin over Danzig. The German Ambassador averred that the state of negotiations was in a

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[65] Ibid.

[66] Kennard to Halifax, May 17, 1939, No. 192, FO 417/39, C 7326/54/18.

[67] Ibid.

period of continual discussion, and that "efforts were being made to bridge the gap between extreme German demands and Polish objections."[68] Moltke stressed that the German government was not planning any sudden coup in relation to the Danzig question.

On April 12, Sir George Ogilvie-Forbes, the counsellor of the British Embassy in Berlin, observed that according to Polish sources it was reasonable for both Germany and Poland to go to war over Danzig. Ogilvie-Forbes assumed that from "what I was told during my visit it seems to me that any lasting arrangement is quite impractical."[69] He indicated that Danzig was a German city which has been "steadily and now quite rapidly ruined, partly by Polish and partly by German action."[70] In conclusion, Ogilvie-Forbes averred that Poland had purposely "deviated trade from Danzig to her new port, Gdynia, even when these measures had no economic justification."[71]

It did become apparent to Kennard that "Danzig is in itself a bad wicket on which to make a stand and in normal circumstances it might be wiser for Poland to reconcile herself to the fact that she cannot indefinitely maintain

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[68]Kennard to Halifax, March 27, 1939, No. 120, FO 417/39, C 4210/54/18.

[69]Ogilvie-Forbes to Strang, April 12, 1939, DBFP, V, No. 51.

[70]Ibid. [71]Ibid.

her position there."[72] The British Ambassador also indicated that the German minority was no doubt being treated unfairly, even though they were provoking the Polish authorities.[73]

The Foreign Office offered a possible alternative which the Polish government could use in its attempt to maintain control over Danzig--that of an economic boycott of the Free City. When word of this reached Kennard, he warned the Foreign Secretary that despite this, the boycott could not force either Poland or Germany to go to war; it was a dual edged sword, which severely hampered Polish interests in Danzig. In retrospect Kennard warned Halifax:

> Further, I am bound to confess that to my mind it would almost evitably be followed by German counter-measures or counter demands entailing so great a deterioration in Polish-German relations that actual hostilities would not be long deferred.[74]

In July, reports reached the Foreign Office that the Germans were infiltrating men and munitions into the Free City. In some cases, the vehicles which transported those personnel passed directly in front of the British consulate in Danzig. This period opened a new phase in Anglo-Polish relations which seriously strained the Anglo-Polish rapprochement to the limits of its endurance.[75]

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[72]Kennard to Cadogan, May 2, 1939, DBFP, V, No. 340.

[73]Ibid.

[74]Kennard to Halifax, May 17, 1939, No. 192, FO 417/39, C 7326/54/18.

[75]Shephard to Halifax, July 1, 1939, No. 1, FO 417/40, C 9225/54/18; Shephard to Halifax, July 6, 1939, No. 8, FO 417/40, C 9561/54/18.

The Poles were extremely sensitive to attacks made by segments of the British press, especially to the "general tone" of the Beaverbrook press, towards Poland. Count Raczynski complained to Halifax on July 3 that from the level of the articles it would appear that almost all of them may be "written in Berlin." What the Ambassador was most concerned about was the fear in Warsaw that the action of the Beaverbrook press might "counter the German encirclement propaganda" and thus weaken "the belief in Germany as to Great Britain's determination."[76] Halifax agreed that the press was "mischievous" and that "His Majesty's Government would of course, take no responsibility for it."[77] The Foreign Secretary concluded that he did his utmost to "say something in the proper quarter" to counter the assertions made by the Beaverbrook press.[78] This did raise one of Beck's primary concerns that Britain may be plotting to terminate its agreement with Poland.

In composing the Anglo-Polish declaration, Colonel Beck repeatedly stressed to Halifax that nothing should be encompassed which would give the slightest hint that the attitude of His Majesty's Government was faltering. The Polish Foreign Minister surmised that any information of that nature would be used by the German propagandists much to their satisfaction. Clifford Norton, the British Chargé

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[76]Halifax to Norton, July 3, 1939, No. 3, FO 417/40, C 927/1110/55.

[77]Ibid. [78]Ibid.

d'Affaires in Warsaw, relayed to Halifax that Beck believed "to an English audience suggestion of conciliation was only reasonable, and it was, of course, his own wish that a peaceful settlement should be reached."[79] The Polish Foreign Minister desired that "British statesmen should nail to the counter the falsehood that Poland's attitude had been determined by the British guarantee."[80] This is interesting since it indicated that the Poles were denying the value of the might of the British Emprie. It tended to indicate that the Polish Foreign Minister believed that Poland could go it alone, and that the guarantee was simply a tripwire to be used in case Hitler became too bellicose.

The British government had another concern which could have the most dire consequences for the future of the Empire and of European stability. Whitehall was worried that the authorities in Warsaw would attempt to occupy Danzig in a maneuver to forestall a German coup. Norton reported that the Polish government may have realized that it would be impossible for Poland to seize Danzig without appearing to be the aggressor. Norton averred that even if open hostilities did occur, the Poles could not hope to hold the Free City.[81]

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[79]Norton to Halifax, July 5, 1939, No. 3, FO 417/40, C 9374/54/18.

[80]Ibid.

[81]Norton to Halifax, July 7, 1939, No. 7, FO 417/40, C 9596/54/18.

When Sir Edmund Ironsides, the Inspector General of the British Army, visited Poland in July, 1939, he inquired of Marshall Smigly-Rydz, the successor of Marshall Pilsudski, as to whether Poland would consult His Majesty's Government before embarking on any action which would drag Britain into a world war. This was a major concern at Whitehall: that the Poles, by some rash action, might drive Britain to war without her consent. The Marshall relieved British frustrations when he reassured Ironside that Poland would never pull Britain into a conflict with Germany without Britain's consultation. The discussions of this meeting centered around the desire of both parties that war should be delayed for as long as possible. If war did occur, the Marshall believed, it could not happen without the approval of the German government. The Marshall hoped that His Majesty's Government would be relieved to hear that the Polish military planned only a minor campaign, without placing a large number of men into the field in an effort to take Danzig. Norton did relate that "this, however, was not to be taken to mean that Poland would give up her rights in Danzig without fighting."[82] Norton, also noted that those conversations indicated that the Poles were "behaving and will continue to behave with the greatest restraint and calm."[8

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[82]Norton to Halifax, July 20, 1939, No. 28, FO 417/40, C 10289/54/18.

[83]Ibid.

CHAPTER III

THE BRITISH VIEW OF MILITARY REQUIREMENTS FOR POLAND

The War Office did not share the optimism of the Charge d'Affaires concerning the reliability of the Poles. The Imperial General Staff assumed that the present situation regarding Danzig was unacceptable to both the Poles and the Germans. Also, it was apparent to the War Office that the Poles would resist any German attempt to seize control of Danzig since Danzig was the cornerstone of Poland's defense of the Corridor. The Germans would, no doubt, press their demands on Poland for a return of Danzig for two reasons: 1)The Germans believed that their terms "were reasonable and just" and 2)the basic prestige of Germany was at stake. The War Office surmised that the Germans believed that Britain did not consider Danzig a significant issue to go to war over.[1]

The British government placed a great deal of faith in the good will of the authorities in Warsaw. Was this enough? Did the politicians at Whitehall realize that the Polish government might not have been totally honest with them? It would be much to the sorrow of His Majesty's Government that

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[1]Great Britain, Public Records Office (London), War Office 19/813, May 25, 1939.

they were deceived by Warsaw. The first manifestation of this beguilement was in the realm of Polish armaments and military preparation. It is tragic that the War Office unwittingly allowed themselves to be the victims of this illusion.

The War Office thoroughly studied, or they thought they did, the Polish military situation. In the War Office documents, it is possible to read conflicting reports concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the Polish military establishment and its capabilities of waging war against Germany, or simply to defend its own frontiers from Nazi encroachments. It is interesting to note how the British military authorities envisioned the German attack upon Poland and the Polish response to a German invasion.

The War Office realized that the Polish military lacked the necessary amount of military hardware needed to defend Poland against the more technically advanced Germans. The War Office assumed the fire power of the Polish Army was much "inferior to that of the German Divisions", and they also recognized the inadequacy of the Polish anti-aircraft defenses.[2] The War Office further noted that the Polish Air Force was "no match" for the Luftwaffe. In addition, they concluded, the defense of the Polish frontiers was greatly overlooked. Some sectors were defended but "not in great strength."[3]

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[2] Ibid. [3] Ibid.

The state of the Air Force was important in the tragedy which would befall the Poles. The Foreign Office received conflicting reports from both military attachés in Warsaw and in Berlin. Sword indicated that because of the weakness of the Air Force, the other services, namely the Army, were suffering considerably.[4] While from Berlin, Group Captain J. C. Vachill, the military attaché, claimed that the present military situation in Poland was desperate, at best, since, if war began, Poland would have to go it alone. Vachill concurred with Sword that the mission of the Polish air arm was to complement the land forces to thwart an invasion. He also assumed, "As such it is quite reasonably efficient but it suffers from the drawback of inadequate equipment as does probably every branch of the Army."[5]

Vachill related that the Air Force lacked fighters of any caliber, despite the overall efficiency of this branch of the Polish Military. The Polish bomber force, about fifty, compared well to the German Dornier 17 and the British Bristol Blenheim.[6] He surmised that the major drawback to a rebuilding program was finances, which only allowed for the re-equippir of "units at long intervals." Vachill gave the Polish aircraft in service high marks for design and construction.[7]

Prior to this report, Vachill visited Warsaw and observed

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[4]Kennard to Halifax, April 5, 1939, DBFP, V, No. 12.

[5]Ogilvie-Forbes, April 12, 1939, DBFP, V, No. 51.

[6]Ibid. [7]Ibid.

that the Polish Air Force was doing remarkably well despite its limitations on finances and the lack of the latest developed aircraft. He reported that the Polish Air Force was built upon very solid foundations, and its training and organization deserved great praise. Vachill, after conferring with various senior staff officers of the Air Force, admitted that the situation would be "different were it not for the limitations of finance."[8]

Vachill emphasized the need for a large amount of financial aid being sent to Poland to help strengthen the Polish air defenses. He noted that if financial limitations were removed, Poland would be able to meet the German threat in the air:

> If Poland is allowed 12 months breathing space with the previous financial restrictions removed, I feel that she may make great strides and that her air force, though still to some extent inferior in quantity, and still to some extent inferior in quality, may be expected to play a much more important role than can be expected at the present.[9]

With the removal of financial restrictions, the Poles, Vachill reiterated, could meet this challenge:

> If Poland is given time, one or two years, the withdrawal of financial limitations, and the assistance from France and Great Britain, should make an enormous difference in the efficiency of her air force.[10]

The state of the Polish Army, and its ability to halt a German attack, was another matter of grave interest to

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[8]Kennard to Halifax, April 5, 1939, DBFP, V, No. 12.

[9]Ibid. [10]Ibid.

Whitehall. Sword observed that the caliber of the average Polish infantrymen was far from excellent. He indicated that the intelligence of the average conscript showed "little improvement in spite of efforts to improve the standard of education in Poland."[11] The Army was further weakened, according to Sword, by its lack of N.C.O.'s at all levels.[12]

Sword informed Westminster that a degree of friction existed within the Polish General Staff, especially between the Army and the Air Force, as well as the Ministry of War. This was a critical problem which had to be resolved if Poland would be able to effectively stem a possible German onslaught. Sword noted that the shake-up within the Polish General Staff, which had placed General Rayski on "long leave," would not debase the leadership ability of the armed forces, since the prestige of Marshall Simgly-Rydz was in no way impaired.[13]

The War Office believed that the Polish Army's primary weakness was in the area of artillery and anti-aircraft defenses. The War Office ascertained that Poland could only muster two hundred modern 75 mm A.A. guns and about two hundred 40 mm A.A. guns.[14] Much of Polish transportation was geared to horses, which, no doubt, the War Office discovered was an asset since the Polish road system was to a great

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[11] Ibid. [12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] WO 190/843, August 25, 1939.

extent extremely primitive.[15]

The War Office assumed that the Polish Army was no match for the German Wehrmacht at the time. The reason for this inadequacy, according to Whitehall, was principally the lack of fire power and support services which are essential for a modern army. The War Office reported on August 25 that the morale of the Army was excellent, and the Army "would fight bravely in defense of their territory."[16]

The War Office was concerned with the horrendous state of the Polish prepared defenses. The only areas which would make a valuable contribution to the defense of Poland were locations such as Osowiec on the East Prussian frontier and the field works at Katowice which were significant keys, the British believed, for the fate of Poland. The defenses that the Poles had acquired from the Czechs at Teschen were also of importance. This region consisted of various field works and machine gun emplacements, but these defenses were facing the wrong way and this fact neutralized their value to the Poles. The War Office was aware that the Poles were constructing a series of defensive positions in the interior which would allow the Polish Army to fall back if it was unable to hold the frontier.[17]

The British were also concerned about the vulnerability of the Polish railroad network. The opinion of the War Office

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[15] Ibid. [16] Ibid.

[17] WO 190/838, August 15, 1939.

towards the Polish rail system was that overall it was efficient and well-managed. But the railways did suffer from some serious drawbacks such as few diversions from main routes. In some cases, bottlenecks occurred which made rail junctions extremely vulnerable to air attack, a good example was the city of Warsaw. Another deficiency was the inadequate number of bridges which crossed the Vistula, thereby impeding rail traffic. Another problem of which the British were especially aware was the closeness of the rail lines to the German frontier which made them vulnerable to German capture. Much of this trackage once belonged to Germany prior to the conclusion of World War I, and if the Germans, according to the British, did capture the Northwest provinces of Poland this would allow them to exploit this extensive rail system. The War Office believed that if this did not occur, the Poles would be able to mobilize one hundred divisions in Western Poland.[18]

Even with disputed information of this nature, the War Office placed great faith in the Polish Army to defend its borders against attack. The War Office and the Foreign Office realized that war would no doubt occur, but exactly when this catastrophe would happen was the major concern of Whitehall.

The German General Staff, according to a report that reached the War Office, placed a great deal of faith in the Hitler regime. General Brauchitsch, the commander-in-chief,

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[18]WO 190/843, August 25, 1939.

noted that a future war would be a great tragedy and soldiers must convey this message to the political leaders in their respective nations. Brauchitsch wished that the British government would realize that he had done everything to act as a mediating influence in Berlin. He made it clear that the German armed services "would willingly and efficiently march whenever and wherever their duty led them."[19]

The War Office was also informed that these sentiments were expressed by the chief-of-staff, Franz Halder. Overall, the military caste was extremely concerned about the declining state of Anglo-German relations. It was evident that the military was generally for peace, but the Bendlerstrasse had no direct influence in determining policy. At the time, the military attaché concluded that the policy "amounts to a demand for untrammeled freedom to pursue its aim in Central and Eastern Europe. Great Britain is warned to get out of Germany's way or take the consequences."[20]

The British perceived that the Germans would, during an initial assault on Poland, seize Danzig on some pretext which the German government would consider justifiable. The Germans, expecting no reaction from the West, would then proceed to occupy the Corridor. The Germans, according to the British, did not want to be caught looking in the West and hoped to

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[19]WO 190/824, June 19, 1939.

[20]Ibid.

crush the Poles before the Western powers got going.[21] The British believed that this attack on Poland would also coincide with an invasion of Rumania, but an attack on Rumania should be considered not as an inter-dependent operation, but an independent offensive of its own. The War Office prepared for the likelihood that ten Italian divisions might assist the German operations in Poland via Slovakia.[22]

War Office estimates placed forty-five German divisions on the Polish front.[23] All of the German armored and mechanized units would be used to overrun Poland as soon as possible. The Germans would subsequently employ forty divisions on the West wall.[24] The Germans believed that once the British realized that they were faced with a fait accompli they would sue for peace.[25]

Even though it was apparent that the Germans would simply hold in the West with a meager assortment of units, there must be some explanation for the failure of the British and the French to exert enough force to alter the German pressure on Poland. Part of the explanation rested with the Allied belief in the numerical superiority of the German Army. One of these myths, that the Germans maintained a larger tank

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[21]WO 190/813, May 25, 1939.

[22]WO 190/798, April 22, 1939.

[23]WO 190/813, May 25, 1939.

[24]Ibid. [25]Ibid.

force than the Allies, still persists today. Even though the French had more tanks than the Germans, they viewed them through their experience during World War I. Unlike the Germans, they failed to boldly experiment with tanks. This can account for the lack of an offensive thrust into Germany to ease the German march through Poland.[26]

Whitehall was concerned about reaching a possible aid agreement with the Poles. As it has been discussed above, the Poles placed little faith in their other Eastern European neighbors. The War Office and the Air Ministry proposed bombing raids on Germany as an effective means of relieving

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[26]Liddell Hart, p. 21; The French Military and Civilian Authorities developed what has been referred to as the "Maginot Line Complex" or "Maginot Mentality" as a result of the French experience at Verdun in 1916. The French believed that they could not once again suffer the massive casualties in a war with Germany as they did between 1914-1918. The French then placed their sole hope in the defense of France in the massive fortifications which stretched from Switzerland to the borders of Luxemborg and Belgium which was completed in 1935, shortly before the French occupation of the Rhineland ended. For further information on the development of the Maginot Line and the decline of French military superiority in Europe both Alistair Horne's, To Lose a Battle: France, 1940 (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), pp. 29-42, and William L. Shirer's, The Collapse of the Third Republic (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969), pp. 183-187, 615, give excellent accounts of the "Maginot Mentality" on French strategic thinking. Shirer notes that the French D-2 and B-1 tanks were superior to any of the German Mark I, II, or III types. According to both authors, the reason for the French debacle in 1940 was the failure of the French to adopt Basil Liddell-Hart's new theory of the "expanding torrent" and abandon the conception of the "continuous front." Colonel Charles de Gaulle was the major exponent of Liddell-Hart's new theory, but he was stifled by the French military establishment. The fall of France was directly linked to the massive expenditure for the upkeep of the Maginot Line and the consequent failure to invest in modern military technology.

the pressure on Poland. The Military decided to refrain from such activity even though they would

> . . . find difficulty justifying inaction in the air against Germany, however temporary it might be, while Poland is being overrun, even though the alternative of taking action against such military targets might lead to indiscriminate air attacks by Germany on us.[27]

Likewise, the British wished to keep from the Poles any information which would inform them of the strength of the Royal Air Force. The British chiefs warned the delegation carrying on talks with the Polish staff to avoid details relating to the present British air expansion program. The negotiators were authorized to mention that there had been a "steady and progressive increase" in aircraft and aircraft personnel. The British wished above all to avoid committing Britain to "definite date and time estimates."[28] If pressed, the negotiators were authorized to inform the Poles that aircraft production had reached over 600 planes a month.[29]

Reorganizing the Polish Air Force was a primary concern of the British military and policy makers. In some cases, the British devised some odd ways of achieving this objective. On August 1 the British proposed to send to Poland a British air strike force, but to overcome Parliamentary obstacles, this would be disguised as a bogus sale of certain materials

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[27]COS 905, June 3, 1939, CAB 53/49.

[28]COS 909, June, 1939, CAB 53/49.

[29]Ibid.

such as petrol and bombs. The Polish government was also advised to maintain the strictest of secrecy involving this measure.[30]

The Air Ministry pressed the Polish General Staff to approve this plan which would allow shipments to be sent within a month. The Purpose of this aerodrome was to supply the British metropolitan bomber force a temporary base in Poland. This would eventually encompass one main base plus satellite aerodromes as well as other service facilities such as transportation, communications, and air defense.[31] When Kirkpatrick was informed of this development on August 1, he noted, "The Poles will be delighted."[32]

When Sir Orme Sargent, Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, sent word to Kennard of this "apparent sale" of war materials to the Poles, he denied that it would be used for the R.A.F. to stage bombing raids over Germany. Even though this was not the case, it was designed to help lift the spirits of the Polish General Staff by emphasizing the determination of Great Britain to live up to his

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[30]Great Britain, Public Records Office (London), Foreign Office 371/23147, Makins to Kirkpatrick, August 1, 1939, C 10805/1110/55; Boyle to Kwiecinski, August 3, 1939, FO 371/23147, C 10805/1110/55.

[31]Boyle to Kwiecinski, August 3, 1939, FO 371/23147, C 10805/1110/55.

[32]Makins to Kirkpatrick, August 1, 1939, FO 371/23147, C 10805/1110/55.

commitments to Poland.[33]

As early as May, this issue was raised by the French in Paris. The British Air Attaché, Douglas Colyer, believed that this would be impossible since Polish air bases were extremely limited. The French were stressing the need for the Poles to increase their facilities, and, as Colyer noted, the French hoped that the British would help pressure the Poles in this area. It is interesting that the French formalized a program such as this with the intention that both British and French aircraft could operate from Polish bases against Germany. It is significant that the seed of the British plan of August 1 was first proposed by the French back in May, 1939. This was another example of an Allied Plan to aid Poland, which was too little and too late.[34]

On July 4, the Foreign Office was prepared to draw up proposals which called for the immediate supply of 100 battle aircraft, six of which could be sent as soon as possible.[35] Another 120 were to be delivered between June, 1940, and May, 1941.[36] The cost of this operation was estimated at £1.5 million.[37] The story of these 100 aircraft is interesting in the tragedy of British aid to Poland.[38]

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[33]Sargent to Kennard, August 4, 1939, FO 371/23147, C 10805/1110/55.

[34]Phipps to Halifax, May 9, 1939, DBFP, V, No. 437.

[35]Waley to Kirkpatrick, July 4, 1939, FO 371/23145, C 9289/1110/55.

[36]Ibid. [37]Ibid. [38]Ibid.

The first consignment of the 100 aircraft mentioned above was assigned to leave Liverpool for Gdynia on August 8 aboard the SS Lacelles. The Lacelles with its precious cargo was not able to embark on its shipping date since the Anglo-Polish Agreement had yet to be signed. The Air Ministry then managed to have the Lacelles depart on August 23, but shortly after the ship put out to sea, it was recalled by the Admiralty and warned not to enter the Baltic. The Foreign Office subsequently devised alternate plans to deliver the cargo to other ports. One proposal called for the cargo to be sent to Riga, despite the Admiralty's warning, and have the Poles arrange transportation from the point of debarkation. If the shipment was lost, the Poles themselves would be held accountable. When the Lacelles left port, it was ordered to sail to Gibraltar to await a convoy to Constanza. Its estimated date of arrival was September 10, much too late to be of any assistance in halting the German invasion, or the Russians, who invaded Poland on September 17.[39]

The second shipment which comprised the balance of aircraft to be sent to Poland was delayed because of the wrangling over financial arrangements between Westminster and Warsaw. Since the Poles extinguished their credits for aeronautical supplies, fifteen or twenty aircraft were not delivered. By that time, Poland was lost, and the British,

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[39]Minute by Roberts, August 23, 1939, FO 371/23147, C 11838/1110/55; Minute by Makin, September 4, 1939, FO 371/23147, C 13024/1110/55.

during the second week in September, concluded that the Polish military situation was hopeless and suspended all shipments of war materials to Poland.[40]

The British government was prepared to begin staff conversations with the Poles concerning aid to Poland and Polish countermeasures to a German attack. The Poles, according to the British view of the Polish strategic conception, were convinced that the Germans would hold in the West as they overran Poland. The British noted that all Polish plans were based on this premise, and Whitehall was discouraged because the Polish chiefs did not adopt any alternate strategy in case the Germans followed a different course of action. Once the Germans invaded Poland, the Poles intended to initiate immediate countermeasures despite the loss of manpower and territory involved in such operations.[41] Whitehall concluded that despite this prospect:

> . . . they face this catastrophe with a certain rather admirable confidence that they will always be able to maintain a front against their enemy somewhere in Poland, and that the eventual defeat of Germany is certain as she will not be able to stand the pressure of a long war against France and England.[42]

This apparently answered the War Office concern about the

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[40]Report of Allied Demands Sub-Committee, September 9, 1939, FO 371/22879, C 13729/13326/49; Report of Allied Demands Sub-Committee, September 16, 1939, FO 371/22879, C 16213/13326/49.

[41]COS 927, June 15, 1939, CAB 53/50.

[42]Ibid.

options the Polish General Staff would take in regard to a war with Germany.[43]

In May Westminster was aware that if hostilities occurred between Germany and Poland there would be little that both His Majesty's Government or the French could do in the way of either military assistance or material aid. The British, at this point, realized that an obstacle in Poland's desire not to accept Russian equipment or supplies was the Polish fear of antagonizing Germany. The British hoped that this would change if Poland found itself actually at war.[44] The air attaché in Paris concluded that Russian air support would be of tremendous importance to the Allied war effort, except that the French hoped the British would not stress the possible use of Russian aircraft to the Poles.[45]

When the British were finally prepared to open an avenue of discussion with the Polish chiefs-of-staff, the British chiefs placed a number of limitations upon their delegation to Warsaw. The British informed members of their contingent that they had no power to reach any agreement with the Poles. If the Poles raised questions which the delegation felt incompetent to handle, they should refer them to London.[46]

The delegation was also informed that the Franco-British

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[43]WO 190/810, May 18, 1939.

[44]COS 903, Mt. 292, May 15, 1939, CAB 53/49.

[45]Phipps to Halifax, May 9, 1939, DBFP, V, No. 608.

[46]COS 903, Mt. 292, May 15, 1939, CAB 53/49.

assistance which the Poles expected would be mainly indirect. "The actual fact of the undertaking having been made, may indeed have the effect of deterring Germany from aggression, or at least forcing her to postpone it."[47] The British chiefs hoped that the British delegation would be able to ascertain exactly what the Poles wanted in the way of assistance from both France and Britain.[48]

Meanwhile, the British desired that the Poles should keep them informed about the possibility of Poland being forced to take military action against a German attack. Beck related to Kennard that the interval between a German incursion and a Polish response would not be long enough to take the matter up with the British chiefs. Beck was worried that if the British did not adequately support Poland it would indicate a "lack of confidence between Poland and the Western Powers" and this no doubt would have tremendous propaganda value for the Germans.[49]

The Poles were distressed that during the staff conversations the British delegation was far from being truthful and open with their Polish counterparts. The Polish Ambassador expressed his regrets that the British chiefs failed to confide in the Poles. Halifax believed that the Poles assumed that they gave much more than they received. To the Polish

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[47] Ibid. [48] Ibid.

[49] Kennard to Halifax, May 31, 1939, No. 206, FO 417/39, C 7889/54/18.

leadership, this showed bad faith. This can be seen in the instructions given to the British delegation pertaining to aircraft production.[50]

On July 11, Clifford Norton, the British Chargé in Warsaw, wired Lord Halifax that the Polish government would gladly welcome Sir Edmund Ironside, the Inspector General of the British Territorial Army, to visit Poland.[51] During Ironside's visit, the General noted that the Poles had an extremely low opinion of Germany, and they hoped that if the Germans invaded Poland they could counterattack with their central reserves and force the Germans to retreat. The Poles placed little value upon the German motorized units, and it was Ironside's observation that the Poles believed that this was Germany's primary weakness.[52]

Ironside assumed that it was impossible for His Majesty's Government to effectively support Poland. He surmised that if the Allies staged an attack on the Siegfried line such an adventure would take time, and that air attacks on German bases used to sustain the invasion of Poland were far out of reach for British bombers. Ironside believed that the Poles would demand immediate assistance, "something they

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[50]Halifax to Kennard, June 1, 1939, No. 207, FO 417/39, C 7917/1110/55.

[51]Norton to Halifax, July 11, 1939, No. 10, FO 417/40, C 9702/54/18.

[52]Roderick Macleod, Time Unguarded: The Ironside Diaries, ed. by Dennis Kelly (New York: David McKay, 1962), p. 80.

can see."[53] Ironside concluded that it would be impossible for the British government to meet the desires of the Poles. Sir Edmund insisted that the British should be forewarned about Polish plans before Britain could organize a relief effort to aid them. Disaster would occur, he indicated, if the Germans by a sudden coup acquired Danzig.[54]

Ironside, after a meeting with the Marshall, stated that both he and Beck were opposed to negotiating the question of ownership of Danzig with Berlin since the issue of Danzig was merely a pretext to expand Germany's Eastern domain. In the mind of the Polish authorities, the ultimate goal of the Germans, as perceived by Sir Edmund, was to crush Poland and then turn on the democracies. Ironside observed that the Poles would not do anything which would force the Germans to use arms to achieve its objective.[55]

Sir Edmund was made to believe that the Poles were a first-rate military power that could withstand a German onslaught, and all that was needed was financial aid to purchase much needed military supplies. The British government, from Ironside's vantage point, observed Britain should not place "so many conditions" on offers of financial assistance. Ironside concluded, "that the Poles are strong enough to resist."[56] These statements were made on July 18, but by July 26, Ironside came to realize that their Eastern ally

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[53] Ibid., pp. 80-81.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid., p. 81.

[56] Ibid.

was not what they perceived her to be:

> Everything was hopelessly defensive everywhere. Meanwhile our 'Eastern Front' myth was being exploded. We should find the Poles destroyed and the Germans overrunning Rumania on the Black Sea . . . I go to bed profoundly depressed at our government's lack of decision. How have we got into this state of affairs? I have to go see the King tomorrow. What shall I tell him?[57]

When the Germans did launch their motorized assault, Ironside declared, "The Poles cannot withstand anything like this for very long."[58]

Norton believed that the Ironside mission played a significant role in maintaining the confidence of Poland in both the British and the French to abide by their declarations to the defense of Poland. In retrospect would the Western democracies be able to help reach a peaceful solution to the Danzig problem? The financial negotiations between the British and the Poles are a viable index to test the democracies' determination to uphold the independence of Poland and to determine if the Allies were willing to defy the challenge made by Germany.

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[57] Ibid., p. 85

[58] Ibid., p. 91

CHAPTER IV

THE ANGLO-POLISH FINANCIAL AND COMMERCIAL NEGOTIATIONS

At first when the British government entered into its commitment to Poland, His Majesty's Government was left totally in the dark concerning the state of affairs of Poland's financial and economic well being.[1] Sir Howard Kennard, the British Ambassador in Warsaw, wrote Sir Alexander Cadogan on April 22, 1939, about the first indication of this Gordian Knot which plagued Anglo-Polish relations from that date until the outbreak of hostilities:

> The Polish budget was going to be a very tight fit this year anyway, and the semi-mobilization must be costing them something like £2,300,000 per month. I give this figure with great diffidence. They are collecting by means of a patriotic loan about £10,000,000.[2]

On June 1 it was evident that the Poles were in serious shape, and the British would have to be called upon to bail them out. The Polish Ambassador called upon Halifax and described the plight of the Polish economy. The Polish Ambassador informed the Foreign Secretary that the Polish Finance Minister was concerned that the Polish government

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[1]Kennard to Halifax, May 7, 1939, No. 171, FO 417/39, C 6708/1110/55.

[2]Kennard to Cadogan, April 22, 1939, DBFP, V, No. 266.

could no longer meet the expenses of the military much beyond the end of June. Then Raczynski assured Halifax that Warsaw was doing all that it could to keep the Polish war industries in operation as well as maintaining the level of mobilization of the Polish armed forces.[3]

Count Raczynski informed Halifax that his government placed a great deal of importance upon impressing His Majesty's Government with the urgency of Poland's need for financial assistance. The Poles realized it would be impossible for them to go it alone, and they had come to the conclusion that Poland would have to accept some form of direct assistance from Great Britain. Warsaw was fearful that it would have to meet prearranged conditions upon any financial agreement which would be reached regarding this subject. As a result, they felt that it would not be worthwhile to send a delegation to London to open discussions on this topic. The Polish Ambassador asserted that he did his utmost to impress upon Warsaw "the real difficulties felt by the Chancellor of the Exchequer."[4]

> But the Polish financial authorities had thought if it was possible for a Polish delegation to discuss the whole ground with H. M. Government without restrictions, it would not be impossible to find ways and means by which these difficulties might be diminished.[5]

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[3]Halifax to Kennard, June 1, 1939, FO 371/23145, C 7017/1110/55.

[4]Ibid. [5]Ibid.

The Polish Ambassador noted that parallel discussions were also being made with the French and that an agreement would soon be reached between Warsaw and Paris pertaining to securing some new and old credits for Poland.[6]

On May 7 Kennard informed Halifax of the special importance of aiding Poland. The Ambassador elaborated that if war did occur, Poland would be cut off from the West. Since this was a likelihood, Kennard ascertained that it was in the best interests of His Majesty's Government to develop the Polish industrial base. The Ambassador noted that the Poles had both the manpower and a new industrial region to accomplish this task, but she was urgently in need of financial credits to have this operation work at its full potential. Kennard noted:

> Present drain of maintaining from half a million to a million men under arms for an indefinite period is such that available funds are diminishing and it would be impossible for her to make the maximum effort to meet any German onslaught, which, in any case must be so formidable as to shake the nerve of any country which has not the nerve of this gallant people.[7]

The Poles were also concerned about the level of foreign investment in their country. During an interview with Kennard, the Polish Finance Minister indicated that the level of indebtedness was rising quite rapidly. The Finance Minister noted that the primary reason for this was that

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Kennard to Halifax, May 7, 1939, No. 171, FO 417/39, C 6708/1110/55.

the Polish State Treasury had assumed a consolidation of all short-term debts. This, according to the Minister, accounted for a rise in the long-term indebtedness to a level of 515 million zloty.[8]

The Minister of Industry and Commerce, M. Roman, related to Kennard that the Polish government in no manner whatsoever planned to curtail foreign investment in Poland. Kennard from the course of this discussion believed that the Poles would accept foreign capital for industrial development, but the Minister of Industry said that the investors would not be allowed to control segments of the Polish economy, but from Kennard's observation, he expected "foreign capital in large quantities."[9] Meanwhile, Kennard asserted that in Warsaw a number of "budget debaters" had expressed feelings opposed to foreign loans and creditors. Many Poles, Kennard surmised, thought "the contraction of foreign loans was tantamount to selling Poland into slavery."[10]

The British realized that there would have to be conditions placed on any financial agreement reached between the Poles and His Majesty's Government. Lord Chatfield, the Minister of Co-ordination of Defense, averred that the granting of financial credits to the Poles would place a great strain upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer. In a letter to Halifax on May 17, Chatfield outlined what the Treasury would precisely have to allocate for the defense of

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[8]Ibid. [9]Ibid. [10]Ibid.

the realm. Chatfield indicated that the Treasury would have to allot for such items as equipment for the Army which would cost £134 million over the next eighteen months, an anti-aircraft defense system which would cost £30 million, an additional £30 million to re-equip the Indian Army, and arms for the Poles which would cost £60 million.[11] Then, there would be possible outlays for the Turks, Rumanians, and the Bulgarians.[12] Chatfield concluded:

> If we cannot afford to provide all this expenditure--and one imagines the Chancellor of the Exchequer may have to say that he cannot--it becomes a matter of priorities, and what I am anxious about is that the individual matters shall not be settled piecemeal, and consequently, perhaps in the wrong order of importance.[13]

On June 7, Sir Frederick Leith-Ross, a chief economic advisor to His Majesty's Government, informed Jacques Rueff, the Director of the French Treasury, that before the British government would consent to a financial deal with Warsaw, the Poles would have to agree to devalue their currency to a "moderate extent" (around 15 percent).[14] Leith-Ross noted:

> They [the Poles] always agree that this is true from the technical point of view, but say that for political reasons it would be quite impossible for the Polish government to adopt this course.[15]

He assumed that if the Polish government could accept this

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[11]Chatfield to Halifax, May 17, 1939, FO 371/23145, C 7496/1110/55.

[12]Ibid. [13]Ibid.

[14]Leith-Ross to Rueff, June 7, 1939, FO 371/23143, C 8162/642/55.

[15]Ibid.

policy it would immensely help to alleviate the turmoil with Poland's foreign exchange. He asserted "we should very much welcome that."[16]

Leith-Ross did warn Rueff that if the Polish government maintained its unyielding position in regard to devaluation, it would be extremely difficult for the Poles to reach a meaningful agreement with His Majesty's Government. Leith-Ross informed Rueff that the scale of assistance which the Poles desired was around £60 million--"while the amount of financial assistance which we can in present circumstances afford to give them is unfortunately very limited."[17]

Ivone Kirkpatrick noted that the many nations of Eastern Europe which clamored for British aid "want to have their cake and eat it."[18] Those client nations in Southeast and Central Europe wanted the British also to develop a formidable army, navy, and air force. Kirkpatrick assumed, "This required an enormous inroad in our own manpower and financial and industrial resources."[19]

Kirkpatrick concluded that at first their Eastern dependents called for more money, and that they themselves would supply the troops. Now the British had to supply the troops, and as a consequence, had to institute conscription in peace time, which became law on May 18. Then there was

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[16] Ibid. [17] Ibid.

[18] Kirkpatrick to Halifax, May 26, 1939, FO 371/23145, C 7496/1110/55.

[19] Ibid.

even less money available to distribute to their allies.[20]

In June, the Poles sent their delegation to London led by Colonel Adam Koc to discuss financial matters significant to the maintenance of the Anglo-Polish alliance. The Koc mission would reach an impasse with His Majesty's Government concerning four major areas: 1)devaluation of the zloty; 2)modification of the Anglo-Polish Coal Agreement; 3)alteration of sterling to gold; and 4)the purchase of military equipment and raw materials from nations other than Great Britain. It was the failure to come to an understanding in these areas which led to the failure of the Koc delegation to secure an agreement on financial aid for Poland which she most desperately needed.

Even before the loan negotiations began on June 15, it became evident that difficulties would impede the progress of reaching an agreement. When the Treasury realized that the Poles hoped to receive £60 million, which they soon could convert into gold, this forced His Majesty's Government to attempt to alter Warsaw's expectations of British assistance.[21] On June 7 Halifax informed Kennard that Raczynski expected to receive all the assistance the Poles needed "for the more efficient prosecution of their military effort." Halifax asserted: "The Ambassador made it plain that his Government had been greatly disappointed by the reception

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[20]Ibid.

[21]Halifax to Kennard, June 7, 1939, FO 371/23145, C 8098/1110/55.

that their requests had met with at the hands of H. M. Government."[22]

Chamberlain, who was present at this meeting, promised that he would do his utmost to meet the needs of the Polish effort. The Prime Minister, according to Halifax, wanted to impress upon the Ambassador,

> . . . that while it was very possible that the primary attack would fall on Poland, this was not certain and, even if it did it was impossible for anyone to anticipate how long the war might last, and if it was a long war it was essential that this country should not have weakened its economic strength, on which in the last resort the prosecution of a war would largely depend.[23]

Halifax indicated that the Prime Minister wished to stress that His Majesty's financial strength was not the same as it was in 1914 and that the British government was aware of their own limitations.[24]

The Poles themselves had seen the British as a means not only to thwart German ambitions toward the East, but also to offset the expense of their partial mobilization in April and to help rearm and to re-equip the Polish armed forces. Colonel Beck, who apparently was the architect of this viewpoint did not want to tie such arrangements to any political agreement. Kennard noted that in Warsaw Beck thought that after being accepted as an equal partner in this alliance, it would be "undignified as a gentlemen to gentlemen to ask direct [sic] for financial help."[25]

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[22]Ibid. [23]Ibid. [24]Ibid.

[25]Kennard to Acdogan, April 22, 1939, DBFP, V, No. 266.

When the Poles realized that London would refuse a direct loan to Warsaw, they claimed that a loan should be granted because Poland would be the major battleground if war did occur. If a loan was made, the Poles could utilize their major asset, manpower, much more effectively. Halifax noted that the Poles "could not but feel that in this way Great Britain would assure herself of getting good value and perhaps better value than in any other way for her money."[26]

Later, Halifax warned Kennard that Poland must be "prepared to accept the full burden that inevitably would rest upon her in the event of war," and that to use this asset, "it was essential that her means of furnishing and maintaining her military equipment should be largely and rapidly strengthened."[27]

When it became evident that the financial negotiations were in a deadlock, the Polish ambassador to France, Juliusz Lukasiewicz, visited London. He noted that both Warsaw and London were totally unyielding on the Polish desire to purchase gold for the Bank of Poland. Lukasiewicz discovered that both Koc and Raczynski had requested a change in their instructions, but their attempts were foiled by Warsaw.[28]

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[26]Halifax to Kennard, June 1, 1939, No. 207, FO 417/39, C 7917/1110/55.

[27]Halifax to Kennard, June 7, 1939, FO 371/23145, C 8098/1110/55.

[28]Waclaw Jedrzejewicz, ed., Diplomat in Paris 1936-1939: Memoirs of Juliusz Lukasiewicz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 230.

Lukasiewicz observed:

> I must say that I was surprised by Warsaw's stand, since I had thought that a part of the negotiated loan would have to be used for the purchase of ready war material and only a part would go for the purchase of gold. As for war material credits the position of the British delegation on this matter was quite favorable and promised no serious complications.[29]

On June 29, the Poles attempted to explain the stalemate in negotiations as a result of an attempt on the part of both Britain and France to reach an understanding with the Soviets. Halifax related to Kennard that Count Raczynski believed, since he "had heard it argued", that the stalemate in the financial negotiations were the result of Anglo-French conversations with the Russians.[30] Raczynski assumed, according to Halifax:

> If this were so, it occurred to him that the Soviet government might well be awaiting the result of the present Anglo-Polish negotiations. If it were satisfactory, the Soviet government would then realize that His Majesty's Government were definitely prepared to take serious and practical steps to meet the present danger, and this might well influence them in favor of an early conclusion of the Anglo-Soviet negotiations.[31]

Halifax noted that an article on this same subject had appeared in the Paris Communist paper, Humanité, on June 27.[32]

Halifax insisted that there existed no justification for

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Halifax to Kennard, June 29, 1939, No. 229, FO 417/39, C 9155/1110/55; see Appendix for Chronology to place the meaning of the Polish concern in its proper perspective.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

such an assertion. The Foreign Secretary then attempted to alleviate any fears that Raczynski may have assumed. Halifax related that at the moment His Majesty's Government was committed to Poland, and it must first "settle all outstanding questions with the Polish government as soon as possible."[33] The Foreign Secretary realized that the Poles were greatly troubled at "the slow progress of the negotiations." He wanted the Polish Ambassador and Colonel Koc to realize how aware he was of the necessity to reach some form of accommodation concerning a financial agreement between both parties. Halifax concluded that "His Majesty's Government were doing their utmost to press on with these negotiations and, although I could give him no definite date, that it would not be necessary to keep him waiting much longer."[34]

On July 3, Halifax wired Norton and related that Koc had left London "in a state of depression and alarm."[35] The major reason for Koc's early departure was the request of His Majesty's Government for information on Poland's needs and requirements which had already been made by the Polish delegation a fortnight before. At some point, Colonel Koc assumed that when the British government replied, he would have obtained everything which Warsaw requested. When he

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[33]Ibid. [34]Ibid.

[35]Halifax to Norton, July 3, 1939, No. 2, FO 417/40, C 9297/1110/55.

received the British reply, it occurred to him that His Majesty's Government did not truly understand the gravity of the problem, and according to Halifax's observation, "he gathered that they were not prepared to consider the grant of cash credits without attaching a number of conditions such as devaluation and a satisfactory solution to the coal question."[36]

The British Treasury hoped that it would be able to alter Polish financial policy. Basically, of course, this meant devaluation. In Warsaw, Clifford Norton, the Chargé d'Affaires, was "rather disturbed" to notice that before any financial agreement could be reached, the Treasury expected the Poles to begin a "fundamental readjustment of Polish economic and financial conditions." Norton was also concerned that conditions should not be used as a lever to foster a Polish accommodation with the Russians. The primary reason was that by this time Polish public opinion was aroused toward both political and financial independence. Norton warned that pressing the Poles in this direction would have an adverse effect upon both nations.[37]

On July 4 S. D. Waley, who was a principal assistant in His Majesty's Treasury, related to Colonel Koc that at the moment it was impossible for the British government to fulfill the wishes of the Polish government in connection

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[36]Ibid.; Harvey, p. 301.

[37]Norton to Sargent, July 5, 1939, DBFP, VI, No. 245.

of cash credits.[38] Waley underlined the view of His Majesty's Government:

> A cash credit to any other country must, in the long run, weaken our gold reserves and we regard this as a thing we cannot face in view of the large losses of gold which we already sustained and to which, for the present, we can see no end.[39]

Waley assumed that if Britain agreed to an immediate cash grant to Poland to meet an urgent budget deficit, "it would hardly be possible for us to resist requests for similar assistance from certain other countries whether among our own Dominions or among our potential Allies."[40]

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir John Simon, was an extremely cautious character, and was opposed to the granting of credits to the Poles. On July 12 Simon approached the cabinet to elaborate his position concerning export credits and a cash loan to Warsaw. He indicated that he would only favor such an agreement if the French would also take steps in the same direction as that of His Majesty's Government. Simon believed that the Poles should be informed of the need for a devaluation of the zloty. Halifax did express misgivings about the Poles' willingness to accept devaluation as a condition for British assistance. Later, Simon justified his determination not to loan gold to Poland since he averred the Poles would simply hoard it, and use the

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[38]Waley to Koc, July 4, 1939, FO 371/23145, C 9289/1110/55.

[39]Ibid. [40]Ibid.

gold for the "further expansion of her paper currency."[41]

The ambitious Poles then began to look in other directions for financial aid. They now turned their attention toward Paris.

On May 31 Kennard made an interesting observation in a letter to Cadogan. Kennard assumed that since Beck was disappointed in both the manner and reply of His Majesty's Government toward his inquiry for financial aid, the Poles would begin to pressure the French with a similar proposal. Apparently, the Poles were highly moved by the way in which their request had been handled in Paris.[42]

The British government was not disposed by this Polish move. The British, as early as July 4, had hoped that if the Poles desired assistance from the French, the British government would do all within its power to expedite the matter. The British government would also be willing to cooperate in any bilateral accord between the Poles and the French which would increase the amount of financial aid Poland could receive.[43]

However, as with the Polish request to Great Britain, the Poles ran into difficulties with the French. In a conversation with Paul Reynaud, the French Finance Minister,

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[41]Ian Colvin, The Chamberlain Cabinet (New York: Taplinger, 1971), pp. 230-231.

[42]Kennard to Cadogan, May 31, 1939, DBFP, V, No. 680.

[43]Waley to Kirkpatrick, July 4, 1939, FO 371/23145, C 9289/1110/55.

Lukasiewicz noted that the French were willing to make a loan to Poland with "no restrictions on us in using the money from the loan and that we would be able to use it for purchases from foreign markets other than England and France or to raise the currency coverage of the Bank Polski."[44]

Reynaud, during an earlier meeting with Lukasiewicz on June 2 agreed that according to the Rambouillet Agreement, France would loan Poland 135 million francs.[45] Lukasiewicz, however, was very skeptical of this promise.

> Although the course of my conference with Reynaud and Rueff seemed to indicate that the matter of credits had begun to move and that it would continue to develop at a normal pace, such unfortunately was not the case. The conference with Daladier which I suggested did not take place at all. At first it was postponed from day to day; then some two weeks later I was told that the premier just did not agree to such a conference.[46]

Reynaud stated he favored closer cooperation with the British in the granting of financial aid to Poland.[47] At first it appeared that all was going well with the Franco-Polish negotiations, and on July 20 Sargent would minute that the Poles could possibly reach an agreement with the French with none of the conditions that the British were stressing.[48]

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[44]Jedrzejewicz, pp. 227-228.

[45]Ibid. [46]Ibid.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Minute by Sir O. Sargent, July 20, 1939, DBFP, VI, No. 371.

On July 5 Lukasiewicz believed that both Leith-Ross and Reynaud concurred in granting a loan of about 15 billion French francs.[49] This would be on a massive scale in which the French would contribute 600 million francs and Britain would contribute 900 million francs.[50] It was stipulated, from Lukasiewicz' observation, that these negotiations would be held in London. He noted "only secondary and technical questions concerning this loan could take the form of separate additional Polish-French and Polish-British agreements."[51]

When the talks began, they were faced with a series of obstacles which doomed them to failure. Lukasiewicz was extremely disappointed with the role that the French played in those negotiations. He asserted that he himself had to take the responsibility for Director Rueff to come to London, and Lukasiewicz hoped that with Rueff's presence, the obstacles which had blocked a settlement could be ironed out. Lukasiewicz was even prepared to present the whole case to Colonel Beck as a means of having Koc's instructions altered which would enhance the possibility of reaching a compromise. All of this was to no avail.[52]

One of the major barriers to an understanding between both parties was the question of gold. The Poles themselves were tied to the gold question by the statutes which

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[49]Jedrzejewicz, p. 227.

[50]Ibid. [51]Ibid. [52]Ibid., p. 231.

governed the Bank of Poland. It was apparent that some of the cash the Poles hoped to attain from Britain would be used to purchase gold. The purpose was to expand the credit of the Bank of Poland and to expedite the financing of the Polish arms industry. Norton believed that the Poles would use a million pounds for this objective.[53]

The Poles presupposed that this in itself was the most important aspect of the negotiations. Norton, in a letter to Ashton-Gwatkin, related the justification for this since "communications will be cut in case of war and they will be thrown on their own resources."[54] It was presumed that the Poles could purchase munitions and supplies anywhere, as Colonel Koc noted, but the Finance Ministry saw little use of investing in those materials unless those in Poland could also be developed.[55]

The British were adamant about the flow of gold from the Treasury to foreign banks. They saw such a course of action as weakening their rearmament programs. They also exhibited traditional British distrust of the Poles. They feared that the Poles would convert the gold into foreign currencies. Even Koc realized that the outflow of gold from the British Treasury would have a detrimental effect

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[53]Norton to Halifax, July 20, 1939, DBFP, VI, No. 369.

[54]Norton to Ashton-Gwatkin, August 4, 1939, FO 371/23147, C 11170/1110/55.

[55]Ibid.

upon British rearmament and the other nations which based their currencies on the pound sterling.[56]

The British Treasury had proposed that the Bank of Poland should change their statutes which would allow sterling assets to count against money which was in circulation. Halifax warned, "If they decline to do this, we cannot be expected to provide gold which we need ourselves, simply in order to avoid amendment of Bank Statutes."[57] Halifax noted that it would be impossible to develop "different arrangements for French and British credits." The Foreign Secretary informed Norton, "You should, therefore avoid any suggestion that French credit might be converted into gold."[58]

Another aspect which proved to be an obstruction to an accord between London and Warsaw was the question of revaluation of the Polish zloty. Currency reform was an important aspect of the negotiations, and the British hoped that a reform of the Polish currency would help them in aiding the Poles without totally depleting their own resources.

The Poles were opposed to such a scheme since they assumed that such a move would be interpreted as a sign of weakness by the Germans. Warsaw insisted that if the

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[56]Norton to Halifax, July 20, 1939, DBFP, VI, No. 369.

[57]Halifax to Norton, July 24, 1939, DBFP, VI, No. 420.

[58]Ibid.

currency were devalued, as the British desired, it would inevitably weaken the morale of the Polish public, as well as the Polish banking system.[59]

The Polish business community was divided concerning the merits of revaluation. Norton described that devaluation would first have an adverse effect upon the Polish economy since many of Poland's neighbors had adopted a system of "controlled currencies." Especially the Germans, and much of Polish trade was with its Western neighbor.[60] Norton elaborated on how this measure would effect Polish foreign trade:

> No doubt in the world markets Polish goods would be more competitive by a reduction of export prices following on a devaluation of the zlote . . . The quantities of goods they export might remain the same while the price of all imported articles would go up in proportion to the decline of the zlote. This would be a particular disadvantage at a time when rearmament necessitates large imports from abroad.[61]

The British during the course of negotiations had pressed for a revision of the Anglo-Polish Coal Convention which was still in effect until the end of 1939. This problem began following the conclusion of the Anglo-German Coal Agreement of January, 1939. These negotiations continued in Berlin between Britain, Germany, and Poland in an attempt to reach a tripartite coal concord. Unfortunately,

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[59]Norton to Sargent, July 5, 1939, DBFP, VI, No. 245.

[60]Ibid. [61]Ibid.

the Poles and the British were unable to reach an agreement for the Polish quota.[62]

In April the Polish coal operators declared that they would no longer abide by the existing coal arrangement. During the following month, the Polish Vice Minister for Commerce, M. Rose visited London. While there, he met with the Minister of Mines, and they agreed that another meeting should be held. At this meeting, on June 19, an impasse developed. On July 17 Colonel Koc, in a discussion with the President of the Board of Trade, stipulated that negotiations should begin once again on a new agreement, and the existing convention was to stay in effect until an accord was reached.[63]

No agreement was concluded, and during an interview with Halifax, the Polish Ambassador informed the Foreign Secretary that the Polish government felt that they "were being squeezed in regard to the coal question." Raczynski averred that he assumed that an accord was finalized, but the manner in which it was handled infuriated his government.

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[62]Footnote, DBFP, VI, p. 244; the concern for an agreement on export coal markets was first raised as early as 1928. In 1932, the first such accord was signed between Poland and Great Britain. The purpose was to eliminate competition in the world markets, setting quotas for each signatory. No new agreement was ever reached between the two countries by the outbreak of the war. For the position of the Chamberlain government which was expressed in parliament on May 23, 1939, see Parliament Debates, 5th Series, H. of C., 347, 2061-2062.

[63]Ibid.

The Ambassador informed Halifax that Warsaw believed that "insisting on the maintenance of the coal agreement His Majesty's Government were taking away with one hand what they were offering with the other," since coal was a major source for Poland to obtain foreign exchange.[64]

Many diplomats within the Foreign Office, and in Warsaw, were extremely concerned about the state of the negotiations for a loan and financial credits for Poland. On July 4 it was evident that the British government would refuse the Polish request for a direct loan of £50 million.[65]

This infuriated many of the ardent supporters of the Poles even before the Treasury publicly rejected the Polish proposal for such a sum. Ashton-Gwatkin, one of the most vociferous of the defenders, saw that there was a need for a strong Poland as a counter-balance to German aggression. He was primarily distressed about the manner in which the negotiations with the Poles were progressing.

In a letter to Sargent, he suggested that the manner in which the negotiations with the Poles were handled was bound to please only Hitler. Ashton-Gwatkin declared, "But if this is not our intention, there is no time to lose; for the battle is actually going on, and it is a question whether

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[64]Halifax to Norton, July 17, 1939, No. 15, FO 417/40, C 10053/1110/55.

[65]Waley to Kirkpatrick, July 4, 1939, FO 371/23145, C 9289/1110/55; Ashton-Gwatkin to Sargent, June 13, 1939, FO 371/23145, C 8328/1110/55; Debecki, p. 244.

the Poles can hold out or not."[66]

Ashton-Gwatkin wondered if the British government was not attempting to force the Poles to come to some agreement with Hitler over Danzig as a means of avoiding war with Germany. In his eyes, "No other logical interpretation seemed to be possible," and in the middle of this battle with Germany, "one cannot afford to listen to the Treasury's warning that a loan of £50,000,000 to Poland may weaken the Sterling exchange."[67]

The British government on July 3, after much deliberation, finally proposed a loan of some £8 million for export credits.[68] On that very day, Raczynski informed Halifax that both he and Colonel Koc would find it difficult to explain the present state of affairs to their government. What was extremely difficult for them to grasp was the length of time spent on negotiations and the meager sum which the British were willing to grant. The Polish Ambassador was concerned about the effect it would have on "Polish public opinion" as well as the present "world situation." He hoped nothing would be "leaked out that the negotiations had hitherto yielded so small a result."[69]

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[66]Ashton-Gwatkin, June 13, 1939, FO 371/23145, C 8328/1110/55.

[67]Ibid.

[68]Norton to Sargent, July 29, 1939, DBFP, VI, No. 492.

[69]Halifax to Norton, July 3, 1939, No. 2, FO 417/40, C 9297/1110/55.

The Poles were confused. They did not perceive that conditions made by His Majesty's Government were of the utmost importance if the Poles planned to obtain financial credits from the British.* One of the major questions which the Polish Ambassador had raised was "devaluation sine qua non?"[70]

On July 17 when Raczynski met with Halifax to inform him of the position of his government, he was, according to Halifax, "distressed to the point of incoherence." The Polish Ambassador warned, from the Foreign Secretary's observation, "that unless there could be some modification in the attitude of His Majesty's Government it would be obliged to consider them partly unsuccessful."[71] Halifax

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*The British found it extremely difficult to aid the Poles with either a direct loan or export credits, since the British needed the limited war materials and cash at hand for their own rearmament program. Neville Chamberlain placed little faith in the United States coming to the aid of Britain, despite Roosevelt's effort to maintain peace. The American President sent the U. S. fleet to San Diego to free the British from their commitments in the Pacific, as well in a personal letter to Hitler requesting the assurance that he would not attack 31 nations on April 15, 1939. Chamberlain's view of the United States is best expressed in a statement the Prime Minister made in 1937: "It is always best and safest to count on nothing from the Americans but words." (See Feiling, p. 325.) As for Poland, those individuals who realized the limitations of His Majesty's Government believed the only hope for the Poles were the Russians. The Soviets likewise were distrustful of the motives of the British Prime Minister and were lukewarm to the idea of aiding Warsaw. For those interested in understanding the strain placed on the British economy of the rearmament program see John F. Kennedy's Why England Slept (New York: Doubleday, 1940), pp. 161-185.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Halifax to Norton, July 17, 1939, No. 15, FO 417/40, C 10053/1110/55.

related other arguments the Poles made concerning the British offer:

> If now His Majesty's Government sought to maintain their requirements in regard to devaluation of the Polish currency, and if credits offered could not be used to cover purchases of goods from other countries, the Polish government felt it useless to proceed with the negotiations.[72]

In Warsaw, Norton believed that the breakdown in negotiations had greatly worried the Poles, and the decision not to sign the agreement was made with "great reluctance." It appeared that the chief hurdle was the fear that the British were using the negotiations as a "financial lever" to "a)interfere with Polish internal affairs, and b)to control Polish military expenditures."[73] Norton related, "It is this impression that weighs with the Marshall and M. Beck. Polish Opinion [sic] is particularly sensitive on such points."[74]

In Warsaw, Norton was extremely anxious. He assumed that if the credits were larger, the Treasury and the Foreign Office may have been able to sway the Poles into altering the Statutes of the Bank of Poland, devalue their currency, and possibly even re-evaluate their position on coal. He did feel that "though I still do not think that so far as coal is concerned it was right to treat Poland's necessity

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[72]Ibid.

[73]Norton to Halifax, July 15, 1939, DBFP, VI, No. 327.

[74]Ibid.

as England's opportunity."[75]

In Parliament the M.P.'s questioned the cabinet on the state of negotiations with Poland. On July 25 Sir John Simon was asked what blocked the conclusion of an agreement with Poland concerning a financial and commercial agreement with His Majesty's Government. Simon replied there were two agreements, and the Treasury was willing to grant export credits worth £8 million to allow the Poles to purchase war materials.[76] He informed Parliament that both the French government and His Majesty's Government were acting jointly in an attempt to reach an agreement on a cash loan to the Poles. He regretted that, for the present, it was impossible to reach an accord before Parliament adjourned.[77]

Simon was also pressed by Hugh Dalton, a Labor M.P., if it were true that there were limits placed on where the Poles could purchase their munitions. The Chancellor of the Exchequer replied:

> As regards that further question of the hon. Member, the French government and ourselves are entirely at one in being willing to assist Poland, if terms can be arranged, in making the necessary purchases of munitions from other countries.[78]

Another M. P. inquired as to whether difficulties had arisen concerning the ability to transfer parts of this loan into

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[75]Norton to Sargent, July 29, 1939, DBFP, VI, No. 492.

[76]Parliament Debates, 5th Series, H. of C., 350, 1247-1248.

[77]Ibid.

[78]Ibid.

"either gold or foreign currencies." Simon averred, "I should prefer not to give a detailed description of the difficulties."[79]

Again in Parliament during question time on July 31, Arthur Henderson inquired of the Prime Minister whether the financial talks were stalled over technicalities. Chamberlain rejoined, "They are of a technical nature. We hope that they will be overcome, but it was not possible to overcome them in time for legislation."[80]

This indicated that the British hoped that the Poles would return to the negotiating table. The Treasury, though, was adamant in its opposition to expand export credits to Poland of £10 million rather than the original £8 million.[81] Kirkpatrick informed Norton that the Chancellor of the Exchequer would probably agree to an increase in the Export Credit Agreement, which was eventually signed in late August, if the Poles were willing to withdraw their request for a direct loan. The Chancellor was not willing to increase export credits and issue a cash loan to the Poles simultaneously.[82]

Despite all these measures and countermeasures, no accord could be reached concerning a loan until September 7

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid., 1922.

[81] Kirkpatrick to Norton, August 2, 1939, DBFP, VI, No. 524

[82] Ibid.

for a sum of £5.5 million.[83] Later the Chancellor of the Exchequer was asked in Parliament how much of this sum and the sum appropriated for export credits was used prior to the invasion of Poland. Simon informed the M.P.'s that "no part of the cash credit was used" and he was unable to answer whether any armaments reached Poland before the outbreak of hostilities.[84]

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[83]Debecki, p. 144; Edward Raczynski, In Allied London (London: Wiendenfeld and Nicolson, 1962), p. 32.

[84]Parliament Debates, 5th Series, H. of C., 352, 681-682.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE AFTERMATH

It was difficult for the British to comprehend the refusal of the Poles to accept their offer of financial credits. Sargent did his utmost to explain the Polish rejection. After a conversation with Dr. Litauer, the President of the Foreign Press Association and a London correspondent, Sargent believed that there had probably been a feud between the Polish Finance Minister and Koc. From his vantage point this was a little difficult to fathom, since Warsaw rejected a proposal which would have allowed them £8 million to purchase war materials from sources other than Great Britain or France.[1] Sargent believed that the Poles hoped to build up their gold reserves and "when they found this was not possible they had a bit of the sulks."[2]

The Treasury, though, realized that a large percentage of what the Poles were asking for was vital to the British rearmament program. According to Waley, much of what was required to fill the Polish orders was in "acute and embarrassing shortage." The British realized that they could

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[1]Sargent to Norton, July 26, 1939, DBFP, VI, No. 463.

[2]Ibid.

have purchased those supplies in the United States, but the government was trying to keep purchases to a minimum. The primary justification for this was the rather enormous flow of gold from the Treasury.[3]

Even at the earliest stage of negotiations, the British warned the Poles that the problems which His Majesty's Government faced were just as real as those which plagued their Polish ally. Halifax, during a conversation with Count Raczynski, stated that the British "would lend every help we could," and he agreed with the Polish Ambassador's understanding of the difficulties which the Chancellor of the Exchequer confronted and was attempting to resolve. Halifax noted that those problems "at the present time . . . were of such a nature as to cause the Chancellor and the Cabinet the gravest possible anxiety."[4]

In the opinion of some, the British did not take the Polish problems and needs as seriously as they should. In many respects there is justification for such charges since, at the heart of the matter, there existed a failure to understand the economic and financial stability of both nations. Even if the British realized their own limitations, the Poles were not blessed with those same characteristics. Debecki echos the sentiments of many Poles:

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[3]Waley to Kirkpatrick, July 4, 1939, FO 371/23145, C 9289/1110/55.

[4]Halifax to Kennard, June 1, 1939, FO 371/23145, C 7917/1110/55.

> The Polish government had in mind a long range financial and economic adjustment; the Treasury and the Bank of England were mainly interested in helping Poland purchase arms, which Great Britain herself needed and could supply in limited quantities only. The Poles wanted commercial credits and a cash loan in free currency. The British were willing to grant export credits for the purchase of munitions within the Commonwealth.[5]

It was evident that even if the British did not succumb to their better instincts and did grant all that the Poles requested, it still would not have affected the outcome of a German attack. The Polish economic system was in a horrendous state, and it was clear that the Poles feared the weakening of their currency more than their survival as a national entity.[6]

The Poles maintained that the failure of the negotiations to reach a successful conclusion served only to prove to the Germans that "effective Anglo-French assistance to Poland need not be feared."[7] In Paris Lukasiewicz asserted, "In the present situation a negative result in our negotiations only embolden Berlin to attack Poland."[8] Also, it was believed that if the talks reached a satisfactory conclusion, the Germans might have abandoned their plans to attack Poland.

Lukasiewicz's comment seemed justified as Hitler, in

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[5]Debecki, p. 144.

[6]Ibid., pp. 143-144. [7]Ibid., p. 145.

[8]Jedrzewicz, p. 226.

a subsequent conversation with his generals, stated that Poland wished to obtain a loan from England for her rearmament program. The English would only grant credits for the Poles to purchase their needed supplies in Britain, even though "England cannot make deliveries" on those items. According to Hitler, "This suggests that England does not really want to support Poland."[9] It was obvious to him that Great Britain "is not risking eight million pounds in Poland, although she poured five hundred million into China. England's position in the world is very precarious. She will not take any risks."[10]

This leads to another question: What was the German reaction to the Anglo-Polish Guarantee? Also, how far was Hitler willing to go to resolve the Danzig question?

The Germans, after March 15, according to Norman Rich, "had little reason to take the Anglo-French guarantee seriously, similar guarantees to Czechoslovakia had been disavowed with easy sophistry."[11] In the case of the Anglo-Polish Agreement, Hitler assumed that the commitment only went into force when Great Britain judged that Germany clearly threatened the survival of Poland, and when the

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[9]Speech by Hitler to Commanders-in-Chiefs, August 22, 1939, DGFP, VII, No. 192.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Norman Rich, Hitler's War Aims (New York: Norton, 1973), pp. 124-125.

Poles deemed it necessary to take military action.[12]

Beck believed that the alliance with Britain would effectively curb Germany. The Foreign Minister noted the supposition on which that premise was based:

> I was fully aware of the fact that this alliance would be a heavy strain on our already tense relations with Germany. Nevertheless, I was convinced that it would be the last effective preventive move, or otherwise a decisive action to assure a powerful ally for our country should Germany not want to withdraw from the aggressive plans against us.[13]

The Wehrmacht was uncertain of Hitler's intentions toward Poland. As early as March 25, barely six days prior to the British announcement of their unilateral guarantee to Poland, the Commander-in-Chief of the Wehrmacht, General von Brauchitsch noted, "The Fuhrer does not wish to solve the Danzig problem by the use of force. He would not like to drive Poland into the arms of Great Britain by doing so."[14]

Keitel, Hitler's alter-ego, mentions in his memoirs the course of action he believed Germany would follow towards Poland:

> I believed Hitler, and I was taken in by his powers of verbal persuasion; I assumed that there would be a political solution though not

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Beck, p. 176.

[14] Allan Bullock, Hitler: A Study in Tyranny (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 497.

> without the application of threats of military sanctions.[15]

This echoed the sentiments of many of the General Staff because they assumed that if war occurred the Army would be far from ready. Keitel would not relay such views to Hitler because this "would expand the mounting distrust of the General Staff by the Führer."[16]

There was even the possibility that Hitler never planned to go to war at all, but hoped to use the fear of war to intimidate the British and the French, not to say the Poles. With the use of such tactics, combined with the bluff, Hitler felt he could obtain his objective without much effort since he had successfully used these same measures earlier.

In a military memo of April 11, Hitler stressed his firm desire to avoid a conflict with Poland, but if the Poles followed a policy which threatened Germany, "a final settlement" with Poland might have to be made to preserve the defensive position of the Reich in Eastern Europe.[17] Rich indicated,

> He [Hitler] wanted to remove the Polish threat from his eastern flank before taking action in the west. As in the case of Austria and Czechoslovakia, he had reason to believe that he might

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[15]Wilhelm Keitel, The Memoirs of Field Marshall Keitel, ed by Walter Görlitz, trans. by David Irving (New York: Stein and Day, 1961), p. 86.

[16]Ibid., pp. 86-87.

[17]Rich, p. 123.

> succeed in eliminating Poland without war, or at least substantially improve his strategic position by securing the peaceful cession of Danzig and a route through the Corridor.[18]

T. Desmond Williams concludes: "Despite the implications of this new attitude, it is by no means clear that Hitler had finally decided that war was the only outcome."[19]

Hitler had hoped to outmaneuver the British. The Führer, a great admirer of the English people, had hoped to confront them with a Fait accompli of such proportions that they would come to their senses and abandon Poland. This was the purpose of the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of August 23.

On the day following this pact, the governments of Great Britain and Poland signed a treaty of mutual assistance, partially as a result of the agreement between Germany and the Soviet Union. The British wished to maintain a system of alliances in Eastern Europe in a hope to both deter Hitler and placate British public opinion. The Poles began to call up their reserves, and Chamberlain hoped that this was enough to demonstrate to Berlin the British determination to oppose German expansion.

The Prime Minister wished to make certain that Hitler understood that Great Britain would not falter in its commitments to Poland. Chamberlain instructed Nevile

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[18]Ibid.

[19]Williams, p. 178.

Henderson to deliver a personal message to Hitler on August 23 outlining the British position. In this letter, Chamberlain warned that in August, 1914, Great Britain was charged with not making its intentions quite clear. The Prime minister warned, "Whether or not there is any force in that allegation, His Majesty's Government is resolved on this occasion there shall be no such tragic misunderstanding."[20]

Chamberlain stated Great Britain was prepared to oppose German aggression by force if necessary. The Prime Minister insisted, "If the need should arise, His Majesty's Government is resolved, and prepared, to employ without delay all the forces at its command, and it is impossible to foresee the end of hostilities once engaged."[21] The Prime Minister cautioned Hitler:

> It would be a dangerous illusion to think that, if war starts, it will come to an early end even if a success on any one of the several fronts on which it will be fought should have been secured.[22]

When Hitler completed reading the dispatch, he became infuriated and stormed:

> The unconditional guarantee England has given to Poland, whereby under all circumstances she would come to that country's assistance in any conflict without regard to its causes, could be interpreted in Poland only as an encouragement to initiate forthwith a reign of terror against one and a half million Germans living there.[23]

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[20]Paul Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter, ed. by R. H. C. Steed (New York: Macmillan, 1951), p. 141.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Ibid., p. 142.

Hitler then issued one of his many veiled threats that "if the military measures announced are carried out, I shall immediately order the mobilisation of the German Wehrmacht."[24] After Ribbentrop reported to Hitler that a formal alliance had already been signed, Hitler immediately ordered the halt to the German scheduled invasion of Poland which was set for August 26. Hitler explained to Keitel, "I need time for negotiations."[25]

During late August Italy played an important role in attempting to maintain peace in Europe. The Germans had attempted to draw Italy into a formal guarantee whereby Rome would abide by the principles of the Tripartite Pact. The British realized that Mussolini could have a mediating influence upon Hitler and attempted to have the Italian dictator exert pressure on Hitler to avoid a conflict no one wanted. In many respects the end of August, 1939, resembled the days which preceded the Munich Conference, and many contemporaries wondered if Britain and France would sell out Poland like they did Czechoslovakia.[26]

During a meeting with Hitler on August 11, Count Galeazzo Ciano, the Italian Foreign Minister and son-in-law of Mussolini, realized that Hitler believed that the Poles

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Taylor, The Origins of the Second World War (New York: Antheneum, 1961), p. 269.

[26] Ibid., p. 248.

would never agree to a revision of Germany's eastern borders:

> I realized immediately that there is no longer anything that can be done. He has decided to strike, and strike he will. All our arguments will not in the least avail to stop him. He continued to repeat that he will localize the conflict with Poland . . . .[27]

Hitler did receive the impression from the Italian Foreign Minister that Italy was not overjoyed with the prospect of going to war over Poland. Ciano pointed to all the logical reasons for not going to war at this time; the shortage of war materials could only keep Italy in the conflict for a limited period.[28]

During the meeting Ciano observed that the Germans were basing their assumptions upon the premise that Great Britain would not go to war for Poland.[29] On the following day at the Berghof, Hitler made a statement which reinforced Ciano's opinion, "I am unshakably convinced that neither England or France will embark upon a general war."[30]

As early as July 7 Chamberlain attempted to have Mussolini act as an intermediary to Hitler to help avoid a

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[27]Count Galeazzo Ciano, The Ciano Diaries 1939-1943, ed. by Hugh Gibson (New York: Doubleday, 1946), p. 119.

[28]Schmidt, p. 132.

[29]Herbert von Dirksen, Moscow, Tokyo, London: Twenty Years of German Foreign Policy (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), p. 229; Laura Fermi, Mussolini (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 396.

[30]Schmidt, p. 132.

confrontation with Germany over Poland. Mussolini, however, was not taking the bait. Through the British Ambassador, Percy Loraine, Mussolini sent a message to the Prime Minister: "Tell Chamberlain that if England is ready to fight in defense of Poland, Italy will take up arms with her ally Germany."[31]

Mussolini still did not believe that war would occur because he felt that the democracies would not abide by their commitments to Poland. Ciano noted that Mussolini feared Hitler, and the Duce assumed that if he did not live up to his obligations to Germany "it might induce Hitler to abandon the Polish question in order to square accounts with Italy."[32]

During late August the Italians were willing to act as mediators between the British and the Germans. On August 23 Ciano presented to Percy Loraine a definite plan to avoid a confrontation over Poland. This called for a return of Danzig to Germany, and after this was accomplished, there would be a conference dealing with this issue. When Ciano finished this message, Loraine was overcome by emotion, and according to Ciano, he "almost fainted in my arms."[33]

On August 25 Hitler received a letter from Mussolini which was an answer to Hitler's inquiry about Italy's determination to follow Germany's lead in going to war.

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[31] Ciano Diaries, pp. 109-110.

[32] Ibid., p. 123. [33] Ibid., p. 127.

To Paul Schmidt, Hitler's interpreter, "The letter was a bombshell."[34] Hitler, after he dismissed Attolico, cried, "The Italians are behaving like they did in 1914."[35]

Between August 30-31 Ciano observed that the world situation had become much more complicated. He maintained that the British did not "close the door to future negotiations," but the British did not "give, or could not give, the Germans all they asked for."[36] The only hope for Italy was "in making indirect contacts" with the British.[37]

This last-ditch effort came on August 31 when Halifax asked Ciano to put pressure on Berlin to help stimulate contacts between Germany and Poland. Ciano, in a state of despair, concluded: "The proposals are advanced, but at the same time it is stated that they are no longer opened to discussion. In any case all discussion is superfluous."[38]

If the Anglo-Polish Guarantee did not deter Hitler and the position of his staunch ally had no effect on him, what then contributed to Hitler's decision to invade Poland? An interesting supposition could be made relating to two points on which Hitler's position was based. The first is that his advisors, namely Ribbentrop, misread the intentions of the British, and second, the German course of action

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[34]Schmidt, p. 146.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Ciano Diaries, p. 133.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Ibid., pp. 134-135.

involving Poland was founded on the premise that the British would not intervene, and, as a consequence, the war could be localized.

As early as March 30, Ernst von Weizsacker, the State Secretary of the Foreign Ministry, informed Attolico in Berlin that the Poles were stubborn, but that they would yield to German demands for a return of Danzig. At no time did Weizsacker believe that there existed a danger which threatened Anglo-German and German-Polish relations.[39]

Ribbentrop likewise assumed that if the Poles failed to comply and war was the logical outcome, Poland would probably collapse within a span of twenty-four hours. As a consequence of Poland's sudden demise, the British would not feel obligated to intervene. Ribbentrop, who claimed to know the English well, threatened to shoot any member of the Foreign Ministry who verbally disagreed with him.[40] Many in Hitler's entourage claimed that it was Ribbentrop's English policy which was Hitler's "great mistake."[41]

Shortly following the German occupation of Prague on March 15, Dirksen tried to warn officials in the Wilhelmstrasse that British appeasement had come to an end. When

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[39]Cienciala, p. 222.

[40]Gordon A. Graig and Felix Gilbert, The Diplomats, 1919-1939 (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1953) p. 437.

[41]Paul Seaburg, The Wilhelmstrasse: A Study of German Diplomats Under the Nazi Regime (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1954), pp. 100-101.

he returned to Berlin, he discovered that Ribbentrop did not fully understand the meaning of this message and the implications it held for German foreign policy.[42]

Ribbentrop attempted to insulate Hitler from Anglo-German and German-Polish relations. Attolico noted on August 1 Ribbentrop's role had been to alleviate Hitler's fears that a war with the Poles could not be localized. Attolico believed that Ribbentrop assumed "Poland would choose not to react to a coup against Danzig."[43] When the German Ambassador in Warsaw, Hemulth von Moltke, discovered that the Poles certainly planned to resist a German coup, the Foreign Minister dismissed this information and directed his plots in other directions.[44]

This view tends to give credence to Schmidt's observation of what occurred when Hitler received the news and meaning of the British ultimatum following the German attack on September 1.

> Hitler sat immobile, gazing before him. He was not at a loss, as was afterwards stated, nor did he rage as others allege. He sat completely silent and unmoving. After an interval which seemed an age, he turned to Ribbentrop, who had remained standing by the window. "What now?" asked Hitler with a savage look as though implying that his Foreign Minister had misled him about England's probable reaction. Ribbentrop

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[42] Ibid., p. 99.

[43] Ibid.; Mario Toscano, The Origins of the Pact of Steel (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1967), p. 100.

[44] Toscano, p. 100.

> answered quietly: "I assume that the French will hand in a similar ultimatum within the hour."[45]

Ribbentrop's gamble was not illogical. As late as August 23 most of the High Commissioners of the Commonwealth favored some form of accomodation with Hitler. This changed, but it did indicate a mood existed for another Munich.[46] Beaverbrook, who was close to Sir Samuel Hoare, believed that both Hoare and Chamberlain assumed that a war with Germany could be averted at the eleventh hour.[47]

It was evident that the Anglo-Polish Guarantee was a failure. The Germans, despite the warnings and apprehensions of their Axis partner, Italy, maintained that London would never abide by their obligations to Warsaw. Hitler believed that the British maneuver was a bluff, and he claimed to be the master of this technique. Hitler hoped that London, after viewing the collapse of the Polish defenses after September 1, would accept this German triumph. Both Hitler and Ribbentrop fooled themselves by assuming that the British would appease the Germans just one more time as they had done at Munich nearly a year before.

The British likewise allowed themselves to be maneuvered into a commitment to Poland which they could not possibly

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[45]Schmidt, p. 158.

[46]Middlemas, p. 442.

[47]Taylor, Beaverbrook, pp. 391-392.

fulfill. The Prime Minister and his cabinet saw in Poland an effective bullwork against further German expansion. After the statement of March 31 the British realized that Poland was not what they had believed her to be. After this guarantee was made, the British realized that they could neither effectively aid or help relieve the pressure on the Poles if the Germans did attack.

After a review of both the Foreign Office and War Office documents, the British may have concluded that Poland would be lost if the Germans did attack, and this may have justified the British attempt to limit the export of her vital resources which she needed for her own survival. In the light of the Anglo-Polish negotiations for financial and military aid it seemed that this was the case.

It is difficult to cast judgments upon the British or the French for not fully supplying the Poles with the needed war materials which may have allowed them to withstand a German attack. The blame rests partially with the Poles themselves for failing to make concessions to the British for financial aid, and to a larger degree, for neglecting to acknowledge their own weaknesses which would have required Soviet assistance as a deterrent to German aggression.

Beaverbrook and others feared that the guarantee stiffened Polish resistance to reach a settlement with

Germany for a revision of the Corridor and Danzig problems. As a result, Britain forced a reluctant France to defend a nation which could never have been maintained after the conflict. Thus, the victors were to lose what they had originally gone to war over, the maintenance of a free and independent Poland.

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The war that began on September 3, 1939, and concluded on May 7, 1945, has evoked tremendous interest within the last few years. At the moment, Hitler memorabilia is in vogue, and in West Germany just a few years ago, there was concern about the likelihood of a neo-Nazi revival. As a direct result of this fascination with the Nazi period, many historians are re-creating or reconstructing the origins of the Second World War.

With the passage of time, a school of revisionism is bound to develop for most historical subjects, and the Second World War is no different. The beginning of this movement had its origins with A. J. P. Taylor, a noted British historian, when he wrote The Origins of the Second World War. Taylor believed that the war was not primarily designed by Hitler, as many scholars assert, but was a tragic mistake made possible by a number of diplomatic blunders by both the Allies and Germany.

Taylor's study was severely criticized by some. For instance, Hugh Trevor-Roper, the most vociferous opponent of revision, made an argument in 1946 which underlined the critic's viewpoint that, "His [Hitler's] ultimate purpose was indeed clear to those who did not willingly deceive

themselves: he aimed at the destruction of European civilization." (p. 231) Once again in 1964 Trevor-Roper returned to this same topic when he edited Blitzkrieg to Defeat. In this book, he declares in his introduction:

> The Second World War was Hitler's personal war in many senses. He intended it, he prepared it, he chose the moment for launching it; and for three years in the main, he planned its course.(p. xiii)

Some see, such as Gerhard Weinberg, Taylor's trying to explain Hitler as an Eighteenth Century diplomat simply trying to rectify a grievous wrong, as the Versailles Treaty had been.

This has led many to review Hitler's responsibility as well as the foreign policy of Neville Chamberlain. Just prior to the outbreak of the War, and for many years following its conclusion, historians, journalists, political scientists, and many laymen have considered appeasement an unmitigated failure and a primary reason for the conflict in Europe. This view has come from such diverse individuals as B. H. Liddell Hart and Winston Churchill. The latter noted his opposition to appeasement as a critic outside the government in The Gathering Storm.

The most concentrated attacks on appeasement came with the publication in 1961 by A. L. Rowse, Appeasement: A Study in Political Decline, and again in 1963, by Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott in their joint effort, The Appeasers. These authors believe:

> Chamberlain and his advisers did not go to Munich because they needed an extra year before they could fight. They did not use the extra year to arouse national enthusiasm for a just war. The aim of appeasement was to avoid war, not to enter war united.(p. 12)

William Rock attempts to give a more balanced account of both appeasement and its critics, but concludes that in reviewing Chamberlain's policy, the Prime Minister's "aim was admirable, his method open to question."(p. 321)

Keith Middlemas and Taylor indicate appeasement was a logical policy to follow during the late 1930's. Taylor concludes Chamberlain "resolved on action in order to prevent war, not to bring it on; but he did not believe that war could be prevented from doing nothing."(p. 134) Middlemas maintains appeasement tended to be "a much more radical departure from this earlier tradition than has usually been described."

Middlemas and Taylor both note that this new departure in foreign policy occurred roughly at the same time that the British altered their defensive requirements from a bomber deterrent to one of a defense based upon the swift fighters of the R.A.F. and a radar network along the south coast. Likewise the British failed to develop a territorial army which could help the French maintain the defense of Northern France. Taylor concludes that despite Chamberlain's effort to organize a program of rearmament, he had little faith in such an enterprise because "he resented the waste of money involved, and believed it to be unnecessary."

(pp. 134-135)

Middlemas, who perhaps gives the most well-balanced criticism of appeasement, believes that Chamberlain's foreign policy was designed to fit Britain's strategic deficiencies, as well as to educate the British public on foreign policy issues. He maintains Chamberlain's primary failure was in his organization of the cabinet for decision making. The Prime Minister was the cornerstone of this process which had diverted responsibility from both the Foreign Office and his military experts.

The charges made by A. L. Rowse concerning Chamberlain's policy being the cause of the decline of the Empire are unfounded. Those men who carried out Chamberlain's program were not traitors to their class, and it is equally unjustified to assume, as Rowse believes, that:

> The total upshot of their efforts was to aid Nazi Germany to achieve a position of brutal ascendency, a threat to everybody else's security or even existence, which only a war could end. This had the very result of letting the Russians into the centre of Europe which the appeasers--so far as they had any clear idea of policy--wished to prevent. (p. 118)

This charge is challenged by both Taylor and Middlemas. Taylor avers that almost all Englishmen who claimed to be knowledgeable in foreign affairs maintained that the Treaty of Versailles was despicable, that Germany did have a legitimate claim for revision, and that it just so happened that Chamberlain was of that inclination.

Middlemas speculates that the options that the Prime

Minister could have followed were limited. Chamberlain was forced into a position where he had to defend the Empire, and this proved to be a difficult proposition. To maintain the claim of Great Britain as a great power, the governments of Baldwin-Eden, as well as Chamberlain-Halifax, could have followed any of these courses after 1936: 1)use a bomber force to create a stalemate, similar to the present stalemate with nuclear weapons; 2)withdraw into a state of total isolation; or 3)allow Germany to dominate continental Europe, including the Soviet Union. Britain would then be forced, like "the Doges of the Venetian Republic," to exist by skillful negotiations. According to Middlemas, if Britain followed this course, it would mean a total "break with traditions at least 400 years old."(pp. 454-455)

Middlemas concludes, "The choice was impossible so long as Britain aspired to great power status and so long as her government recognized an interest in the survival of France."(p. 455) Keith Eubank notes even at the time of Munich Chamberlain's policy was sound. Eubank believes "to wage war required sufficient cause, a will to war, and the men and armaments. Because these were lacking, Chamberlain and Daladier had no choice but to sign the Munich Agreement."(p. 287) If appeasement was a failure in the eyes of its critics, it was unavailing simply because it failed to achieve its stated purpose.

Chamberlain has been maligned by historians, and there

fails to exist a definitive biography of the Prime Minister which takes into account the new evidence which has been released by the British government. The first attempt to write a biography of Neville Chamberlain occurred in 1946 by Sir Keith Feiling. This work was written too soon after the conclusion of the war to be reasonably objective. He explained Chamberlain's foreign policy in view of the Prime Minister's distaste for war and his moralistic views. This is accurate, but Feiling failed to relate the precarious state of British public opinion and armaments to the overall European situation throughout the years 1937-1939.

Likewise, Iain Macleod, the author of the most recent biography of Chamberlain, even though he agrees with the conclusions made by Feiling, views appeasement as above all, a policy of necessity. This, according to Macleod, was continued by "the deepest impulses of his nature." Even despite Chamberlain's latent anti-German character, Macleod maintains the Prime Minister believed that some form of revision of the Versailles Settlement could be reached with the Germans. Macleod also assumes, "Chamberlain must certainly bear the chief responsibility for the policy of appeasement."(pp. 208-209) He concludes:

> But since those who pursued appeasement lacked the benefit of hindsight, it was neither a foolish nor an ignoble hope. The case for appeasement thus rested on the proposition, not merely that it would have been folly to incur war without adequate defences or reliable allies, but morally wrong to accept it as inevitable unless every attempt had been made to redress legitimate grievances peacefully.(p. 209)

Chamberlain notes in his own defense:

> War is not the cruelest but the most senseless method of settling disputes. But man of peace as I am, there is one claim which, if it were made, must, as it seems to me, be resisted even, if necessary, by force. That would be a claim by one state to dominate others by force, since if such a claim were admitted I see no possibility of peace of mind or body for anyone.(p. v)

Not much has been said of the Polish complicity in this affair. The Poles have yet to be criticized by historians except during the Sudeten Crisis, when they joined the pack of wolves to devour portions of the carcass of Czechoslovakia in obtaining the Teschen region. Most writers of any repute have taken the Poles to task for this episode, but when it comes to Danzig and the Corridor, Poland is viewed as a victim rather than an instigator.

The Poles were placed in a position in which they were confronted with an aggressive Germany in the West demanding a return of Danzig as well as concessions through the Corridor to East Prussia, and in the East, their arch enemy Russia. The Polish leadership refused to come to terms with either of Poland's neighbors since they maintained a compromise with one would alienate the other. Another factor which impeded an agreement with either of Poland's adversaries was the Polish romantic view of nationalism. Thus, an agreement with either Russia or Germany was seen by the Poles as an infringement of their national independence. This view also permeated Polish military planning in which the cavalry charge would settle all questions of

the day. This philosophy has indicated a degree of irresponsibility on the part of the Poles, which has been overlooked by Polish historians who fail to criticize the refusal of Poland to come to some form of accommodation with either Germany or Russia. As a result, Jozef Beck tied the fate of Poland to the British Empire as a means of avoiding such a decision.

A review of the Anglo-Polish Guarantee, especially in regard to military and financial assistance, is pertinent to understanding the origins of World War II as well as the strength of the British commitment to Poland. The guarantee to Poland was a fluid arrangement rather than a concrete alliance, as the discussion of the financial negotiations revealed. It was indicated by London's belief as late as mid-August that war could still be avoided. Some in the government even believed, as, e.g., Leslie Hore-Belisha, the Minister of War, that Poland was the cornerstone of British foreign policy in its attempt to maintain the independence of Eastern Europe. Thus, the British were willing to place the future of their Empire into the control of an ally, especially one in Eastern Europe, something which they denied to the French for over twenty years.

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APPENDIX

Chronology

Date	Event
1938	
March 13	Anschluss-German forces enter Austria.
September 29-30	Munich Conference.
October 24	Ribbentrop informs Lipski of German proposals for a return of Danzig to Germany.
1939	
January 5	Beck, Ribbentrop, and Hitler meet at Berchtesgaden to discuss easing of tensions between Germany and Poland.
March 15	German troops enter Prague--end of Czech independence.
March 16-18	"Tilea Affair"--British attitude towards Rumania--beginning of the end of British appeasement of German claims.
March 31	Chamberlain issues unilateral guarantee to protect Polish independence.
April 3	Colonel Beck, Polish Foreign Minister, arrives in London for talks with Chamberlain and Halifax.
April 6	Chamberlain formalizes Anglo-Polish Alliance.
April 7	Albania overrun by Italian armed forces; King Zog begins life in exile.
April 14	British make overtures to the Russians.

April 17	Soviets offer to normalize relations with Germany.
May 3	Vyacheslav Molotov replaces Maxim Litvinov as Commissar of Foreign Affairs.
May 5	First German-Soviet contacts pertaining to possible trade agreements are made.
May 6	British receive warning from German sources that the Russians may conclude an agreement with Germany despite ideological differences.
May 14	Molotov rejects British proposal of a unilateral declaration to protect Poland. Soviets press for various declarations for Baltic states and Finland.
May 20	Chamberlain in a cabinet meeting claims he would rather resign than sign an alliance with the Soviet Union.
June-August	Anglo-French talks with the Russians for a joint effort to halt German expansion.
June 13	Colonel Adam Koc arrives in London for Anglo-Polish financial negotiations.
June 15	Financial negotiations begin between the British and the Poles.
July 25	Financial negotiations between London and Warsaw fail to reach an understanding before Parliament adjourns.
August 5	Anglo-French military mission leaves England by ship for Russia to begin staff conversations with the Soviets.
August 11	Military mission arrives in Moscow.
August 12	Molotov agrees on German-Soviet political negotiations in Moscow.
August 14	Military negotiations reach an impasse over transient rights for Red Army through Rumania and Poland.

August 17	Molotov and German Ambassador, Friedrich von der Schulenberg, propose draft of German-Soviet Non-aggression Pact.
August 18	Colonel Beck refuses to allow the Red Army to enter Poland.
August 20-21	Germany and the Soviet Union sign trade agreement.
August 23	Ribbentrop and Molotov sign German-Soviet Non-aggression Pact in Moscow.
August 24	Halifax and Raczynski sign Anglo-Polish Pact of Mutual Assistance.
August 30	Poland calls for partial mobilization of its reserves.
August 31	Hitler submits 16-point proposal of a moderate nature, but before it could be transmitted to Warsaw communications are cut.
September 1	Germany invades Poland--Italy announces it will remain neutral.
September 2	Italy proposes five power conference to settle outstanding problems.
September 3	Britain and France declare war on Germany.
September 7	Parliament approves a loan of £5.5 millions for Poland.
September 17	Soviet Union invades Poland.
September 27	Warsaw surrenders to the Wehrmacht.