HITLER'S POLICY TOWARDS THE SOVIET UNION
JANUARY 1933 - JUNE 1941

by

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B.A., University of British Columbia, 1957

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS
in
International Studies

We accept this thesis as conforming to the
required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
September, 1958
Within a year of his accession to power, Hitler, by concluding a non-aggression pact with Poland and by bringing relations with Russia to an impasse, had revolutionized German foreign policy. This policy reversal was chosen, primarily, for tactical reasons and only secondarily for ideological reasons. From the outset, it is true, relations with Russia were made difficult by Hitler's persecution of the German Communist Party and by his own hatred for Bolshevism. But it was only after Poland had twice threatened a preventative war against Germany and after Germany had become diplomatically isolated through her desertion of the League of Nations, that Hitler decided upon a rapprochement with Poland and a break with Russia. This policy was finalized by the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact of January, 1934.

The political orientation of German foreign policy, established by this pact, remained fixed in its outlines for the following five years. During these years, Hitler used the anti-Communist bogey to justify his foreign policy coups and to ease his relations with Poland. Russia herself, he ignored as a power factor in opposition. Nor did he consider a political understanding with her. However, he did toy with the idea of her as an object of aggression.
In the spring and summer of 1939, Hitler's Soviet policy was changed by his decision, in early spring, to settle with Poland. Even after making this decision, he continued to ignore Russia. In mid-April, however, stiffening British resistance and the threat of an Anglo-Russian understanding, on the one hand, and coy hints by the Soviet Government that it might be prepared for a detente with Germany on the other hand, persuaded Hitler that the only way of intimidating the West into neutrality and Poland into submission and of preventing a Russo-British alliance, was to raise the threat of a Russo-German understanding. During the following months this tactic proved to be unsuccessful and by mid-July, Hitler, however unwillingly, became convinced that only the reality of a Russo-German alliance would suffice to drive the Western democracies into neutrality. It was mainly for this reason, that Hitler sought the pact with Russia.

When war came and Western resistance was not paralyzed, the original reason for the Moscow Pact disappeared. However, the consequent Western belligerency made a continued policy of friendship with Russia necessary throughout the winter of 1939 to 1940. The idea of an eventual attack on Russia had never been completely absent from Hitler's mind, but before the defeat of France in June, 1940, it had never been more than a vague notion.
With the defeat of France, Hitler, assuming that Britain, too, would capitulate, briefly considered the idea of an attack on Russia as a strategic goal. When Britain continued to resist, Hitler, frustrated that he could not end the war and confident that he could vanquish Russia, convinced himself that Britain's attitude was based on hopes placed in Russia. Thus to destroy Britain's last remaining hopes on the continent, Hitler, in late July, decided upon an attack on Russia. During the following months the diplomatic, military, and economic preparations for the attack were completed, and with the attack on June 22, 1941, an era of Russo-German relations was ended.
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Date September 15, 1958
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It was in a seminar under the direction of Professor Egmont Zechlin, at the University of Hamburg, that I was first introduced to the problem of Hitler's eastern policy and that I became interested in it as a thesis subject.

I am much indebted to my adviser, Dr. John Conway, who, during the past year, has given freely of his time and of his extensive knowledge of German History in directing my research. It was he who, in numerous consultations, taught me the analytic approach to a problem in foreign policy and clarified numerous historiographical problems in Nazi foreign policy.

I would also acknowledge the help given me by my wife Anne, without which this thesis would not have been completed—on time.
ABBREVIATIONS

G.D.: Germany, Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945:


FROM WEIMAR TO THE THIRD REICH - A DIPLOMATIC REVOLUTION

Relations between Germany-Prussia and Russia have been for the past 200 years characterized by sharp oscillations. They have swung from periods of warm friendship to periods of bitter acrimony separated by twilight interludes of suspicion and ambiguity. The Conference of Versailles in 1919 ended one such period of enmity and initiated another of reconciliation. It did this by stigmatizing both Russia and Germany as the pariahs of the European community; the former because of its infection with revolution, the latter because of its infection with war. In this way the two powers were given a common interest in overthrowing the Versailles system. On March 25, 1919 the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, realizing the latent dangers in this course, drew them to the attention of the French Premier Clemenceau:

The greatest danger that I see in the present situation is that Germany may throw in her lot with Bolshevism and place her resources, her brains, her vast organizing power at the disposal of the revolutionary fanatics whose dream it is to conquer the world for Bolshevism by force of arms. This danger is no mere chimera.¹

Nor were these fears groundless. On May 6, 1921 Germany signed a trade agreement with the Soviet Union. This lead to a

friendship which slowly matured into an alliance. The following year, on April 15, 1922 at Rapallo, Germany signed a pact with Russia which, essentially, provided for the liquidation of conflicts between them. Germany was gradually emerging from her status as an object of international politics and becoming as initiator of international action.

The new partners were probably not immediately aware of the significance of their action in signing the Rapallo Treaty. But it was soon made clear that Germany intended to use this Treaty as an offensive weapon against the Versailles Powers; if necessary, she was determined to blast her way into the world community. This was to be done not through a full orientation of Germany's policy eastwards but through the implicit warning to the West that if they pressed Germany too hard, she could and would turn to Russia.  

The immediate object of the Rapallo partners was to prevent Poland from taking action either eastward or westward. Thus, during the 1923 occupation of the Ruhr, the situation was saved for Germany by the threat of Russian action against Poland. This threat underlined the potential uses of the relationship. Later, when Germany and Russia were strengthened, this defensive policy vis-a-vis Poland might give way to an offensive policy and, from the German point of view, lead to the

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3 Fischer, op. cit., p. 452.
restoration of her eastern frontier — the principal aim of German foreign policy.

On the other hand Germany would prefer an eastern policy with, rather than against the Western Powers. This indeed was the essence of Stresemann, Germany's sometime chancellor and foreign minister's, fulfillment policy. The high points of this policy were the ending of the Ruhr occupation in September 1923, the Dawes plan in 1924 and finally the Locarno Pact in 1926. Each step in this path of rapprochement with the west was accompanied by a corresponding weakening of the Rapallo front. Russia feared that Britain was drawing Germany into an anti-Soviet alliance and robbing the Rapallo partnership of its chief function, namely the assurance of the disunity of the capitalist world. For the moment Stresemann's eastern policy had indeed been "... tactically subordinated to his western policy..." But the elimination of the Polish Corridor remained the strategic goal of German foreign policy.

This being so, Stresemann had no desire to forego the eventual use of Russia as a second pincer against Poland. He therefore set about to redress the balance between his eastern and his western policies. In the first place he tried to convince the Soviet government that Locarno did not represent a unilateral return of Germany to a western policy. The community

4 Kochan, op. cit., p. 59.
of interests based on common hostility to Poland, he stressed, had thereby, in fact, been strengthened. Germany's western flank was now secure and the question of Germany's eastern frontier had been left open. Secondly, Stresemann underlined German friendship by reaffirming the principles of the Rapallo treaty in the form of a further pact signed in Berlin in April, 1926.6

The Berlin Treaty stabilized German-Soviet relations on a level on which they were to remain for the following three years. During these years, which marked the "heyday" of the Rapallo partnership, Russo-German relations were underpinned by extensive cooperation in economic, military and political matters.7

However in the autumn of 1929 relations began to deteriorate as Germany swung westward for the second time.8 This deterioration which culminated in the complete breakdown in early 1934 thus predated Hitler's accession to power by some three years. Its beginnings cannot be exactly dated or its causes precisely defined. As early as the winter of 1929-1930 the Rapallo friendship was beginning to show wear9 from the daily

8 Kochan, op. cit., pp. 140-149.
9 Heribert von Dirksen, Moscow, Tokyo, London: Twenty Years of German Foreign Policy, London, Hutchinson, 1951, p. 97.
friction of minor incidents. This in itself was not sufficient reason for the relations to become uncertain for they had acquired a routine character based upon solid political, economic and military agreements. It was only with the beginning of Bruning's chancellorship in March 1930 that an element of doubt crept into the political basis of the Rapallo relationship. It was then that the Soviets began looking for reinsurance against a possible German defection from the Rapallo front.

The attitude of the German Government leaders during the Bruning era was largely responsible for Soviet doubts. Bruning himself acted as his own Foreign Minister during much of his chancellorship. He had little time to devote to foreign affairs and consequently the initiative in foreign policy often fell to the State Secretary, von Bülow. Neither Bruning nor von Bülow was enthusiastic about the close Soviet tie and both were determined to stabilize Russo-German relations on a lower level. Bülow, in fact, found everything...connected with Soviet affairs... almost physically repugnant....

Even in the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office supporters of an eastern orientation such as Dirksen, Trautmann and Moltke had given place to mercurial personalities like Richard Meyer. In short, foreign policy decisions in Germany in 1931 were no longer in the hands of ardent advocates of Russo-German cooperation.

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11 Ibid., p. 241.
12 Dirksen, op. cit., p. 112.
In June 1932 Moscow's suspicions were heightened when von Papen replaced Brüning as chancellor. The Soviets were anxious about his Francophile sentiments and expressed concern when rumors were heard that von Papen had proposed an anti-Russian military alliance to the French in exchange for French concessions to Germany. In Geneva the Soviet representative, Boris Stein, warned the German representative that German-Russian friendship was now at an end.

In the summer of 1932 officials in the Russian Foreign Ministry almost panicked when rumors that Hitler had become Chancellor reached Moscow. Expressions of relief quickly followed when instead of Hitler, Schleicher, a man of pro-Rapallo sympathies, headed the new government.

But despite previous expectations none of this increasing tension in the political sphere found any reflection in either economic or military relations. In fact after 1929 trade actually increased. Dirksen's initiative in promoting trade resulted in the granting of long term German credits to Russia and in March 1931 of a tour of Russia by leading German industrialists. The upshot of this was that in the period of 1931 to 1933 Germany's share of both Russia's imports and exports amounted to fifty percent of the total sum.

In the military sphere as well, little had changed.

13 Kochan, op. cit., pp. 162, 163.
14 Ernst von Weizsacker, Erinnerungen, Munchen, Paul List Verlag, 1950, p. 91.
15 Dirksen, Twenty Years of German Foreign Policy, p. 115.
16 Ibid., p. 106.
The Reichswehr was determined that military cooperation with the Soviet Union should not suffer as the consequence of hastily conceived policies of a "Saison Regierung." Thus while von Papen was feeling out the French on a joint anti-Russian military front, a large delegation of Soviet Army officers headed by Marshall Tuchatschevsky attended German military maneuvers.\textsuperscript{17} This activity, however, could not succeed in glossing over the fact that, politically, the ways of the Rapallo partners were diverging.

As early as 1931 the Soviets apprised\textsuperscript{d} themselves of these worsening political relations with Germany and decided to find re-insurance elsewhere. In so doing Russia entered a "twilight" zone between Germany and the West which lasted almost three years, until January 1934. During this period, with the greatest reluctance, Russia was forced to align herself with the western powers. But before the break in 1934, the alignment merely meant "...a bridge...by which the Russians could withdraw to another combination should they be constrained to sever the bonds which linked them with Germany."\textsuperscript{18} That the Soviets later walked this bridge was not their design, but Hitler's.

Hitler's accession to power on January 30, 1933 burst like a bomb into the charged atmosphere of international relations. There was apprehension abroad as to the future of Germany's foreign policy. To alter this the German foreign

\textsuperscript{17} Hilger, \textit{Wir und der Kreml}, p. 241.

\textsuperscript{18} Dirksen, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 116.
office issued a circular letter to all German diplomatic missions; in it von Bülow tried to quiet foreign misgivings by pointing to the composition of the new cabinet. It contained former cabinet ministers such as Neurath, Blomberg, and Schwerin-Krosigk who would guarantee the continuance of foreign military and economic policies on the same lines. German policies, the circular read, were not dependent upon the party which happened to be in power but were determined solely by "...German necessities and conditions."\(^{19}\)

This assurance did little to quiet Soviet fears. On January 31, Dirksen, the German ambassador in Moscow, reported that the dismissal of Schleicher "... in whom they had much confidence here respecting his attitude toward Russia..." and the creation of the Hitler Government had caused "... great uneasiness."\(^{20}\) Earlier Russian doubts about the new Vice Chancellor, von Papen, were resurrected and justifiable misgivings were felt as to the future of the Communist Party (K.P.D.) in Germany. Even more serious were the fears over Hitler himself, who in *Mein Kampf* had advocated the policy of Brest-Litovsk. Dirksen felt, surprisingly, that the greatest immediate cause for alarm in Moscow was the inclusion of the German Nationalist Hugenberg in the cabinet.

But the above suspicions were not shared by all Soviet officials. On the day after Hitler's accession *Izvestija* commented that the rise to power of the Nazis was merely a

\(^{19}\) G.D., C, I, 1.

\(^{20}\) G.D., C, I, 6.
prelude to the class war which would usher in a Soviet-type state. Even as late as March 1933 Radek, the Soviet publicist, wrote reassuringly that the Nazi victory was only a "Pyrrhic victory". Others in Russia, so-called political realists, held the view that the responsibilities of office would force the National Socialists to revise their anti-Soviet views to coincide with manifest German interests as expressed in the Rapallo Pact.

This latter view was also held almost unanimously by officials in the German Foreign ministry and in the German Embassy in Moscow. Dirksen's own views were mixed. On the one hand he recognized the danger which an extension of Nazi enmity from domestic communism to relations with the Soviet Union would denote for German-Soviet relations. He even considered the threat urgent enough to ask for leave to come to Berlin to appraise himself of the new situation. At the same time, he hoped that Hitler would pursue a "Zweigleisigkeit" policy, opting for good relations with the Soviet Union at the same time that he was suppressing the Communist Party at home. Hilger, the German Commercial Counsellor in Moscow, likewise labored under this illusion. In Berlin, the State Secretary, wrote to Dirksen on February 6 that the effects on foreign policy of the change of government were being much exaggerated.

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22 Ibid., p. 243-4.
23 G.D.C.I, 6.
24 Dirksen, Twenty Years of German Foreign Policy, p. 119.
by the Soviets; that responsibility would temper Nazi policies - "It was always like this and it is the same with all parties -"; and suggested that Dirksen should remain in Moscow for the time being to avoid the appearance of a change in German policy.25

Hitler's own thoughts during these first heady days of power were concerned not so much with Germany's Soviet relations as with the reestablishment of Germany's freedom of action in foreign affairs through rapid rearmament.26 Nevertheless his mind turned instinctively to the east when it came to a consideration of the use to which Germany's power should be put once it had been attained. On February 3 Hitler spoke at a dinner attended by officers of the Reichswehr; here he is reported to have stated those ideas of Lebensraum and German eastern colonization already known from "Mein Kampf." "How is political power to be used after it has been won?" he asked. There was an element of uncertainty in his answer, but the subject of his "daydreams" was obvious. "Not yet possible to tell. Perhaps conquest of new export possibilities, perhaps - and indeed preferably - conquest of new living space in the east and ruthless Germanization of the latter...."27 Hitler was here not speaking to "Parteigenossen" in the heightened atmosphere of the Braun Haus in Munich, but before responsible members of his armed forces who would be charged with carrying out his military plans. More weight may therefore be attached.

26 G.D.,C,I,16.
27 G.D.,C,I,16.
to these words, as an expression of his plans in January 1933, than would be assigned to similar statements expressed in Hitler's more intimate circle. However that may be, for the moment at least, Hitler had little time to indulge in his dreams of Empire for there were more immediately pressing problems in foreign policy to be faced. Amongst these was the problem of Poland; its solution may have more decisively influenced his Soviet policy than all of his reputed eastern plans.

In the interwar years Poland's independence and power were dependent upon the relative strengths of both Russia and Germany and upon the temperature of the Russo-German relationship. In this context Polish-Russian and Polish-German relations were of considerable interest to both Germany and Russia. It is in this light that an examination of Poland's relations with Germany and Russia during the first year of the Third Reich can give insight into the breakdown of Russo-German friendship which was completed by the signing of the Polish-German non-aggression Pact in January, 1934.

The creation of the Polish state at the end of World War I was only made possible by the prostration of both Germany and Russia.28 Thereafter the maintenance of Polish independence assumed either continuing Russian and German weakness, or failing that, constant Russo-German enmity. In terms of the balance of power this meant that Poland could preserve her freedom of action so long as the combined strengths of Germany and Russia did not

28 Kochan, Russia and the Weimar Republic, p. 154.
threaten her militarily. If they did, she could only escape partition once again by allying herself with either of her two great neighbours and so, decisively affect the balance between them. The former condition prevailed during the first years after the Rapallo Treaty from 1922 till about mid 1930.

The Rapallo Treaty of 1922, as previously mentioned, was largely a reaction of Russia and Germany against the isolation into which they had been placed after World War I by the victorious powers. It was thus the product of a community of interest whose foundations were transitory. In the same proportion that the international quarantine against Germany and Russia was gradually lifted and they were able to associate with other states, so did the relationship lose its urgency. However, the Rapallo Pact had another more permanent base - mutual enmity against Poland, the country created out of German and Russian territory. 29

By 1931 even this community of interest was beginning to dissolve. The solvent was composed of two interdependent developments. On the one hand heightened German nationalism induced Russia to slide gradually from the revisionist into the anti-revisionist camp. In so doing she overtly renounced claims to any Polish territory, thereby removing the main obstacle to friendly relations between Poland and Russia. Simultaneously other combinations were being opened to Soviet diplomacy; Russia

showed her readiness to exploit these even if this meant imperilling the concept of Rapallo.  

These developments resulted in Russia's signature of two non-aggression pacts, with France in August, 1931, and with Poland in January, 1932.

In Germany both of these pacts were considered breaches in the Rapallo front. The foreign office in particular was alarmed over the Polish pact. In Moscow Dirksen remained calm throughout the developments. He recognized that "...Russo-German relations were undoubtedly beginning to totter." At the same time, he was convinced that future relations would depend upon Germany's good intentions; that the Soviet Union was seeking nothing more than reinsurance for the future. Hitler could choose whether the Soviet non-aggression pacts would become a "...bowl...filled with the milk of peaceful intention or with the virulent brew of menace." Stalin for his part had no desire to drop Germany for an unsure relationship but he wanted to be in a position to enter another defense orbit if the Rapallo pact should, by Germany's choice, become dead.

Thus on the eve of Hitler's advent to power, Russia's relations with Poland had gradually improved while German-Polish relations had reached their nadir. Moreover, the Polish-Russian

30 Kochan, op. cit., p. 154.
31 Ibid., p. 155.
32 Dirksen, op. cit., p. 115.
33 Ibid., p. 116-117.
34 Kochan, op. cit., p. 157.
rapprochement had introduced an element of doubt into the Rapallo combination and largely robbed it of its utility as an instrument in support of Germany's revisionist claims. While German nationalist clamourings reached a frenzy, Russia quietly withdrew from the revisionist front; while Poland signed the non-aggression pact with Russia, her relations with Germany almost reached the breaking point as a result of a long standing trade war, minority conflicts, revisionist propaganda, German armament-equality demands and the danger of unilateral German rearmament. By January 1933 the situation on Germany's eastern frontier was beginning to fester. Either German-Polish relations would have to be redefined or the cold war might erupt into an armed conflict.

At first sight it seemed that Hitler intended to exaggerate this tension. On February 2, in an interview with a British journalist, Hitler is reported to have said: "the situation on Germany's eastern frontier was intolerable and would soon have to be remedied." But when on March 6, the day following the Reichstag elections, Polish troops arrived at the Westerplatte, a peninsula commanding the Danzig harbour, a maneuver which constituted a provocative action against Germany, no retaliatory measures were taken. Despite his bluster, Hitler knew well that he was not ready to take any drastic action. Fortunately on March 16 the Westerplatte crisis ended with the promised withdrawal

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36 In an interview with Etherton of Sunday Express; cited in Breyer p. 69.
of the Polish troops.

Hitler's chief concern during his first year as chancellor was to maintain complete freedom of action until he had felt out the foreign situation and discovered in which diplomatic areas he could best achieve his purposes. He faced the same problem as his predecessors: whether to turn east or west or whether to balance between the two. Until this was decided he found it useful to reassure Russia that Germany's attitude toward her had not changed.  

In fact, privately, von Neurath assured Dirksen that German policy had not changed, and, significantly, that Hitler had decided to draw a sharp line between his domestic anti-communist policy and relations with the Soviet Union. But no official statement on Germany's Russian policy was issued because Hitler did not want to be tied down by any such commitments.

However, despite these reassurances the Soviet government remained unconvinced, for simultaneously the burst of energy released by the Nazi revolution caused grave doubts as to German goodwill. The Reichstag fire of February 27 was the curtain raiser of a weird drama which was to see the total destruction of the K.P.D. and the imprisonment and death of its members. The terror thus unleashed was directed primarily against the German Communist

38 G.D., C, I, 33.
Party but in the heat of anti-bolshevism the Comintern was verbally attacked and Soviet institutions and nationals in Germany made to suffer physical abuse. Soviet leaders were clearly agitated, but as the suppression of German communism was a German domestic matter the Soviet ambassador in Berlin, Khinchuk limited his protests to a repetition of generalities about the breakdown of cooperation and a listing of incidents perpetrated against Soviet nationals in Germany.39

On March 2, Hitler made his first anti-Soviet outburst in a public speech in Berlin; it drew a sharp reaction from the Soviet government.40 These protests, coinciding as they did with the Polish action on the Westerplatte, underlined Germany's increasing isolation and caused Hitler to reverse his propaganda approach. Henceforth he was careful to distinguish sharply between the necessity for the destruction of the K.P.D. and the purposes of his foreign policy. 41 He realized the need not to antagonize foreign powers while Germany was still weak. He

39 G.D.,C,I,43. Litvinov in Geneva asked his German opposite number at the disarmament conference what the German charges meant.


40 In Moscow Litvinov lodged a violent protest: "The National Socialist Party had from the beginning blazoned in its banner the fight on communism without making any distinction between communism at home and the relations with the Soviet Union." G.D.,C,I,73.

41 This "two track" (Zweigleisigkeit) policy was now widely propagandized. Goring, in a press interview in March, explained that "...our own campaign for the extirpation of Communism in Germany has nothing to do with Russo-German relations," and affirmed that Germany would "remain as friendly as in former years." G.D.,C,I,104.
therefore chose to reverse his hostile attitude towards Poland, as was clear when on March 23 he made his long-awaited foreign policy speech to the Reichstag, one of the last to which the foreign office contributed anything. In it were passages directed both to Warsaw and to Moscow, the former implicitly and the latter explicitly. Without directly naming Poland — but the intent was obvious — Hitler declared himself ready to reach an understanding with any nation which was willing to forget the past and to make a new start.42 His reference to Russia was even more positive.43 Hitler's obvious intention was to quieten the European situation long enough for him to break out of the diplomatic isolation in which Germany found herself. The speech was followed by further measures designed to facilitate a détente in Russo-German tension. During the months of March and April, Soviet trade officials had difficulty in meeting their payments on the long term German credit agreement negotiated in 1931. Hitler lent them valuable aid by prolonging for a few months the drafts due.44 After the turmoil of the previous weeks Hitler's decision came as a surprise to the German officials in

42 Breyer, op. cit., p. 82.

43 "Toward the Soviet Union the Reich Government intends to cultivate friendly relations advantageous to both parties. It is above all the Government of the national revolution who feels themselves in a position to pursue such a positive policy toward Soviet Russia. The fight on communism in Germany is an internal affair, in which we will never tolerate interference from outside. Political relations with other powers with which we are linked by important interests in common are not affected thereby." Norman H. Baynes, ed., The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, 1922-1939, RIIA, London, Oxford University Press, 1942, vol.2, p. 1019.

44 Dirksen, op. cit., p. 120; G.D.,C,I,33.
Moscow and augered well for future relations. None of the above concessions, however, laid Russian misgivings which daily fed on a long series of incidents.45

Russo-German relations were to be subjected to further strain by the suggestion of a Four Power Pact put forward to the German Government by Mussolini in mid-March, 1933. The pact envisaged the four western powers, Britain, France, Italy and Germany, as the dominant influences in European policy. It might be considered by Germany as an instrument for the revision of her eastern frontiers through the use of Article 19 of the League Charter.46 The German foreign office, aware of the tension in Russo-German relations and the apprehensions evoked in Moscow earlier by the Locarno Pact, decided to tread warily lest the Soviets interpret the Four Power Pact likewise as a unilateral

45 The German documents of the period following the Reichstag fire brim with Soviet protests against Nazi lawlessness which in Moscow was interpreted as being inspired by Hitler or at least condoned by him. The Russians could not understand why a dictator like Hitler did not put a stop with an official word to the excesses, if his intentions towards the U.S.S.R. were genuinely friendly. As early as March 1 the Russian ambassador in an official note deprecated the actions of the police in arresting persons who frequented the Soviet hotel in Berlin: (G.D.,C,I,43). The German Government decision at the end of March to withhold entry cards from Soviet journalists for the opening of the Reichstag also drew a "...violent attack on the Government" from Izvestia for the implied discrimination against the Soviet Union: (G.D.,C,I,104). By the end of the month such incidents had become almost routine and began affecting trade relations. The Soviet commercial missions in Hamburg and Leipzig were repeatedly looted and communist baiting led to frequent searches by Nazi hoodlums of Derop, the organization for marketing Soviet petroleum products in Germany: (G.D.,C,I,134). From Moscow, on April 4, 46 G.D.,C,I,83.
reorientation of German foreign policy westward. Dirksen was therefore instructed to inform the Russians that the proposed pact was wholly an Italian idea designed primarily to weaken France's alliance system. It would not receive Germany's support unless German-Russian relations were "...in no way... impaired..." The Soviet reaction was portrayed as one of "...great reservation and a certain caution." The Soviets feared that they were again to be isolated from a forum in which Soviet interests could be adversely affected and demanded an observer's role for themselves. Even though the pact itself

Dirksen, convinced that a crisis had been reached, sent a telegram to the Foreign Minister classified "Most Urgent": (G.D.,C,I,134; Dirksen, p. 120). In it he cautioned that in spite of the statements made by Hitler, Neurath and himself, Soviet fears were rising that the "...trends in Germany that are opposed to good German-Soviet relations are gaining the upper-hand over the positive attitude in official circles." Unless immediate steps were taken to halt the incidents, the Soviet Government would draw broad conclusions and reverse its foreign, military and economic policies. Particularly in the trade field this would mean a grievous loss to the German economy. In a private letter to Bulow of the same date Dirksen struck similar note: (G.D.,C,I,134). Hitler's speech of March 23 had temporarily relaxed tensions but new incidents had "...filled the cup to overflowing". Dirksen was frankly confused. He could not fathom why no redress was made if Hitler's March 23 statement was to form the base on which further Russo-German relations were to be conducted. He began to suspect that the crisis connoted a shift in German policy and for the second time requested permission to come to Berlin to report and confer.

47 G.D.,C,I,121.

was never ratified it was not soon forgotten by the Soviets.\textsuperscript{49}

Meanwhile no one in the foreign office questioned the assumption that the first task of German foreign policy was to bring about a revision of the eastern border, for the purpose of strengthening Germany's security. There might be differences as to methods but the end was unanimously agreed upon. On April 7, Neurath, in a review of the foreign policy situation at a Conference of Ministers, at which Hitler was present, reiterated this thesis. After the preceding month of incidents and rumors of war, Poland loomed up as the prime source of danger, and defence against her was considered possible only with the support of Russia. Of this support Neurath was dubious. He saw no hope of an understanding with Poland which he termed "neither possible nor desirable" and repeated the Weimar proposition that "Our main objective remains revision of the eastern Border." In Neurath's view the way out of this dilemma of a threatening Polish preventive war and an unsure Russian ally was to be found neither in a coup nor in a change of partners but in a return to the policy of Rapallo. The motives for this move were to be both political and economic; politically, the need for a protective "...cover for our rear with respect to Poland", and economically the need to maintain strong trade bonds with Germany's best customer for industrial products. Neurath documented this hope by citing the Italian

\textsuperscript{49} Dirksen's own views on the Four Power Pact did not in any measure overlap with those of the foreign office. He felt that if the main function of the pact was to be revision then Germany was exchanging a bronco for a proven work horse. Germany would be "tying herself to the unpredictable gyrations of three other powers and so sacrifice her freedom in dealing with the Soviet Union, "...the indispensable second jaw of the pincers against Poland." G.D.,C,I,136.
example where the domestic fight against Communism had not prevented the development of cordial relations with Russia.\(^50\)

The conference broke off without any debate but Hitler's silence must not be equated with acquiescence. Hitler agreed that Germany's chief security problem was in the east but he rejected Neurath's conclusion that the only solution lay in a rejuvenation of the Rapallo front. For the moment however, Hitler was willing to maintain the fiction of "business as usual" so long as the Polish question was unresolved. But he did so only half-heartedly for he feared cooperation with Russia, not only for ideological reasons but because Germany was weak. It was at this point that Neurath's and Hitler's views diverged. While Neurath spoke of continued enmity against Poland and renewed friendship with Russia, Hitler had probably already decided to dispense with the need for Russian support through a Polish rapprochement.\(^51\)

Hitler in all probability did not know yet how he would achieve this aim but there is a body of evidence to show that the decision in principle had already been made. On April 8 Hitler broached the topic of border revision to the French Ambassador Francois-Poncet but denied categorically that Germany would change her eastern frontiers by force.\(^52\) The Polish problem was also

\(^{50}\) G.D.,C,1,142.

\(^{51}\) Breyer, op. cit., p. 83.

touched on when during this same time Dirksen was finally summoned to Berlin for an interview with Hitler. The Fuhrer seemed bored with his Ambassador's report and confined his own remarks to a statement reaffirming his March 23 speech. His attitude to Soviet relations was obviously only lukewarm. Then an incident occurred whose significance did not escape dirksen. He describes it in these words: "Hitler rose, went across to the window and, gazing into the park of the Reichskanzlei, remarked dreamily: 'If only we could come to an agreement with Poland.' But Pilsudski is the only man with whom that would be possible."  

Dirksen interjected that that would mean the reversal of Germany's revision policy. Hitler refused to pursue the topic.

Simultaneously, the Warsaw Government, encouraged by Hitler's March 23 speech, put out its own first cautious feelers for a détente. On April 19, Foreign Minister Beck received Moltke in Warsaw. The German Minister came away from the conversation with the distinct impression that Beck's remarks should be interpreted "...as a veiled proposal for direct contact with Germany."  

At the same time in Berlin Wysoki was pressing the German Foreign Ministry to set a date for an interview with Hitler. However the Polish Government, unsure of Hitler's real intentions regarding Poland, decided to give greater urgency to German-Polish relations by demonstrating to Germany the alternative to

53 Dirksen, op. cit., p. 121.
54 G.D., C, I, 167.
55 Breyer, op. cit., p. 84.
an understanding. Then Hitler could decide what he wanted — peace or war. To this end Pilsudski resurrected the spectre of a Polish preventive war.  

It is apparent that this second power demonstration by Poland within two months was a bluff designed to force Hitler to negotiate. Poland had no serious intentions of forcing a showdown with Germany. The Westerplatte incident had shown the impossibility of that.

To Hitler Polish intentions in the first weeks of April must have seemed thoroughly ambiguous. They could mean one of three things. Either the Poles had already decided on a forcible settlement with Germany, or they were seeking to force a rapprochement upon Germany, or Polish leadership was do divided that divergent aims were being followed simultaneously. These possibilities demanded two different responses. If Poland had

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56 G.D., C, I, 184. From April 22 till April 29 the Foreign Ministry in Berlin was flooded with reports from various missions abroad that the Poles and Czechs were planning military action against Germany. From Rome the German Ambassador wired of rumors circulating in the diplomatic corps of an imminent Polish march: (G.D., C, I, 177). From Warsaw Moltke sent threatening tidings that at the moment "...arguments for and against (a preventive war) approximately balance each other," and even more ominously that rumors of a "...Soviet Government...binding statement that in case of a Polish-German conflict it would remain absolutely neutral": (G.D., C, I, 180). Reports of troop movements multiplied and there was extreme agitation in foreign political circles: (Breyer, p. 84). Within a few days the storm died down and Moltke revised his earlier estimate with a reassuring note that "...there are no positive signs of a systematic preparation of a preventive war": (G.D., C, I, 183). A query in Moscow by Dirksen also revealed that no official Polish approach for a preventive war had in fact been made to the Soviets; only private individuals had sounded out the Russian Minister in Warsaw. G.D., C, I, 199.

57 Breyer, op. cit., pp. 84, 85.
already decided on war then the rapprochement feeler was merely a ruse. In that event Germany's security lay in a continued close relationship with Russia. However if Polish policy really were one of rapprochement, then the rumors of war were merely meant as an inducement for Germany to choose Polish friendship; Hitler could then drop Russia in favour of Poland. Finally if Polish leadership were divided and its aims confused then Hitler would perforce be obliged to strengthen all existing security ties. In this event the Soviet tie would be of determining influence.

Of the three possibilities Hitler of course preferred the second. He proceeded to plumb Polish intentions regarding a settlement by negotiations. At the same time, until a clarification was reached, other precautions would have to be taken. For this reason Hitler decided not to bring relations with the Soviet Union to a breaking point. The Russians were to be reassured of German good faith and the line to Moscow kept open. Then if Hitler's worst fears were realized and Germany was faced with a war against Poland and possibly France too, the Rapallo Pact could be reactivated to redress the power balance. On the other hand if a Polish-German understanding were actually reached, then the Russian tie could be cut. At any rate keeping the Russians in play could do no harm for the present.

To inaugurate this policy of "keep the line to Moscow open" Hitler's March 23 Reichstag speech contained the earlier quoted favourable reference to German-Soviet relations. The speech was Hitler's reply to the oft expressed Soviet request for an official public policy statement. Hitler then moved to rob the
Russo-German relationship of other uncertainties as well. Two of them had stuck out in the minds of Soviet officials as bad omens; first, Hitler had never received Khinchuk, the Soviet ambassador in Berlin, and secondly, no German Government had ever ratified the Protocol for the extension of the Berlin Treaty which had been signed in 1931.58

On April 28, 1933 Hitler summoned Khinchuk to an official interview. Hitler confined himself to generalities, none of which had not been said before.59 However, the importance which was attached to this conversation by both sides did not derive from its content but from the fact that it had even taken place.

The second step in the projected "insurance detente" took place in Moscow on May 5 with the ratification of the Protocol for the extension of the Berlin Treaty.60 Dirksen

59 G.D.,C,I,194.
60 The Protocol had been dogged by bad luck ever since the day of its signing on June 24, 1931: (Hilger, p. 241; Dirksen; p.113, 114). On that occasion Brüning had tried to withhold knowledge of the signing from the press for fear of its effect on German-French relations. Thereafter successive German Governments had failed to get it through a Reichstag made impotent by political stalemate. Since Hitler's accession Dirksen had repeatedly urged swift ratification to serve as proof positive to the Soviets that Germany's orientation towards her had not changed. As late as April 8 Dirksen still had hopes of using the ratification to exercise Russia's deep-seated distrust of Germany: (G.D.,C,I,197, 212). His hopes were buoyed up by the atmosphere he thought to have divined on his ten day trip to Berlin at the end of May. His warnings that continued police and S.A. outrages against Soviet citizens would make continued good relations with the Soviet Union impossible had elicited favourable responses from Göring, Goebbels and Frick: (Dirksen, op. cit., p.121-2). Even Hitler's attitude, though
used this occasion, in a dispatch to Berlin, to make an energetic plea for a return to the Rapallo policy: "The collaboration and friendship of two states with so certain a political future necessarily represented for the world an important positive factor. Even today nothing has changed in regard to this basic fact. Even today, therefore for Germany the same reasons which in 1922 led to the conclusion of the Rapallo Treaty, and in 1926 to the conclusion of the Berlin Treaty, are alive and operative."61

Hitler however, neither accepted the assumptions upon which the Rapallo edifice had been raised nor did he trust the advice of his ambassadors in favour of its rejuvenation. Limited border revision was no longer the aim of German foreign policy. Dirksen, along with his colleagues in the foreign service, had not yet realized that the problem of German foreign policy was no mingled with hopes for a Polish rapprochement, seemed positive. The Foreign Office was after all convinced that Germany's deepest interests and Polish friendship were incompatible.

Dirksen used the occasion of the exchange of documents to dispatch to Berlin a lengthy report: (G.D.,C,I,212). In it he stressed the political significance of the exchange but warned against the self deception of expecting more from the pact than it was capable of delivering. Its effects, would be closely hedged about by Soviet distrust, by the feeling of injured pride and by the magnetism of the Polish-French orbit. Unless these factors were obviated by proven German good-will, then the current Soviet attitude toward Germany, which, was characterized as unrelied anxiety, mistrust and uncertainty, would remain. The corollary in Soviet policy of this attitude, was the acceptance of the maxim that "revision means war": (G.D.,C,I,212; G.D.,C,I, 232). The argument that Russia was the "second necessary power against Poland" was implicit in all that Dirksen wrote. The counter argument that Russia was too weak to be of practical benefit to Germany was curtly dismissed by him with the reminder that the Russo-German alliance had never been effective in terms of actual power but only as a potential force. To the men of the Foreign Office Dirksen's peroration must have been a castle of logic.

61 G.D.,C,I,212.
longer how to restore but how to expand.

In the late summer and fall of 1933 Hitler's Soviet policy was gradually clarified by events. This clarification however, was not immediately translated into an official policy statement and the impression of ambiguity in German foreign policy persisted. The discrepancy thus created between Foreign Office attitude and Government action caused uneasiness and consternation abroad but served Hitler's purposes.  

The division of opinion among the German hierarchy regarding German-Soviet relations can be clearly seen from the record of a cabinet meeting on September 26 given over almost exclusively to the Russian question. Even von Bülow, State Secretary, broached the problem with an energetic plea for a détente with Russia; and emphasized the losses in the diplomatic, economic and military spheres which Germany would suffer from a break with her. Hitler, in reply, stressed the ideological incompatibility of Nazism and Communism, implying thereby that a permanent antagonism between Russia and Germany could be expected for the future. The deterioration in relations was Russia's fault for the Soviet Government would "...never forgive Germany

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62 In Moscow, Dirksen, confident that Hitler's speech of March 23 still denoted Government policy took every opportunity to urge upon Berlin the need for a German initiative in the Soviet capital. Early in August he divined a relaxation in the immediate tensions of German-Soviet relations and reported the desire in the Soviet side for a German initiative: (G.D., C, I, 389, 404). While he awaited action from Berlin he tried to patch up German-Soviet relations as best he could with honeyed words. At the end of August Dirksen returned to Berlin and although he still hoped for the best he was enough of a political realist to close his final dispatch with the words, "The Rapallo Chapter is concluded": (Hilger, op. cit. p. 349). After Dirksen's departure the German Chargé in Moscow, Twardowski, continued to work along the same lines as Dirksen had. Litvinov in an exchange with Twardowski summed up what every

63 G.D., C, I, 456.
for our having smashed Communism in Germany". Hitler's rejoinder to von Bulow's argument that good Russo-German relations had proved a diplomatic, military and economic asset was a curt, "...the liabilities have always been greater than the assets."
The most that Hitler was willing to do was to grant the Soviets apparent concessions. Reluctantly he agreed to give the Soviets reassuring statements regarding German intentions and to receive Krestinski on his journey through Berlin.64 This action was to be purely tactical in order not to furnish the Russians with a pretext for a break with Germany. Hitler was convinced that "...a restoration of the German-Russian relationship would be impossible."65 The reason for such definite statements was undoubtedly Hitler's hopes for a rapprochement with Poland.

64 G.D.,C,1,457; Hilger, p. 250. Krestinski's visit did not take place.

65 G.D.,C,1,457.
However, until this was definitely achieved, his real intentions towards Russia must be disguised. 66

During the summer of 1933 it became apparent that the loss of confidence in the political base of the Russo-German combination had disastrously shaken economic relations. From March until September action was taken by both sides whose effect was the dismantling of the economic structure which had been assiduously built up over the years to the profit of both partners. 67 By the end of March frequent searches of the Russian commercial missions in Leipzig and Hamburg had taken place and the systematic destruction of Derop, the giant Soviet enterprise for distributing Russian oil in Germany had begun. By mid-April the Soviet Ambassador charged that Derop sales had been cut in

66 This attitude of Hitler's was not obvious at first to Rudolph Nadolny, Dirksen's successor in November 1933 as Ambassador in Moscow. The same dichotomy between Hitler's attitude and Hitler's action in Soviet policy persisted. The new ambassador, a career diplomat of East Prussian background, who spoke Russian well, was a convinced advocate of the eastern orientation in German foreign policy. In Moscow he sought, as his predecessor had done, to bridge the chasm, which had developed between Russia and Germany since Hitler's advent to power. Hitler was to be persuaded of the fact that a dynamic foreign policy with revisionist aims was possible only with the support of Russia. His initial instructions from the Foreign Minister indicated agreement between his views and the ostensible aims of German diplomacy. According to the instructions Nadolny was to further friendly relations between the Reichswehr and the Red Army, even though these had not existed for three months; to maintain the Moscow Embassy as an active post (Vorposten) of German policy; and to create a more beneficial atmosphere by avoiding incidents and by making redress for the past Soviet losses.

These instructions were based on Hitler's 6 month old March 23 speech which had since been superseded by Hitler's plans to seek an agreement with Poland. However, for the moment, it suited Hitler's purpose to keep from his Ambassador as well as from the

67 See Kochan, op. cit., p. 169.
half and that the trade mission had not been able to close a single sale in Germany since the beginning of the anti-Soviet agitation.68

After September the Soviets adopted "a wait and see" policy in economic relations; no initiative was taken although the German Government was informed that any move from its side would receive a generous reply from the Soviet Government. Political relations remained the leader in Russo-German relations. Similar tactics were adopted with regard to military relations.

Russian Foreign Office his true intentions. Nadolny's conscientious efforts to keep Russia in play could serve Hitler well until the Polish tie was secure and he was ready to break off relations with Moscow on his own initiative: (Hilger, op. cit., p. 252-253).

None of Hitler's diplomatic surprises had thus far provoked Russia to make a final break with Germany; the keynote of Soviet policy throughout 1933 remained "caution" and "firmness". If Germany chose to continue the mutually profitable relationship of past years the Soviets wished nothing better. If Germany chose otherwise the Soviet Government would align her policy with that of the Versailles Powers. When Hitler forced Russia to choose this latter course Stalin, Litvinov, Molotov, and Krestinsky were careful in their speeches to emphasize that Russia was reluctantly swinging away from the Rapallo front and would be ready to resume normal relations whenever Germany demonstrated her capacity for friendship by concrete actions: (Hilger, op. cit., p. 246). If Germany chose the mutually profitable relationship of past years the Soviets wished nothing better. If Germany chose otherwise the Soviet Union would align her policy with that of the Versailles powers. Kochan, op. cit., p. 166.

68 G.D., C, I, 198, 421.
During the first months of 1933 it seemed as though Russo-German military relations might weather the storm into which political relations had been cast by Hitler's ambiguous attitude. High ranking officers of the Reichswehr as well as members of the Foreign Ministry were agreed that sound military cooperation guaranteed the security of the political structure rather than being dependent upon it. All were determined to maintain it.  

In May and June this hope proved false when on the initiative of the Soviet Government military relations were put in jeopardy. The German High Command, sensing that this development might lead to a complete break, despatched General von Bockelberg, the Chief of the Army Ordnance Office, on a goodwill mission to Russia. Between von Bockelberg's departure from Moscow and his return to Berlin the Soviet Government preemptorily

69 The Reichswehr attitude was attested by an incident which took place in March 1933. After the Reichstag fire, Reichswehr officers, fearful lest a breach in the Russo-German front should occur, informed Soviet diplomats of the existence of an underground corridor linking the Reichstag with the palace of the Reichstag President, Göring. Dirksen, op. cit., p. 93; Francois-Poncet, p. 2.

70 The Reichswehr maintained three stations in Soviet Russia; Lipetsk (airforce), Tomka (Chemical warfare) and Kazan (armoured vehicles): (G.D.,C,I,197). Red Army officials announced that the German plants were to be closed.
demanded that Germany dissolve all of her military plants in Russia. By mid-August it was clear that all military ties would have to be broken and the Reichswehr sent a military mission to pay a farewell visit to the Red Army. The atmosphere in which the leave-takings were made was laden with nostalgia. Political talk was engaged in by neither side but the Red Army attitude left the impression that although "the chapter of co-operation on the basis of mutual confidence must be regarded as closed", they had, "...left the door open for themselves for military collaboration...at some later date." A month later on September 15 after another round of leave-takings Hartmann the German military attache in Moscow, again reported that basically the Soviet side"...is constantly trying not to let the connections with us break off...."

Concurrently a military rapprochement between France and Russia was evident and there were suggestions that military consultations between Russia and Poland had also taken place. The importance of these contacts, coinciding as they did with

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71 General von Bockelberg in his comprehensive report of the June 13 supported Hartmann's conclusions: "Cooperation with the Red Army and the Soviet armaments industry is, in view of the extent of Russian plans and their demonstrated energy in carrying them out, urgently desirable not only for reasons of defence policy but also for technical reasons with respect to amounts." (G.D.,C,1,252). Later the Russian Foreign Ministry claimed that this action was prompted by rumours that von Papen had divulged all particulars of German-Russian military cooperation to the French Ambassador in Berlin, Francois-Poncet. (Hilger, Op. cit., p. 246, 247.
72 G.D.,C,1,409.
73 G.D.,C,1,439; G.D.,C,1,460.
74 G.D.,C,1,439.
the liquidation of German military interests in Russia, were not lost on the Germans.

Hitler must have been impressed with the "real politische" considerations which reputedly guided Soviet policy. For the moment however he had decided to dispense with the need for Soviet friendship even at the price of the loss of Soviet cooperation in the military field. This cost was not great for the decision openly to denounce the military clauses of the Versailles Treaty had rendered three German armaments plants and testing stations in Russia of no consequence to Germany. Hitler thereby gained a freedom of diplomatic manœuvre which permitted him to court Poland openly without her fearing a Russian knife thrust in her back. Later if tactical considerations dictated a return to the Rapallo path Hitler could always take up with Russia again. After all he held it in his hand to give Russia what she wanted and could thus force her in to a policy of friendship.

Meanwhile the diplomatic ground work for a German-Polish understanding was being laid in both Warsaw and Berlin. On May 2, Hitler received the Polish Minister Wysocki in the presence of von Neurath. Wysocki's words were cautious, expressing Polish fears for Danzig, and Poland's determination not to give up the Corridor. Hitler's reply was tempered by the imagined dangers of a Polish preventive war. Hitler objected to the Polish

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initiative on the Westerplatte. He asserted that as a German Nationalist he was sympathetic to Polish nationalist aspirations and recognized Poland as a political entity with a right to exist. Suddenly Hitler remarked that he had examined Russian birth statistics: "The astonishing fertility of that nation caused him to reflect seriously on the dangers to Europe and, therefore to Poland, which might arise from this fact." Hitler did not pursue the topic further but he had made his point. The Soviet bogey was to form the basis of any Polish-German understanding. Wysocki's initiative, a joint communique was issued. It contained the key promise that the "...Chancellor laid stress on the firm intention of the German Government to maintain their attitude and their actions strictly within the limits of existing treaties." For Poland the ghost of the Four Power Directorate had hereby been temporarily laid and the basis formed for the new-ordering of the German-Polish relationship in the following years.

In the following months Hitler reiterated the anti-Soviet theme. On May 17 he carried the German initiative one step further in a speech to the Reichstag. Here he renounced

77 P.W.B., I, 13. The Neurath Memorandum concerning this conversation although agreeing with Wysocki's report in all other essentials makes no mention of this utterance: (G.D., C, I, 206).

78 P.W.B., 2.

79 Breyer, p. 84, 85; Wysocki termed the interview "...of a nature to bring about a real relaxation of tension in German-Polish relations," and an official Polish press release noted that the conversation had "...exerted a quieting influence on German-Polish relations." (G.D., C, I, 206).

the principle of Germanization and declared for the first time that "Germany is ready to take part in any solemn pact of non-aggression, for Germany has no thought of attack, but thinks solely of her security." The invitation, without saying so, was obviously meant for Polish ears.

Hitler broached the anti-Russian theme again the following month in a talk with Wysocki. The Polish Minister's report of July 13 contained these words: "M. Hitler also extensively discussed the situation in Russia, and the necessity for all European countries to cooperate in combating the economic crisis and its serious consequences in Germany."81

But Hitler was not yet prepared to commit himself fully to a rapprochement with Poland and to a break with Russia until Germany's precipitate desertion of the League of Nations on October 14 completed her diplomatic isolation and compelled Hitler to look around for sympathy wherever he could. From Geneva the German League of Nations delegates warned of the possibility of a preventive war against Germany. The Danzig Senate President Rauschning cautioned against any new provocations. Hitler flippantly dismissed Rauschning's warning: "The people want war. Let them have it - but only when it suits me."82 Hitler stated, "I am willing to sign anything. I will do anything to facilitate the success of my policy. I am prepared to guarantee all frontiers and make non-aggression pacts and friendly alliances with anybody."83

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81 P.W.B., 4.
83 Ibid., p. 109.
On November 15, the Polish reaction to Germany's withdrawal from the League was transmitted to Hitler by Lipski. Lipski expressed Poland's concern for her security, recalled the Westerplatte incident and asked suggestively "...whether (Hitler) did not see any possibility of compensating the loss of this element of security in direct German-Polish relations."\(^{84}\)

Hitler's gamble had paid off. The German Führer, with a sigh of relief, assured Lipski of his willingness "...to exclude the very idea of the possibility of war from German-Polish relations."\(^{85}\)

The idea that a German-Polish community of interests existed in common enmity towards Russia was implicit in Hitler's words. He characterized Poland as an "Outpost (Verposten) against Asia, whose destruction would be a calamity for the states which would thus become Asia's neighbors."\(^{86}\)

The isolation into which Germany was thrust by her withdrawal from the League and Poland's response to it, a mixture of threat and invitation, was the decisive factor in finally persuading Hitler that his own tactical interests demanded a settlement with Poland. Less than two weeks later, on November 28, a German draft of a German-Polish non-aggression pact was placed in

\(^{84}\) P.W.B.,6.

\(^{85}\) P.W.B.,6.

\(^{86}\) P.W.B.,6; Breyer, op. cit., p.100. The shape of things to come was clearly indicated in the communique issued after the conversation. "Discussion of German-Polish relations revealed the complete agreement of both Governments in their intention to deal with questions affecting both countries by way of direct negotiation, and further to renounce all application of force in their mutual relations, with view to strengthening European peace." P.W.B.,7.
Pilsudski's hands. Thereafter negotiations were conducted in the spirit of the November 15 Hitler-Lipski conversation and on January 26, 1934, almost exactly one year after Hitler had assumed office as Chancellor of Germany, the formal signing of the non-aggression pact took place in Berlin.\footnote{Hitler had demonstrated that in foreign policy as in domestic affairs his will, and his alone, prevailed. Contrary to the wishes of the German Foreign Ministry and the leading officers of the Reichswehr the policy of revision, the hallmark of the Weimar Republic, had been abandoned; the decisive blow against German-Soviet friendship had been struck.} Hitler had demonstrated that in foreign policy as in domestic affairs his will, and his alone, prevailed. Contrary to the wishes of the German Foreign Ministry and the leading officers of the Reichswehr the policy of revision, the hallmark of the Weimar Republic, had been abandoned; the decisive blow against German-Soviet friendship had been struck.\footnote{Hitler's motives in finally seeking this pact were primarily tactical. Circumstances not ideology directed his diplomacy towards conciliation with Poland. The fact that Hitler had declared before his rise to power, that as Chancellor he would be prepared to reach an understanding with Poland does not detract from the fact that Hitler's initiative in this direction was dictated in its timing by the circumstances of the day.} The reversal in German foreign policy which the pact symbolized was designed to serve Germany's changed foreign policy aims. The first aim was rapid rearmament and to achieve this the

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  \item \footnote{P.W.B., 9, p.20.}
  \item \footnote{Carr, \textit{German-Soviet Relations}, p. 110.}
  \item \footnote{Rauschning, \textit{Destruction}, p. 28.}
  \item \footnote{Breyer, \textit{Das Deutsche Reich und Polen}, p. 113.}
\end{itemize}
pact was of signal utility: it ended tensions on Germany's eastern border; it tore a gaping hole in the French pact system; it rendered Soviet efforts to raise an eastern coalition against Germany abortive and prevented Russia from using Poland as a pivot from which to leap-frog into the western camp. Finally, it would force the Soviet Government to reckon with the possibility of a joint German-Polish aggression against Russia. It is not yet clear from the available evidence what Hitler's ideas on a German-Polish front were; it is probable that he had no fixed ideas. However, psychologically an aggressive eastern policy would occupy first place in Hitler's sympathies. If an opening should lead to the east he would move. Hitler was determined to exploit every favourable opening in diplomacy for expansion.


92 Kochan, Russia and the Weimar Republic, p. 172.
CHAPTER II
ANTI-BOLSHEVISM AS TACTIC AND AS STRATEGY,
JANUARY 1934 - MARCH 1939

In January 1934 Hitler was probably determined to exploit thoroughly the international situation which had been created by the German-Polish non-aggression pact. Friendship for Poland and its corollary, enmity towards Russia, were to be used tactically to secure German diplomatic freedom of action through rapid rearmament - the principal task of German foreign policy. Behind the symbol of the dove and the slogan of anti-Bolshevism, Hitler proposed to rearm step by step. This achieved, the weakness of Hitler's opponents could be probed and the political initiative grasped. In fact, if the political situation developed favorably in the interval, anti-Sovietism might be changed from a tactic to a strategy.

It is remarkable how slight the active opposition in Germany to Hitler's new policy was. Those in the Nazi Party who had beat the anti-Polish drum were consoled by the hope that the pact was a temporary expedient and would be repudiated the moment Germany was rearmed.¹ Some Foreign Office and Army circles, however, were not so easily reconciled to the new policy. In

¹ Rauschning, Voice of Destruction, p. 115.
June 1934 their opposition came to a head. The German Ambassador in Moscow, Nadolny, refused to acquiesce in an anti-Soviet strategy. He repeatedly protested against the ending of the Rapallo policy. When in May 1934 his arguments were rejected by his government, he returned to Berlin. Here he and Bülow pressed their views in personal conversations with Hitler and Neurath. The former dismissed their arguments with the remark: "I want to have nothing to do with those people." Nadolny refused to return to Moscow unless his instructions were altered and when in June they were confirmed instead, he resigned his post. With his resignation all active opposition within the Foreign Office apparently ceased. On the other hand the military opposition to Hitler's eastern policy was even more forcibly quashed. During the Röhm purge of June 30, 1934 many recognized proponents in the Reichswehr of an eastern orientation

2 In his reports to Berlin, Nadolny openly criticized Hitler's political theories. In one despatch he questioned the aim, as outlined in Mein Kampf, of the downfall of the Soviet Union. Why, he asked, should Germany desire this when she possessed no national claim to any Russian territory and when she could benefit for a long time from traditional Russian cultural and economic cooperation? Hilger, Wir und der Kreml, p. 253; ibid. pp. 253-55; Erich Kordt, Wahn und Wirklichkeit, Stuttgart, Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1948, pp. 64-66.

3 Hilger, Wir und der Kreml, p. 254.

4 Count Werner von der Schulenburg succeeded to the Moscow Ambassadorship in October, 1934. He was a diplomat admirably suited in disposition to represent Germany at a time when no diplomatic initiative in Moscow was contemplated. Unlike Nadolny he was more a spectator than a player in formulating policy recommendations. For the following three years the Moscow Embassy was reduced to a "listening post". Carl Schorske, "Two German Ambassadors: Dirksen and Schulenburg," in G.A. Craig and F. Gilbert, ed., The Diplomats, Princeton, University Press, 1953, p. 488.
were killed. The most notable victim of the purge was the former Chancellor and Reichswehr leader, General Schleicher, whose quarrel with Hitler over German-Soviet policy was one of the reasons for his liquidation. The bloody purge put an end to all further efforts of the military to effect a return to the Rapallo Policy. There is no documentary evidence whatsoever to support the charge that relations between the Red Army and the Reichswehr continued to exist after 1934.

These events of June 1934 again proved that Hitler would not tolerate interference in his foreign policy either from professional diplomats or from professional soldiers. At any rate, the political orientation established by the Polish-German Non-Aggression Pact, whether as tactic or as a strategy, remained fixed in its outlines during the following five years.

During these years German-Soviet relations were reduced to a "word war" by Hitler's verbal sallies and Soviet counter-assaults. Hitler's anti-Communism was designed domestically, to focus the opposition of the German people on one object and

5 On June 30, 1934 Hitler justified the purge in the following words: "I had gained the impression that by certain unscrupulous elements a National-Bolshevist rising was being prepared which could only bring untold suffering upon Germany." Baynes, Hitler's Speeches, vol.1, p. 315.

After Schleicher's death a number of his Reichswehr friends, in an effort to rehabilitate him, composed a memorandum to Hindenburg which demanded that a military directorate take charge of the affairs of state. The orientation of this group was evident in that they proposed Nadolny as Foreign Minister.


6 P.W.B.,13,15,19,29.
On May 23, 1935 Hitler told Lipski that Schleicher's eastern policy was "ample justification for the end that befell him." P.W.B.,p.19.
to make Hitler appear as the saviour of Germany from internal dissension. It had the added advantage of being ideologically consistent - a fact which had to be weighed in the balance in the changed circumstances of 1939.

In fact Hitler even occasionally used the Communist bogey to goad his own cabinet into putting forth greater efforts in the rearmament programme. Thus, on September 4, 1936 Göring stated to a meeting of the cabinet that the German economy should be put on a war footing forthwith because Hitler believed the showdown with Russia "is inevitable." 7

It was in the field of foreign policy, however, that the chief use of anti-Bolshevism lay. 8 It found an echo in Central and Western Europe; this permitted Hitler to pose as the defender of western civilization from the disintegrating virus from the East and gain, if not support, at least tolerance for his policies. Every German initiative, every violation of international obligations, every act of aggression was justified in part at least on the grounds of the necessity to halt Bolshevism. 9

7 N.D., 416-EC; Mau und Krausnick, Deutsche Geschichte, p. 91.
8 In this connection it is of interest that in October 1932 Hitler is reported to have told Kurt C. Ludecke that a preventive war at the beginning of his regime would be disastrous. He stated: "No, I've got to play ball with capitalism and keep the Versailles Powers in line by holding aloft the bogey of Bolshevism - make them believe that a Nazi Germany is the last bulwark against the Red Flood. That's the only way to come through the danger period, to get rid of Versailles and rearm. I can talk peace, but mean war." Kurt C.W. Ludecke, I Knew Hitler, London, Jarrolds, 1938, p. 422.
German anti-communist propaganda during the period under discussion was thus a gigantic bluster puffed up in times of diplomatic stress and deflated in times of diplomatic calm. The year 1934 was one of these quiet interludes; German rearma-
ment was proceeding secretly. In March 1935 the pace quickened with the reintroduction of conscription, necessary in part, Hitler stated, because of the "...creation of a Soviet Russian army of 101 divisions". The Eastern Pact also was rejected simply on the grounds that Hitler would have nothing to do with the Bolshevist Power. A year later on March 7, 1936 Hitler, in announcing the occupation of the Rhineland, lashed out at international communism but adopted a more conciliatory tone towards the Soviet regime. This spirit of conciliation was, however, short-lived. In August 1936 the strengthening of the Red Army and the development of a Russian submarine flotilla in the Baltic were announced. Hitler's immediate reaction (August 24) was to lengthen the period of military service from one to two years; he defended this move by stating that Germany must not be "overwhelmed in the Bolshevist chaos." These


11 In a visit to Berlin in March 1935, Eden questioned Hitler on his charges of alleged Soviet aggressive intentions against Germany. Hitler's answer was evasive: "In these matters I have had a longer experience than the British." Schmidt, Statist auf Diplomatischer Bühne 1923-1945, Bohn, Athenäum-Verlag, 1949, p. 296.

12 Hitler said, "I do not and did not reject cooperation with Russia but with Bolshevism which lays claim to a world rulership." Baynes, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 1281.


developments formed the background to the Nazi Party rally of September 1936 which, in terms of sustained Anti-Soviet vituperation, established a record. The speeches by Hitler, Goebbels and Hess were characterized by an extreme aggressiveness. They practically called for a "holy war" against communism and made relations with Russia as bad as they possibly could without actually causing a break in diplomatic relations.  

The Anti-Comintern Pact, signed with Japan in Berlin on November 25, 1936 was a further application of the anti-communist jingoism. Its propaganda value at any rate far exceeded its political content. On January 30, 1937 Hitler defended his anti-Comintern policy in these words: "Our attack on Bolshevism has been not only in defense of our own civilization but in defense of European civilization as a whole." The effect of this semantic trick was either to disarm Hitler's victims before they were attacked or to put them "on the spot" by stigmatizing them as carriers of the communist germ. Hitler, in effect, claimed the inalienable right for himself to intervene anywhere in opposition to international communism. 

This tactic was applied most successfully in the cases

On September 12, 1936 Hitler went so far as to speak of German interests in the Ukraine, the Urals and Siberia. Hilger, Wir und der Kreml, p.265.

16 Baynes, op. cit., p. 1336.

of Spain\textsuperscript{18} and Czechoslovakia\textsuperscript{19} in 1937 and 1938.

Although Hitler's anti-Communist tirades were sheer bluster, on another level, an anti-Soviet front was of advantage in easing relations with Poland. Friendly relations with Poland helped to secure Germany's eastern frontier but they did not increase good feeling between the two nations. The German-Polish non-aggression pact of January 1934 was merely the product of fear, not the expression of a genuine community of interests. Initially it represented no more for German-Polish relations than the renunciation by Hitler of the forcible revision of the German-Polish frontier. But, if the pact were to be used as the beginning of a long term settlement it would have to be underpinned by common interests, and hints had been dropped to the Poles in 1933 that such interests might be found in a common hostility towards Soviet Russia.

In early 1934 Hitler confided some of his thoughts regarding German policy towards Russia and Poland to Rauschning, the Nazi President of the Danzig Senate.\textsuperscript{20} The record of the conversation reveals the extraordinary flexibility of mind with

\textsuperscript{18} On September 9, 1937 Goebbels made this point in a speech at Nuremberg: "...a discussion of the Spanish question must include revelations of the international ramifications of the World Revolution planned by the Bolshevists of which the events in Spain are only a part." \textit{Survey}, 1937, vol.2, p.188.

\textsuperscript{19} Hitler characterized Czechoslovakia on March 25, 1935 as the "...outstretched arm of Russia." Schmidt, \textit{Statist auf Diplomatischer Bühne}, p.302.

On September 17, 1938 Hitler is reported to have claimed that he created the Luftwaffe because of the "...existence of Czechoslovakia as an ally of Soviet Russia, thrust forward into the very heart of Germany." Baynes, Vol.2, p.1501.

which Hitler approached a strategic problem. First things came first. Uppermost in Hitler's mind was the question of Poland's reliability in the event of a war on Germany's western border. He only needed Poland, he said, as long as he was threatened from the west. The question of an eastern policy and Poland's place in it was for the moment only of secondary importance. He considered all eventualities. He would "... prefer an eastern policy of agreement with Poland rather than one directed against her." He was willing to work with the Poles because they were realists but only if they were "...generous in their views." German cooperation would be forthcoming if Poland accepted his own terms. Germany might support Polish claims to parts of White Russia if Poland ceded part of her territory to Germany. He might "perhaps" plan a joint attack with Poland against Russia but there were knotty problems to solve first. Hitler categorically rejected the idea of a greater Poland extending from Riga to Kiev, from the Baltic to the Black Sea: "I have little use for a military might and a new Polish Great Power on my frontiers." Thus, for the time being, Hitler considered Polish friendship indispensable. In the long run, however, he was willing to work with Poland only on a basis of Polish subordination to German interests. If Poland rejected his terms he would crush her: "I could at any time come to an agreement with Soviet Russia." For the moment Hitler had not adopted plans for a long range strategy. Rather, for the following years he set himself the task of organizing the political situation in such a way so that when the time came
to move, numerous avenues would be open to his exploitation.

In the preceding chapter the prominence of the anti-Soviet theme in the utterances of the German leaders during the negotiations leading to the German-Polish Pact has been examined. There is no record of similar statements by Hitler or any other German politician during 1934 but it can safely be assumed that similar advances were made.

The anti-Soviet motif was taken up again by Hitler in a conversation with Lipski on January 24, 1935. Hitler repeated that Germany and Poland might some day have to stand together against aggression from the East. He then contrasted his own policy with that of General Schleicher with the probable intention of underlining the alternative to a concerted German-Polish policy.

Göring, charged by Hitler to promote Polish friendship outside official diplomatic channels, now continued where Hitler had left off. On January 31 he arrived in Warsaw for conversations with Polish officials; these marked one of the high points in German efforts to secure Polish adherence to an anti-Soviet front. Göring stated that Germany desired a strong Poland because she feared a common border with the Soviet Union. He suggested "...an anti-Russian alliance and a joint attack

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21 P.W.B., 13.
23 P.W.B., 17; Dewitt C. Poole, "Light on Nazi Foreign Policy", Foreign Affairs, vol. 25, October 1946, p. 134.
on Russia" to the Polish generals. Similar proposals were made to Pilsudski and it is reputed that the Marshall was offered the joint command of the German-Polish forces in the event of an attack on Soviet Russia. Göring hinted that Polish rewards for cooperation would consist of a Greater Poland extending from the Baltic to the Black Sea and including the Ukraine. Hitler would be satisfied with North-Western Russia as a German sphere of influence. Implicit in all that Göring said was the possible alternative for German policy if Poland refused to cooperate - a return to the Schleicher policy of partition.

The old Marshall rejected Göring's proposals with the straightforward "...it was impossible to stand continually at the ready on such a long line as the Polish-German frontier." However, the Polish position was not as clear-cut as this answer would suggest. Poland did not reject Hitler's offer because she had no territorial aspirations in the East, but because she did not want to embark on an adventure under German ladership. The decisive factor in both Hitler's and Pilsudski's calculations was the shifting power relationship between Poland and Germany and between Germany and Russia.

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26 Göring repeated this line of argument to Lipski on April 25, 1935, P.W.B., 17.
27 P.W.B., 16.
29 In March, 1939 Roman Knoll, noted Polish journalist and politician, wrote: With a different power relationship we could gain an advantage from German assistance....But as matters are today, German aggression against Russia would above all pose a danger for Poland. So long as Soviet Russia exists and doesn't cooperate with Germany, we should avoid any action against her. quoted in Breyer, p. 181.
In 1936 and 1937 while the political situation matured, allusions to common German-Polish anti-Soviet interests remained the keynote of Hitler's approach to Poland.\textsuperscript{30} The only jarring note in an otherwise serene relationship was Hitler's mention to Lipski on May 23, 1935 of an idea "...premature today, but which might be possible of realization in some fifteen years time, namely, the building of a special railway line and of a motor road for transit through Pomorze\textsuperscript{31} The Poles might profitably have taken this as an indication of Hitler's price for continued collaboration when Germany was fully rearmed. On the other hand, the fact that Hitler spoke of a fifteen year period and was willing to meet Polish wishes on the Danzig question as well as the minorities problem revealed that he wished, for the moment at least, to curry Polish good will.

In the meantime, despite the prominence of the anti-Soviet theme in Hitler's public statements and in his relations with Poland, he practically discounted Russia as a factor in opposition when he considered Germany's immediate political

\textsuperscript{30} On May 22, 1935 Hitler described his rapprochement policy with Poland to Lipski as "...more advantageous to Germany than uneasy relations with Russia. Russia is Asia":(P.W.B.,19). German protestations of anti-Sovietism must have been rendered more believable to the Poles because of the insistence with which they were repeated. Hitler told Lipski on December 18, 1935 that European"...Solidarity ended at the Polish-Soviet border":(E.W.B.,21). P.\textsuperscript{31}. Poland and Germany were described to Polish State Secretary, Szembek, on May 22, 1936 as a "bloc" which "...it would be difficult to resist in Europe."(P.W.B.,22). In 1937 Göring continued to feel out the situation but his proposals were not pressed as vigorously as similar ones in 1935 had been. But German-Polish interests were still described as "one" and "...it would be desirable to determine how far a policy of collaboration could be worked out." P.W.B.,29.

\textsuperscript{31} P.W.B.,19.
objectives. During the first years of his regime Hitler had carefully weighed up the opposition which his rearmament measures might encounter in Europe and adopted a defensive posture to counteract it. This posture, supported by an abundance of good luck, had paid rich dividends by 1937. German rearmament was now sufficiently advanced for Hitler to contemplate using his Wehrmacht to strengthen his hand in foreign policy. If the European situation were now to be systematically exploited, defensive planning would have to give way to offensive preparations.

On November 5, 1937 Hitler outlined his ideas on the future course of German foreign policy to the now famous "Hossbach Conference". Present were: Hitler's Adjutant, Commanders-in-Chief, the War Minister and the Foreign Minister. Hitler stated that the principal goal of German policy remained the forcible acquisition of continental "Lebensraum". At the same time the object of these "Lebensraum" aspirations was not identified. It was, in fact, left vague purposely as nothing more than a long-term goal. Hitler's approach was more flexible: "The question for Germany ran: where could she achieve the greatest gains at the lowest cost." The overthrow of Austria and Czechoslovakia was stated as the first task of the Wehrmacht in the event of a war. This task was to be accomplished not to open an invasion route into Russia or even Poland but to

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"...remove the threat to our flank in any possible operation against the West." Hitler reckoned, country by country, those who might obstruct his path. He labelled Britain and France but not Russia, as might have been expected from his public statements, as his chief antagonists. Hitler envisaged war in one of three contingencies: at the latest in the period from 1943 to 1945, when his relative power would be at a peak; earlier, if France became embroiled in a civil war or thirdly, if France became involved in a foreign war against Italy in the Mediterranean. In all cases Russia was discounted as an active opponent. Russia would not move for fear of Japan; if she did move, the swiftness of German operations would make Soviet intervention too late.

Of interest to this study is not the declaration of the foreign policy goal of "Lebensraum" outlined by Hitler, for this had been stated before; nor the contingencies in which war would be possible, for they did not materialize; but rather the manner in which Hitler minimized the Soviet Union as a power factor in planning his foreign policy. What may have been the reasons for this? In the first place, the great Soviet purges of the previous year had convinced German military and diplomatic officials of Russia's impotence as a military power. Then, the fact that Germany was isolated from the Soviet Union by a group of states violently hostile to the Soviets made Russian

33 G.D.,D,1,622,623; G.D.,D,II,82.
military intervention against German territory difficult if not impossible. Finally in the years after 1934 Hitler came to rely more and more upon Japanese power in the East to dissuade Moscow from pursuing an active course in Europe.  

Hitler's tendency to discount Russia as a power factor became particularly evident during the Czechoslovakia crisis in 1938. Hitler's decision on May 30, 1938 to attack Czechoslovakia was made independently of any consideration of Russia. There is no evidence to support the belief that the Czechoslovakia adventure was designed as a prelude to an eastern offensive either against Russia or Poland. In the following months Hitler strove to isolate Czechoslovakia. In this process Russia had to be considered.

The military planning for the operation against Czechoslovakia definitely started from the assumption that Russia would attempt to give Czechoslovakia air support. Ground support was considered less likely because of the expected participation of Poland and Hungary in the dismemberment of the Czechoslovakian state. The military directive obviously had to provide for every eventuality. On the other hand, the political evaluation was more hopeful that Russia would ultimately disinterest herself in the fate of

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34 G.D.,D,I,19. In the fall of 1933, Blomberg, the German War Minister, is reported to have told Dirksen that Hitler hoped to find in Japan a substitute for the loss of Russia, especially in military matters. Poole, "Light on Nazi Policy", p. 135.

35 G.D.,D,II, 221.

36 G.D.,D,II, 175. 221.
Czechoslovakia. Schulenburg's dispatches, in the period preceding Munich in particular, could only have strengthened Hitler's conviction that Russia would stand back in the event of war. The gist of his analysis was that despite Litvinov's bellicose statements, Russia would avoid being drawn into a general war because of Soviet internal instability and her fear of a two-front war. Russia would fight only if she were assaulted directly. Otherwise she would keep her assistance to a minimum until it was manifest that Germany would be defeated. On July 5, Tippelskirch, Counselor of the German Embassy in Moscow, characterized the Soviet attitude as one of "...wait and see." The attitude of Germany's foreign minister, Ribbentrop, was also optimistic. This appreciation only heartened Hitler in his determination to settle with

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37 Schorske, _The Diplomats_, p. 490. Schulenburg's evaluation of Russia as a factor in opposition to Germany in the period between 1936 and 1938 was based on ideas of "Staatsräson." The revolutionary factor was played down. In November 1937 Schulenburg stated that Soviet foreign policy was based on fear of Germany and the lack of a modern war industry. It was therefore a defensive policy. He agreed with the current view that the purges had shaken the Soviet state organization but cautioned that this "...downward development need not be permanent." G.D., D, II, 610; Schorske, p. 488.

38 G.D., D, II, 222, 396.

39 G.D., D, II, 280.

40 _Documents and Materials Relating to the Eve of the Second World War_, vol. 2, _The Dirksen Papers, 1938-1939_, Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1948, p. 33. On September 27 Lipski reported that "...as to Russia Herr von Ribbentrop is rather optimistic."
Czechoslovakia and, if necessary, with the West.  

In the end Russian non-interference depended upon the attitude of Poland and Roumania to Soviet requests for troop transit rights through their territory. Poland was no cause for concern to Hitler. Her benevolent neutrality on Germany's side was assured by her fear of opening her frontiers to the Red Army, by Germany's military strength and by Polish hopes of sharing in the Czechoslovakia spoils. But the position of Roumania was less trustworthy. Rumors and dispatches from May until September warned of negotiations between Moscow and Bucharest for the right of transit through Roumania for Soviet troops. There were further reports that Soviet planes were being flown to Czechoslovakia through Roumanian airspace. The dispatches of German representatives in Moscow, Bucharest and Warsaw were cautious. They inferred that Roumania would permit the passage of Soviet aircraft to Czechoslovakia under protest but would oppose the transit of Soviet troops. By refusing to deny or confirm these rumors the Soviet Government kept them alive. This meant that, in attacking Czechoslovakia, Hitler would have to gamble on the Soviet attitude.

Whatever considerations Hitler may have had before, in the period after Munich Hitler's aggressive plans were not tempered in the least.

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41 G.D., D, II, 396. But this was not Schulenburg's purpose. Rather, by stressing the likelihood of British and French intervention, he hoped to influence Hitler in favour of a moderate policy. Should these countries intervene, he warned, Russia would be the only one to gain in the end.
42 G.D., D, II, 122, 126, 131, 141, 146, 236, 258, 262.
43 G.D., D, II, 300, 397, 538, 546.
by fears of a potential threat from the Soviet Union. Hitler was confident of his military predominance over the Red Army; he was certain that Russia would not rely on her own strength for military and internal reasons; he knew that the Western Powers would rather negotiate with him than with the Soviet Union and, finally, he assumed that his position of predominance in Central Europe, which exposed Poland and Roumania to possible German aggression, would strengthen those countries as a barrier against Russia. Hitler was determined to take advantage of the weaknesses of his opponents which had been revealed at Munich and to move against the rump Czech state at the first opportune moment. If France and England tried to obstruct him he would crush them as well.

If Munich had convinced Hitler of Russia's military weakness, it had also revealed her isolation. The German missions in London and Moscow confirmed this impression and suggested that in the altered circumstances Russia might be willing to negotiate a broadened German-Soviet economic agreement. A trade rapprochement was obviously in German interests for the acceleration of Hitler's political programme in the fall of 1938 made the completion of German military preparations more urgent. Negotiations between Moscow and Berlin were thus begun and continued during the six months following Munich. The

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44 G.D., D, I, 622.
45 G.D., D, I, 623.
46 Conway, German Foreign Policy, p. 171.
47 G.D., D, IV, 476, 477.
Germans intended to use the negotiations solely to strengthen their military establishment. Neither Hitler nor his chief advisers considered them as a prelude to a political rapprochement, although Hitler undoubtedly saw in them the germ of a possible political alternative if his other plans should be obstructed. Moreover, the erratic course of the economic negotiations disclosed that Hitler was not willing to jeopardize his relations with Poland for the sake of Russian raw materials. A political rapprochement with Russia was obviously beyond the pale of Hitler's immediate plans.

In early October the initiative for the resumption of economic talks was taken up by Göring, who, in his capacity as Commissioner for the Four Year Plan, urged that serious attempts be made to reactivate trade with Russia, particularly with reference to the delivery of raw materials. This move was supported by both Ribbentrop and Schulenburg. The Economic Policy Department advised that a trade agreement which would increase raw material imports over the preceding year by 200 percent should be sought from Russia.

Consequently, on December 23, 1938 the first conference was held with the Soviet trade delegation in Berlin. The following month, on January 11, 1939, Merekalov, the Soviet Ambassador to Berlin, agreed to the resumption of conversations on the basis of the German proposals of December and also insisted that further talks be held in Moscow. The Soviet

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48 G.D., D, IV, 481.
49 G.D., D, IV, 482.
50 G.D., D, IV, 483.
Government manifestly wanted to invest the economic negotiations with a political importance foreign to German intentions. Although Hitler did not want the talks to have any unforeseen repercussions, German officials considered Russian raw materials imports to be of such importance that it was decided to accommodate Soviet wishes in part at least. Therefore, on January 20 Merekalov was informed that Schnurre would arrive in Moscow on January 31 for a two-week visit. The significance attached to the visit abroad was to be minimized by having Schnurre pay a call in Warsaw first. But a week later the French and British press carried accounts of the impending journey and abruptly Schnurre's visit was cancelled. Yet in spite of this incident economic talks were not allowed to break off completely. The chief reason for this was the insistence of Germany's economic experts on the need for continued raw-materials deliveries. However, economic difficulties inside Germany brought an end to the negotiations in March, 1939.

Thus it is apparent that economic, not political considerations, had been of primary importance both for the

51 G.D.,D,IV, 485.
52 Schorske, The Diplomats, pp. 498,499; G.D.,D,IV, 487. The sensational account stated that Schnurre was expected in Moscow with a large economic delegation of 30 persons to develop a comprehensive expansion of German-Soviet trade. Schulenburg blamed the Poles for the French press story.
53 G.D.,D,IV, 486,387.
54 Schorske, loc. cit., G.D.,D,IV,488,490,491,493,494,495.
resumption and disruption of negotiations. Moreover, the peremptory way in which the visit of Schnurre to Moscow was cancelled showed that friendly political relations with Poland were still of greater importance to Germany than was Soviet economic assistance.

Despite the fact that, in the months following the Munich crisis, Hitler was not interested in a political rapprochement with Russia and did not consider Russia as a factor in opposition, the question may well be asked: Did he reckon her as an object of aggression? Although the documents regarding this question are inconclusive, there is evidence to support the belief that during this period Hitler at least toyed with the idea of an anti-Soviet course as an alternative for German foreign policy. This suggestion may be adduced from his policy towards the Carpatho-Ukraine and Poland in the interval from September 1938 till March 1939. His policy at this time is very paradoxical and therefore difficult to interpret. However erratic, it does illustrate the numerous avenues open to German diplomacy and again reveals the flexible approach which Hitler adopted to a strategic problem.

By the end of 1938, Germany's position in relation to Poland had changed fundamentally. As long as Germany was weak she had needed the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact to secure Germany's eastern flank in the event of a western intervention to halt German rearmament. Also she had feared a common frontier with Russia and looked with favor on a strong Poland. But now the rearmed Germany no longer needed Poland as a
defensive cover nor feared a common border with Russia. Hitler might still be willing to use Poland against Russia or as a cover for his attack on the West, but Poland's collaboration was no longer essential to his foreign policy. Nor indeed need Hitler of necessity oppose cooperation with Russia for "real-politische" reasons; he could face her as an equal.

For the moment however, Hitler continued his wooing of Poland. In the winter of 1938 to 1939 offers for an alliance against Russia, which had been pressed by Göring in previous years, were taken up again and intensified. The historical question arises: Why were they made? Were they intended to disarm Poland while her destruction was being plotted; were they genuine offers for an alliance against Russia; were they merely intended to consolidate the German-Polish relationship so that Poland would act as a defensive barrier against Russia and an opponent against the western powers if they decided to intervene on behalf of Czechoslovakia; or were all three possibilities considered by Hitler at one time or another? The heart of the German offer, as stated by Göring, Ribbentrop, and Hitler in numerous conversations with Polish statesmen between August 1938 and March 1939, was a blatant incitement of Poland against Russia. It promised the Poles gigantic territorial aggrandizement in the Ukraine. The German

55 John W. Wheeler-Bennett, "Twenty Years of Russo-German Relations 1919-1939." *Foreign Affairs*, vol.25, October 1946 p. 31.
57 Conway, *German Foreign Policy*, p. 184.
leaders for their part were modest in their demands, claiming that their main interest lay merely in an eradication of Bolshevism and in the establishment of German dominance in the Baltic. The conciliatory spirit in which these conversations were held, the concrete nature of the German proposals and the absence of any indication that a decision to attack Poland had been made suggest that these proposals were made with the intention of establishing some type of understanding with Poland.

In fact, after the Austrian Anschluss and the destruction of Czechoslovakia, Hitler may well have believed that Poland would voluntarily accept his terms concerning the Corridor and Danzig if she were faced with the alternative - destruction. Thus he may have hoped that Poland would buy herself off and free his hands for action elsewhere. Alternately his extravagant promises of Russian territory to the Poles may have another explanation. He may have meant what he said and actually looked for Polish assistance in a joint action against the Soviet Union. The implication of this policy would have been obvious to Hitler as well as to the Polish statesmen. In such a concerted crusade against Russia, Poland would obviously have to take a satellite position behind Germany. Hitler may actually have believed that Poland would accept this status in view of the developments during the winter of 1938 to 1939 but


59 Conway, op. cit., p. 184.

60 Loc. cit.
Poland, also realizing this threat to her independence, rejected all of Hitler's advances.

From Hitler's fluctuating and thoroughly ambiguous attitude to the Carpatho-Ukraine in the winter of 1939 to 1940 it can also be adduced that he considered an aggressive course against Russia. Following the Munich Conference in September 1938, rumors were spread that Hitler planned to turn to the East and Northeast as an outlet for further aggression.61 On November 2 these rumors were fed by Hitler's creation of an autonomous Carpatho-Ukraine, manifestly subject to his will. This action constituted a potential threat that the German Government was sponsoring the Carpatho-Ukraine as the nucleus of a Greater Ukrainian state. As such it could be used to incite agitation against the Governments of Roumania, Poland and Russia by focussing the irredentist aspirations of their Ukrainian population on a motherland. The project was warmly supported by the German Foreign Office, which had earlier represented it to him in this light.62 During the following months the Carpatho-Ukraine was maintained as a potential threat in the heart of central Europe. Repeated Hungarian and Polish demands that the territory be incorporated into Hungary were repulsed63 and Germany strove to convert the area into a viable economic unit.64 If Hitler even seriously

62 G.D.,D,IV,45, 46.
63 G.D.,D,IV,127,128,167,179.
64 G.D.,D,IV,146.
considered using the Carpatho-Ukraine as a jumping off spot for an attack on Russia, he could only have been heartened in this purpose by reports from abroad. In early January Dirksen reported from London that a military solution of the Ukrainian question would, in fact, be accepted by the British Government and public opinion if it were represented as a drive for Ukrainian self-determination.65

But Hitler soon realized that the advantages of supporting the Ukrainian National Movement were far outweighed by the disadvantages of this policy. Hungary had been transformed from a willing to a sullen satellite because of the Ukrainian policy. Hitler's chief fear, however, was that Poland and Russia might discover a common interest in opposing Ukrainian irredentism and create an alliance directed against him.66 Briefly, the Carpatho-Ukraine had proved to be too general a threat in Central Europe to serve Germany's purposes. Therefore, on March 13 Hitler acted to liquidate it as a state. He informed the Hungarian Regent, Horthy, that Germany agreed to its incorporation into Hungary. Two days later it was occupied by Hungarian forces while, at the same time, German troops were marching into Prague.67

The hopes which Hitler no doubt placed in these actions were realized only in part. Hungary, it is true, was placed in Hitler's debt and securely tied to German policy as an

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65 G.D.,D,IV,367; V,108.
66 G.D.,D,IV,367; V,108.
international outcast. But the removal of the threat of Ukrainian irredentism did not induce Poland to accept Hitler's demands. Indeed, Hitler's simultaneous destruction of Czechia aroused Polish and Western suspicions that Poland was the next object of German territorial aspirations. This suspicion precipitated a series of events which provoked Hitler to decide to settle with Poland.

Hitler's occupation of Prague on March 15 was followed on March 25 by the annexation of Memel. These developments so disturbed the British Government that on March 31 Prime Minister Chamberlain offered Poland an unconditional promise of assistance if she were attacked. This sudden appearance of Britain as a power factor in Eastern Europe confronted Hitler with a situation he had not anticipated. It contained the threat of a massive coalition embracing Poland, France, Britain and possibly Russia, which would be aimed at halting any further German expansion in Eastern Europe. Hitler was thus faced with fundamental decisions regarding his future policy: he could either admit defeat and withdraw from his position of dominance in Central Europe, or determine to settle with Poland regardless of the gamble involved. It was upon the latter course that Hitler decided.

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68 Conway, *German Foreign Policy*, p. 188.
CHAPTER III

THE RUSSO-GERMAN RAPPROCHEMENT AS THREAT
AND AS REALITY, APRIL - AUGUST 1939

It has been conclusively demonstrated elsewhere that Hitler did not decide on a final settlement with Poland before the end of March.\(^1\) Rather, the evidence suggests that this decision was made in the interval from March 25 to April 2,\(^2\) and probably was a direct response to Chamberlain's unexpected guarantee of Poland on March 31.\(^3\) In any case, on April 3, Hitler issued the first of two military directives ordering the preparations for an attack on Poland.\(^4\) Preparations were to be made in such a way that an attack could commence at any time after September 1. The first directive was followed on April 11 by a more detailed one in which the complex of political problems stemming from the decision to settle with Poland was considered.\(^5\) Hitler stressed that a military settlement with Poland should be regarded as a limited war; it was not envisaged as a prelude to a western offensive. Following


\(^3\) Hinsley, *op. cit.*, pp.11-12.

\(^4\) G.D.,D,VI,149.

\(^5\) G.D.,D,VI,185.
from this, Hitler stated that the principal task of German diplomacy was to isolate Poland in order that she could be eliminated without the risk of outside intervention. Hitler did not say who would intervene, but the fact that he regarded the western democracies as his main antagonists made this fairly obvious. It is of interest that in this analysis Russia was practically ignored as a possible opponent. The most that Hitler would say was:

Intervention by Russia, if she were in a position to intervene, cannot be expected to be of any use to Poland, because this would mean Poland's destruction by Bolshevism.\(^6\)

Hitler's policy towards Russia in early April is thus fairly clear. It was determined by his decision to settle with Poland, a decision from which he did not retreat in the following months. Throughout this period all diplomatic activity was subordinated to the principal aim of isolating Poland. In pursuing this aim Hitler apparently felt quite at ease in ignoring Russia. His ease of mind was influenced by several factors. In the first place Hitler still believed now, on April 11, 1939, as he had in September 1938 and in March 1939, that Russia's military weakness would stop her from challenging Germany single-handedly. That Russia would ally herself with other powers was considered unlikely. For obvious reasons Russia was not likely to become Poland's ally. The possibility of a "Grand Alliance" embracing Russia, Britain and France was also discounted. Further, by dispatches from his Embassy in London, Hitler was

\(^6\) G.D., D, VI, 185.
discouraged from attaching great significance to the feelers which the British Government had put out to Russia after March 15. More importantly, Britain's guarantee of Poland on March 31 revealed that Russia, at least temporarily, had been dropped as a prospective partner in an anti-German front. This impression was reenforced by a diplomatic report from Moscow on April 5 which stated that the Soviet Union was still distrustful of the policies of Britain and France and was determined to maintain her freedom of action.

Presuming the foregoing analysis to be correct, Hitler may well have reasoned in early April that if Poland, through her fear of Russia, were already isolated in the East and if the Western Powers could be induced to withdraw their guarantee of Poland, Poland might willingly negotiate with Germany rather than face certain destruction. A rapprochement with Russia was not needed for this. If, on the other hand, the West were to persist in supporting Poland, then the Russian question might have to be reassessed. There is no evidence to support the view that Hitler's considerations of Russia went beyond this in early April.

Although Hitler was not seriously considering a political rapprochement with Soviet Russia at this time, earlier, in February and March, the approaches of Soviet representatives

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7 For an evaluation of the British feelers by the German Embassy in London see G.D.,D,VI,35,50,58,112.
8 G.D.,D,VI,121,136,137.
9 G.D.,D,VI,161.
had led him to believe that one would be possible. At that time the German response had been frigid; Hitler was still hopeful of an agreement with Poland based on a common anti-Soviet policy.

However, when these hopes were frozen by the stiffened attitude of Poland and Britain in late March, Ribbentrop and Göring began urging that guarded moves be made to find out what diplomatic possibilities might exist in Russia. On April 7 Ribbentrop instructed Kleist, an "expert" on Soviet affairs in the "Dienstelle Ribbentrop", to improve his relations with the members of the Soviet Embassy in Berlin. Ribbentrop probably did this on his own initiative. A few days later when the Soviet Charge, Astakhov, openly hinted to Kleist at a German-Soviet understanding, Ribbentrop ordered Kleist not to pursue the matter. While Ribbentrop considered a friendship policy with Russia simply as a return to the Rapallo policy at Poland's

10 In February, 1939 the Soviet Military Attaché in Berlin is reported to have said that the Soviet Government was interested in any change in the status of Poland which might occur: (A. Rossi, The Russo-German Alliance: August 1939-June 1941, London, Chapman and Hall, 1950, p.6). The moderation of Stalin's speech to the Party Congress on March 10 was noted by Schulenburg in a dispatch to Berlin: (G.D.,D,VI,6). On March 20 it was reported from Moscow that Litvinov had told the wife of the Japanese ambassador that "...Germany and Italy were about to set their relationship with the Soviet Union in order." G.D.,D,VI,51.

11 On March 21 Ribbentrop was still eager to buy concessions from Poland by promising to regard the Ukrainian question"...from a purely Polish angle": (G.D.,D,VI,61; G.D.,D,VI,73). In view of subsequent developments, Hitler's reputed statement to General Brauchitsch shortly after March 15 that "...I will pay a state visit to Moscow," must be regarded as no more than a conversation piece. Kordt, Nicht aus den Akten, p.306; Kordt, Wahn und Wirklichkeit, p.157.

expense, Göring's view was very different. He detested even the idea of an alliance with Soviet Russia, but, on the other hand, was willing to use the threat of such an alliance to blackmail the Poles.\textsuperscript{13}

Nevertheless, Hitler held back from considering a rapprochement with Russia until a series of events in the interval between mid-April and early May caused him to reexamine his Soviet policy of neglect and to turn a more receptive ear to Ribbentrop's urgings. One of these events was the action taken by the British Government on April 15 in making its first concrete proposal for an anti-German front to the Soviet Government.\textsuperscript{14} Two days later this move was followed by a series of Soviet counterproposals.\textsuperscript{15} These developments indicated a hardening of the British position and faced Hitler with the prospect of an Anglo-French-Russian alliance and a two-front war.

This impression of an Anglo-Russian front was, however, offset by a number of other developments in late April and May which definitely indicated that the Soviets were interested in a détente with Germany. On April 16 Merekalov, the Soviet Ambassador, in a surprise visit to Weizsäcker made this declaration:

As far as Russia was concerned there was no reason why she should not live on a normal footing with Germany, and out of normal relations could grow increasingly improved relations.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{13} This was the gist of a conversation between Göring and Mussolini in Rome on April 16. G.D.,D,VI,211.
\textsuperscript{14} G.D.,D,VI,233.
\textsuperscript{15} G.D.,D,V,239.
\textsuperscript{16} G.D.,D,VI,215.
A fortnight later, on May 3, Litvinov was "sacked" as Commissar for Foreign Affairs. His dismissal caused a sensation in Berlin and probably was decisive in overcoming Hitler's reluctance to consider an understanding with the Soviet Government. The immediate upshot was that on May 6 Hitler summoned Hilger, the economic attache in Moscow, to Germany to inform his government on the situation in Russia. Hilger discussed the significance of Litvinov's dismissal with Ribbentrop on May 9 in Munich, and with Hitler at Berchtesgaden on the following day. Hitler was obviously considering his own foreign policy in the light of present Soviet behavior, but as yet reaching no definite conclusion. He continued to vacillate. On the one hand, he, presumably at this time, instructed Schulenburg to maintain "extreme caution in any conference with

17 G.D.,D,VI,325.
18 Raeder described it in these words:"Litvinov's resignation as Foreign Minister struck Hitler like a cannon ball":(N.C.A., Supplement,A, p.1012, quoted in Rossi, The Russo-German Alliance, p.151.
20 G.D.,D,VI, 325; Hilger, Wir und der Kreml, pp.277-281; Kordt, Wahn und Wirklichkeit, p.158. Initially Schulenburg and General Köstring, the Military attaché in Moscow, were summoned but both were on journeys, the Ambassador in the Middle East and Köstring in the Far East.
Molotov"^{21} but at the same time he ordered a change in the tone of the German press.^{22} From the Soviet side hints at a rapprochement continued to be made.^{23} On May 17 Astakhov, the Soviet Chargé in Berlin, called on Schnurre, reiterated that there were no conflicts in foreign policy between Germany and Russia, and hinted specifically at a return to the Rapallo partnership.^{24}

As a result of these Soviet approaches and of the stiffening of Western opposition, Hitler must have done some serious thinking on the future of German-Soviet relations. No longer could Russia be ignored as she had been in April! Hitler's hopes that Britain would voluntarily renounce her guarantee of Poland had been dashed; however unwillingly, Hitler now had to consider how to court Russia. Consequently, Schulenburg was instructed to raise the question of the

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^{21} G.D.,D, VI, 325, note 2. Hitler's chief lieutenants were not plagued by similar doubts. As early as April 20 Ribbentrop was trying to force the Japanese to concessions in a Three Power Pact by warning that Germany might arrive at an understanding with Russia: (**RIIA, Survey, The Eve of the War; 1939, 1958, p. 366**). On May 6 and 7 Ribbentrop spoke to Ciano of seizing every favorable occasion to prevent the "...adhesion of Russia to the anti-totalitarian bloc...." (**Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, p. 286**). In Paris on May 6, Göring's adjutant Bodenschatz, obviously on instructions from his chief, warned of a fourth partition of Poland: (**France, Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres, The French Yellow Book: Diplomatic Documents 1938-1939, London, pp. 134, 135**). Göring's motives are uncertain. Either he intended to blackmail the French and the Poles, or he wanted to undermine Ribbentrop's policy.


^{23} G.D., D, VI, 332, 351.

^{24} G.D., D, VI, 406.
resumption of economic negotiations in Moscow. 25

This decision to resume contacts with the Soviet Government, even if they were to be merely of an exploratory nature, was made without enthusiasm. 26 Hitler despised Bolshevism and was reluctant to give up the Communist bogey as a justification for his foreign policy coups. In addition he had to carefully weigh the effect on domestic opinion of such an alliance with the "Red Menace". Hitler also suspected that the Soviets wanted to use the threat of a Russo-German rapprochement to wrest concessions from Britain and France. 27

In spite of these misgivings, on May 20, Schulenburg put out a cautious feeler to Molotov. He proposed that the same Herr Schnurre whose earlier visit had been so abruptly cancelled, come to Moscow for the resumption of economic negotiations. The German proposal was no doubt designed to probe Soviet intentions but it had the added possibility of putting a spoke in the Anglo-Soviet negotiations without having to commit Germany to any definite policy. Molotov's answer, however, while friendly, posed a riddle:

...the Soviet Government could only agree to a resumption of the negotiations if the necessary 'political basis' for them were to be constructed. 28

25 This decision was preceded by a month of discussions in Berlin on whether a political approach to the Soviet Union should be made. Schorske, The Diplomats, p. 503.

26 For a good account of Hitler's reluctance to take up contacts with the Soviet Union see Conway, German Foreign Policy, pp. 208-210.

27 Astakhov's statement of May 17 was represented in this light by an official of the German Foreign Office on May 22. G.D., D, VI, 406, note 5.

28 G.D., D, VI, 424.
Schulenburg, in reporting this conversation, characterized Molotov's attitude as "suspicious" but interpreted his statement as an invitation for more "...extensive proposals of a political nature."²⁹ The ambassador saw the dilemma that the Russians might use a German initiative to exert pressure in negotiations with Britain and France, but, nevertheless, suggested that if German intentions were serious, a limited move should be considered.

However, Molotov's request for the establishment of "political bases" apparently went beyond Hitler's intentions. Hitler had no interest in strengthening the Soviet hand in negotiations with the West. Therefore, on May 21, Schulenburg was instructed to adopt a "wait and see" attitude in his relations with the Soviets.³⁰

In the crucial period which followed, from May 21 till May 30, Hitler considered all possibilities again. This is particularly evident from his secret speech to the German military commanders on May 23 which illustrated both the uncertainty of German diplomacy at this time and the development of Hitler's ideas on Russia since April 11.³¹ The isolation of Poland was stated still to be the primary task of German diplomacy. However, unlike Hitler's analysis in early April, Russia was now considered a factor of some importance. Russia

²⁸ G.D.,D,VI,424.
²⁹ G.D.,D,VI,424; G.D.,D,VI,414,note 2.
³⁰ N.S.R.,p.7.
³¹ G.D.,D,VI,433,ND 079-L.
was envisaged in one of two roles: among Germany's opponents in an alliance with the west or, an accomplice in the destruction of Poland. On the one hand, if Russia were to enter the Franco-British alliance, Hitler felt sure that she could be neutralized as an attacker through pressure from Japan. The interminable negotiations of the preceding months with Japan, had at least disclosed that Germany could at any time secure a pact specifically directed against Russia. On the other hand, concerning a Russo-German Pact, Hitler trenchantly commented:

It is not ruled out that Russia might disinterest herself in the destruction of Poland.

However, the possibilities of reaching an agreement with Russia seemed slight indeed, when on the following day, May 24, the British announced that an agreement with the Kremlin was expected at an early date. This threat, following so closely after Molotov's invitation of May 20 for a German initiative caused a great stir in the German Foreign Office and gave rise to a number of conflicting suggestions on how to proceed further with the Russian question. Weizsäcker was

32 Hitler was also aware of the possible repercussions of a Japanese Pact. On May 22 Schulenburg warned that the conclusion of a German-Japanese alliance might destroy the last misgivings which were still keeping Russia and Britain apart. G.D.,D,II,424.

33 Hitler, of course, desired a Japanese alliance with universal application but the Japanese navy would agree only to a pact directed explicitly and solely against Russia. G.D.,D,VI,70, 254, 275, 298, 326, 344, 363, 282, 410, 457, 467, 487.

34 G.D.,D,VI,433.

pessimistic. He expected the imminent conclusion of an Anglo-Russian Agreement. Nevertheless, on May 25, he suggested that a limited initiative be taken in an effort to rob the Russo-British hive of its sting. Ribbentrop, on the other hand, favored dropping all reserve and making a frontal approach to the Kremlin. On May 26, in a draft memorandum of startling candour, he suggested that a sweeping offer be made to the Soviets. The core of his proposed offer was a suggestion that an agreement on Poland, taking Russia's interests in consideration, could be reached. But Hitler held back, and, on the same day, instructed Schulenburg to maintain complete reserve in relations with the Soviets.

During the following days the German government remained undecided on what to do. The Foreign Office was impatient; Ribbentrop was not satisfied with Hitler's "wait and see" policy and looked around for some approach, which, while not committing Germany to any course of action, would disclose

36 G.D., D, VI, 437. Weizsäcker suggested that a limited initiative be taken through Hilger in economic discussions with the Soviet Foreign Ministry and that a more indirect approach be made through Rosso, the Italian Ambassador in Moscow, who could make clear to the Russians German readiness for contacts.

37 G.D., D, VI, 441. It is possible that Hilger had a hand in drawing up this memorandum.

38 G.D., D, VI, 442. This decision was reached after consultations with the Japanese and Italian embassies. Hitler's reticence was represented to Schulenburg by Weizsäcker in a dispatch on the following day, as the result of suspicion that the Soviets were trying to use Germany to blackmail the Western Powers. G.D., D, VI, 446.
Soviet intentions. On May 26 he considered a concerted German-Japanese initiative but dismissed this as impossible when an approach to the Japanese embassy in Berlin elicited an unfavourable response. The possibility of an indirect approach to the Soviet Government through the Italian ambassador in Moscow was weighed next. This possibility and other urgent matters were discussed by Weizsäcker, Gaus, the head of the Legal Department of the Foreign Office, Attolico, the Italian ambassador, and Ribbentrop, at an important meeting held on May 29 at Ribbentrop's country home at Sonnenberg. The course of the discussions revealed that Ribbentrop's visitors were dubious over the efficacy of a further approach to the Soviets. Ribbentrop, however, was not so easily discouraged and proposed that a last try to torpedo the Anglo-Russian negotiations be made. He suggested that Weizsäcker meet Astakhov the following day and use the question of the status of Soviet commercial missions in Prague as the occasion for a political conversation. When this proposed course of action was submitted to Hitler on the same day, he agreed to a limited exchange of views.

Thus on May 30 Weizsäcker carried out his instructions by summoning Astakhov for an interview. His approach was suggestive; he indicated that Germany's eastern relations had

39 G.D.,D,VI,446; Weinberg, Germany and the Soviet Union, p.30
40 Weizsäcker, p. 231; Weinberg, op. cit., pp.30-31;
41 G.D.,D,VI,449,450.
42 G.D.,D,VI,446.
become freer as a result of Poland's intransigent mood and that ideological barriers need not stand in the way of a Russo-German understanding. At the same time Weizsäcker informed the Moscow Embassy that the decision had been reached "...make a certain degree of contact with the Soviets..." As a sign of German good faith Hilger was instructed to resume trade talks with the Russian Government.

The reluctance with which, at the end of May, Hitler agreed to this limited initiative towards Russia reveals that he did not seek a rapprochement as an end in itself, or as a means by which to destroy Poland militarily, but simply and solely to forestall an Anglo-Russian alliance and the two-front war which that would entail. This view is reenforced by the tactics which Hitler employed in the following months of June in order to sound out the Soviet Government.

Despite the fact that, as a prerequisite for improved trade relations, Molotov, on May 20, had demanded a clarification of "political bases", Hitler, throughout June, continued his soundings mainly through trade talks in Moscow. There are a

43 G.D.,D,VI,451.

44 G.D.,D,VI,452. The inaccurate translation into English of this passage in Nazi-Soviet Relations: "...we have now decided to undertake definite negotiations with the Soviet Union..." had created the erroneous impression that Hitler had made a firm decision to reach an agreement with the Soviets by May 30. N.S.R.,p.15.

45 G.D.,D,VI,453.

A response from Russia was not slow in coming. In his speech of May 31, Molotov avoided all verbal sallies against Germany and Schulenburg reported that in diplomatic circles in Moscow there was greater scepticism of an early agreement between Russia and Britain after the speech than there had been before. G.D.,D,VI,463.
number of possible reasons for this. On the one hand German raw material needs argued in favor of an economic agreement with Russia regardless of the outcome of the political negotiations. However, Hitler remained suspicious of Soviet intentions and was unwilling to risk a Soviet double-cross which a specific political proposal would open him to. Moreover, to prevent a Russo-British agreement; it was essential that signs of a Russo-German rapprochement be publicized as soon as possible. Hitler knew that Russo-British negotiations were balanced precariously. Merely the publicity attending a trade agreement, he may have hoped, could bring them crashing down, or at least buy him enough time to work out another tactic.

Be that as it may, during the month of June the initiative was mainly on the German side. Occasionally, to be sure, the Soviets would play coy and raise German hopes with a non-committal approach. The Draganov incident of June 14 must be interpreted as such a move. In fact, it so raised Ribbentrop's hopes that two days later he warned Shiratori, the

46 On June 15 Schnurre warned that in the face of raw material needs another breakdown in the economic negotiations such as had already occurred in February could not be risked. G.D. D, VI, 530.

47 On June 14 Astakhov called on Draganov, the Bulgarian Minister in Berlin, and in a two hour conversation outlined to him, obviously for transmission to the German Government, that of the three alternatives open to Soviet diplomacy, a pact with the Western Democracies, a spinning out of relations with the West, or a rapprochement with Germany, the latter was preferred by the Soviet Government. He hinted at Soviet interests in Bessarabia and also at a desire for a non-aggression pact. G.D. D, VI, 529.
Japanese Ambassador in Rome: "Since Japan had not accepted our proposals Germany would now conclude a non-aggression pact with Russia." Although this was manifestly a bare-faced effort at blackmail, it probably also was an honest expression of Ribbentrop's views. This impression is supported by the sudden reversal of Germany's position in the negotiations for an alliance with Japan. On June 21 Ribbentrop had had the German Embassy in Tokyo instructed that, contrary to previous tactics of urgency, the negotiations with the Japanese were now to be continued only in a dilatory manner.

However, despite Ribbentrop's optimism, Hitler's hopes of toppling the Russo-British negotiations were not founded. Hilger's efforts in Moscow remained fruitless. The Foreign Trade Commissar, Mikoyan, especially, remained sphinx-like in his dealings with Hilger. On June 27 Weizsäcker commented bitterly:

...it is doubtful if we shall even get as far as negotiations with Moscow in the economic field.

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48 G.D.,D,VI,529, note 2.
49 G.D.,D,VI,553.
50 G.D.,D,VI,571. Hilger's economic talks with Mikoyan opened hopefully on June 2 with a Soviet query on what means Germany proposed in order to settle trade matters: (G.D.,D,VI, 465). On June 7 Schnurre suggested that he be sent to Moscow as a plenipotentiary to negotiate an economic treaty if conditions were found to be favorable: (G.D.,D,VI,491). The German Government agreed to this proposal and on June 9 Schulenburg reported that the Soviet Government agreed to the dispatch of Schnurre to Moscow but first demanded that the latest Soviet proposals of February be accepted as the basis for trade negotiations: (G.D.,D,VI,499). Weizsäcker recommended acceptance of the Soviet terms: (G.D.,D,VI,514). But doubts still persisted in Berlin and Hilger was recalled for consultations (June 15-17): (G.D.,D,VI,499, note 3). On his return to Moscow he was informed
The more limited efforts of Schulenburg were likewise barren of results.  

By the end of June Berlin was becoming distinctly weary of Soviet mulishness. The economic talks were producing neither the desired political advantage nor were they clarifying the economic possibilities vis-a-vis the Soviet Union.  

Throughout the month hints at possible areas of mutual interest in Poland and the Baltic states or at a revival of the Berlin Treaty had met with an ambiguous, if not outright negative, response in Moscow.  

On June 29 Hitler decided that the economic negotiations had gone far enough; accordingly, he instructed the Foreign office to inform the Soviet Government that Germany was no longer interested in the resumption of

by Mikoyan on June 24 of further Soviet terms. A visit to Moscow by Schnurre was now made dependent upon the prior classification of points of difference: (G.D.,D,VI,568). Schulenburg correctly interpreted this rebuff as indicating that Russia did not want a dramatic development in Russo-German relations but nevertheless was not willing to let the talks break off. G.D.,D,VI,570.  

While in Berlin from June 12-24, Schulenburg called on Astakhov on June 17 and told him in very definite terms that "Russia had to make her choice": (G.D.,D,VI,540). On his return to Moscow on June 27, Schulenburg again broached the topic of "political bases" to Molotov when the Foreign Minister confined his demands to Mikoyan's economic terms, Schulenburg reported progress: (G.D.,D,VI,579,607). However, he himself was aware that this did not mark progress. In fact, when the Soviet Government agreed to a very limited exchange of German nationals for Soviet prisoners of The Spanish Civil War, the Ambassador, on July 3, characterized this gesture as the "...first sign of any accommodating disposition to speak of for a long time." G.D.,D,VI,610.  

On June 28 Schnurre recommended that the economic discussions be postponed for both political and economic reasons. G.D.,D,VI,576; G.D.,D,VI,596.  

Schorske, The Diplomats, p. 504.
economic negotiations. A few days later - the exact date is unknown - instructions to this effect were transmitted to the Moscow Embassy. On June 30 Ribbentrop instructed Schulenburg that in the political field as well, enough had been said.

This decision to discontinue negotiations, while prompted mainly by Russia's enigmatic behavior, may have had another motive. The difficulties encountered by the British in their negotiations with the Soviet Union may have encouraged Hitler to believe that Russia "...could be left out of the number of his enemies." In a settlement with Poland, Hitler, no doubt, would have preferred having Russia as an unfriendly but nevertheless dependable neutral to having her as a partner in sharing the spoils.

During the next three weeks, while Hitler mulled over his future course of action, Soviet relations were treated lack- idaisically. Opinion in both the Moscow Embassy and in the Foreign Office agreed that nothing hasty be done. Schulenburg suggested that Germany might make a few small gestures in order to create an atmosphere of confidence in which serious steps towards a rapprochement could later be taken. In Berlin a similar mood prevailed. Weizsäcker believed that any progress could only be made slowly and "step by step". After a visit to Berlin, the Counsellor of the Moscow Embassy, on July 12, 

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54 G.D., D, VI, 583. The question left unanswered in Nazi-Soviet Relations of whether these instructions were even transmitted to the Moscow Embassy, has since been solved by the given German Document publication. It includes this marginal note by Weizsäcker: "...has meantime been dispatched."
55 G.D., D, VI, 588.
56 Conway, German Foreign Policy, p. 217.
57 G.D., D, VI, 648.
observed that in Berlin the Soviet topic was being probed keenly but that "...the will to take a definite political stand has not yet asserted itself." 58

In the meantime, in spite of his instructions of June 29 to discontinue all trade talks, Hitler did not yet seem willing to block off this last avenue of contact. On July 7, therefore, a last initiative in the economic field was decided upon. Hilger was instructed to agree to Mikoyan's earlier conditions by informing him on the economic differences which the German Government felt still existed between Germany and Russia. 59 These instructions were carried out on July 10. Schulenburg reported that Mikoyan seemed disposed to accept this German initiative as a political gesture. 60

However, on July 16 Schulenburg reported that the Soviets were now dissatisfied with the information given them by Hilger and proposed that a further clarification of the points at issue be sought in conversations in Berlin between Babarin, the Soviet trade representative, and Schnurre. 61 Two days later, Schnurre met Barbarin in Berlin for a conversation which must be regarded as the beginning of a thaw in Russo-German relations which culminated one month later in the Moscow Agreements. Suddenly, after the evasions and postponements of the previous month and a half, Barbarin made the astonishing

58 G.D.,D,VI,661.
59 G.D.,D,VI,628.
60 G.D.,D,VI,642.
61 G.D.,D,VI,677.
statement that; if agreement could be reached, he was empowered to sign an economic treaty. It was apparent that the Soviets wanted the negotiations started but also wanted them to be unobtrusive and away from Moscow. In spite of these reservations, Schnurre suggested to his government that the negotiations be continued. While from a political standpoint the lack of publicity was unfortunate, the conclusion of an economic agreement would, nevertheless, have desirable effects. On July 22 the Moscow press announced the resumption of Russo-German economic negotiations. On that same day Schulenburg was instructed by the German Foreign Office to pick up the thread of political discussions with the Soviet Government. The period of waiting, ordered on June 30, had clearly come to an end.

While the Soviet initiative of July 18 was the positive factor which encouraged Hitler to believe that a political agreement with Russia was possible, there was also a negative factor which caused him to resume the political discussions on July 22. By this time Hitler realized that if he were to settle with Poland this year, he would have to move quickly. Poland was not yet isolated and each day only brought forth fresh signs that the Western Democracies were determined to stand by their pledge to Poland. If the threat of a Russo-German understanding

62 G.D.,D,VI,700.

63 On July 21 the French Chargé in Berlin, De Saint-Hardouin, in a dispatch to his Government, made this acute analysis: "...during the past week some change has taken place in the Chancellor's mind. It is reported that the Führer is now convinced that, contrary to what he has hitherto been assured by some of his advisors, France and England are resolved to fulfill their pledges to Poland...." The French Yellow Book, p.169.
had not persuaded them to give way; then, Hitler decided, the reality of one should.  

During the following days the German Government was galvanized into action. Ribbentrop consulted daily with his subordinates and was himself constantly in touch with Hitler. This activity was given even greater urgency when it became known on July 25 that Britain and France were dispatching military missions to Moscow. Ribbentrop reacted to this by ordering that negotiations be pressed at "an unheard of tempo." Measures were taken in all fields to lay the groundwork for a Russo-German understanding. For this purpose the German government moved to harmonize relations between Japan and Russia. Simultaneously cultural contacts between Germany and Russia were reestablished.

Finally Hitler decided to lay his cards on the table. He ordered that his views on a settlement of interests be put before the Soviet Government. On the evening of July 26,

64 Conway, German Foreign Policy, p. 220.
65 G.D., D, VI, 757.
66 Kleist, Zwischen Stalin und Hitler, quoted in Schorske, The Diplomats, p. 507.
67 On July 24 Weizsäcker suggested to Astakhov that a "modus vivendi" in Russo-Japanese relations be established for a number of years. G.D., D, VI, 115.
68 Also on July 24 the Soviet Embassy sounded out the German Foreign Office on a Soviet invitation to two Germans to attend the Russian agricultural exhibition in Moscow: (G.D., D, VI, 714). During the same period Astakhov was present as an official guest at an opening of the exhibition of German art in Munich, at which Hitler, personally, presided. G.D., D, VI, 727.
Schnurre, on Ribbentrop's instructions, went over the whole sweep of Russo-German relations in an informal but penetrating political discussion with Astakhov and Babarin. As possible stages to a political rapprochement he suggested: economic collaboration, normalization of political relations, and then the restoration of good political relations. The Soviets, while remaining suspicious of German intentions, seemed receptive to Schnurre's suggestions. Schnurre thereupon stated the German case in its most blunt form. The time for an understanding was ripe now. It would not be so after the conclusion of an Anglo-Russian agreement:

What could Britain offer Russia? At best participation in a European war and the hostility of Germany, hardly a desirable end for Russia. What could we offer as against this? Neutrality and keeping out of a possible European conflict and, if Moscow wished, a German-Russian understanding on mutual interests, which, just as in former times would work out to the advantage of both countries.

This conversation undoubtedly marked the beginning of a concerted German effort to frighten the West into neutrality through a German-Russian pact. It is obvious that Hitler was now aiming at a definite understanding with Russia; he was not merely wanting to prevent a Russo-British pact. In the following days numerous efforts were made to win Soviet confidence, even if gigantic concessions had to be made in the process. On July 29 Weizsäcker instructed Schulenburg to sound

70 G.D.,D,VI,729; Hilger, Wir und der Kreml, p. 282.
71 G.D.,D,VI,729.
out Molotov on his response to Schnurre's initiative of July 26. If Molotov's response were favorable, Schulenburg was to state more specifically that Germany was prepared to guard Soviet interests in Poland and in the Baltic area. A probable military settlement with Poland was also to be hinted at. These seemed to be the German terms for a Russo-German agreement.

There now followed in rapid succession three political conversations between German statesmen and Soviet representatives. In the course of these discussions Schnurre's suggestions for a political rapprochement of July 26 were stated in a more definite form. On August 2 Ribbentrop summoned the Soviet Charge for an interview. Here the German Foreign Minister proposed a settlement based on non-interference in the internal affairs of the other country and the "...abandonment of a policy directed against our vital interests." He stressed that there was no problem between the Black and the Baltic Seas which could not be solved to Russian satisfaction. Although the note of urgency of Schnurre's earlier approach was absent from Ribbentrop's manner, the effect of this conversation was to confirm Schnurre's offer. However, this contrast in Schnurre's and Ribbentrop's moods troubled Astakhov. Therefore, on August 3, he saw Schnurre again. The German economic expert reassured him of Germany's serious intentions and added that

72 G.D.,D,VI,736.
73 G.D.,D,VI,758.
74 G.D.,D,VI,761.
his government would be ready with concrete proposals when it received word that Moscow was similarly disposed. In the interests of speed, he suggested that the conversations be continued in Berlin.\textsuperscript{75} On that same day Schulenburg finally saw Molotov. The German proposals for a settlement of all problems in Russo-German relations was again restated. Molotov appeared "unusually open" but remained non-committal.\textsuperscript{76}

It would appear from the foregoing analysis that Hitler's decision to seek an agreement with Russia was made in the interval from July 16, when the Soviets offered to resume economic talks, to July 26, when Schnurre put the question of a political settlement squarely before Astakhov and Babarin. It is possible that the decision had already fallen by July 22 when Schulenburg was instructed to pick up the threads of the earlier political discussions.\textsuperscript{77} In any event the German moves from the 26th on, evince a similarity of approach and a singleness of purpose which suggest that they were the result of a decision by Hitler to launch a concerted effort for a pact with Russia.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{75} Just prior to this conversation Weizsäcker had informed Schulenburg that if the Soviet side was receptive to German soundings, more concrete political proposals would be broached to the Soviet Charge in Berlin. G.D.,D,VI,759.

\textsuperscript{76} G.D.,D,VI,766.

\textsuperscript{77} Schulenburg was told "...a conclusion, and this at the earliest possible date, is desired for general reasons." G.D.,D,VI,700.

\textsuperscript{78} For the view, based on hearsay evidence, that Hitler made his final decision to seek a pact with Russia on the night of August 4-5 see Rossi, The Russo-German Alliance, p.27 and Namier, Diplomatic Prelude, p. 284.
This view is strengthened by the fact that in the following days the tempo of the Russo-German rapprochement was held back only by Stalin's reluctance to commit himself. The Germans, for their part, pressed for an understanding with increasing vigor; they were, after all, working against a deadline - the date for the attack on Poland had been set for August 26! Thus, when Astakhov, in a further talk with Schnurre on August 5 refused to say more than that his government desired to continue the conversations with Germany, Ribbentrop, three days later, instructed Schnurre to shock the Soviets out of their lethargy by impressing upon them the imminence of a German-Polish war and the willingness of Germany to state concrete terms.79 Within these three days Astakhov also had received new instructions from his government. On the basis of these new instructions then, Astakhov and Schnurre met again on August 10. Astakhov stated that he again had received express instructions to "emphasize" that the Soviet Government desired an improvement in its relations with Germany. Thereupon Schnurre became more specific and outlined the questions on which the German Government sought clarification. These were the questions: What was the attitude of the Soviets to the Polish question? And, number two, why were military negotiations with the Western Powers being continued in Moscow? Schnurre asserted that as to the first question "...it was possible...that a solution by force of arms

79 G.D.,D,VI,772.
80 G.D.,D,VII,18.
would have to take place."\(^{81}\) As to the second problem it was affirmed that if the Soviet Government were fearful of being threatened in a German-Polish war, Germany was "... prepared to give the Soviet Union every assurance desired."\(^{82}\)

Schnurre's words were clearly meant as an indication of the price Hitler was willing to pay for Soviet friendship. They indicated that Hitler was prepared to offer the Soviet Government a non-aggression pact, and, even more important, that he had decided, in principle, to partition Poland.\(^{83}\) However, before spelling out these terms, Hitler awaited Moscow's response to his move.

This response was not long in coming. On August 12, while Hitler was conversing with Ciano in Berchtesgaden, Astakhov transmitted the Soviet reply to Schnurre in Berlin.\(^{84}\) He told Schnurre that the Soviet Government was prepared to discuss all of the subjects raised by the German side in preceding conversations and proposed that subsequent negotiations be carried out in Moscow. To underline the fact that Moscow was making extensive concessions to the German viewpoint, Astakhov stated that the discussions were to be "undertaken by degrees". This, of course, was the substance of Schnurre's proposals of July 26. Astakhov was duly informed that Hitler agreed to the suggested procedure.\(^{85}\)

\(^{81}\) G.D., D, VII, 18.
\(^{82}\) G.D., D, VII, 18.
\(^{83}\) Conway, German Foreign Policy, p. 227.
\(^{84}\) G.D., D, VII, 50.
\(^{85}\) Kordt, Wahn und Wirklichkeit, p. 163, 164.
Word of Astakhov's bid reached Hitler during a conversation with Ciano. The interview was briefly interrupted. Then Hitler exultantly informed his guest that the Soviets were prepared to receive a German political negotiator in Moscow. Hitler then gave his interpretation of Soviet policy:

Russia would not be prepared to pull the Western Powers' chestnuts out of the fire. Stalin's position was just as much in danger from a victorious as from a defeated Russian army. Russia was at the most interested in extending her access to the Baltic Sea. Germany had no objection to this. Besides, Russia would probably never intervene on behalf of Poland whom she thoroughly detested. The sole purpose of sending the Anglo-French Military Mission to Moscow was to conceal the catastrophic state of the political negotiations.

These confident words suggest that Hitler had correctly interpreted the Russian note of August 12 as signifying that a decisive step had been taken in Moscow. Although the Russian offer was actually only a foundation on which concrete negotiations were yet to be built, Hitler firmly believed that there would be no difficulty in arriving at terms for an agreement. After all, he held it in his hand to give Russia what she desired; he had already decided to give her gigantic concessions. Fundamental decisions concerning favourable terms for a pact had thus already been made; it now remained only for the negotiations to proceed and the pact to be signed.

86 G.D., D, VII, 43; Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, p. 302.

87 G.D., D, VII, 43.
With this policy established in Hitler's mind, the following days, although brimming with diplomatic proposals and counter proposals between Berlin and Moscow, reveal no advance in the Fuhrer's Soviet policy.

Consequently, we are now interested only in the highlights of the diplomatic moves which intervened and led, on August 23, to Ribbentrop's dramatic flight to Moscow. In the period from August 12 to August 23 German diplomatic maneuvers were characterized by extreme urgency. By August 14 it had been decided that as a sign of the German desire for immediate negotiations with a rapid conclusion, Ribbentrop would represent Hitler at the Moscow discussions.  

Schulenburg informed Molotov of this arrangement the following day and added that his government agreed to all of Moscow's suggestions contained in the August 12 Soviet proposal.  

Molotov's reply, transmitted to Berlin on August 15, while unusually positive, nevertheless showed that the Soviet Union was still in no hurry. The Soviet Foreign Minister suggested a specific agenda, but, on the other hand, demanded that "adequate preparations" precede Ribbentrop's visit. Ribbentrop immediately agreed to Molotov's terms and offered to come to Moscow sometime after August 18. Molotov, however, continued to stall. His answer, which arrived on August 18,

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88 Earlier it had been planned to send Dr. Frank, the Director of the Reichsrechtsamt, and Schnurre to Moscow. G.D.,D,VII,62.  
89 G.D.,D,VII,70,79.  
90 G.D.,D,VII,70,79,88.  
91 G.D.,D,VII,75.
while affirmative, still left the exact date of Ribbentrop's visit open. This answer was not good enough for the Germans. If the Russo-German Treaty were to have its desired impact upon the British, French and Polish Governments, the negotiations would have to be speeded up. Ribbentrop therefore instructed Schulenburg to propose to Molotov, that he Ribbentrop, be received in Moscow within the next few days.

August 19 was the day of decision in Moscow. Late that afternoon the Soviet leaders agreed that the Russo-German economic agreement, which, in the meantime, had been negotiated in Berlin, be signed, and that Ribbentrop be asked to arrive in Moscow one week later. Hitler now was sure of his coup. However, to achieve the maximum political results from the agreement, Hitler knew that negotiations had to commence forthwith. Consequently, on August 20, he appealed directly to Stalin for an earlier date. On the following day, Stalin finally agreed that Ribbentrop could arrive in Moscow on August 23.

Late that same night, a communique was issued announcing Ribbentrop's imminent arrival in Moscow. This announcement, being both impudent and unexpected, made a tremendous impression in Germany and abroad. The German people were relieved that the nightmare of encirclement had been banished; the German Generals

92 G.D.,D,VII,105.
93 G.D.,D,VII,113
94 G.D.,D,VII,132,133,144.
95 G.D.,D,VII,157-160.
96 G.D.,D,VII,160.
were convinced that they could now fight victoriously in Poland; Hitler hoped that Poland would be demoralized and, of greatest importance, that the Western Powers would be intimidated into neutrality.

That Hitler's original motive in seeking a pact with Russia was the intimidation of the Western Powers is apparent. As previously stated, Hitler's decision to settle with Poland was made independently of the idea of a Russo-German understanding. This decision was made at a time when negotiations with Russia had not even begun. Indeed, the Russo-German negotiations must be regarded as a consequence, rather than a cause, of this decision. The Russo-German Pact was therefore not the trigger which released Nazi aggression but was, instead, the factor which let Hitler hope that he would be able to crush Poland without outside interference. Hitler thought, that as a result of his diplomatic revolution, Britain and France would recognize the hopelessness of the military situation and would not intervene. On August 23, Hitler confidently assured his Generals:

The likelihood of an intervention of the Western Powers in a conflict is, in my opinion, not great.

97 The Moscow coup was represented in this light to the German Generals by Hitler in a conference on August 22, N.D., 798-PS; G.D., D, VII, Appendix, p. 559.

98 Hinsley, Hitler's Strategy, p. 16.

99 Ibid., p. 20.

100 Conway, German Foreign Policy, pp. 249, 250.

The price which Hitler was willing to pay for the intimidation of the Western Powers is recorded in the Moscow Agreements negotiated by Ribbentrop on August 23. Through this pact, Hitler sacrificed his ideological leadership of the anti-communist world. Moreover, under the terms of these agreements, Hitler gave to Russia a position of dominance in Eastern Europe. In a secret protocol Bessarabia, Estonia, Latvia, Finland, and half of Poland were promised to the Russians. The Soviet Union's interests in the Balkans were also recognized, but this in a purposely vague manner. No difficulties were encountered in the negotiations. After all, Ribbentrop had not come to Moscow to bargain, but to secure a pact with Russia, and that quickly.
CHAPTER IV

HITLER'S POLICY, AUGUST 1939 - JUNE 1941: FRIENDSHIP, INDECISION, AND ATTACK

The Moscow Pact, contrary to popular belief, did not immediately create confidence in Nazi-Soviet relations. The new partners, while sparing no effort to demonstrate their own good faith, were suspicious of each other. But Hitler was not satisfied with this situation. The purpose of the Pact was to eliminate the Western Powers from Eastern Europe. Even if the new partners were not friendly, they must at least appear to be so. Thus rumors on August 27 that the Red Army had withdrawn 250,000 troops from its western borders, moved Ribbentrop to direct an appeal to Molotov to cancel the order.  

Even after Molotov had dismissed the rumor with a "hearty laugh" Ribbentrop continued to insist that it be officially denied and the opposite stated. Hitler could take no chances on his Moscow coup failing to paralyze the Western and Polish determination to resist. On August 30 the Kremlin acceded to Berlin's wishes with a Tass statement. Soviet accommodation was matched by German good faith and Moscow was kept constantly informed on the diplomatic

1 G.D.,D,VII,360.
2 G.D.,D,VII,383.
3 G.D.,D,VII,387, 424.
4 G.D.,D,VII,446.
negotiations preceding the outbreak of war.\textsuperscript{5}

Despite the fact that the Moscow Pact had succeeded in eliminating Poland militarily, when the two armies met at Brest-Litovsk in September, it had not shocked the western Powers into remaining neutral. Thus when war broke out between Germany and Great Britain on September 3, the main reason for the Moscow Pact disappeared. The new situation however, with the possibility of a two-front war, dictated a policy of continued friendship with Russia. Hitler's Soviet policy till the summer of 1940 was thus prescribed by the fact of continued western opposition.

Hitler's determination to accommodate the Soviet Government was apparent in the negotiations preceding the Russo-German Boundary and Friendship Treaty of September 28 and 29. Prior to the conference both countries stated their bargaining positions. German demands were of a minor territorial nature\textsuperscript{6} but Soviet proposals constituted a basic revision of the Moscow agreements. On September 25 Stalin, in a surprise move, proposed to Schulenburg, that the Secret Protocol of August 23 be amended in order that the indisputably Polish areas, comprising

\textsuperscript{5} G.D.,D,VII,387, 431, 440.
\textsuperscript{6} On September 20 Ribbentrop instructed General K"{o}string to request Molotov to transfer the important Lwow and Drohobyacz oil area to the German sphere. It had been assigned to the Russian sphere by the secret protocol of August 23 but was under German occupation since September 17. The Soviet reply transmitted on that same day regarding both the original request and a subsequent appeal that the area be left under German military occupation pending a final settlement, was an unequivocal no. A. Rossi, \textit{The Russo-German Alliance: August 1939 - June 1941}, London, Chapman and Hall, 1950, pp.59,60; G.D.,D,VIII,109.
the Province of Lublin and the Province of Warsaw West of the Bug River, fall to the Germans. In return the Germans should waive their claim to Lithuania. The Soviet Union would then move to settle the Baltic question.7

On September 27 Ribbentrop arrived in Moscow with a large suite. In three conference sessions the division of Poland was sealed and economic problems discussed. The record of the negotiations reveals that the initiative obviously lay with the Soviets. Ribbentrop had ostensibly come to Moscow to define boundaries but Hitler was primarily interested in winning Soviet confidence. To this end he was willing to make broad concessions.8

Early in the negotiations Ribbentrop had weighed up

7 On September 19 Molotov suggested that the final border settlement ignore the idea of a Polish residual state by establishing as final the four river line. Negotiations should commence at once in Moscow. On September 23 the military demarcation line between the Red Army and the Reichswehr along the four river line was announced in a joint communique: G.D.,D,VIII,104,122.

8 The agreements arrived at in Moscow between September 27 and 29 were contained in a series of documents dated September 28: (G.D.,D,VIII,157-163). The best accounts of the negotiations are given in Kordt, Wahn und Wirklichkeit, pp.221-228; Nicht aus den Akten, pp. 344-354; Hilger, p. 295-97. There was a German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty. There was a confidential protocol providing for the unhindered migration of Germans to German territory and of Ukrainians and White Russians to Soviet territory. The most significant agreement provided for the cession to Germany of Lublin and Warsaw west of the Bug River and the transfer to the Soviet sphere of influence of Lithuania with the exception of its southwest corner. A further secret protocol affirmed that both parties would suppress any Polish propaganda on their soil aimed at the territory of the other. The protocols were supplemented by an exchange of two letters relating to economic matters. In the first it was agreed to promote trade relations vigorously through an exchange of Soviet raw materials for German manufactured goods "over an extended
the pros and cons relative to the Soviet plan for the exchange of territory and on September 28 he appealed to Hitler for a decision.\textsuperscript{9} Ribbentrop's evaluation was concerned solely with military and territorial considerations. His memorandum contains no hint of the political repercussions which a refusal of the Soviet proposals might entail. Hitler's reply has not been found, although it was no doubt positive. It is unlikely that Hitler gave his acquiescence for any reason other than the fact that Stalin had requested it. For the moment Soviet amity was more vital to Hitler than any specific piece of Polish real estate.\textsuperscript{10}

The Moscow pacts of August and September 1939 were signed by Hitler with the intention of using them so long as they served his purposes. Given Hitler's propensity for adventurism, they were based upon realistic considerations in the form of momentarily overlapping German and Soviet interests. In an address period.\textsuperscript{9} The second provided for the flow of German transit over Soviet tracks to third countries and for the delivery to Germany of additional crude oil in the amount of the annual production of the area of Drohobyz and Beryslav which Ribbentrop had earlier attempted to secure for Germany. Finally the German and Soviet Governments jointly appealed for peace and hinted darkly at coordinated action if France and Britain would not accept the fact of Russo-German hegemony in Central Europe and sue for peace.

\textsuperscript{9} G.D.,D,VIII,152.

\textsuperscript{10} Hitler was not disappointed. The negotiations ended on a friendly note and Ribbentrop later stated to anyone who would listen that during his visit to the Kremlin he had felt as though he were among old 'Partei Genossen!' (G.D.,D,VIII,665; G.D.,D,VIII,501); Kordt, \textit{Wahn u. Wirklichkeit}, p. 231.
to his Commanders-in-Chief on November 23, 1939. Hitler asserted that the Soviet Union was as ruthless as he was and would adhere to the pacts "...only so long as she considers them to be to her advantage." He held that Russia harboured far-reaching ambitions in the Baltic and Balkan and Persian Gulf areas which would inevitably clash with his own foreign policy aims. The future struggle was not given an ideological basis for Hitler claimed that Panslavism would pose as great a threat to German interests as Soviet internationalism. At present the Soviet armed forces were weak and "this situation would obtain for the next one or two years." In the interval Hitler assumed that the German-Soviet community of interests would persist.

After the British Government on October 12 rejected Hitler's peace appeals of September 28 and October 6, Hitler realized that continuing Soviet friendship would be an essential ingredient of Nazi power for the impending struggle in the West; his back would be free in the east and Soviet raw materials would

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11 N.D. 789 - ps

12 Göring claimed that Hitler told him in late August 1939, "I am determined to work with Russia for a long time." (DeWitt. C. Poole, "Light on Nazi Policy", Foreign Affairs, p. 144). On October 2, 1939 Hitler stated to Ciano, "Germany wanted to live in peace with Russia...." (G.D.,D,VIII,176). The following month he affirmed to Mussolini that his resolve to cooperate with Russia was fixed. (Galeazzo Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, Stuart Hood, transl., London, Odham's Press, 1948, p. 364.). Hilger believes that Hitler was resolved for five or six months after the signing of the Moscow pacts that they should last for some years: (Hilger, Kreml, p.290). On November 25, 1939 Raeder informed his senior officers of Hitler's view "...that as long as Stalin is in power, it is certain that she will adhere strictly to the pact made." (N.D.,170,C,22).
be put at his disposal.

Hitler's determination during the winter of 1939-1940 to abide strictly by the terms of the Moscow pacts was best recorded by his attitude to the Finno-Russian winter war. By the terms of the August 23 Pact Finlànd had been assigned to the Soviet sphere of interest. An attempt by the Finnish Minister in Berlin on October 2 to seek clarification on this point was not answered.\(^{13}\) A week later he was clearly given to understand that Germany would disinterest herself in the fate of Finland in the event of a Finno-Russian war.\(^{14}\) When war broke out on November 30, 1939 Germany declared her neutrality and German missions abroad were instructed to express sympathy for the Russian viewpoint.\(^{15}\) Thereafter by all means short of direct intervention Hitler supported the Soviet action. In the naval field Raeder urged clear-cut support of Soviet interests\(^{16}\) and German support was considerable.\(^{17}\) As the war

\(^{13}\) N.S.R., p.111.
\(^{14}\) N.S.R., p.122.
\(^{15}\) G.D., D,VIII, 423.
\(^{16}\) N.D.170,C, #27.
\(^{17}\) As early as October 27 Molotov had objected to the appearance of German ships in the Gulf of Finland, which he charged, would be interpreted abroad as "...a power demonstration in favour of Finland...." (G.D.,D,VIII,305). The following day the Foreign Office deferred to Soviet wishes: (G.D.,D,VIII,309). On December 9 the Soviet Chief of Naval Staff inquired whether Germany would aid in the blockade of Finland through the supplying with food and fuel to Soviet submarines in the Baltic. Schulenburg advised support; it would not affect the outcome of the Finnish war and could form the subject of later German naval counterclaims: (G.D.,D,VIII,433). On the following day Hitler gave his approval: (G.D.,D,VIII, 440). However, German aid in this respect was never used; two days later the Soviets cancelled it without giving any explanation: (G.L. Weinberg, Germany and the Soviet Union 1939-1941, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1954,p.89).
continued and prospects of British and French intervention in the Baltic became more likely, Germany became interested in facilitating a swift end to the war. There is evidence that in January and February 1940, Germany offered to mediate between Finland and Russia.\textsuperscript{18} The war ended on March 12, 1940.

From Hitler's point of view the results of the Finno-Russian war were not entirely negative. The Germans were pleased that the Soviets, through their isolation from third countries, as a result of the Polish and Finnish campaigns, had been pushed farther into their camp.\textsuperscript{19} Moreover, the military weaknesses of the Soviet forces as revealed in the Finnish struggle, seemed a good omen for Germany's future security in the east. Ribbentrop on March 16, 1940 was certain that Soviet weaknesses would dissuade the Red Army from attacking Roumania and causing unrest in the Balkans.\textsuperscript{20} However some voices were raised in caution. From Helsinki on March 13, the Finnophil German Ambassador, Blücher, warned that the sudden peace had improved Russia's strategic position vis-a-vis the Scandanavian countries and given her a dominating position in the Gulf of Finland and the Central area of the Baltic Sea.\textsuperscript{21}

Hitler's support of Russia during the winter war was unequivocal to the point of undermining the Rome-Berlin Axis. The Soviet attack on Finland occasioned anti-Russian demonstrations in Rome which resulted in the recalling of Italian and

\textsuperscript{18} Weinberg, p. 89.
\textsuperscript{19} G.D.,D,VIII,574.
\textsuperscript{20} G.D.,D,VIII,665.
\textsuperscript{21} G.D.,D,VIII,672.
Russian Ambassadors from each other's capitals in December. Italian sympathies were wholly with the Finns; daily, Italian volunteers offered their services to the Finnish Embassy in Rome. Italy was also anxious to ship pursuit planes in transit through Germany but a Soviet protest in Berlin on December 9 prevented that. On January 3 Mussolini finally directed a strongly worded letter to Hitler in which he urged the Fuhrer to keep faith with their revolutions by returning to an anti-Bolshevist policy. He warned that a "...further step in your relations with Moscow would have catastrophic repercussions in Italy..." Two weeks later Weizsäcker cautioned that anti-Bolshevism was "trump" in Italy. The sudden end of the winter war on March 12 was thus welcomed with a sigh of relief by Hitler. He could now seriously set about to facilitate a detente in Russo-Italian tension.

On the other hand, in the Eastern Mediterranean Hitler's Soviet ties were paying handsome dividends. Following the outbreak of hostilities on September 2, Molotov informed Schulenburg that "...the Soviet Government was prepared to work for permanent neutrality of Turkey as desired by (Germany)". Initial Soviet efforts to prevent the conclusion of a mutual assistance pact between the western Allies and Turkey failed.

22 G.D.,D,VIII,494.
23 G.D.,D,VIII,432.
24 G.D.,D,VIII,504.
25 G.D.,D,VIII,548.
26 N.S.R.,p.85,86. See also G.D.,D,VIII,6.
on October 19. Thereafter Turkey's neutrality was assured by repeated Soviet threats. The Germans found this method of neutralizing Turkey so effective that when rumors arrived in March 1940 that the conclusion of a Russo-Turkish agreement was imminent, uneasiness was caused in the German Foreign Office. On March 24, Weizsäcker hurriedly instructed the German Ambassador in Turkey to undermine the Russo-Turkish negotiations. It was feared that a direct rapprochement between the two powers would provide the British with a bridge on which they could cross to the Russians. Turkish neutrality was to be secured by keeping up Turkish fear of a Russian attack. To this end the Germans published documents at the beginning of July 1940 which clearly compromised the position of the Turks with respect to Russia. German machinations were successful and already by the end of April 1940 Pravda lashed out at the "intrigues of the British and French imperialists" in Turkey. Nevertheless, Russia's short-lived flirtation with Turkey had left a residue of suspicion in Germany.

During the winter of 1939-1940 German leaders were plagued by the nightmare of a Russian march into the Balkans, which by the terms of the August 1939 Moscow Protocol had been assigned to the Soviet sphere of interest. Plans were prepared to divert Russia from this goal. On January 8, 1940 a military and military-political study dealing with this problem was

27 G.D.,D,IV,10.
29 Cited in Rossi, The Russo-German Alliance, p.88.
submitted to Ribbentrop by the Chief of the Operations Office of the O.K.W., General Jodl. It assumed that Germany's interest demanded Russia's diversion from the Balkans. It considered the alternatives. Action against India and Afghanistan was not practicable because of the distances involved but a Russian drive through the Caucasus, Iraq, Iran and Batum would be desirable; it would divert Russia from the Balkans and simultaneously threaten British positions. Although dubious of Soviet willingness to divert sufficient forces for such an operation, Jodl felt that Germany would at least be justified in encouraging Russia towards such an objective. The above question has been dealt with in some detail to illustrate some of the diplomatic and strategic alternatives open to Hitler as he considered his Soviet policy in the winter of 1939-1940.

Thus far one of the least understood problems in German-Soviet relations is the effect which economic collaboration between Germany and Russia had on Hitler's Soviet policy. The problem is not yet solved. We are not certain of either the extent of the economic cooperation or the degree to which the German war effort before June 1941 was dependent upon it. The most we can dare is an informed guess. Moreover we face the question that Hitler's consciousness of economics as a factor in foreign policy was limited; Hitler thought mainly in political and military terms. However, the writer assumes that Hitler was not entirely oblivious of economic matters. Some consideration of this aspect of the problem is now appropriate.

30 G.D., D, VIII, 514.
The Russo-German economic agreement of August 19, 1939 was a political rather than an economic instrument, limited in scope and therefore inconsequential for the German war effort. Ribbentrop's second visit to Moscow was attended by further economic discussions which on September 28 resulted in an exchange of letters regarding economic matters. They provided for increased trade based on the exchange of Russian raw materials for German manufactured goods "over an extended period" and for the transit of German traffic over Soviet territory to third countries. This agreement was to form the basis of interminable economic negotiations which, on February 4, 1940, finally resulted in an extensive trade agreement.

As early as September 9 Russia had agreed to the dispatch to Moscow of a German economic delegation. This delegation, headed by Ritter and Schnurre, arrived on October 7 and negotiations were begun immediately. German proposals, contained in a memorandum which Schnurre had prepared as an outline for the talks, were far-reaching. The August 19 Treaty was to remain in force but was to be supplemented by further agreements designed to offset the effects of the Allied blockade. The heart of the German plan called for massive deliveries of Russian raw materials with German counter deliveries in the form of manufactured goods and capital equipment being made over an extended period.

31 G.D., D, VIII, 162, 163.
32 G.D., D, VIII, 21.
33 G.D., D, VIII, 237.
34 G.D., D, VIII, 208.
period of up to five years. Schnurre realized that no agreement would be possible unless the negotiations were treated from a political, rather than an economic point of view. Therefore no agreement was reached before the principals themselves intervened. Two Kremlin conferences, personally attended by Stalin, were held on January 2 and January 29. They clarified the points at issue without solving them. Ribbentrop intervened in the negotiations with a letter on February 2. He charged the Soviet Government with reneging on its promise to "...support Germany economically during the war which had been forced on her." Attention was drawn to the Russo-German political understanding which had nothing in common with an ordinary trade agreement. Finally Ribbentrop cited the "advance

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Initially negotiations proceeded smoothly and on October 18 Ritter reported that although Soviet methods were wearisome "...the general impression thus far is not unfavourable." (G.D.,D,VIII,272). Difficulties soon arose and over the next three months were multiplied. Soviet requests were mainly for the newest German military equipment and for heavy ships and ship's equipment. On November 10, 1939 Hitler ordered that Russian requests should not be granted at the expense of German needs. On November 30 the Soviets finally presented a formidable list of requirements which consisted almost exclusively of iron ore and the latest types of military equipment: (G.D.,D,VIII,407, 412,413). On December 5 Keitel complained that Soviet demands for machine tools would cut into German armament production: (G.D., D,VIII,420). Two days later fears in Berlin rose that the economic negotiations were headed for a breakdown which would have unforeseeable political consequences: (G.D.,D,VIII,430). On December 27 Ritter reported that the negotiations were bogged down and, without comprehending the irony of his words, that the Russians "...are trying to get all they think they can." (G.D., D,VIII,484,footnote 2).

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36 G.D.,D,VIII,584.
payment" of Polish territory and Baltic interests which Germany had made, with the obvious hint that further payments in like coin would not be forthcoming if Stalin did not change his attitude.  

Ribbentrop's diminutive sabre rattling had its effect. Hitler's political interest in buying Soviet neutrality was probably not as great as Stalin's political interest in buying time. On February 8 Stalin broke the impasse. In addition to offering substantial concessions on the main economic agreement, Stalin suddenly agreed to a number of minor German requests which had been left unanswered for months. In subsequent discussions on the details of the agreements Ritter noted that Mikoyan's "previous pettifogging methods" were no longer in evidence.

The economic agreement was signed on the basis of Stalin's compromise proposals on February 11.

37 G.D., D, VIII, 594.
39 G.D., D, VIII, 6000.
40 G.D., D, VIII, 602.
41 Concessions were made on both sides but Russia's were clearly of greater magnitude. Germany forewent its initial demand for advance delivery of non-ferrous metals and granted Russia some secret weapons and plans: (Weinberg, p. 69). However Germany got her way on the demand that her deliveries should lag behind Russia's. This meant in fact that Russia would grant Germany substantial credits at the expense of her own reserves. Soviet deliveries extending over 18 months were to be compensated by German compensation deliveries over 27 months. A balancing according to this schedule was to take place periodically. This last stipulation meant that if Germany did not make its deliveries promptly Russia could temporarily discontinue her deliveries. This seems to have happened twice; in April 1940 and again in September: (G.D., D, VIII, 671; IX, 32; RIIA, Survey, Initial Triumph of Axis, p. 413.
The complicated schedule arrived at for German and Soviet deliveries bears closer scrutiny. It reveals that the maximum lag between Soviet deliveries and German counter-deliveries would be reached on May 11, 1941, exactly 14 months after the conclusion of the agreement. One writer suggests, although documentary evidence is lacking, that this fact must certainly have been in Hitler's mind when he initially set the date for his attack on Russia for April 1941.  

We must now attempt an estimate of the extent of Soviet economic assistance to Germany and of its importance for the German war machine. Schnurre reckoned in February 1940 that the total Soviet deliveries to Germany during the 18 months life of the agreement would approach 1 billion RM.

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43 G.D.,D,VIII,600. These were to include large quantities of oil, phosphates, scrap iron, pig iron, cotton, chrome ores, legumes, grain, platinum, manganese, ore and lumber: (G.D.,D, VIII,600). The agreement also made provision for the flow of German traffic to and from Roumania and the countries of the Middle East and for the purchase by Russia in third countries of other raw materials essential to Germany's war effort: (Survey, The War and the Neutrals, 1956, p.16). Assistance in this regard was substantial. As early as October 29, 1939 Mikoyan had agreed to purchase raw materials for Germany abroad and have them shipped on neutral boats to Black Sea harbours: (G.D.,D,VIII,314). On November 1, 1939 the Soviet Government further agreed to import raw materials purchased abroad by Germany and stored under camouflage: (G.D.,D,VIII,320). In addition a substantial volume of soya beans and rubber reached Germany on the Transiberian Railway from the Far East: (Weinberg, pp.72,73). An objective estimate of the importance of all this assistance is impossible thus far; the German Documents covering the period after August 1940 have not been published at the time of this writing.
One writer presumptuously states that Soviet economic assistance to Germany "...was more significant politically than economically ....; against the British blockade it was far too weak as a weapon and its propaganda value in no way corresponded to actual value of the trade turnover...." Against this argument must be placed the unanimous opinion of the Germans themselves. In October 1939 the Chief of Naval Operations was convinced that Russian offers of assistance were "...so generous that the British blockade will surely fail." Ribbentrop was reported to be "very pleased" with the economic agreement concluded in February 1940 and Schnurre characterized it as providing "...a wide open door to the east for us which would decisively weaken the effects of the British blockade." In March 1940 an emissary from Ribbentrop informed Gafencu, the Roumanian Foreign Minister, that "the economic assistance which the Soviets could give to Germany ... might well be decisive." Finally one writer even questions whether Hitler's attack on the west would have been as unqualifiedly successful as it was without Russian oil and rubber and whether "...the attack on the Soviet Union would have been possible at all." 

Hitler's attitude to Russia during the winter of

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44 Dallin, Soviet Russia's Foreign Policy, p. 427, cited in Weinberg, p. 74.
45 N.D. 170-C 15.
46 G.D.,D,VIII,636.
48 Weinberg, Germany and the Soviet Union, p. 75.
1939-1940 was dictated by the strategic necessity of keeping his eastern frontier quiet while he attacked in the west. To this end he had given Russia diplomatic support in the Baltic area and had in turn received Stalin's congratulations on his conquest of Norway and Denmark in April 1940. Russia had made gains through German successes to date; through them the eastern reaches of Poland had fallen to her, the Baltic states had been transformed into Soviet dependencies and the Allies had been prevented from aiding Finland.

On May 10, 1940, Hitler launched his offensive against the west. Within six weeks the French campaign was ended; Hitler was confident the British would sue for peace. If this assumption were proven correct the arguments in favour of the Soviet alliance would no longer obtain and Hitler would be free to turn against the east. However, if it were proven false Hitler would have to review the entire political and military situation, for his plans did not extend beyond the defeat of France.

Hitler's lightning conquest of France was deeply disturbing to the Soviets.\(^49\) They had expected a war of attrition which would guarantee their security by leaving Germany exhausted. They were now compelled to find other means of gaining the same end. In June and July the Soviets moved quickly to secure a glacis in the north to protect Leningrad and Moscow and one in the south across the entrance to the Ukraine and the Caucasus.

\(^{49}\) Kordt, Wahn und Wirklichkeit, p. 272.
On June 16, 1940, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were completely occupied by Soviet forces and in a further series of steps in June and July finally fully incorporated into the Soviet Union. The German Government was surprised by Russia's incorporation of the south-west corner of Lithuania, which was to have fallen to Germany, and over the massing of Russian troops along the German frontier, but the main operation had been expected for some time. In fact German missions abroad were instructed to avoid anti-Soviet partisanship in discussing it.

The reopening of the Balkan problem was also not unexpected. The previous October the Soviet Government had grasped the initiative in the area by proposing a mutual assistance pact to Bulgaria. The Soviet aim obviously was to cut Roumania off from the Black Sea and secure a passage to the Straits. The outbreak of the Finnish war caused Russia to suspend its initiative for six months. However, it was revived by Molotov in a speech on March 29, in which he hinted at possible Soviet action regarding Bessarabia. Soviet troops were concentrated on the Dniester and in Galicia in May. The Roumanian Government threatened to fight rather than disgorge any territory and hoped the German dependence on Roumanian oil

50 N.D. 170-C, 58.
51 G.D.,D, IX, 465.
52 G.D.,D,VIII, 247.
53 G.D.,D,IX,35; Beloff, II, p.313.
would encourage Hitler to restrain the Soviets from attacking Roumania.  

On June 23, Molotov informed Schulenburg that the Bessarabian question "...brooked no further delay" and that the Soviet Government wished to incorporate Bukovina as well because of its Ukrainian population. The Soviets were determined to use force if necessary and expected the German Government to support their action. As the matter was urgent, Molotov requested a German reply by June 25.

Hitler's policy in the Balkans since the outbreak of war had been to keep the area quiet. Unrest could only serve Soviet ends, particularly while German forces were diverted by the assault in the west. However Soviet revision vis-a-vis Roumania could not be impeded, since Molotov's claims, with the exception of the demand for the Bucovina, were in accord with the Secret Protocol of August 23, 1939. The German reply, contained in a note transmitted to Molotov on June 25, was therefore positive but cautious. The Moscow agreements were to be scrupulously observed. The Soviet claim to Bessarabia was accepted and diplomatic support promised. Soviet designs on the Bucovina were questioned, particularly as the area had never before been a part of Russia. German economic interests in Roumania were stressed and the hope stated that the Balkans might not become a theatre of war.

54 G.D.,D,IX,345.  
55 G.D.,D,X,4.  
56 G.D.,D,X,5.  
57 N.D.,1456-PS.  
58 G.D.,D,X,13.  
59 G.D.,D,X,20.
The Soviet decision on Bucovina, as a result of German objections, was a compromise. Schulenburg was informed on the following day that Soviet claims would be limited to the northern Bucovina; German economic interests would be respected; the interests of the Volksdeutsche would be given full consideration. 60

The Soviet ultimatum was presented in Bucharest on June 27. 61 The Roumanian Government proposed to resist; war seemed imminent. 62 That same day the German Government declared its disinterestedness in the dispute 63 and advised the Roumanian Government to accept the ultimatum. 64 The following day Roumania unconditionally accepted Soviet demands. 65 Germany's territorial payment in the Balkans for Soviet neutrality was thereby completed.

The Soviet move against Roumania had effects which were far-reaching. The ultimatum, coming at a time when the Wehrmacht was occupied in the west and violating the spheres of influence agreement in the case of Bucovina, raised Hitler's suspicions. Was Stalin, fearful of German victories, trying to consolidate his defensive position and open an offensive penetration against Germany into the Balkans? 66

60 G.D., D, X, 25.
61 G.D., D, X, 27.
62 G.D., D, X, 29.
63 G.D., D, X, 31.
64 G.D., D, X, 33.
65 G.D., D, X, 44.
Nevertheless the Balkans, through Russia's actions, were set in motion and a series of events unleashed which seriously compromised German-Soviet collaboration. The course of these events was not accidental but designed by Hitler. Had Hitler desired Soviet friendship they could have been channelled differently. Finally Balkan neutrality, which had hitherto been precariously maintained, was upset. The Balkan states were compelled to choose with whom they would coalesce, Russia or Germany. Hitler's manoeuvres again determined the outcome of this competition.

In the meanwhile the idea of an attack on Russia was never completely absent from Hitler's mind. However, before late July 1940, it was no more than a vague notion. Hitler had told his military commanders in November of 1939 that he could not rid himself of doubts over a possible Soviet counteraction to a German offensive in the west. His conviction that Russia would remain neutral, was, after all, based on preponderant German armed strength vis-a-vis the Red forces; he was determined to maintain this posture and withhold from Soviet view any symptom of German military weakness. Thus on October 10, Hitler rejected for "political reasons" a suggestion by Raeder that Germany buy U-boats from the Soviets or have them built in Russian shipyards. A similar Admiralty request of November 11 was rejected by Hitler on the grounds that Soviet boats were of inferior quality.

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67 Weinberg, p. 104.
68 Gafencu, Prelude, p. 50.
69 N.D., T9-C, 9; The Führer Conferences on Naval Affairs, reprinted in Brassey's Naval Annual, New York, Macmillan, 1948, p.43.
and, more significantly, that Russia "...should not be allowed to see any of our weaknesses...."  

Germany could undertake a military settlement with Russia only after she was free in the west. In January 1940, Hitler, confident of a quick victory in France in spring, ordered Raeder to postpone the delivery of naval equipment to Russia as the "favourable development of the war" might permit Germany to avoid their delivery completely. During the French campaign in June 1940, with victory in sight and the capitulation of Britain assumed, Hitler told Jodl that he was determined to settle with Russia the moment his military position permitted. However this statement cannot have been more than a conversation piece, for on June 4, Hitler informed Raeder that after the defeat of France he planned to reduce the size of the German Army. Obviously Hitler's plans did not extend beyond the defeat of France.

The end of the fighting in France, therefore, called for fundamental decisions regarding future war policy. Hitler, however, vacillated while he waited for word from London that his "peace terms" had been accepted. When instead, his offers were defiantly rejected, Hitler was forced to take new strategic decisions involving the invasion of Britain. On July 13 Hitler

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70 N.D.,170C,21; The Führer Conferences on Naval Affairs, Brassey, p. 47.
71 G.D.,D,VIII,384.
72 N.D.,170C,54.
73 Weinberg, Germany and the Soviet Union, pp.107,108.
told the Army High Command (OKH) that Britain would be forced to surrender by a direct assault. On July 16 the first directive for the "...landing operation against England..." was issued. Nevertheless this did not represent a final decision and Hitler continued to vacillate. He remained unenthusiastic about the operation and dubious whether it could be accomplished with available naval and air units.

It was this frustration with Britain which drove him once more to consider the Russian problem. Only July 21 Hitler called a conference of his top military advisers. Three points of interest to this study were made here. First, the primary task of German policy remained the defeat of Britain. A direct assault across the channel, however, was considered hazardous and would be undertaken only "...if no other means is left to come to terms with Britain." Hitler was still hopeful that his peace offer would be accepted or that Britain could be forced to surrender by means of a diplomatic front comprising Spain, Japan and Russia. Secondly, Hitler assumed that Britain's continued resistance was based on hopes of American or Soviet intervention. Hitler did not fear a Soviet attack but felt Stalin was "flirting" with Britain to keep her in the war and prevent a situation where Russia would face Germany alone. To eliminate this factor, Hitler directed the O.K.W. to

75 Halder Diary (13 July, 1940), cited in Weinberg, p. 109.
76 N.D.,P.S.,442.
make preliminary studies for an eastern offensive which he indicated might be possible in the fall of 1940. This is the first explicit mention of a projected offensive. Hitler's ideas on the British problem, contrary to his own strategic maxims, were obviously beginning to turn to a Napoleonic solution.

As a result of this conference O.K.H. began studies of Soviet military strength and dispositions and commenced work on operational plans for a possible eastern offensive. During the week from July 21 to 29 Hitler consulted further with his military advisers and was persuaded that an attack on Russia in the fall was impracticable. Keitel, in fact, is said to have contested in a memorandum the whole idea of an eastern initiative. On July 29 Hitler informed Jodl of his intention to attack. Jodl passed this information on to his Operations Staff that same day and instructed them to prepare a directive ordering the massing of German troops on the German-Soviet border. This directive, designated "Aufbau Ost" was issued on August 9, 1940. It provided for the improvement of the transportation and supply routes to the east and was designed to overcome those deficiencies which made an attack in the fall of 1940 impossible.

81 Dewitt, C. Poole, "Light on Nazi Policy," p. 144.
On July 31 Hitler summoned a conference of all of Germany's top army and naval commanders to the Berghof. No one from the Luftwaffe was present. It was to hear Hitler's fundamental decisions regarding future war policy and must thus be considered one of Hitler's most decisive strategic conferences. Two subjects were discussed: the question of an invasion of Britain and the problem of Russia.

During the previous week the Naval Staff had made a detailed study of the deficiencies in the naval establishment which made the landing in Britain before the end of September impossible. Even then it would be hazardous and the Naval Staff suggested postponement of the invasion till May 1941.

At the conference of July 31 the problems of an attack on Britain were more clearly defined. However, Hitler refused to be dissuaded by logistic, naval, air or weather problems from his intention to attack Britain in the autumn. If the autumn invasion did not come off then plans should be made for another attempt in May, 1941.

Hitler seemed frustrated and pessimistic. Poland, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and France had all fallen like ripe grain before the Nazi scythe. Hitler's armies were still intact but his victory was incomplete. The fact of the channel prevented him from harvesting the British fields. As he surveyed his Empire he must have asked himself

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84 Wheatley, Operation Sea Lion, pp. 44-46.
whether he was to be frustrated in this final achievement.

It was in this mood of frustration, rather than in a "...Geisteszustand ... der an Grossenwahn grenzte...."\textsuperscript{85} that, Hitler turned to the question of Russia. Hitler stated that if the invasion of Britain proved more difficult than had been expected or did not take place at all, the task then would be to "...eliminate all factors that let England hope for a change in the situation." Britain placed her hopes in the United States and Russia. They then would have to be eliminated as power factors. How was this to be accomplished? Here Hitler's argument reached a high degree of refinement. The solution to all of Germany's problems suddenly lay in the defeat of Russia. If Russia were vanquished, Japan would be relieved on her western flank and she could then move against Britain and thus, by threatening the United States in the Pacific, neutralize her. Abruptly Russia was characterized as the factor on "...which Britain is relying the most."\textsuperscript{86} This statement reveals an advance in Hitler's thinking. For only a month earlier Hitler had confided to Alfieri that Britain's hopes lay primarily in America and "...perhaps also ... a secret hope as to Russia."\textsuperscript{87}

America lay beyond reach but Russia was exposed to his Wehrmacht which in land battle had proved invincible. Hitler's monologue rose to a climax: "With Russia smashed,

\textsuperscript{85} Hilger, \textit{Wir und der Kreml}, p. 299.
\textsuperscript{86} \textit{Halder's Diary}, (July 31, 1940) cited in G.D.,D,X,Appendix.
\textsuperscript{87} G.D.,D,X,21.
Britain's last hope will be shattered.... Decision: Russia's destruction must therefore be made a part of this struggle. Spring 1941. The sooner Russia is crushed, the better." A tentative attack schedule was set. It called for the completion of operations in five months with the use of some 120 divisions. Approximately 60 divisions were to hold the western front.

Hinsley has correctly pointed out that two ambivalent elements helped to make Hitler's decision. 88 The first was frustration that the war could not be ended quickly; the second was overconfidence that he could maintain his position in the west and simultaneously enslave Russia. 89 Hitler was unwilling to look facts in the face and admit that there were factors involved, such as the position of the United States, which he could not directly influence. He had a predilection for land battles and, finally, he was deluded regarding his own abilities as a military strategist.

Moreover, it is apparent that the immediate decision had nothing whatsoever to do with ideological considerations or with Lebensraum aspirations. 90 In the crucial month of July no word regarding either of these fell from Hitler's lips. However, once the decision was made, he justified it on ideological grounds and presented his plans for the enslavement of the


89 N.D., 170-C, 32.

90 N.D., 170-C, 40. It must be added that the decision to strike eastward might never have been made had not this idea been kept alive in Hitler's mind by his ideological and "Lebensraum" frame of reference.
Russian people as part of an anti-Communist crusade.  

It is obvious from Halder's account of the July 31 Berghof conference that Hitler's remarks signified a definite decision to make military and diplomatic preparations for an attack on Russia. The documents explicitly speak of a "decision" rather than of a possible venture. Moreover, the immediate repercussions in the military and diplomatic fields further indicate that fundamental decisions regarding Hitler's eastern policy had been reached.

The basic pattern of Hitler's strategy was thus apparent. The primary goal was to crush Britain in the fall of 1940. However, if Britain held out during the winter, another attack "might" be made in spring. At the same time the object of Britain's hopes, Russia, would have to be eliminated. An attack on Russia was to be used as a tactic to bring Britain to her knees. Alternatively if Britain were eliminated, an attack on Russia in the following spring could become Hitler's strategic goal.

Diplomatic and military preparations for the attack on Russia were speedily begun. The most obvious repercussion in the diplomatic field was in Hitler's changed attitude to Finland. During the winter war of 1939-1940 Germany had supported Russia unqualifiedly. But Hitler's plans of July 31 for an attack on Russia called for Finnish participation and

91 Hilger, Wir und der Kreml, p.299. Hitler's propaganda was so effective that even such an acute writer as Hilger has fallen victim to it: "He became more and more convinced that he was called by fate to destroy Bolshevism and that he was not permitted to rest until he had conquered for the German people their rightful Lebensraum."
dictated a course of rapprochement. Signs in July and August that Russia was preparing to attack Finland, put Hitler's plans in jeopardy, so he moved to consolidate his position.

He was determined not to forego the strategic advantage of controlling a Finnish bridgehead for an offensive from the north. Therefore on August 14, Hitler ordered that Finland was to be supplied with military equipment. Word of Hitler's support of Finland reached Halder on August 22. His diary evinces surprise: "Reversal of attitude of Fuhrer with respect to Finland. Support with arms and ammunition." 92 In the following days Halder recorded further that Finland was to be supplied with airplanes and, in the event of Soviet attack, Petsamo was to be occupied. 93 Negotiations with Finnish Officials were begun and on September 12 an arms-purchase agreement was concluded. 94 Meanwhile Göring had directed the Air Ministry to supply Finnish orders promptly. On August 30 he informed Thomas that the Führer would find any further Russian political or military advance on the European continent "displeasing". The Soviets were to be informed of German assistance to Finland with the intention of dissuading them from moving forward. 95 A further German Finnish agreement, providing for the transit of German troops and equipment through

93 Loc. cit.
94 Weinberg, op. cit., p. 127.
Finland was signed on September 22. German troops immediately entered Finland. Molotov was agitated and questioned the Chargé in Moscow on these troop movements. Frantic correspondence on both sides revealed the degree of Russial's concern. All of this was to Hitler's liking and on September 26 he confided to Raeder that his swift action had saved the Finnish situation for Germany and that no complications were to be expected that year. On Hitler's initiative the dispute had exacerbated German-Soviet relations.

The policy decision of July 31 was further reflected in the German attitude to Russo-Italian relations. In the period immediately following this fateful Berghof conference, Hitler's interest in a Russo-Italian rapprochement began to wane. Earlier, Hitler had been willing to sacrifice Finland and even jeopardize the Rome-Berlin Axis in order to keep Soviet friendship. Following the Winter War the Foreign Office had consistently tried to improve relations between Germany and Italy. Abruptly the German position was reversed. However, On August 17, Ribbentrop informed Alfieri that "... the German Government does not desire that ...(Italy) make too close a rapprochement with Russia...." This reversal obviously had to do with a policy decision of some magnitude.

96 N.S.R., pp. 201-203.
97 N.S.R., pp. 198-199.
98 N.D., 170-C, 86.
99 See particularly G.D., D, IX, 6, 11, 21, 34, 263, 280, 346, 359, 381, 520.
Similarly diplomatic preparations for an eventual attack were begun in the Balkans. Soviet action against Roumania in late June 1940 had unleashed a wave of revisionist sentiment in Bulgaria and Hungary. On June 27 the governments of both countries urged Germany to support their claims against Roumania. Simultaneously, the Roumanian Government turned to Germany for security and requested both a territorial guarantee and the dispatch to Bucharest of a German military mission. The latter request was repeated on July 13. The official line which the Foreign Office took in early July was that Germany had no political but only economic interests in the Balkans. Germany therefore desired tranquility in the area. She sympathized with legitimate revisionist claims but would only support them after peace returned to Europe. The Bulgarians and Hungarians, however, would not be quieted by Ribbentrop's honeyed words and threatened military action against Roumania. On July 4 Berlin gave way and instructed its Minister in Bucharest to urge the Roumanian Government to enter voluntarily into negotiations with Bulgaria and Hungary for the cession of land to them.

Meanwhile reports were circulating that the Soviet Union in the period from July 5 to 9 had turned a friendly ear to Bulgarian and Hungarian aspirations and promised to support their claims against Roumania. This prospect was clearly

100 G.D., D, X, 37, 38.  
101 G.D., D, X, 68.  
102 G.D., D, X, 80.  
103 G.D., D, X, 70, 73, 75.  
104 G.D., D, X, 80.  
105 G.D., D, X, 119, 165.
disquieting to Hitler. It would put those countries in Russia's debt and thereby threaten Germany's Balkan interests. Moreover, as Ribbentrop intimated on July 8, a war in the Balkans might lead to a linkup of England and Russia in the area.  

If the Balkans were not to fall to Russia by default, Hitler had to do something quickly. On July 15, he personally intervened to urge the Roumanian monarch to initiate negotiations with Bulgaria and Hungary. During the next two weeks Hitler's decision to settle with Russia was made. It envisaged the use of Balkan territory, man power and raw materials and therefore called for Roumanian, Hungarian and Bulgarian collaboration. Hitler's moves to secure the Balkans for Germany culminated in the Second Vienna Award of August 30. Through it, he first put Bulgaria and Hungary in his debt by compelling Roumania to cede part of the Dobrudja to Bulgaria and part of Transylvania to Hungary. Then, in a masterstroke of diplomacy, he secured Roumania's allegiance by offering her a territorial guarantee. The immediate effect of Hitler's action was to establish German hegemony in the whole of Southeastern Europe. The date of the decision which culminated in this development is instructive regarding Hitler's motives. German interest in supporting Bulgarian and Hungarian revisionist

106 G.D.,D,X,129.
107 G.D.,D,X,171.
108 G.D.,D,X,408,409,410,413. The guarantee read: "Germany and Italy assume as of today the guarantee for the integrity and inviolability of the Roumanian national territory."
claims dated from early July. However Hitler's idea of a territorial guarantee of Roumania first appears in the documents on July 26. It was repeated by Hitler on July 27, and was basic to his plans of July 31. In them Roumania was destined to fulfill the same function against Russia in the south that Finland was to fulfill in the north. Moreover, statements by Hitler on August 31 support the argument that the guarantee of Roumania was directed against Russia. The developments in the Balkans in the crucial months of July and August thus appear both as a cause and as an effect of Hitler's decision to attack Russia. Soviet activity in the Balkans till the end of July argued in favour of an attack. Developments thereafter stemmed largely from the decision to prepare an attack.

The Vienna Award caught the Soviet Government by surprise. In fact Hitler did not see fit to have Molotov informed of the award until August 31. The Soviets objected to this action by hurling a series of charges against the German Government. The hollowness of German protestations was established beyond doubt by the dispatch of German troops to Roumania in late September.

German action in the Balkans and in Finland had been a conscious provocation of Russia. The troop movement,

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109 G.D.,D,X,234.
110 G.D.,D,X,245.
111 Halder Diary (July 31), G.D.,D,X,Appendix, pp.370-374.
112 Halder Diary (August 31), G.D.,D,X,415,footnote 2, p.590; N.D.,170-C,80.
114 Weinberg, op.cit. p.131.
following hard upon the German guarantee of Roumania strengthened the Soviet Government in its suspicions that it was being systematically excluded from affairs in the Balkans. The ostensible purpose of the troops was to act as training units within the Roumanian Army but their real purpose was to prepare the ground for a joint German-Roumanian offensive against Russia.

The resulting tension in Russo-German relations represented a calculated risk, particularly with respect to Russo-German trade relations. These relations had been developing positively on the basis of the February delivery schedules after the trade bottlenecks of March and April. On July 22, 1940, Schnurre reported exceptional Soviet accommodation on transportation and deliveries during the preceding months but warned that difficulties could be expected in the future because German deliveries were running behind Soviet deliveries to a greater extent than the February agreement provided. Following the July 31 decision Hitler must have been anxious to maintain the flow of Russian raw materials into Germany until shortly before the projected attack. To ensure this, economics would have to be insulated from politics to the greatest possible extent. German deliveries would have to be fulfilled according to schedule. On August 14, two weeks after the July 31 Berghof conference, Göring informed Thomas,

117 G.D., D, X, 206.
head of the War Economics Department of the O.K.W., that 
"...the Führer desires punctual deliveries to the Russians only till the spring of 1941. Later we would have no interest in satisfying Russian wishes fully." The implication was obvious.

Closely intertwined with the economic repercussions of the decision to attack Russia were the military repercussions. First to be affected was the size of the military establishment. Early in July a reduction in the size of the armed forces had been projected. This development was abruptly reversed by Hitler's decision to attack Britain and to plan an attack on Russia. His plans, as outlined on July 31, called for an army of 180 divisions. On August 17 Keitel ordered commencement of work on an army this size. The comprehensive order for the buildup of the army to 180 divisions was issued by the O.K.W. on September 10.

Simultaneously, the movement of German troops to the east was begun. Following reports in late August of Soviet troop concentrations in Bessarabia and Bucovina, Hitler, on August 26, ordered that German forces in Poland were to be strengthened by the addition of 12 divisions. Their true purpose, to prepare an eastern offensive, was to be disguised

118 N.D. 2353-PS.
120 Halder Diary (July 31), G.D., D, X, footnote 1, p. 373.
121 War Diary Wehrmacht Operations Staff (August 26), G.D., D, X, 549-550; G.D., D, X, 389.396. The Führer Conferences on Naval Affairs, Brassey, p. 132.
as a defensive manoeuvre to protect German interests in the Balkans.122

The navy too became involved in the military preparations against Russia. On August 13 Raeder was instructed to strengthen the fortifications of the northern Norwegian fiords "...so that Russian attacks there would have no chance of success, and the foundation for occupying Petsamo would be laid."123

In the meantime operational studies for the eastern offensive were commenced. Preliminary studies were already begun in late August. On September 3 General Paulus was charged with the task of preparing a detailed operational plan for the attack on Russia.124 By early November the plan was completed. At a conference of high ranking military leaders on November 4 it, as well as Germany's proposed intervention in Greece in support of Italy, were examined. Although Hitler expected Russia to remain neutral in the Greek offensive, the problem of Soviet neutrality was to be discussed during Molotov's forthcoming visit to Berlin. In the meantime, preparations for the "Ostfall" were to be continued. On November 12 Hitler issued directive 18 on the conduct of the war. It coincided with Molotov's arrival in Berlin and had something to say regarding it. The directive contained Hitler's decisions on matters previously discussed and indicated no withdrawal from

122 N.D., 1229-P.S.
123 Führer Conferences, Brassey, p.126; N.D. 170-C, 76.
124 Weinberg, op. cit., p.126.
125 N.D., 170-C, 95; Führer Conferences, Brassey, p.146.
his decision to attack Russia. On the contrary it treated Molotov's visit as an event of no consequence and ordered "...whatever result this conference has, preparations are to be continued for the Eastern campaign."\(^{126}\) No detailed directive regarding the campaign had yet been issued but this was solely because plans were not yet completed. Hitler promised one as soon as he had approved the plans of the army. These plans, logistical and operational, were gathered together by Halder and presented to Hitler on December 5.\(^{127}\) Hitler agreed to them and ordered that they, together with plans from the O.K.W., be synthesized into a detailed directive. This synthesis was issued by Hitler on December 9 as Directive 21 and given the code name "Fall Barbarossa."\(^{128}\)

The operational planning leading to the December 8 directive for the attack on Russia has been treated in some detail to show that it was the logical culmination of a process initiated by Hitler's decision of July 31. As such it was "...merely a summing up of plans already worked out."\(^{129}\) The directive was not issued earlier because the preparatory studies were not completed. It had nothing to do with doubts in Hitler's mind concerning the attack as some writers suggest.\(^{130}\)

\(^{126}\) \textit{Führer Conferences}, Brassev, p. 166; N.D., 444-P.S.
\(^{127}\) N.D., 1799-P.S.
\(^{129}\) Weinberg, \textit{Germany and the Soviet Union}, p. 139.
was issued does not elucidate them. Nor was the directive a sequel to Molotov's visit to Berlin on November 12 and 13.131

In the meantime, Germany took other measures which further exacerbated German Soviet relations. The Tripartite Pact was signed by Japan, Italy and Germany in Berlin on September 27, 1940.132 The purpose of the Treaty, from the German viewpoint, was primarily to encourage Japanese aggression against Britain and to frighten the United States into permanent neutrality. It was also hoped that Russia would be persuaded to renounce her interests in the Balkans. The Pact came as a surprise to Russia. She was not informed of the Treaty till the day previous to its signature.133 On September 26 the German Charge d'Affaires in Moscow, von Tippelskirch, on instructions from Ribbentrop, assured Molotov that the Treaty would not affect existing good relations between Germany and Russia, but anticipating a protest, Tippelskirch added that an invitation for Molotov to come to Berlin would soon be forthcoming. Molotov reserved comment on the Treaty but pressed Tippelskirch for an explanation of the landing of German troops in Finland.134 Further Soviet protests concerning German troop movements into both Finland and Roumania were made in the

131 See Hilger, op.cit., p.303 for the opposite view; also Paul Schmidt, Statist auf Diplomatischer Bühne, p.514.
132 N.D.,2643-P.S.
following days.  

Hitler was determined not to withdraw from his positions either in Finland or the Balkans. The idea of a delimitation of interests on a worldwide scale, which was broached to Molotov by Ribbentrop in a letter on October 13, was designed to divert Russia from these areas and to conceal from Soviet eyes the functions for which they were to be used. However, Hitler's invitation to Molotov to visit Berlin in November was not intended solely as a diversionary strategem. No doubt Hitler was interested in discovering Soviet plans for the coming months. Possibly, he was even willing to revoke his decision to attack Russia if Molotov would agree to his proposals for a long term delimitation of interest. Anyway, he did not expect to have his proposal accepted. On the day of Molotov's arrival the already discussed order was given that plans for the attack on Russia already in progress were to be continued. At any rate, a meeting with Molotov could do no harm.

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On October 13 Ribbentrop directed a 15 page letter to Stalin. First he put up an elaborate defense of German policy and tried to gloss over those developments which were most disquieting to Moscow. Ribbentrop's intentions may even have been honest for it is not at all certain that Hitler took Ribbentrop into his confidence regarding his earlier decisions. The substance of Ribbentrop's apologia was a silly indictment of British policy. Roumania had received a territorial guarantee to protect German economic interests in the Balkans against British intrigues. The German troops in Roumania were there as instruction units and to safeguard German interests against Britain. German troop landings in Finland were represented as supply movements into Norway. The Tripartite Pact was not aimed at the Soviet Union but should, on the contrary, facilitate a Russo-Japanese rapprochement. If this did not convince Molotov, Ribbentrop hoped that his peroration would at least divert his attention. In it Ribbentrop proposed a grandiose delimitation of interests among the Soviet Union, Italy, Japan and Germany. N.S.R., pp. 207-213.

and, if the Soviets were obstinate, at least Hitler would have a pretext for his assault.

Molotov arrived in Berlin on November 12 and conversations were begun forthwith. The tenor of the conversations soon revealed that Hitler was determined not to draw back from his positions of influence in the Balkans and in Finland. Further Russian interests in Europe were to be repulsed and Russian energy diverted towards the Persian Gulf. The German tactics were apparent from the outset. At the first session Ribbentrop tried to lay down a conference agenda of three points: Russia's association with the Tripartite Pact, a delimitation of extra-European spheres of influence among Russia, Japan, Italy, and Germany and a revision of the Straits Regime in favour of Russia.\footnote{N.S.R., pp. 217-255.}

Molotov soon showed that he was not to be diverted from discussing the Balkan and Finnish questions. He faced Hitler as an equal and pricked his grandiloquent and vague proposals for the diversion of the "bankrupt British estate" with pointed questions.

The Finnish question was looked on by Molotov as the touchstone of Russo-German relations. It was the last territory assigned to Russia in the Moscow agreements which had not been incorporated into the Soviet Union. German troop movements and arms shipments were preventing Russia from absorbing it. Molotov demanded that Finland be dealt with on the basis of the spheres of influence agreement. Hitler tried to evade the question and justify German action in Finland on the grounds of wartime
necessity. Hitler warned Molotov to keep the peace in the Baltic. The fact that one third of the discussions in Berlin were devoted to the Finnish question attests to the urgency with which it was regarded by Russia and the intransigence of the German position.

Molotov further demanded that Germany revoke its guarantee of Roumania. When Hitler categorically refused to do this, Molotov countered with a question of a Russian guarantee to Bulgaria. Hitler evaded this question by asking if Bulgaria had requested the guarantee and by stating that he could not give an opinion without first consulting Mussolini. Molotov made the satisfactory settlement of the Balkan question a precondition of Russia's adhesion to the Tripartite Pact. The Soviet Union was not in principle opposed to joining the Axis Powers but first required more precise information on its nature and purposes. On November 13 the Soviet Foreign Minister left Berlin.

Molotov's two day visit had altered nothing. The northern and southern pincers of Hitler's projected front for the drive against Russia were still in German hands. There had been no agreement because Hitler had not sought agreement. In August 1939 he had been willing to make gigantic territorial concessions for Soviet neutrality. Payment had been certain. In the fall of 1940, however, he was not even willing to give Russia her rightful due in Finland. It can indeed be argued

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138 For the opposite view that Molotov's visit marked the occasion for Hitler's decision to settle with Russia see Weizsäcker, Erinnerungen, pp. 304, 305.
that Hitler's stand on the Balkans was dictated by his plans to intervene in Greece, but the same cannot be said with regard to Finland. Moreover, Hitler's proposals for an extra European sphere of influence agreement was far-fetched and the promised territorial gains uncertain. The fact that Molotov had not let himself be bluffed strengthened Hitler's determination to settle with Russia. On November 14 Raeder observed that Hitler was still "...inclined towards a demonstration with Russia."\(^{139}\)

Following Molotov's departure from Berlin on November 13, political and military preparations for the attack on Russia were accelerated. The failure of the Berlin conversations was used as the pretext for the preparations. On November 20 Hitler wrote to Mussolini that Molotov's visit had "...made it plain that he was becoming increasingly interested in the Balkans."\(^{140}\) Molotov's letter of November 25 added fuel to these charges.\(^{141}\)

Meanwhile the planning for "Operation Barbarossa" had

\(^{139}\) N.D. 170-C,98. On November 25 after his return to Moscow Molotov transmitted to Schulenburg his Government's conditions for the accession of Russia to the proposed Four Power Pact: (N.S.R.,p.258,259). They merely covered the same ground which had been gone over during Molotov's visit to Berlin. German troops were to be withdrawn from Finland in exchange for a Soviet assurance to keep the peace in the area. Bulgaria was to sign a mutual assistance pact with Russia and give Soviet forces a base within striking distance of the Dardanelles. The area in the direction of the Persian Gulf was to be recognized as the centre of Soviet aspirations. Finally Japan was to renounce her claims to raw materials concessions in Northern Sakhalin. The memorandum merely strengthened Hitler's view that the fulfillment of Soviet terms for a long range understanding would put in jeopardy Germany's proposed jump off spots for the invasion of Russia. The proposals were never answered despite the fact that Russia continued until February to ask for a reply. N.S.R.,pp.270-271.

\(^{140}\) Cited in Rossi, The Russo-German Alliance, p. 172.

\(^{141}\) N.S.R.,pp.258,259.
been complicated by the failure of Mussolini's offensive against Greece. Before the attack on Russia could commence the right flank of Hitler's anti-Russian front would have to be consolidated. The Balkan states would have to be tied even more securely to the Axis and a path cleared into Greece. On November 20, a scant week after Molotov's return to Moscow, Hungary was persuaded to join the Tripartite Pact. Three days later Roumania followed suit and Slovakia was also induced to sign. Bulgaria was now the last state separating Germany from Greece and Russo-German tensions now focussed on her. Molotov offered Bulgaria a mutual assistance pact in late November. His proposal was rejected. Thereafter the German Government increased its pressure on Bulgaria and despite repeated Soviet threats secured Bulgarian adherence to the Tripartite Pact on March 1. German forces could now be massed on the Greek frontier and the Luftwaffe put in bombing range of the Ukraine and the Caucasus. The Soviet reaction was increased sullenness. Tension reached a peak in the following days with the Yugoslav crisis. On March 25 the Yugoslav Government reluctantly signed with the Axis. An internal Yugoslav crisis was thereby unleashed by pro-Soviet circles; the Government was overthrown and a pro-Russian

142 Kordt, Wahn und Wirklichkeit, p. 287.
143 N.S.R., p. 276.
144 RIIA, Survey, The Initial Triumph of the Axis, p. 396.
145 N.D., 170-C, 128.
Government installed. Yugoslavia's alliance with Germany was repudiated and a treaty of friendship and non aggression proposed to the Soviet Government. The Yugoslavian offer was accepted and on April 5 a Russo-Yugoslavian Pact was signed.146 Russian action, however, was no more than a token gesture for Russia was not in a geographical position to give Yugoslavia military assistance. On April 6 the German attack on Yugoslavia began. Simultaneously German troops invaded Greece and in four weeks cleared the Balkans of enemy forces. Hitler's southern wing was now in position for the attack on Russia.

Hitler's lightening victory persuaded Stalin to reverse himself. Negotiation from a position of strength had not stopped Hitler; perhaps appeasement would. From now on Stalin left no effort untried to keep Hitler in good humour.147

In the field of military planning, few complications were encountered. In December and January various planning conferences were held and by February planning was far enough advanced for Hitler to settle detailed problems connected with the proposed attack.148 The Naval War Diary of February 18 characterized the proposed camouflage measures for "Operation Barbarossa" as "the greatest deception in war history...."149 Plans for the participation of Roumania and Finland were

146 N.S.R., pp.316-318.
147 N.D. 170-C,149.
148 N.D. 872-P.S.
149 N.D. 033-C; N.D. 170-C,121.
completed by early May. On June 14 the Supreme Commanders of the Armed Forces, Goring, Raeder, Brauchitsch and Keitel presented their final plans for the attack to Hitler.

But the timing of the invasion was complicated by the Balkan war in April. Planning in January had been based on the assumption that the attack would come in mid-May. On March 27 Hitler informed his military commanders that the Balkan operation would force postponement of the attack by four weeks. Then on April 30 Hitler set the offensive for June 22.

Economic planning paralleled military planning. In November 1940 Goring informed General Thomas, of the War Economics Department of O.K.W., of the planned attack. Detailed studies of the Soviet economy were immediately begun and in January they were coordinated under a planning staff. On February 28 orders were issued for the creation of an organization to exploit the economic area of Russia. By April 2 planning was far enough advanced to permit a memorandum to be drafted on the aims and methods of the German occupation of Russia.

Neither Italy or Japan were informed of the preceding plans. Hitler probably withheld his decision from Mussolini.

150 Weinberg, op. cit., p. 149.
151 N.D., 078-C.
152 N.D., 1746-P.S.; N.D., 170-C, 142.
153 N.D., 873-P.S.
154 N.D., 2353-P.S.
155 N.D., 1317-P.S.; N.D., 1157-P.S.
156 N.D., 1017-P.S.
because he thought it unnecessary to inform him. Italy, Hitler knew, would be eager enough when the attack began. The Italians had no doubt discerned a change in Hitler's attitude to Russia since the winter of 1939-1940. Despite Hitler's assurance to Mussolini on January 19, 1941, that as long as Stalin lived there would be no danger from Russia, the Duce found Hitler's mood to be "...very anti-Russian." On May 14 the most Ribbentrop would say in answer to a question by Ciano on Hitler's eastern plans was that if Stalin were not careful "Russia will be dispatched in the space of three months." On June 2, less than three weeks before the scheduled opening of the eastern offensive, Ciano came away from a conversation with Hitler with the impression that "...for the moment Hitler has no plan of action."

The Japanese question was more complex than the Italian one. Hitler was convinced he could vanquish Russia alone. Moreover, he probably felt that Japanese knowledge of his plans would encourage Japan to seek an accomplice role against Russia which would divert her from an attack against British positions in the Pacific. At any rate when the Japanese Foreign Minister, Matsuoka, paid a four day visit to Berlin in late March and early April, Hitler's Soviet Plans were veiled

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157 N.D., 134-C.
158 Ciano Diaries, p. 338.
159 Ciano Diaries, p. 351; N.D., 1866-P.S.
160 Ciano Diaries, p. 361.
from him.161 The most that Ribbentrop would say was that "...present relations with Russia were correct...but not very friendly."162 Hitler raised the question of war with Russia merely to dismiss it. However, Ribbentrop tried to dissuade Matsuoka from discussing a non-aggression pact with Soviet leaders. A further hint was contained in Ribbentrop's reference to the need for greater shipments of rubber to Germany via sea routes; "...traffic over the Siberian Railroad was not adequate."163 German aims must have seemed thoroughly ambiguous to the Japanese Foreign Minister and he probably must also have considered a Russo-German war improbable.164 On his return to Tokyo he visited Moscow where, on April 13, a Russo-Japanese neutrality pact was signed. Some three months later, on July 10, Ribbentrop realized the error of German policy and instructed the German Ambassador in Tokyo to request the Japanese Government to intervene against Russia in Siberia.165 The request came too late.

Stalin's frantic efforts to win Hitler's favour during the three months preceding the attack on Russia, which have been

161 N.S.R., pp.281-316. On March 24 Weizsäcker had suggested to Ribbentrop that the Japanese be informed of Hitler's projected assault on Russia: Weizsäcker, op. cit., p. 309.

162 N.S.R., p. 284.


164 Beloff, The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia,II,p.373.

165 Rossi, op. cit., p. 195.
fully discussed elsewhere, were futile. Hitler's decision had long since fallen; Germany policy proceeded along "...a mental one-way street against Russia." However, there were German voices raised in caution. The army and navy commanders questioned the proposition that the way to London lay over Moscow and warned against a two-front war.

Of the civilians opposing a war against Russia Schulenburg was most persistent in his representations. Since the Moscow Pact he had conceived of Russo-German relations as a revival of the Rapallo spirit. In mid April he journeyed to Berlin where, in collaboration with Weizsäcker, he tried to dissuade Hitler from an attack against Russia. Hitler received Schulenburg but would not even admit to him the fact that an attack was planned. Schnurre's various memoranda to the effect that Russian raw material deliveries to Germany were essential to the German war economy must also be regarded as protests against the idea of a Russo-German war.

Their effect was probably the opposite of what Schnurre had intended. If the war effort were dependent upon Russian raw material deliveries, then it was also dependent upon Soviet good will. Of this Hitler was not convinced and

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167 Weizsäcker, Memoirs, p. 313.
169 Weizsäcker, Erinnerungen, p. 315.
probably persuaded himself that control over his raw material needs was essential to his programme.

In spite of all these warnings Hitler was not to be dissuaded. On June 22, 1941, German panzers rolled across the German-Russian border on schedule. Hitler addressed the German nation in these words: "...it is necessary for us to take steps against (the) Jewish Anglo-Saxon warmongers and the equally Jewish rulers of the Bolshevist centre of Moscow."\textsuperscript{171}

In Rome, a disgruntled Ciano observed: "An obvious and convincing reason is lacking for such a war."\textsuperscript{172}

\textsuperscript{171} The Times (23 June, 1941), quoted in RIIA, Survey, Initial Triumph of the Axis, p. 406.
\textsuperscript{172} Ciano Diaries (1939-43), p. 368.
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