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The European neutrals in World War II

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Jerrold Michael Packard for the Master of Arts in History presented Spring 1989.

Title: The European Neutrals in World War II

APPROVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:


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The thesis begins with a short section on the nature of neutrality in Europe in the 1930s, and briefly introduces the political circumstances of the six nations that remained neutral throughout the war. The primary subject of the paper deals with the relationship between the belligerents and the neutral states, especially the extent to which military strength and preparedness was responsible for the latter maintaining their neutrality.

The degree to which military preparedness enabled the European neutrals to remain non-belligerents in World War II varied, of course, country by country.

But each of the six undertook expensive rearmament programs that were substantially out of proportion to their prewar spending on arms. Certainly in the cases of Switzerland and Sweden such arming played a major role in Germany's decision to respect their neutrality. Spain and Portugal relied more on their status of understood goodwill toward the Axis to protect themselves against aggression. Ireland stood in the greatest danger of having its neutrality violated by the Allies; none of the others were meaningfully threatened from this quarter. Turkey's position on the geographical edge of the war eventually became its primary guarantor of neutrality.

The major part of the research materials - books and articles - was obtained from the libraries of Portland State University and the University of Oregon and from the Multnomah County Library. There have been no substantive treatments, either academic or popular, specifically concerning the European neutrals since the 1956 survey, "The War and the Neutrals", edited by Arnold and Veronica Toynbee. The specific matter of military preparedness in relation to the neutrals' non-belligerency in World War II has not, to the best of my knowledge, been the subject of a book.

My thesis conclusions were particularly weighed toward material from Toynbee, from Gordon and Dangerfield's "The Hidden Weapon", from Roderick Ogley's "The Theory and Practise of Neutrality in the Twentieth Century", from William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason's "The Undeclared War 1940-1941", and from the "Documents on German Foreign Policy."

THE EUROPEAN NEUTRALS IN WORLD WAR II

by

JERROLD MICHAEL PACKARD

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
in
HISTORY

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1989

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PREFACE

Though the major historical emphasis of World War II is, of course, vested in the two great warring blocs, one of the most interesting though least reported aspects of the war deals with the half dozen European states that managed to remain neutral.¹ This paper looks at the relationship between the belligerents and these neutral states, and examines the extent to which their military capabilities or preparedness was instrumental in the maintenance of their neutrality.

The position of neutrality within the contemporary imperialist system is, under all conditions, not only a dangerous illusion which in no way prevents a neutral state from being drawn into war, but is in fact a justification of aggression, and a contributing factor to the unleashing of war.

So said the 1939 edition of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*,² and the Machiavellian pragmatism of this statement speaks to the problems shared by those European states which in 1939, when intracontinental war broke out, tried to remain free of the struggle between opposing blocs.

Discussed in this paper will be the nature of neutrality and how this political stance was so generally precariously maintained in Europe after September 1939, followed by a brief review of the political circumstances of the six states - Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, Sweden, Ireland and Turkey - that remained neutral. The thesis will examine most closely the extent to which each of these states was able to control its own destiny as to participation in the war, or, conversely, whether circumstances beyond each's control were the decisive factors in their neutrality.

¹ Only five remained *formally* neutral throughout the war; Turkey made a last minute declaration of war against Germany in early 1945.

² quoted in Peter Lyon, *Neutrality*, Leicester, 1963.

Though the subject covered in this paper does not include those states whose neutrality failed - Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Hungary, Greece to list a few - it is important to understand that neutrality always represented an often unreachable aspiration rather than an absolute. The two countries which came out of the war as the most powerful of the victors - the United States and the Soviet Union - had in 1939 been most vocal in their declarations of neutrality.³

The subject of the successful World War II neutrals has been relatively little treated. The best single reference source is Arnold and Veronica Toynbee's 1956 survey, *The War and the Neutrals* (Oxford University Press), in which a number of scholarly authorities discuss the six countries' wartime experiences. *The Hidden Weapon* by David Gordon and Royden Dangerfield (Harper & Bros., 1947) is another important work on the subject, directed primarily at the nature of economic warfare as waged on the neutrals; the authors were chiefs of the Blockade Division of the wartime U.S. Foreign Economic Administration. The role of the neutrals in locally-available war literature - histories, diaries, biographies - is sparse, as is periodical literature on the subject. The *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, available through 1942 at both the University of Oregon library and the Portland State University library, are a useful source of information on German diplomatic relations with the neutral states.

³ Dennis J. Fodor, *The Neutrals*, Alexandria, 1982, 27.

CHAPTER I

NEUTRALITY

"Neutrality is rather like virginity,
Everybody starts off with it...
Roderick Ogley¹

When the European war broke out in 1939, more than thirty independent states stretched across the continent. By the end of 1941, only six of them - Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, Sweden, Ireland and Turkey² - had managed to remain at peace. None of these non-belligerents was completely "neutral" in practice, each swinging precariously from one camp to the other in attempts, often frantic, to appease its warring neighbors.³ Through most of 1941, it was Germany's interests that were usually favored for the understandable reason that Hitler seemed to be winning. After 1941, the neutrals came more and more to hedge their bets in favor of the Allied side as Germany's military edge began to dull.

As we'll discuss, all six occupied, to varying degrees, geographical positions that were strategically important to the belligerents. Though each was peripheral to Europe's center, none was a backwater that might remain impervious to external pressure while it safely rode out the conflict - each had something both sides wanted, whether it was raw or finished materials, ports, manpower, or an important land or water passageway. The neutrals' locations and resources gave them an

¹ Roderick Ogley, *The Theory and Practice of Neutrality in the Twentieth Century* ("The World Studies Series"), N.Y. Barnes & Noble, 1970.

² Plus the tiny enclaves of Andorra and Vatican City.

³ J. Lee Ready, *Forgotten Allies: Vol. 1 - The European Theater - The Military Contribution of the Colonies, Exiled Governments and Lesser Powers to the Allied Victory in World War II*, Jefferson, N.C., 1985, 60-ff.

importance highly disproportionate to their sizes or military capabilities. Though no neutral was itself an economic powerhouse, their combined assets could contribute very materially to a belligerent's war machine, as they would, in the aggregate, for Germany. All had an appreciation of the value of their neutral status to both blocs, and throughout the war each capitalized on this to the maximum extent possible. In the first two or three years of the fighting many high-placed persons in each of these countries believed in the inevitability of a German victory, or, at minimum, that a stalemate would develop between the belligerents, leaving Germany the dominant continental power. Of critical importance to their behavior, all were either deeply suspicious of or outright antagonistic toward the Soviet Union. Most would give way, in the early war years, to German demands - if only slowly nonetheless steadily and in strategically important ways.⁴

It should be stressed that even though states can, and often do, declare their permanent neutrality, the concept itself logically exists only in a setting of war. Though states are routinely allied to one another in peacetime, and some demand their neighbors' alliance through military threats,⁵ it is during armed conflicts that professed neutral states stand most likely to lose their unaligned status.⁶

According to Professor Roderick Ogley of the University of Sussex, neutrality takes four different forms. The first is where it is imposed on a state, such as on Belgium at its early 19th century inception, or on Austria in 1955 by the World War II victors; second, there are the "traditional" neutrals, most notably Sweden and Switzerland; third are the so-called "ad hoc" neutrals, the states that decide to

⁴ David L. Gordon and Royden Dangerfield, *The Hidden Weapon - The Story of Economic Warfare*, New York, 1947, 57, 74-75.

⁵ It is, for example, difficult to imagine the Soviet Union allowing the German Democratic Republic to leave the Warsaw Pact.

⁶ Ogley, *Theory and Practice*, 1.

remain out of a particular war, such as Turkey in the Second World War; and, finally, there is the nonaligned state, typified today by India, and which is in fact a form professed by nearly all the new Asian and African nations.⁷

Irrespective of a nation's professed neutrality, such neutrality nonetheless stands in danger of violation when the interests of its war-making neighbors override the counter-balancing costs of warring against the neutral. To be effective, professions of neutrality have, in most cases, to be backed with the military capability and determination to deter a belligerent from using the neutral state's territory to further that belligerent's own war aims.

Throughout World War II, Iberia remained the one solidly neutral quadrant of Europe. The two peninsular states were each ruled by right-wing authoritarian leaders, men who had risen to power in the 1930s. In 1932 Portugal's conservative and scholarly finance minister, Antonio Salazar, became prime minister, redeeming years of political chaos with the relative civil orderliness provided by a military-supported system, the so-called *Estado Novo*. Though Portugal retained its centuries-long alliance with Britain, Salazar's one-party "New State" self-consciously modeled itself on Hitler's and Mussolini's examples. After the European war broke out, Salazar's cardinal principle of foreign policy was that Portugal should remain neutral and should do everything in its power to see that Spain also remained neutral; he reasoned that if the latter either entered the conflict as a co-belligerent with the Germans or was invaded by Hitler, Portugal would inevitably be dragged into its neighbor's war.⁸ He also calculated, being cognizant of Hitler's military strength, that he couldn't hope to maintain Portugal's colonial

⁷ *Ibid*, 4.

⁸ Hugh Kay, *Salazar and Modern Portugal - A Biography*, N.Y., 1970, 124-ff.

empire in the event of a British loss, the Royal Navy being the guarantor of Portugal's colonies against a German takeover.⁹

Of the six neutrals, Spain came closest to actually entering the struggle on the German side. But having been ravaged from 1936 to 1939 by its own Civil War, Francisco Franco correctly judged his country was in no condition to fight in the broader European war. Franco's one-man rule was diluted when he was forced into domestic political concessions to the two main competing forces in his victorious coalition, the traditional right-wing groups - the army, landowners, monarchists - and the Falange, the mix of nationalists and socialists that was far more radical than any of its Nationalist-coalition competitors. One of the primary reasons for Spain's susceptibility to pressure from the belligerents both at the outset and throughout the European war was the administrative chaos engendered by Franco's attempts to pacify both sides of his often incompetent governing coalition.¹⁰

Franco, who held unprecedented fourfold authority in Spain - as commander-in-chief of the armed forces and as head of the state, of the government, and of the Falangist party - considered himself and Spain under obligation to both Hitler and Mussolini, the Axis leaders who had helped his Nationalists achieve victory by providing critical military materiel and air support. Though it is indisputable that Franco sympathized ideologically with the dictators, especially after Germany attacked the hated Soviet Union in June 1941, he was able to successfully play a cat-and-mouse game with them by assuring both Berlin and Rome of his loyalty and support and promising to "eventually" join the Axis in

⁹ Gordon, *The Hidden Weapon*, 4.

¹⁰ Arnold Toynbee ed., *The War and the Neutrals*, "Survey of International Affairs 1939-1946", Oxford, 1946, 258.

battle. Instead, he kept Spain out of their war.¹¹ As Spanish writer Victor Morales Lezcano summarized Spain's course:

The changing position of Franco's government during World War II from strict neutrality to non-belligerency to vigilant neutrality...was dictated by the perception of the development of the war and by the resulting necessity to adjust Spain's relations with the Axis and Allied powers.¹²

Switzerland has been the European state most generally identified with the practice of neutrality in its foreign relations.¹³ Landlocked and (after June 1940) surrounded by Axis-controlled territory, Switzerland could nonetheless ill-afford to assume its neutrality would be respected during the Second World War. Forced by *Realpolitik* to oblige Hitler, especially in providing critical transit routes between Germany and Italy, the German dictator was nonetheless made aware that any attempt to occupy Switzerland would result in the Swiss destruction of the three Alpine tunnels, the Loetschberg, the Simplon and the St.-Gotthard. The three transalpine rail tunnels were of enormous strategic importance to the Axis. After Italy's entry into the war in 1940, when the Royal Navy effectively shut off Italy's normal channels of sea commerce, nearly all of the traffic formerly carried by ship, especially coal, had to be sent through the Swiss tunnels. Raw material carried via Switzerland's railroads represented 10% of the traffic in the last prewar year; by 1944, the same category of freight, led by coal, made up almost 90% of the total.¹⁴

¹¹ It should be noted that the tactic of delay was urged on him during the period of heaviest German pressure on Spain, the summer and fall of 1940, by Portugal's Salazar, whom Franco openly admired. *Ibid*, 258.

¹² Victor Morales Lezcano, "Las Causas de la No Beligerencia Española, Reconsideradas", *Revista de Estudios Internacionales*, May 3, 1984, 609-631.

¹³ Christopher Hughes, *Switzerland*, London, 1975, 149.

¹⁴ Gordon, *The Hidden Weapon*, 81.

If Spain was the neutral that came closest to allying militarily with the Axis, Sweden was the neutral which most narrowly avoided German occupation. Since 1870, strict neutrality had been raised to the level of a Swedish national doctrine, but after World War I the Swedes decided to participate in the League of Nations. The rise of Hitler and the disintegration of the League in the 1930s led to the country in the summer of 1938 renouncing its obligations to participate in League sanctions, the single self-imposed condition Sweden allowed on its otherwise theoretical impartiality between British and German interests. Instead, Sweden turned in the direction of greater inter-Nordic diplomatic cooperation based on achieving and maintaining a common policy of neutrality.¹⁵

The Wehrmacht's Plan *Weseruebung*, the operation which in the spring of 1940 resulted in the occupation of neutral Denmark and Norway, had also originally included Sweden. Because two Swedish commodities were vital to Germany maintaining its war-footing - ball bearings and high grade iron ore, both purchased by the Reich in large amounts during Hitler's military build-up in the 1930s - Germany could not allow any interruption in their delivery from Sweden. Stockholm explicitly warned Berlin that invasion of its territory would result in the immediate destruction of its iron-ore processing facilities.

A further Swedish consideration related to Norway's Atlantic coast, the only easy access to which was across Swedish territory. After its neighbor's fall to Nazi occupiers, Sweden would agree, in a storm of domestic and international criticism, to German transshipments to Narvik, resulting in the ability of the *Wehrmacht* to relatively securely maintain its forces in northern Norway.

¹⁵ Loenroth, Erik, "Sweden's Ambiguous Neutrality", *Scandinavian Journal of History*, February 1977, 89-105.

The only British Commonwealth dominion not to militarily take up Britain's cause in World War II was Ireland. The fact that Ireland's six northeastern counties continued to comprise a part of the United Kingdom, a partition seen by Dublin as British occupation of the North, was the single most important moral justification in Irish prime minister Eamon de Valera's determination not to join Britain's war against the Axis. In 1938, the government of Neville Chamberlain, a prime minister genuinely anxious for good relations between Britain and Ireland,¹⁶ in order to assuage Irish nationalism let lapse the treaty by which Britain leased naval bases in three Irish ports - the so-called Treaty Ports of Cobh, Lough Swilly and Bereshaven. (He called the 1938 return of the Irish ports an "act of faith."¹⁷) Chamberlain assumed that in the event of war Dublin would re-lease them to Britain. The British military chiefs of staff concurred with Chamberlain's assessment that a British division would be required to hold each port if Ireland were actively hostile, and that Britain's forward Atlantic sea lanes could always be protected by the use of French instead of Irish ports.¹⁸

To de Valera, the ports represented a major concern: foreseeing that Europe was headed for war, he equally foresaw that Ireland would not be able to maintain its neutrality if Britain had use of the ports. Accordingly, when war began in September 1939, de Valera steadfastly refused to allow Britain's naval re-access to the ports, a decision which in light of the immediate German submarine threat in the North Atlantic meant a grave danger to shipping in England's southwestern approaches. (The northern - Clyde and Mersey - approaches were protected by

¹⁶ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 232.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 234.

¹⁸ In June 1940, Churchill estimated it would take ten days to move a division from England to Ireland. Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War - Their Finest Hour*, Boston, 1949, 172.

Ulster bases.) A proposal would be put forth from Whitehall in early 1941 for Ireland to lease the bases to the still non-belligerent but pro-British United States. But de Valera vetoed the plan as the breach of Irish neutrality it would have represented to Germany. The prime minister reasoned that if either Britain *or* the United States were allowed into the ports, Germany would disregard Dublin's protestations of neutrality and regard the entire island as a belligerent.¹⁹ Furthermore, the former IRA leader believed that once Britain regained the ports' use, it might never again leave.²⁰ Ironically, the fact of Irish partition became the chief protection of Ireland's neutral status from British interference: if Britain had had no Ulster bases from which to protect its shipping, a British occupation of Ireland might very well have been implemented.²¹

The last of Europe's neutrals was Turkey, the diplomatic skills of its leaders representing the critical factor that kept that country out of the war. Turkey's sympathy to the German cause was based chiefly on their joint hatred of Russia, the Turk's most powerful traditional enemy. But the British naval presence in the Mediterranean was the stimulus which finally convinced Ankara to negotiate a middle way between the belligerent camps rather than actively join either's side.²² The Turkish capital became a jousting ground, with a succession of Allied envoys doing diplomatic battle with Germany's Franz von Papen, one of the Reich's most

¹⁹ John Bowman, *De Valera and the Ulster Question 1917-1973*, Oxford, 1982, 242.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 235.

²¹ Nicholas Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Wartime Cooperation and Post-War Change 1939-1952*, London, 1958, 65.

²² Turkey's 1914-1918 debacle on the Central Powers' side was also vividly remembered by Turkey's aging leadership.

effective envoys as its ambassador in Ankara.²³ A tantalizing what-if regarding Turkey is that if Franco's Spain had joined the Axis, a closed western entry to the Mediterranean would have been the undoubted result. Thus much of the sting would have been taken out of Britain's Mediterranean fleet, perhaps enough to persuade Turkey to join Germany's fight against Russia in the summer of 1941.²⁴

In addition to the fighting war, the belligerents waged an economic struggle, and as a result all six neutrals would be held hostage by a vitally important Allied weapon: the blockade. Though not directed against the neutrals themselves and their own economic needs, it was these countries which represented the largest potential holes in the economic barrier Britain and the United States built around the Reich and the territory it controlled; to minimize these leaks in the barrier was a major Allied effort in its relations with the neutrals.

Germany did not give the same emphasis to economic warfare as did Britain and its allies, although it was able to successfully threaten Sweden with import allowances over the transit issue (see p. 75). In the early war years, the victorious Germans evidently saw little need to concern themselves with an attempt to completely blockade the neutrals' strategic trade. In the later years, Germany lost its ability to do so, and more pressing defense needs occupied its attention.²⁵

The threat of near-total embargo designed to force a neutral to halt trade with Germany and Axis-controlled territory - theoretically if not always realistically

²³ Frank G. Weber, *The Evasive Neutral - Great Britain and the Quest for a Turkish Alliance in the Second World War*, Columbia, Mo., 1979, 217.

²⁴ Hitler's concern that his armies should not seem weak to Turkey was one of the reasons he wouldn't ordinarily allow tactical military retreats when the tide turned against Germany in southern Russia; he continued to hope Turkey would come in on the side of the Axis. William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *The Undeclared War 1940-1941*, New York, 1953, 112-ff.

²⁵ Gordon, *The Hidden Weapon*, 82-83.

within the power of the Allies - had always to be considered in the neutral capitals, and it was implicit in nearly all Allied diplomatic relations with these states; in the next chapter we'll see how Allied ability and willingness to cut petroleum to Spain would in 1943 and 1944 force Franco to finally halt Spain's tungsten exports to the Axis. Cordell Hull justified the years of Allied economic warfare in a April 1944 radio broadcast:

In the two years following Pearl Harbor, while we were mustering our strength and helping to restore that of our Allies, our relations with these neutral nations and their attitude toward our enemies were conditioned by the position in which we found ourselves. We have constantly sought to keep before them what they, of course, knew - that upon our victory hangs their very existence and freedom as independent nations...we are *not* asking these neutral nations to expose themselves to certain destruction when we ask them not to prolong the war, with its consequences of suffering and death, by sending aid to the enemy.²⁶

A complete Allied blockade of the neutrals was never undertaken, the reasons essentially involving the retention of the moral high ground: extending rights of belligerency to such lengths was, in 1939, an alien concept. What was of perhaps more concrete concern was the realization that the neutrals' trade went two ways, with both the Axis *and* with the Allies, and if the Allies stopped imports from entering these countries, they couldn't very well expect to get exports out of them. Before December 1941 there was also the not unimportant issue of U.S. neutrality: if America's profitable trade with the belligerents had been grossly interfered with by Washington and London, American isolationists would have been handed an effective club with which to berate the Allied cause.²⁷

At the outset of the war, before Germany's spectacular continental victories in 1940, Britain negotiated import quotas called War Trade Agreements with Spain,

²⁶ Cordell Hull quoted in Gordon, *The Hidden Weapon*, 13-14.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 183.

Portugal, Switzerland, and Sweden;²⁸ Turkey, considered an ally, was treated somewhat differently, and Ireland wasn't held to be a potential conduit of goods to Germany. These agreements²⁹ set quotas based on each countries' own needs, measured against normal prewar net imports of each commodity;³⁰ products not normally imported by the neutral state and from which Germany might benefit were totally restricted. Each neutral agreed not to re-export goods allowed through the blockade, but in 1941 and 1942, with German power at its zenith, the War Trade Agreements were often violated by the neutrals. Britain's military position, and thus its ground forces' ability to maintain any land blockade, was at a low point, so the neutrals - particularly the Iberian states - sold to Germany in exchange of much-needed goods, especially weaponry, rather than to Britain which because of its own depleted stocks could offer only cash.³¹

In the summer of 1940, Lisbon hedged coming to terms with Britain on a quota for its oil needs. The Portuguese refused to set a tonnage amount which satisfied the British Ministry of Economic Warfare that allowed imports would be used domestically and not re-exported to Germany or Italy, both of which countries Britain knew were willing to buy oil from Portugal for considerably more than Portugal had had to pay for it. In February 1941, after the Royal Navy instituted an embargo of oil into Portugal, Lisbon and London agreed to a figure of 78,000 tons

²⁸ These treaties recalled similar agreements between Britain and Europe's neutrals during the 1914-1918 war. Medlicott, *The Economic Blockade*, London, 1952, vol. 1, 7.

²⁹ They were set by a coordinated agency; the attempt at scattered ministries negotiating separate agreements in the First World War had been a failure. *Ibid*, 15.

³⁰ Turkey's quotas were not formally set, but listed by "informal" quotas.

³¹ Gordon, *The Hidden Weapon*, 33-40.

per month, an increase over the 50,000 it had earlier been receiving. Britain also extracted solemn assurances from Salazar that none would be re-exported.³²

Portugal also suffered the misfortune of having her colonies' products subjected to Allied quotas. Angola and Mozambique produced far more than Portugal could use domestically, but unfortunately most of the goods concerned - fruit and other food products - were perishable, and thus routinely rotted on the docks because shippers wouldn't run the risk of the destruction or seizure of their ships by Allied naval vessels on reaching European waters.³³

The coercion used by the Allies to enforce their economic blockade against the neutrals lay in their navies, but rather than guns, the navicert was the navies' most potent weapon. Both Britain and the United States employed the system, the latter beginning to do so many months before its active belligerency began. The navicert worked as follows: if a given country wished to sell goods to a European neutral, such as Argentina selling meat to Spain, or Venezuela oil to Portugal, that country's agent would consult with the local British or American consul to determine whether such a consignment was within the ration preset by the Allies for the receiving nation. If it was, the consul would issue the navicert, allowing the goods to pass through the Allied naval blockade guarding the sea lanes to the neutral country; if it was not, no navicert was issued, and if the consignment were still sent it would be subject to seizure by the Allied navy.

The navicert provided an assurance to the ship owners that their vessels and cargoes wouldn't be seized as contraband as long as the navicert conditions were adhered to, although the ships were often searched to make sure of such adherence. British and American shipping agents around the world were

³² Hugh Kay, *Salazar and Modern Portugal*, New York, 1970, 173.

³³ *Ibid*, 174-175.

purchased at enormously inflated prices by both the United States and Britain for the purpose of keeping it out of German hands in a campaign of preemption.

During this period of intense wolfram supply and price inflation, the two Iberian governments followed quite different policies regarding its mining and sale. Ever-cautious where Portugal's neutrality was concern, Salazar had as his primary concern the orderly disposal of his country's supplies. In consequence, he intensified controls on both production and price in an effort to both restrain the inevitable inflationary pressures attached to the bidding war between the belligerents and to protect Portugal against the threat of military takeover of its supplies by either side. Franco, who was less worried, limited neither production nor prices, seemingly unconcerned about the inflationary effects or security risks as long as the Spanish treasury was the prime beneficiary. Nor did he share Salazar's concern that either side would risk a hostile Spain by threatening the peninsula over this issue.³⁸

Because of the enormous profits involved - Portuguese prices increased from \$1100 a ton in 1940 to nearly \$20,000 in 1941, despite Salazar's controls - illegal production became the breeder of widespread corruption; mines nears the Spanish border simply smuggled portions of their production into Spain for the even greater profits that could be realized in the less-controlled Spanish market. The effect of Portuguese policies, which included the stipulation that all domestic producers channel their production through an official sales commissariat, was to thwart Allied preemption of the mineral, regardless of Salazar's perhaps well-intentioned policy of even-handed protection of his country's economy. Germany was able to buy nearly as much Portuguese ore as it wanted to transport by train to steel manufacturers in the Reich, and thus represented the favored side in

³⁸ Gordon, *The Hidden Weapon*, 106.

Salazar's arrangement, a situation which continued into 1943. Despite Allied efforts to thwart Portuguese wolfram sales to the Reich, Portugal remained the larger of Germany's two Iberian suppliers until June 1944, when Salazar felt he was freer to submit to Allied demands to stop sales to Germany because of what he now regarded as the weakened German retaliatory threat to Portugal.³⁹

In Spain, the Allied preemption policy ran into a different set of problems. Because of increased domestic mining as well as the Portuguese smuggling of the ore into the country to take advantage of Spanish prices and to thwart Salazar's allocation rules, Spain by 1941 had greatly increased its wolfram mining.⁴⁰ The major difficulty the Allies faced was obtaining Spanish pesetas with which to buy wolfram, a problem which led to the transference of significant amounts of British gold bullion into the Spanish treasury.

Finally, after July 1943, Germany's financial capacity to pay Spain's inflated prices for the metal collapsed, and Franco now bowed to Allied demands to limit wolfram sales to Germany at the same time not having to worry too much about Germany's retaliatory capacity, German armies now on the retreat in both the Mediterranean and eastern Europe. This same realization on the Allies' part led to demands in November 1943 that Spain embargo *all* wolfram to Germany, in return the United States promising to increase goods quotas allowed to pass through its naval blockade of Spain.

Germany - still not quite out of the picture - demanded that Spain supply it with wolfram against the Civil War debt the latter owed, and which Franco agreed despite Allied pressure to resist. In retaliation, the Allies embargoed all petroleum into Spain, soon bringing the now virtually fuel-less country to its senses,

³⁹ *Ibid*, 107-108.

⁴⁰ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 91.

economically-speaking. Spain gave in to Allied demands in the spring of 1944. Since Germany no longer received Spanish wolfram, the U.S. and Britain were free to halt their Spanish purchases as well.⁴¹

The wolfram war ended. Germany was forced to reduce the tungsten percentage in even critical tool tips from the normal 10-18% to around 2-3%, which necessitated slowing machinery speeds by up to 75%; tungsten tools in other vital industries, such as coal mining, had to be foregone. There was also a near abandonment of tungsten carbide cores in anti-tank ammunition, a deficiency to which German military experts attached great significance.⁴² The cessation of Iberian supplies also forced the Germans to make the ore, from whatever source, their principal cargo in running the general Allied embargo of Nazi Europe, at enormous danger to its suppliers and in lieu of other desperately needed imports those ships could have carried.⁴³

⁴¹ The Anglo/U.S. victory came only a short time before Germany would have been physically unable to get any wolfram through France, which was about to fall to the Allies. *Ibid*, 92.

⁴² Gordon, *The Hidden Weapon*, 203.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 115. At war's end, the Allies had bought 15000 tons of Iberian wolfram at a cost of \$170 million, perhaps 10 times its 'normal' worth. Kay, *Salazar*, 180.

CHAPTER II

THE NEUTRALS

SPAIN

"There is no country in Europe
which is so easy to overrun as Spain;
there is no country which is
more difficult to conquer."
Lord Macaulay¹

Of the six neutrals in World War II, it was Spain, under the dictatorial leadership of Francisco Franco, that would have presented the gravest danger to the Allies had it joined the Axis. The Spanish position vis-a-vis the belligerents arose most directly out of its own just-concluded civil war, but a key to understanding Franco's Spain and its attitude toward the general European war was that the Nationalist victors of the civil war considered Russia - not Germany - to be the real enemy of the civilized world. Furthermore, they detested the liberalism of the Western Alliance, the social doctrine they believed was responsible for Spain's decline from its nineteenth century imperial power role. This latter issue was magnified by Franco into a sort of recipe for isolation in his belief that Britain, France and America would do their utmost to overthrow his regime, a belief borne out by the pariah status assigned Spain after the war by the victorious Allies.²

There is little question that Spain's foreign policy, as well as its goodwill, was oriented toward Germany and Italy in 1939.³ Paradoxically though, perhaps the

¹ John Gunther, *Inside Europe*, New York, Harper & Bros., 1940, 213.

² Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 260.

³ Stanley G. Payne, *The Franco Regime 1936-1975*, Madison, 1987, 253.

least-recognized facet of Spain's relationship to the belligerents is the fact that the Allied cause owed Franco an enormous debt for keeping his nation out of direct partnership with Germany. It would have been a partnership giving Germany control of Gibraltar - one of Britain's vitally important control points in its sea blockade of goods bound for Axis countries as well as a key communications link with India and the Orient.⁴ British loss of the Mediterranean would have meant a very different scenario for the European war.⁵

At the end of June 1940 German tanks had reached the border between France and Spain. Many in the British government thought the Germans had an open road to Gibraltar.⁶ Hitler and the OKW General Staff regarded Spain unambiguously in the logic of their military aims: by bringing the country into the war on the Axis side, they reasoned Franco would open his border to German infantry and armored columns and permit them to march toward Gibraltar - Britain's last toehold on the continent and the utterly critical guarantor of its ability to keep the Mediterranean open to the Royal Navy.⁷ Once in Gibraltar, Hitler planned to move his armies across the Strait into Spanish Morocco, and to persuade Franco to cede to Germany one of its Canary islands to serve as a U-boat base. To remunerate Spain, Germany would hand over parts of French North Africa in compensation for both the island and for German occupation of the more strategically important Spanish Morocco. In its final political configuration, Spain

⁴ Gordon, *The Hidden Weapon*, 29.

⁵ Willard L. Beaulac, *Franco - Silent Ally in World War II*, Carbondale, 1986, 7.

⁶ *Ibid*, 1-3.

⁷ Hitler reportedly was going to turn the bastion over to Spanish sovereignty once German troops had seized and secured it. Walter Ansel, *Hitler and the Middle Sea*, Durham, 1972, 41.

itself would be virtually a German dominion and northern and middle Africa were to come under permanent German suzerainty.⁸

Franco's response in light of the Reich's overwhelming military capability was to delay partnership with Germany for the longest time possible. Having lost 600,000 people, and with countless acres of productive land and its industrial capacity crippled as a result of the three-year-long civil war, Spain's dictator knew his country was in no position to enter the war on the Axis side as anything approaching equality with Germany - or even of the rank of its Italian junior partner-to-be. Furthermore, if Spain were forced by unilateral German action to join the Axis (the threat of an outright hostile German invasion of a resisting Spain was by no means negligible in the summer of 1940⁹), Franco wanted it delayed until the last possible moment in the hope that Spain might gain maximum advantages in terms of African spoils and run the least risk in terms of casualties and damage. To help in his delaying tactics, from the war's outset Franco provided Germany with valuable military assistance, from allowing German pilots to photograph Allied shipping from Iberian airliners, to agreeing to permit the Reich's naval (mostly submarine) and merchant vessels to use the Spanish ports of Santander, Vigo, and Cadiz and harbors in the Canary Islands for refueling and resupply. The latter were an especially important refueling point for this critically important arm of the German war machine in the period before Germany's "milch cow" method of resupplying submarines at sea was initiated in December 1941.¹⁰

Long before the German armies had reached the Spanish border, Franco was readying arguments against joining the Axis - a position he knew Hitler would

⁸ Beaulac, *Silent Ally*, 2.

⁹ *Ibid*, 2, 3-5.

¹⁰ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 266-267.

consider ungrateful in light of the assistance the Nazis had given Franco's rebel forces in overcoming Spain's Republican government. Franco wrote to Hitler in June 1940:

At the moment when the German armies, under your leadership, are bringing the greatest battle in history to a victorious close, I would like to express to you my admiration and enthusiasm...when your soldiers shared with us in [our] war against the same, although concealed, enemies...[However] the great upheavals which Spain underwent in the three years of war, where to our losses and wear and tear were added the innumerable losses inflicted in Red territory, have put us in a difficult position...I do not need to assure you how great is my desire not to remain aloof from your cares and how great is my satisfaction in rendering to you at all times those services which you regard as most valuable.¹¹

In this wily prose, Franco's real purpose was to lay the case for staying out of the war. He believed that joining the conflict would merely constitute a continuation of Spain's own deeply wounding civil war, a struggle that had not only left the nation's economy in shreds but also its reputation ruined among the democracies because of the support the Nationalists accepted from Europe's two leading fascist states.¹² In June 1940, Franco "assured" Germany of his willingness to join the Axis as a co-belligerent, but set an unacceptable list of demands he knew couldn't be met: in addition to Gibraltar, he insisted French Morocco and the department of Oran in Algeria be transferred to Spain, Rio de Oro and Spanish Guinea be enlarged, and huge economic and military aid grants be given which Franco told Hitler were absolutely necessary before the exhausted Spain could think of joining the European war at Germany's side.

It was at the famous meeting of October 26, 1940 at Hendaye, on the Atlantic border of France and Spain, that Hitler's grand strategy for Spain was

¹¹ Unsigned memorandum, Francisco Franco to Adolf Hitler, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, v. IX, 509-510.

¹² Antonio de Figueiredo, *Portugal - 50 Years of Dictatorship*, New York, 1976, 100.

checkmated by Franco. One of the demands he insisted be met before bringing Spain into co-belligerency was the promise of extensive French African possessions, a demand which if agreed to and then discovered by Vichy officials in Africa would have almost certainly led to their abandonment of Petain's government in favor of the Free French. A German diplomatic memorandum stated that

there was the danger that, if the French were explicitly told they would have to get out of certain African areas, the African possessions would perhaps desert France, *even with the concurrence* of the government of Vichy.¹³

It was a risk Franco correctly judged Hitler wouldn't take.¹⁴

From the summer of 1940 to the end of 1941 Franco was under considerable domestic pressure to bring Spain into the Axis as a co-belligerent. Not only was there a body of Falangists publicly calling for a Spanish declaration of war against Britain, but a minority of party members personally opposed to Franco was willing to join any cause designed to embarrass the Caudillo.¹⁵ Another source of internal difficulties was the major Spanish newspapers - *Arriba* and *Diario de Burgos* were the most prominent - which caused Franco political embarrassment by calling for a union, forced if need be, with Portugal. Their editorials jingoistically wrote of the two countries' "sharing of the same soul."¹⁶ These outbursts in important Spanish papers not only gave Portugal's Salazar problems, they clearly were aimed at the more even-handed Portuguese policy of

¹³ Unsigned memorandum, Record of the Conversation Between the Fuehrer and the Caudillo, in the Fuehrer's Parlor Car, at the Hendaye Railroad Station on October 23, 1940, italics mine, DGFP, v. XI, 375.

¹⁴ Walter Ansel, *Hitler and the Middle Sea*, Durham, 1972, 37-ff.

¹⁵ Juan Pablo Fusi, *Franco - A Biography*, Cambridge, 1985, 45; Kay, *Salazar*, 156.

¹⁶ Kay, *Salazar*, 156.

urging non-intervention in the war on Franco,¹⁷ the latter favoring a "Good Neighbor" policy not laced with the kind of Pan-Iberianism that was highly unpopular in Portugal.¹⁸

During the summer of 1940 Franco attempted to sway Salazar from genuine neutrality by getting him to sign a Hispano-Portuguese military pact that would have had the effect of turning Lisbon into a kind of satellite of Madrid. Salazar refused, agreeing merely to sign a treaty providing for "mutual consultation" between the two Iberian nations in case of any foreign threat to either.¹⁹ The treaty, a Salazar success, was read by an irritated Berlin as a "fairly substantial" distancing of mutual Iberian policy from the interests of the Axis.²⁰

The relationship between Spain and the Allies followed an often stormy course, specifically in its American dealings. The U.S. government shared Britain's goal of Spanish neutrality, and it became a major policy objective whose maintenance was monitored by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and supervised by the State Department.²¹ The primary players in U.S./Spanish relations were, on the American side, Alexander Weddell, the first ambassador to the new Nationalist Spain from the United States, and the man who succeeded him in mid-1942, Carlton Hayes.²² While serving in Madrid, they interacted chiefly with Spanish

¹⁷ It speaks of Spain's internal political problems that Franco permitted the normally heavily-controlled Spanish press to publish stories inimical to what he obviously considered the country's best interests.

¹⁸ Kay, *Salazar*, 156.

¹⁹ Payne, *Franco Regime*, 269. Franco's proposed pact would have required Portugal to formally detach itself from its British alliance, which would have left it only Spain to look to for support.

²⁰ Kay, *Salazar*, 125.

²¹ Gordon, *The Hidden Weapon*, 100-101.

²² Crozier, *Franco*, 363.

foreign ministers Juan Beigbeder (who was especially anxious to help preserve Spain's neutrality by linking the country with Portugal's neutrality policy²³), and Ramon Serrano Suñer. The personalities of the two Spaniards determined to a large extent the course of Washington's relations with Spain.²⁴

Especially after the fall of France, the chief concern of Washington paralleled London's - that Franco would bring Spain into the war on the side of the Axis. Although still neutral, the United States had become all but a co-belligerent with Britain in the anti-German alliance, and the fear of an Axis strengthened by a Spanish partner, with the inevitable loss of Gibraltar coming from such a partnership, was President Roosevelt's primary consideration in initiating an unprecedentedly blunt diplomatic line with Franco's government.²⁵

This dropping of normal diplomatic politesse came when Franco named as Foreign Minister his brother-in-law and head of the Spanish Falange, the strongly (many say notoriously) pro-Axis Ramon Serrano Suñer.²⁶ Ambassador Weddell was instructed by Secretary of State Cordell Hull to inform Serrano Suñer that if Spain sided with Germany against Britain, no additional U.S. humanitarian supplies would be sent, a situation which because of Spain's critically low food reserves the Spaniards knew would result in famine. The more conciliatory British position, forwarded by its ambassador Sir Samuel Hoare, was to accept Serrano Suñer's assurances that Spain would remain a non-belligerent, although the Spanish

²³ J.W.D. Trythall, *El Caudillo - A Political Biography of Franco*, New York, 1970, 164.

²⁴ Beaulac, *Franco - Silent Ally*, vii.

²⁵ Langer, *Undeclared War*, 61.

²⁶ James W. Cortada, ed., *Spain in the 20th Century World - Essays on Spanish Diplomacy 1898-1978*, Westwood, 1980, 65. Beaulac does give Serrano Suñer credit comparable to Franco's for diplomatically allaying Hitler's demands for a co-belligerent Spain. Beaulac, *Franco - Silent Ally*, 74-ff.

minister told Hoare that its relation to Germany was merely the same as the U.S.'s toward Britain, "except that Spain had nothing to give the Axis."²⁷ In any event, London urged Washington to resume relief shipments, which by mid-1940 had been nearly totally halted, reasoning that to allow Spain to succumb to widespread starvation might push Franco to the point of co-belligerency with Germany. In November 1940, Serrano Suñer finally assured, and apparently convinced, Weddell that Spain would resist "to the last man" a forced German invasion should it come, and U.S. food shipments were resumed.²⁸

Spain was further enjoined in 1940 from going to war on the Axis side - when German victory seemed most inevitable - by the realization that Britain's power to retaliate, especially its naval power, was by no means yet negligible. A British capture of the Canary or Balearic islands was held by Madrid to be a likely British move in the event of Spain joining the Axis. Another may have been a landing on Spain's northern coast, where the British might try to join forces with locally strong Asturian communists. It was clear that the Royal Navy would totally embargo a belligerent Spain from all overseas supplies, and further that the United States would fully support Britain in such a move.²⁹

One of the arguments put forward by Hitler to Franco in urging Spanish cooperation in an attack on Gibraltar was the reasoning that once Britain lost Gibraltar, Spain's Mediterranean coast would be safe from naval and economic warfare, and Spain would thus have only its Atlantic coast to contend with in the war with Britain. Hitler promised to protect this front with German dive bombers,

²⁷ *Ibid*, 83.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 83.

²⁹ Toynebee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 271.

which "experience has shown are more effective than heavy coastal batteries."³⁰ Germany reasoned that once Britain lost Gibraltar, the former would attempt to transfer its power to the Canaries by seizing a naval base there, in which eventuality Germany further promised Spain support in thwarting such an attempt.³¹

In 1940, it was assumed that a Britain without Gibraltar would consider the Canaries, Spain's Atlantic island chain off the African coast, its best base from which to regain some control over the approaches to the western entrance to the Mediterranean.³² But Carlton Hayes, Weddell's successor as American ambassador in Madrid, actively tried to dissuade either the U.S. or Britain from seizing these islands, a move which the State Department informed Hayes was under active consideration but which Hayes believed would be counter-productive.³³ In light of Hayes' warning that Franco could still be pushed into the Axis if the Allies threatened Spanish soil (which Franco - and Spanish law - held the Canaries to be), Roosevelt gave assurances to the Spanish dictator³⁴ that the Allies had no intention to occupy the Canaries, a possibility Franco still thought existed. Roosevelt now knew that there was little likelihood of Hitler being able to take Gibraltar without Spanish acquiescence.³⁵

³⁰ Adolf Hitler to Francisco Franco, September 18, 1940, DGFP, v. IX, 107.

³¹ *Ibid*, v. IX, 107.

³² Beaulac, *Franco*, 8.

³³ *Ibid*, 164.

³⁴ C.J.H. Hayes, *Wartime Mission in Spain*, quoted in Payne, *Franco Regime*, 313. Notably such assurances would from now on emanate from Washington, not from London.

³⁵ Payne, *Franco Regime*, 313-314.

Early in the war Franco and Serrano Suñer recognized that if Spain didn't join the Axis while Spain could still be of critical strategic importance to Hitler, it might not be able to profit from Europe's coming "New Order." Franco worried that to wait until Britain was occupied might be disastrous to Spain's future. Yet while the German economy was self-sufficient in the months between the fall of France and the invasion of the Soviet Union, Spain's economy was not - and actions by the still-powerful Royal Navy could devastate it.³⁶ For the time being, and to Britain's advantage, Franco continued to prevaricate. The British ambassador in Madrid, Sir Samuel Hoare, described Franco in May 1941 as "the Brer Rabbit of dictators. He lies very low, often so low and so long that people think he is dead or asleep."³⁷

Though Franco himself refused to give assurances to Roosevelt that Spain would absolutely remain neutral, he continued through 1941 to stress that his country was in no position to join the Axis as a co-belligerent. Despite the Caudillo's antipathy to the democracies, the American ambassador advised Washington that food shipments to Spain should continue - a course the U.S. government followed even in the face of large parts of the American public indignant at the notion of supplying a regime it regarded as having been brought to power on the wings of the Luftwaffe and which still publicly and vociferously supported the German side in the war.³⁸

³⁶ *Ibid*, 270.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 270.

³⁸ The United States continued to be concerned about relatively minor matters as well: as late as July 1943, Ambassador Hayes was warning the Spanish Foreign Ministry "if the Spanish Government is unable to control...the pro-Axis [press], my Government will of necessity be compelled to re-examine its attitude towards Spain..." *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Washington, 1943, vol. ii, 610.

After the U.S. entry into the war, the more significant - and generally the harshest - Allied influence exerted on Franco shifted from London to Washington. More and more the threat of withholding navicerts - compulsory after 1940 - came to represent the primary diplomatic threat to ensure Spanish non-belligerency.³⁹ There is no certainty that American supplies were the decisive factor in Franco's decision to stay out of the European conflict, but they must have to a considerable degree weighed in that decision. In 1940 Germany could not supply the necessary foodstuffs and fuel to Spain.⁴⁰ Franco told Hitler that in the absence of such supplies Spain could not fight a long war without risking disastrous famine and collapse of internal order. It is clear that the exigencies of Spain's domestic needs and the realities of Anglo-American economic power created a relationship between Spain and the United States that was, according to historians William Langer and Everett Gleason "an important contributory factor in keeping Spain from closer identification with the Axis."⁴¹

By the last half of 1941, Franco had good reasons to feel vindicated in his caution in the matter of co-belligerency with the Axis. Though German successes remained seemingly spectacular, the Reich was far from a final victory over either the West or the Soviet Union. And Franco understood that Spain owed its escape from greater famine misery not to Hitler's Europe, but to overseas supplies allowed through the blockade. Furthermore, the Caudillo had his hands full at home as he continued to experience political problems that were beginning to put cracks in the

³⁹ *Ibid*, 332.

⁴⁰ Among the demands Spain made of the Germans as a price for its co-belligerency were 800,000 tons of petroleum products, 100,000 tons of cotton, 25,000 tons of rubber, and 625,000 tons of fertilizers - not all of which the Germans would agree to supply and none of which they could supply immediately. Toynebee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 278.

⁴¹ Langer, *Undeclared War*, p. 85.

foundations of his authority. They came from, on one side, the disaffected and disappointed monarchists who had since 1939 hoped for a royal restoration, and, on the other, from the over-powerful Falange that believed Spain was "abandoning" the debt it owed Germany.⁴²

By late 1942 Franco himself was apparently coming to the conclusion that Germany was passing its military zenith,⁴³ and thus his country would probably not have to honor the "promises" of co-belligerency that he had made to Hitler in 1940.⁴⁴ Allied concerns thereafter centered not so much on the issue of Spain itself actually joining the Axis, but on the strategic value of Spain's Canary Islands, as well as any possible Spanish interference with the North African landings, and, mostly for symbolic reasons, Franco's Blue Division then fighting alongside the Germans on the Russian front.⁴⁵ The Allies clearly made known to Franco their continuing lack of intention to occupy Spain, an occupation dismissed by U.S. and British war planners as an overly-costly expansion of the European conflict.⁴⁶

Probably the single greatest mistake of Franco's diplomacy was the failure to return to a position of genuine neutrality in 1942, after the American entry into the

⁴² Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 284.

⁴³ Undoubtedly because of the Wehrmacht's stall in Russia and the Allied landings in North Africa, although Franco still thought Germany could fight to a stalemate. Cortada, *Spain*, 70.

⁴⁴ It wasn't until May 1943, historians later learned, that Hitler entirely abandoned his plan to seize Gibraltar, with or without Spanish help. Ansel, *Hitler*, p. 378. Among Hitler's reasons for taking the decision - going against Doenitz's recommendation that Spain and Gibraltar could still be occupied and which was preferable to defending Sicily and Sardinia - was that Hitler judged it would be "impossible without Spain's consent...they are the only tough Latin people, and would carry on guerrilla warfare from the rear." Quoted from "Fuehrer Conferences" in Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 298.

⁴⁵ Cortada, *Spain*, 70.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 71.

war. But Franco, in a "sophisticated but improbable piece of casuistry"⁴⁷ viewed the war in Europe as two conflicts. One was between Germany and the Allies, in which Spain was neutral (although until 1943 or 1944 he didn't think his authoritarian regime could survive a German defeat⁴⁸). The other was between Russia (which *was* a Western ally, regardless of Franco's contorted thinking) and Germany, in which Spain was anything *but* neutral. A Russian victory in *this* war was, in the clear consensus of his biographers, regarded by the Caudillo as the deathknell of Christian Europe: after the three-year-long slaughter in which Spain finally and overwhelmingly defeated the Moscow-backed Republic, his and his party's hatred of communism and the Soviet Union was visceral. This had been one of the justifications for sending the Blue Division to Germany, although the Division was, according to Willard Beaulac, primarily intended as a relatively inexpensive gesture to demonstrate friendship to Hitler and thus keep at bay the possibility of actually having to join the Axis.⁴⁹ Franco also reasoned Britain and the United States would look on the "gesture" as doing relatively little to harm their cause. Sent to the Russian front just six days after the German invasion, the Division consisted of 18,000 Spanish volunteers under the command of General Agustín Muñoz Grandes.⁵⁰ (East German historian Otfried Dankelmann notes that the Blue Division was, however, offered *before* it was requested.⁵¹) Franco justified the Division in a speech to National Council (the wartime Cortes), characterizing it

⁴⁷ Fusi, *Franco*, 52.

⁴⁸ Cortada, *Spain*, 74.

⁴⁹ Beaulac, *Silent Ally*, 20.

⁵⁰ Many thousands of additional volunteers were turned down - Franco sent only the best because he didn't want the Legion to "dishonor" Spain. *Ibid*, 20.

⁵¹ Otfried Dankelmann, "Zur Spanischen 'Nichtkriegfuehrung' in Zweiten Weltkrieg", *Zeitschrift fuer Militaergeschichte*, Halle, September 6, 1970, 683-692.

as a token payment for the "debt of blood" owed by Spain to its German and Italian "Axis comrades." The gesture unsurprisingly resulted in a furthering tightening of Allied military supplies to Spain.⁵²

According to Stanley G. Payne, long into the war Franco had little doubt as to whom the eventual victor would be: Payne writes that the Caudillo continued to be convinced of a German victory until mid-1944, although the depth of his faith had "slowly eroded."⁵³ After Hitler's *Blitzkrieg* against Western Europe in the spring and summer of 1940, Italian Foreign Minister Count Ciano⁵⁴ had put pressure on Serrano Suñer to change the Spanish position from one of theoretical neutrality to "non-belligerency." Franco's agreement and subsequent protestation that Spain's policy remained essentially unchanged rang expectedly hollow to Allied ears. In fact, the character of Spanish-Axis relations over the next year and a half made it clear that Franco's sympathies lay unmistakably in an Axis victory over the Soviet Union - coupled with a stand-off between Germany and the Allies.

The expansion of the European war into a world war in December 1941 was the event that allowed Franco to breathe easier in terms of German pressure on Spain to join in its war against Britain. Though Hitler continued for a while to talk about eventually taking Gibraltar and blocking the western end of the Mediterranean to the Royal Navy (an interest he never brought to his staff's plans to seize the Suez Canal and cut off access to the eastern Mediterranean), the

⁵² Fusi, *Franco*, 52.

⁵³ Payne, *Franco Regime*, 267. In an interview with Ambassador Hayes on July 29, 1943, Franco spoke of Germany's "toughness" and the "excellent state of its morale" in response to the ambassador's warning that Hitler was "clearly" losing the war. FRUS, vii, 1943, 612.

⁵⁴ Franco felt closer to Italy than to the senior Axis partner, and Berlin thus judged it was especially susceptible to Italian pleas for demonstrable solidarity between Spain and the Axis. *Ibid*, 267.

vision evaporated with the first winter of the Russian War.⁵⁵ When Hitler's single-mindedness switched to the Russian campaign in June, followed with the American entry into the war in December, Iberia became a relative backwater.

If Franco had returned to genuine neutrality in 1942 - recalled the Blue Division,⁵⁶ halted sales of wolfram to *both* sides, given firm and verifiable assurances that imports would not be transshipped to Germany - Spain's post-war international position would have been greatly improved.⁵⁷ Even his fear of not surviving an Allied victory was ironically misguided as a justification to tilt toward the Axis: Franco's delaying tactics so infuriated Hitler that he vowed to eventually "get even" with the Spanish dictator, a prospect that if Hitler had been in a position to implement wouldn't have boded well for the Caudillo in an Axis-dominated Europe.⁵⁸ Though his consolidation of power during the war years was vital to his state's ability to survive the external isolation following the war, a U.S./British front friendlier to Franco after the war would have served his corporate state far better.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ In 1942 the Germans developed two contingency plans for occupying Spain, both with the purpose of preventing invasion of the peninsula by the Allies. Neither plan "Ilona" nor "Gisela" ever came close to fruition; the latter was replaced in 1943 by plan "Nuernberg", which represented only the German military defense of the Pyrenees frontier between Spain and occupied France. Unsigned, "Los Planes Militares de Hitler Sobre España en 1942-43", *Ejercito*, 1964, 37-40.

⁵⁶ In July 1943, Ambassador Hayes told Franco that although Spain's "repugnance to Russian communism" was "understandable", it appeared to the American government that it was only in 1941 that "the Spanish Government suddenly discovered that Russian communism was a great menace." FRUS, vol. ii, 1943, 613.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 341.

⁵⁸ Hitler had nebulous plans to use the Blue Division and the Spanish *Gastarbeiters* in Germany, both groups under the command of Muñoz Grandes, as a means to overthrow Franco after the war. Beaulac, *Franco*, 57.

⁵⁹ It should be noted that Franco expected the Roosevelt/Churchill team to control the postwar west; instead, he got the much less sympathetic Truman/Attlee pairing. Either Truman and Attlee never seemed to understand the value to the West of Spain having remained neutral during the war, or domestic

It is difficult today to make one's thinking about Franco's actions in World War II conform to the realities that Spain had to face during what was for it an exceedingly dangerous period. Though Stanley Payne cogently argues that Spain was "relatively" neutral only during the early war years (1939 and 1940), when a German victory was still uncertain, and the late phase of the war (1944 and 1945), when it was no longer possible, and in between was an active supporter of Axis victory⁶⁰, other observers who were in responsible positions in Spain - Willard L. Beaulac,⁶¹ perhaps most convincingly - paint a far different picture, one in which Franco's overriding desire to keep out of the war, despite his public ideological utterances and concessions to Germany, redounded to the favor of the Allies. If this latter view is the one which Franco wanted to be remembered for after the war, his detractors in turn respond that *had* Hitler met his price in the summer or fall of 1940, Franco would most certainly have taken up arms as an active Axis member. Payne writes that it was Hitler, not Franco, who made the decision that Spain would stay out of the war: the cost of Spanish participation wasn't worth the opposite cost of alienating Vichy France by depriving it of its African territory to pay Franco's price.⁶²

The results seem best to be weighed not by the ideological sympathy toward Hitler and Mussolini, but of the concrete results of Franco's policies in the Second World War. Had Spain joined the Axis as a full co-belligerent, Gibraltar would have, in all probability, been lost and the Mediterranean War would have

political realities after 1945 wouldn't allow them to acknowledge this contribution. *Ibid*, 207-208.

⁶⁰ Payne, *Franco*, 339.

⁶¹ Beaulac was from June 1941 to May 1944 U.S. Counsellor of Embassy and - intermittently - Chargé d'Affaires in Madrid.

⁶² Payne, *Franco*, 341.

been immensely more difficult for the Allied cause, both before and after direct American participation in the conflict. The North African landings would have been infinitely more formidable with Spain serving as a giant German base from which the *Luftwaffe* would have resisted the Allied landings. Certainly an Allied victory in the European war would have been greatly prolonged, if it would have been possible at all.

In a speech to the House of Commons on May 25, 1944, Churchill noted the effects of the Spanish policy - not of Franco's pro-Axis propaganda but of the reality and results of his actions:

There is no doubt that if Spain had yielded to German blandishments and pressure...our burden would have been much heavier. In the dark days of the war the attitude of the Spanish Government in not giving our enemies passage through Spain was extremely helpful to us. It was especially so at the time of the North African liberation...I must say I shall always consider a service was rendered...by Spain not only to the United Kingdom and to the British Empire and Commonwealth, but to the cause of the United Nations.⁶³

⁶³ quoted in Beaulac, *Franco*, 207.

PORTUGAL

"It always costs more to
buy a man of principle."
David L. Gordon, of Salazar⁶⁴

The principal issues in the relationship between the belligerents and Portugal during World War II were wolfram and the Azores; the major points of the first issue were discussed in the first chapter. The second will be a chief topic of this section.

Dr. Antonio Salazar, who during World War II ran the Portuguese government with near-ironclad authority, saw the war primarily as a threat to Portugal and its colonial interests - the larger moral and political issues involved being, according to his biographers, entirely secondary.⁶⁵ Just as none of the wartime neutrals was genuinely "neutral", so it was with Portugal; in, for example, its vitally important wolfram dealings with the Axis and the Allies, the former received fully 75% of the ore, the latter only 25% of the total production between 1939 and 1945 - this despite loud and long protestations of even-handedness toward the opposing blocs.⁶⁶ Numerous other signs of pro-Axis sentiment in Portugal could be seen: unequal censorship of German and Anglo-American propaganda, or the observation that many of the country's social institutions were openly modeled on the fascist pattern. Nonetheless, Salazar's state did make a far

⁶⁴ Gordon, *The Hidden Weapon*, 103.

⁶⁵ Figueiredo, *Portugal*, 93.

⁶⁶ Ironically, while Germany never had to repay the unpaid portion of the funds owed Portugal for the ore, Britain's war debt to Portugal - mostly for the wolfram, which was sold at the rate of 300 pounds sterling for 16,000 tons each year - was after the war used by Salazar to pay for the take-over of the British owned commercial interests in the Portuguese colonies; officially, however, Britain held that the money was well-spent in that it represented an important contribution to Britain's preemptive economic campaign against Germany. *Ibid*, 92-93.

greater effort to achieve something approaching true neutrality than did Franco until late in the war.⁶⁷ With serious and conflicting pressures from both sides, Salazar engaged in a "six-year piece of tightrope diplomacy and relentless bargaining"⁶⁸ that at times infuriated both sides but at war's end left Portugal intact - and not nearly the international pariah that Franco's Spain had become.

The history of Anglo-Portuguese relations was a major factor in creating this distinction between the two Iberian states. Though the English-Portuguese alliance went back six centuries, the Methuen Treaty of 1703 underlay the concrete economic basis of the relationship. This treaty ensured that Portugal would enjoy with Britain "a greater trading balance than any other country whatsoever", making their relationship a very much closer one at the outbreak of World War II than that between Britain and Spain.⁶⁹ But foreseeing the coming European conflict, Salazar in the late 1930s attempted to bolster his country's position by broadening its friendships into a wider circle of potential allies - particularly Brazil and Spain - in case of a serious Axis threat to Portugal's independence of action.⁷⁰

At the outbreak of war in September 1939, Britain didn't try to use its special relationship to bring Portugal into active co-belligerency; in fact, Portugal's neutrality at the outbreak of war was considered an advantage by the British. Had Salazar entered the war against Germany, the British government foresaw the strong possibility of Lisbon provoking a German invasion, which would have in turn

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 93.

⁶⁸ Kay, *Portugal*, 122.

⁶⁹ Figueiredo, *Portugal*, 94.

⁷⁰ Kay, *Portugal*, 121. Salazar also reached out for stronger contacts with the Holy See at this time.

given Salazar the prerogative to invoke the Alliance provisions and force Britain to fight for Portugal's territorial integrity.⁷¹

With war closing in, Salazar received a not-too-subtle suggestion from Franco that Portugal's position in the upcoming conflict should be one of neutrality - that it should avoid favoring the British side. The German Chargé d'Affaires in Portugal cabled the Foreign Ministry in Berlin on August 25, 1939:

I learn from a most reliable source that the Spanish ambassador [the Caudillo's brother, Nicolas Franco y Bahamonde] inquired of Minister President Salazar yesterday whether Portugal would remain neutral in a general conflict. Salazar gave him to understand that he would do everything to ensure that Portugal remains neutral, but did not give him any binding declaration. Thereupon Franco's Ambassador gave him to understand that Spain would be compelled to revise her policy towards Portugal, if Portugal did not maintain her neutrality.⁷²

As we've seen, some of the more extreme elements of the Falange advocated an Iberian union, with or without Portugal's compliance: the influential *Diario de Burgos*, published in the city that had been the Nationalist headquarters in the Civil War, ominously editorialized on November 15, 1939: "without the meddling of Great Britain, the union of Spain and Portugal would have been achieved because it is a geographical necessity."⁷³

Five days later, on August 30, the same German official reported to Berlin that he was told by Salazar's ambassador to Madrid that he had instructions to inform the Spanish government that Portugal "would try to remain neutral as long as possible, but would probably not be able to withstand excessive British pressure

⁷¹ When the threat of a German invasion of Portugal seemed imminent in 1940, Britain suggested to Salazar that his army put up only a token resistance while moving the government to the Azores, and Salazar did begin strengthening his military garrison in those islands. *Ibid*, 152 and 161.

⁷² DGFP, v. VII, 290.

⁷³ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 323.

in the long run, especially in view of her [Portugal's] colonies." The following day, Ribbentrop wired his legation in Lisbon that Germany was

determined, should hostilities break out, to refrain from any aggressive act toward Portugal...and to respect Portuguese possession, *if* Portugal maintains an impeccable neutrality towards us in any future conflict. Only if this condition should, contrary to our expectation, not be fulfilled, would we naturally be compelled...to protect our interests in the sphere of warfare in such a way as the situation then prevailing might dictate.⁷⁴

It would, however, soon be Salazar who would be urging Franco to stay out of the conflict for Iberia's sake.⁷⁵ Salazar announced on October 9, 1939 that Germany had offered through diplomatic channels to respect Portugal's neutrality, and furthermore that Great Britain did not wish to invoke any obligations under the historic Anglo-Portuguese alliance in respect of Portugal entering the war. Britain's position as conveyed by its ambassador in Lisbon stated that the country's neutrality was the best way to serve British *and* Portuguese national interests. The British envoy in Lisbon, Sir Walford Selby, reported to London that he believed that "Salazar was fundamentally loyal to the Alliance", and that he "would answer the call to [co-belligerency with Britain] if it were made on the grounds of dire necessity."⁷⁶

Even though Salazar held that Germany represented a bastion against communism, hatred for which he felt fully as strongly as Franco, the evidence is that the Portuguese government and people essentially supported the the Allied side, fearing that a British loss in the war would result in a Germanification of Europe and a consequent loss of Iberia's independence.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, Germans

⁷⁴ DGFP, v. VII, 441.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, v. VII, 474.

⁷⁶ Kay, *Salazar*, 123.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 128.

in Portugal very successfully impressed the Portuguese upper classes as well as the organized youth movement with the Nazi point of view: though not necessarily embracing Hitler's methods, Portugal's upper social strata favorably compared Germany's orderly society and strong economy with the memory of poverty and social discord from which Salazar was slowly bringing the country.⁷⁸

In a sense, Portugal was at war's outbreak tied to Britain because of its colonial empire and their trade and investment relationship. Throughout the nineteenth century, British naval power had protected most of Portugal's overseas possessions from foreign encroachment, which had been the primary reason for Portugal entering the First World War on the Allied side. Many of its colonies were in close physical proximity to substantially stronger British possessions and nearly all were strategically important to Britain's war effort - and there was an implied British threat if they remained off-limits in that effort.⁷⁹

Salazar had had reason to mistrust British intentions in the late thirties, when leading members of the Chamberlain government had proposed a plan giving Germany economic rights and possibly even "living space" carved out of Portuguese Angola and the Belgian Congo, a proposal that was, of course, shelved after September 1939.⁸⁰ But with the onset of war the Portuguese dictator believed a British loss would still likely mean a German takeover of its African possessions and thus the end of the enormous financial advantages its African empire brought home. If he voluntarily allied Portugal with Spain in military

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 128.

⁷⁹ During World War II Portugal would lose one of its overseas colonial possessions, not to the British but to the Japanese. Portuguese Timor, an island in the Lesser Sundas in the Malay archipelago, which it shared with the Netherlands, was occupied by the Japanese army in February 1942. *Ibid*, 165.

⁸⁰ Tom G. Gallagher, *Portugal - A Twentieth Century Interpretation*, Manchester, 1983, 102.

partnership with Germany in the hope of finessing Hitler into letting Portugal's African possessions remain Portuguese, the result would have been, in Salazar's judgment, an eventual British invasion of Iberia and the collapse of his regime.⁸¹ It was from this quandary that Salazar urged Franco to remain neutral. Though the precise effect of Salazar's advice to Franco is disputed among historians, it should be noted that when Franco had the least reason to deny Hitler's pleas that Spain militarily join the Reich in the summer and fall of 1940, the Spanish dictator, then coming under Salazar's most insistent protestations against belligerency, kept his country neutral.

Though it would be an over-simplification to credit Salazar's influence alone for keeping Franco neutral,⁸² substantial credit in this regard should nonetheless be given the Portuguese leader. The assurances of Iberian military solidarity Salazar proffered Franco, and the link Portugal represented between Spain and the Allies, also would help allay Franco's fears of Spain being used by the Allies as a site for future European landings: the promise that Salazar made of neutrality went a long way in 1940 and 1941 toward relieving Franco of fears of an Allied invasion of Iberia, one Franco thought would be directed primarily at Spain even though it might have involved an initial landing in Portugal.⁸³

Unknown to the Portuguese, the British or the Americans, Germany had decided in late 1940 to indefinitely postpone its naval plans to seize the Azores, the most strategically important of Portugal's possessions.⁸⁴ Hitler judged that such a

⁸¹ Figueiredo, *Portugal*, 97.

⁸² In 1942 the British ambassador in Lisbon made clear his own view that the greatest service the Portuguese could render the Allies was "if Salazar can keep Spain neutral in the event of war." *Ibid*, 152.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 155.

⁸⁴ Toynebee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 329.

naval operation would draw-off an unacceptably large portion of his naval forces then engaged in destroying merchant shipping supplying Britain, and ordered the cessation of plans to occupy the islands.⁸⁵ But as late as May 1941, Hitler was apparently still hazily looking forward to eventually gaining a long-range bomber base in the Azores, saying as much to Grand Admiral Erich Raeder, who responded with the same advice as that tendered at all earlier mentions of the subject - that at no foreseeable date could the German navy militarily hold the islands or keep them adequately supplied.⁸⁶

Germany did, however, develop a plan outlining a response to a British invasion of Iberia.⁸⁷ A May 1941 directive to the Army High Command from General Franz Halder noted that in the event of the German army being "tied down in the eastern theater of war in the summer of 1941" that it should

not be excluded that England...will try...to create for herself a new continental position on the Iberian peninsula, with the aim of preventing Spain from joining the Axis Powers, compensating for the loss of prestige she has suffered, and offering the U.S.A. promising conditions for her entry into the war...A landing in the Portuguese ports is to be expected primarily rather than in the ports of northern Spain. Portugal will resign herself, under protest, to an English landing.⁸⁸

The directive went on to outline in Operation *Isabella* the means by which the *Wehrmacht* would respond by driving out the British force.

Portugal's neutrality, already more nearly total than any of the other neutrals,⁸⁹ was important and useful to both sides, and thus restrained the

⁸⁵ Figueiredo, *Portugal*, 97.

⁸⁶ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 330.

⁸⁷ Stanley Payne has written that just as Germany had no concrete plans for a first-strike invasion of Iberia, neither did Britain; neither side knew this until after the war, of course. Payne, *Franco*, 269-ff.

⁸⁸ DGFP, v. XII, 731-733.

⁸⁹ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 322.

opposing belligerents in whatever occupation plans they had for Portugal or its colonies. If Portugal had become absolutely vital to one side or the other, the probability is that it would have been invaded. But the fact that both sides were free to come and go in wartime Portugal made it extraordinarily useful as an entry point for Europe, with, for example, the Lisbon-based Pan American Clipper flights serving both the Allies and the Axis - ironically, many believed, in equal measure.⁹⁰ Lisbon was also between 1940 and 1945 one of the world's major financial markets, its money black market an undeniable asset to both sides.⁹¹ Furthermore, Portugal's capital became the Red Cross' chief European distribution port. Less measurable perhaps but still noteworthy is the fact that the city and its outskirts represented Europe's brightest and most normal urban landscape:

To travellers from countries at war, Portugal seemed an incredible oasis of peace and prosperity: no blackout, no ration cards till [late] in the war; shops full of food and luxuries, for those who could afford to buy them; hotels full of wealthy refugees killing time till they could get a place in the Pan-American Clipper; a skulking place for spies (real, or more often fancied) of all the nations at war.⁹²

Salazar strongly continued to believe his country's only chance to come out of the European conflict unweakened and undamaged was to achieve and maintain complete neutrality,⁹³ and just as strongly held that Portugal's future was inextricably tied to that of Spain: if Spain either joined the Axis, or was invaded by either belligerent side, Portugal would perforce be swept into the fray regardless of

⁹⁰ The Germans were notably able to infiltrate and exfiltrate their Britain-based espionage agents via the Pan Am Clipper and the other international airlines that continued to serve Lisbon. Fodor, *The Neutrals*, 88.

⁹¹ Kay, *Salazar*, 154.

⁹² *Ibid*, 154.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 122.

the correctness of its behavior as a neutral.⁹⁴ Even after 1941, Salazar continued to hold that it would be an easy leap for Germany to move into Portugal with the rest of a Nazi-occupied Iberia. And a German-dominated Iberian Atlantic coastline was known to have been coveted by the German navy, though Hitler is reported to have always shown more interest in the Portuguese Atlantic island possessions than he did in the Portuguese mainland.⁹⁵ As a cornerstone of Portugal's foreign policy designed to keep Spain neutral, he continued unabated through 1944 to counsel patience to Franco.⁹⁶ But Salazar always recognized Franco's underlying fear - both dictators well knew what it would mean to their regimes if communism or communist-supported regimes were established in Iberia as a result of a German loss of the war. Salazar could neither understand Britain's moral antipathy to Franco's Spain - even in light of its membership in the Anti-Comintern Pact - nor the British failure to see that country as a barrier to such a political future for all of Europe.⁹⁷

Portugal might have had its own version of Spain's Blue Division fighting alongside the *Wehrmacht* in Russia if a proposal German Ambassador Huene made to Salazar had come to fruition. In a telegram dated July 2, 1941, Huene reported to the Foreign Ministry in Berlin that

in the course of today's conversation with Salazar the talk turned to the establishment of a corps of Spanish volunteers to fight Bolshevism [the Blue Division was at the time being organized in Spain] and to the question of carrying out a similar demonstration in Portugal. I informed Salazar that we received daily applications from Portuguese to be taken into the German army...Salazar explained

⁹⁴ Fodor, *The Neutrals*, 78-79, 86.

⁹⁵ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 328.

⁹⁶ Kay, *Salazar*, 155-ff.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 124.

that...in Spain it was somewhat different...that Spain had a debt of gratitude to pay for the help in the Civil War.⁹⁸

Salazar managed to disengage himself thus, and said he would "perhaps" organize a "Portuguese Legion" demonstration on behalf of the German fight on the Russian front. Huene's response was that even this gesture would find a "strong response not only in Germany but all over the world." The subject was apparently dropped, except when it was raised one more time by Huene in October, which met with Salazar responding only that he hoped Huene didn't want an immediate reply. Nothing further came of the idea of Portuguese volunteers fighting Germany's fight.⁹⁹

Portugal's relationship to the United States between 1939 and 1945 was much less stressful than Spain's - though because of the strategic political considerations involving its Atlantic island possessions, the Portuguese professed to fear the Allies' intentions concerning the islands nearly as much as they did those of Germany. The Salazar government was held by Western opinion to be far less odious than that of Franco, not because it was any kind of a model Western-style democracy but because it had neither been helped into power by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy nor had it emanated from a military coup. But both before and after its entry into the war, the U.S./Portuguese relationship centered particularly on the inflammatory issue of the Azores, the islands whose utilization as an anti-submarine facility the British considered especially critical. Before December 1941, President Roosevelt constantly brought diplomatic pressure on Salazar to lease one of the islands to Britain, and even threatened,

⁹⁸ DGFP, v. XIII, 69-70. The telegram doesn't say which man broached the topic, but from the turn of the conversation it appears the German was the instigator.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 70.

through Cordell Hull to Portugal's Ambassador Bianchi in Washington, American occupation of Germany were seen to make any moves in their direction.¹⁰⁰

In May 1941, Senator Claude Pepper gave a speech in the Senate advocating American occupation of the Azores on the basis that Hitler was known to regard them as a useful base from which Germany could launch air strikes against New York with an as-yet undeveloped long-range bomber.¹⁰¹ Portugal was, understandably, indignant over Pepper's speech, and a series of notes from Lisbon to Washington was immediately initiated in which Portuguese neutrality for *all* Portuguese soil was emphasized. In spite of the fact that Roosevelt declared the Azores to be a part of the western hemisphere and thus under the protection of the Monroe Doctrine, thereby "justifying" a preemptive occupation to safeguard America from air attack, Hull was nonetheless authorized to assure Salazar that Portuguese sovereignty would not be infringed. The assurance evidently was given on the grounds that good relations with this useful neutral were more important than preempting an unlikely German occupation attempt on the islands.¹⁰²

It was in July 1941 that the Germans apparently decided that a unilateral American intervention in the war - taking the Azores - was not in the United States' interests. In a telegram dated July 20, 1941, the German chargé in Washington wired the Foreign Ministry in Berlin that

according to all indications President Roosevelt has postponed for the moment his intention to occupy the the Azores....This change in the President's opinion certainly was decisively influenced...by

¹⁰⁰ Kay, *Salazar*, 161.

¹⁰¹ Langer, *Undeclared War*, 80.

¹⁰² The State Department had correctly judged German naval power inadequate to even try to capture the islands - a judgment later borne out by German naval records. Kay, *Salazar*, 163.

reports which were heeded here regarding a strengthening of the Portuguese garrisons on the Azores.¹⁰³

After the fall of France in June 1940, when war appeared perilously close for the Iberian peninsula, Salazar had ordered the strengthening of the Portuguese army from 40,000 men to 80,000 men, in addition to new colonial manpower levies, most of which increases were sent to the vulnerable Atlantic islands.¹⁰⁴ Though at the time of Pepper's speech the American army's offensive combat strength was "negligible", an assessment General George Marshall conveyed to Roosevelt when a move against the Azores was still being officially considered, there is no evidence that "strengthened Portuguese garrisons" would actually have held off an American occupation if Roosevelt decided that essential U.S. security interests demanded it.¹⁰⁵

Later evidence, a German document, seems to question the interpretation: a German Political Office interoffice memorandum dated September 30, 1941, and based on reports from the Luftwaffe Attaché in Lisbon, reported that

the task of the Portuguese armed forces (which it [Portugal] no longer intends to strengthen to any substantial degree) was, first of all, to protect the islands and colonies until a greater military power could come to the aid of Portugal. The troops on the Atlantic islands could hold the islands from 3 to 4 days against the attack of a major power. Portugal intended to maintain strict neutrality. In case of an attempt to land by English or American troops she would call on Germany for help. In case of an invasion by Germany or Spain on the other hand she would call on England for help.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ He added that "a further reason for Roosevelt's hesitation to push further into the Atlantic lies in the momentary lack of clarity about Japan's next steps." DGFP, v. XIII, 189-90.

¹⁰⁴ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 319-321. Incidentally, at the same time the country's gold reserve was reportedly sent to the United States.

¹⁰⁵ Stetson Conn and Byron Fairchild, *U.S. Army in World War II - The Western Hemisphere - The Framework of Hemisphere Defense*, Washington, D.C., 1960, 26.

¹⁰⁶ DGFP, v. XIII, 594.

In February 1942, Franco warned Salazar that he had information that the British were going to try to overthrow him in preparation for occupying the Atlantic islands; the Caudillo promised Salazar Spanish help in such an event, subject only to reciprocity from Portugal should Spain be attacked. Salazar reportedly didn't believe such were Britain's intentions.¹⁰⁷

Though Iberia itself began to recede in importance after the United States entered the war, the Azores did not. Allied shipping was still subject to devastating losses from submarines in the Atlantic, and the limited-range aircraft of the time were not able to attack the German submarines effectively from available continental bases. Not only would a more southerly, and thus presumably safer, shipping route be opened to the Allies, but naval escorts would have a refueling station and the aircraft from the islands would be an effective weapon against the U-boat threat to the convoys.¹⁰⁸ So where U.S. diplomatic efforts failed, the British decided to go forward - by asking rather than demanding, and in very polite diplomatic language, that Portugal cede to the Allies an Azore base.¹⁰⁹

As long as substantive danger of a German invasion had hung over Salazar, he had hesitated to compromise Portuguese neutrality. But after the Torch landings and Iberia's apparent safety from future German attack, in August 1943 he finally gave in, not to the importunate Americans, but to the British. Salazar justified this obviously huge hole in Portugal's neutrality policy by invoking its ancient treaty obligations to Britain. Nonetheless the United States continued to threaten to take the Azores by force while these negotiations with Britain inched forward, the U.S.

¹⁰⁷ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 328.

¹⁰⁸ Kay, *Salazar*, 166.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 165.

ambassador archly informing the Portuguese foreign minister that "small nations depend on an Allied victory [too]."¹¹⁰

The German reaction to this reversal in Portuguese policy was noted succinctly by Goebbels in a diary entry: "Unfortunately [Salazar] has lost faith in us to some extent." For good measure, he added that "the same is true of Franco. The dictators would do far better if they openly took sides with us, for if our side does not win, they are lost anyway."¹¹¹ In hindsight, Goebbels' prediction was erroneous, but in light of the attitudes that operated in both Iberian states even as late as 1943, it was assumed that if Germany did lose the war, both Iberian dictators would also fall.

German Foreign Office records indicate that on May 14, 1943 Hitler finally decided that any kind of an Iberian invasion for the purpose of taking Gibraltar was no longer possible. The German dictator understood by this time that Franco would not enter the war at his side, his Spanish counterpart judging (correctly) that German military forces, while still lethal, were now simply too much consumed in the Russian war to be able to field a force capable of breaking through Spain or Portugal against the combined opposition of those countries' governments. Both Portugal and the Allies evidently came to the same conclusion at around the same time, and the realization in Lisbon that Germany no longer presented an overwhelming danger to Portugal was what caused Salazar to acquiesce to Allied demands regarding the Azores. Though he insisted that Portugal remained legally neutral, the move signaled the real end to all significant Portuguese concessions to

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 168.

¹¹¹ quoted in Figueiredo, *Portugal*, 100.

German war aims except that Portuguese wolfram would continue to go to Germany for another year.¹¹²

The Royal Navy arrived in the Azores in October 1943. Immediately the American ambassador in Lisbon demanded that the United States be allowed to station a 10,000 man garrison on the islands. (For the time, the demand was ignored.) Britain had promised not only the maintenance of Portuguese sovereignty in the islands, but that it would remove its personnel at war's end. It also promised to come immediately to Portugal's military rescue if Germany should invade mainland Portugal because of this breach in Portuguese neutrality. The British further vowed, somewhat disingenuously, that this granting of Azores facilities in no way decreased its respect for Portugal's neutrality "on the European mainland." In payment for the bases, Britain supplied Portugal with war materiel worth 15 million pounds sterling, meant to substantially increase Portugal's defensive military capabilities. In the end, Germany took no retaliation on Portugal over the Azores.¹¹³

For somewhat longer, Salazar maintained that he could not give the United States what he had given Britain only because of treaty obligations.¹¹⁴ Finally, Salazar gave in, but only on the condition that the Americans operate as an arm of the British force, and that American aircraft be marked with both U.S. *and* British insignia. As of July 1944, American naval squadrons were finally based in the Azores.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Kay, *Salazar*, 166-168.

¹¹³ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 338.

¹¹⁴ After writing to Churchill on October 14 to suggest a direct presidential request would be most useful "in the furtherance of the Allied cause", Roosevelt personally approached Salazar with a plea to base U.S. forces in the islands. FRUS, v. vii, 1943, 553.

¹¹⁵ Kay, *Salazar*, 65.

The granting of the Azores facilities to the Allies did much to assuage U.S. indignity over the continued sale of Portuguese wolfram to Germany. This last attempt at even-handedness Salazar felt was necessary to forestall German bombings of Portuguese cities: after the agreement with Britain over the islands, the Portuguese nervously awaited Luftwaffe bombers for several weeks.¹¹⁶

The political effects of the Second World War on Portugal were similar to those experienced by Spain, in that the Salazar regime was required in the post-war world to discard some of its less acceptable features of its authoritarian regime - less acceptable by the standards of the western democracies - and replace them with at least some of democratic standards of the states which, on the non-Soviet side of the Grand Alliance, won the war. Although the changes were perhaps more cosmetic than substantive - fascist salutes became less conspicuous, Salazar replaced his desk photograph of Mussolini with one of the British monarch, and he declared his state not "corporate" but "corporative", the latter distinction a fine one¹¹⁷ - the result for Portugal was a step toward greater pragmatism and fewer of the repressive policies that had marked Salazar's pre-war domestic politics.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 179.

¹¹⁷ Figueiredo, *Portugal*, 103.

SWITZERLAND

"Of all the neutrals, Switzerland
has the greatest right to distinction."
Winston Churchill¹¹⁸

Since 1815,¹¹⁹ Switzerland's foreign policy had been grounded on one unshakable rock: neutrality - which meant keeping out of other countries' wars, expecting other countries to stay out of its affairs, and treating all other nations theoretically evenly. When they joined the League of Nations in 1920, the Swiss abandoned their centuries-old policy of absolute neutrality in favor of one of "conditional neutrality", i.e. that under limited circumstances they would participate in coercive, but non-military, measures to thwart a breaker of the League's covenant.¹²⁰ But after the failure of the League, and seeing the road to war being taken by the Powers, Switzerland renounced this policy when it decided in October 1938 to revert to absolute neutrality to relieve itself of any lingering legal obligation to enforce sanctions.¹²¹ In light of its renewed scrupulous neutrality, in the summer of 1939 the Swiss government accordingly ceased any official public utterances designed to influence the about-to-be belligerents from altering their policies. Bern's fear was that any such course of action might be interpreted as taking sides as Europe's states moved along an inevitable path to war.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Fodor, *The Neutrals*, 46.

¹¹⁹ This date is arbitrary; the Swiss Diet first declared neutrality in 1674; Switzerland "withdrew" from Europe's wars after the defeat at Marignano in 1515. Christopher Hughes, *Switzerland*, London, 1975, 149.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 150.

¹²¹ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 200.

¹²² Heinz K. Meier, *Friendship Under Stress - U.S./Swiss Relations 1900-1950*, Bern, 1970, 251. Fervently defended in the person of Guiseppe Motta, both a federal councillor and Switzerland's leading diplomat from 1920 until his death in 1940, neutrality became the undisputed national ideal; it was Motta who convinced

Berlin viewed this policy as a deliberate rebuff by the Swiss, Germany being the racial and linguistic wellspring of over two thirds of Switzerland's people, as well as its largest trading partner.¹²³ It should be understood, however, that this Swiss posture of even-handedness came not from strong federal leadership, but was born of a deep-seated hatred for Nazi methods and ideology, a hatred loudly expressed by a substantial majority of the Swiss people in their unique and (in 1939) still almost personal democracy. The nation's journalists (particularly those of the German-language press) and intellectuals, and, especially, the officer corps of the Swiss army were the chief guarantors that Switzerland would not gravitate toward National Socialism but instead continue to embrace the nation's "historic values of independence, moderation and self-reliance."¹²⁴

A primary factor determining Switzerland's relationship with as well as official attitudes toward the belligerents in World War II was the nation's absence of economic self-sufficiency.¹²⁵ Legislative and administrative measures enacted in the late 1930s helped to alleviate difficulties arising out of the country's lack of needed materials, including the lack of sufficient domestic raw materials to keep open factories that needed them, the almost complete lack of significant oil reserves, and insufficient domestic food resources. But precautionary measures

the League to release Switzerland from any policing obligations under its Covenant. George Soloveytchik, *Switzerland in Perspective*, London, 1954, 246.

¹²³ During the late 1930s Germany accounted for nearly twice the annual value of both imports from Germany to Switzerland and exports from Switzerland to Germany as Switzerland's second largest trading partner, France. J. Murray Luck, *History of Switzerland*, Palo Alto, 1985, 804-805.

¹²⁴ Alice Meyer, *Anpassung oder Widerstand. Der Schweiz zur Zeit des deutschen Nationalsozialismus*, in *Friendship*, Meier, 251.

¹²⁵ This was, of course, a factor in determining the attitude of each of the neutrals toward the belligerents. In Switzerland's case, however, it contravenes popular beliefs which at the time of the war and since have inaccurately held Switzerland to be self-sufficient, or nearly so. *Ibid*, 263-ff.

alone were not enough to solve the problems that the economy faced once surrounded by a continent at war. With no sea coast of their own from which to export or import materials, the Swiss were forced to depend on potentially hostile neighbors for shipment facilities.¹²⁶

In the early stages of the war, before the German attack through the Low Countries in May 1940, the Swiss were also concerned, justifiably and seriously, about both sides dragging the Confederation into the war by outflanking the fortifications on the Franco-German frontier¹²⁷ and invading each other through Swiss territory, especially via the Belfort hinge in France.¹²⁸ All these factors determined Switzerland's behavior at the outset of war, behavior that would prove to be far from neutral or even-handed but which allowed the Swiss economy to keep from either collapsing or reverting to a kind of agrarianism for which the majority of the highly industrialized Swiss population would have been ill-prepared to participate.¹²⁹

Before European hostilities broke out in September 1939, there was some fear, particularly in American intellectual circles, that Switzerland, which had seemingly overreacted to the Comintern threat at the time of the Spanish Civil War by partially outlawing the Communist party, would come under Nazi influence by permitting some kind of semi-*Anschluss* with Germany.¹³⁰ It was out of the Swiss government's wish not to offend Berlin or Rome that these foreign fears emanated,

¹²⁶ Meier, *Friendship*, 258.

¹²⁷ Fodor, *The Neutrals*, 49. The attack the Germans had indeed planned to go through Switzerland was called *Tannenbaum*; the end run around the Maginot Line's northern wing through Belgium obviated its need.

¹²⁸ *Life*, September 25, 1939, 32.

¹²⁹ Meier, *Friendship*, 258.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, 272-ff.

and the government's efforts not to upset the Nazi colossus to its north was seen in more sympathetic circles as understandable *Realpolitik*. Nonetheless, during the war Switzerland continued to come under severe press criticism in the West for what was perceived as unseemly licking of German boots.¹³¹

In fact, the concerns in much of the West about the Swiss people's psychological incapacity to withstand the German siren appear to have been greatly exaggerated. The overwhelming majority of the Swiss rejected German demands for either union or Nazification of its institutions, despite government concessions to Germany regarding such matters as the importation of Nazi propaganda material or even the larger issue of stopping criticism of Germany in Switzerland's press. Heinz Meier wrote that in order to survive the ordeal of 1939/1945, Switzerland

had to trade with Germany, had to black out its cities, made it difficult for refugees to enter the country,¹³² lived under a constant threat of invasion, and had to submit to severe restrictions in the consumption of food, manufactures of all kinds, and gasoline

in placating its "snarling enemies", yet the country "remained true to itself."¹³³

It is generally conceded today that had Germany wanted to occupy Switzerland in World War II, it could have done so - but at a huge price. Wringing that high price out of Germany was, as the Swiss government and people realized, the factor most responsible for its independence and neutrality. Following World

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 266.

¹³² Switzerland's wartime behavior has been most severely criticized in regard to refugees, especially Jews, fleeing the Nazis. The number of refugees who found asylum in Switzerland between 1933 and 1945 - estimated at 300,000 - was pathetically small in proportion to the need, but the Swiss defended their actions (actions which met with approval by the majority of the Swiss people) as necessary to preserve the country from being swamped and thus threatening the "character of [its] insular society." Fodor, *The Neutrals*, 59.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 269.

War I, Switzerland had, like most pacific-oriented states, largely ignored military defense. But after Hitler came to power in 1933, the Federal Council, sensing the new danger from its powerful neighbor, began to undertake a limited military build-up, albeit one engendering the criticism of Swiss socialists and the country's other left-wing political groups. In 1936, more substantive re-arming began, with new fortifications built on the northern and northeastern frontiers and in the strategic Alpine chokepoints. Two years later, following the Munich crisis, all tunnels, roads and bridges near the nation's borders were mined and put under permanent guard,¹³⁴ the government understanding that scrupulous neutrality was tied to the counterweight of an active and vigilant military back-up.¹³⁵

The cornerstone of Switzerland's security was its army. Swiss military training was the most rigorous of any of the six European neutrals. Under the universal military training provision of its constitution, every able-bodied male without exception was called-up at 19 (lowered in 1939 from age 20), and was required to give from two to six weeks of active duty training every year until the age of forty; furthermore, all males were kept on the active reserve roles until reaching sixty.¹³⁶ Four hundred thousand Swiss were called-up under the first general mobilization of September 1939, and by May 1940, a total of 850,000 were engaged at least part-time in the country's defense, including women's auxiliaries and home guards. During the period from 1939 to 1945, there were never less than 100,000 men under arms at any given time.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 202.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 210.

¹³⁶ The normal peacetime army numbered about 50,000 men, including reservists. *1933 World Almanac* of the "New York World Telegram."

¹³⁷ Georg Thueren, *Free & Swiss - The Story of Switzerland*, London, 1970, 157.

The theory underlying Switzerland's mobilization plans in September 1939 called for the border to be guarded by active military; if a general mobilization order went out, the entire military force could be brought into an active defense posture within 24 hours. Half a million troops were assigned to the Alpine regions; these represented the armed elite, the body whose military skills and general preparedness were meant to give pause to any aggressor, even the *Wehrmacht*. Backing these troops were strongly-fortified borders and strategic sites: the area around the Swiss entrance to the St.-Gotthard tunnel was in 1939 held to be the most heavily fortified place in the world, exceeding even the fortifications at the ends of the Panama Canal.¹³⁸ Though Germany very much coveted Switzerland's assets, the factor which kept the merits of an invasion from outweighing its costs was Germany's certain knowledge that the Swiss military would prove a tenacious enemy to defeat, and that the Swiss would unhesitatingly institute a kind of "scorched earth" defense by destroying their most valuable assets - the tunnels linking Germany to Italy.

On August 22, 1939, an unsigned memorandum was prepared by State Minister Otto Koecher in Berlin that "would serve as guidance on language to be held for German Missions abroad." With reference to Switzerland, the memorandum stated "the intention to respect Swiss neutrality should be reiterated to the Swiss Government and reference made to the repeated unequivocal statements by the Fuehrer on this question."¹³⁹ Nine days later, on September 1, the day Germany attacked Poland, the following memorandum by the State Secretary was filed with the Foreign Ministry in Berlin:

¹³⁸ *Fortune*, September 1941, 114.

¹³⁹ DGFP, v. VII, 196-197. Similar statements were made to all the European states, excepting Poland of course, and the Soviet Union, which by this time had knowledge of Germany's forthcoming actions.

I pointed out...that the German attitude toward Switzerland has been clearly defined to the Federal Counsellor a few days previously by Minister Koecher....I noted with gratitude that...the Swiss Government declared their readiness to lend every assistance to furthering humanitarian work. [signed Weizsaecker]¹⁴⁰

But professed German respect for Swiss neutrality quickly began to take the form of demands that Switzerland voluntarily circumscribe much of its own freedom of action as a sovereign state. After the outbreak of hostilities, one of the points of contention between the Reich and Switzerland involved Germany's furor over the still relatively uncensored Swiss press.¹⁴¹ Berlin was affronted by the anti-Nazi tone of many of the Swiss papers, which finally caused Weizsaecker to threaten Switzerland's president, Henri Vallotton, with retaliation unless the situation were rectified. In a memorandum of February 12, 1940 from Weizsaecker to the Foreign Ministry in Berlin, he reported that he "impressed upon [Vallotton] how necessary it was for the Swiss press to adopt a different attitude that that heretofore taken."¹⁴² This would be followed by many more German demands that Switzerland recognize the futility of clinging to Europe's old order.

When the *Wehrmacht* attacked the Low Countries in May 1940, the Swiss government's most immediate concern was that its own territory would be simultaneously violated by a German drive through Switzerland. In consequence, on May 10, the day after the German drive in the West began, the Swiss ordered a general mobilization of their army, bringing it to a high state of readiness if it should

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, v. VII, 504-505.

¹⁴¹ It might be noted that serious impediments on freedom of expression designed to assuage Germany were also implemented in Sweden. On several occasions, the Swedish government instituted proceedings against papers which "expressed themselves 'offensively' against a 'Foreign Power'". In December 1939 journalist Thure Nerman was sentenced to 90 days in jail for insulting Hitler in the *Trotts Allt*. Such restrictions, legislatively enacted, remained in force until 1944. Toynebee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 174.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, v. VIII, 772.

have to defend the country's borders. Invasion fears peaked on the night of May 14-15, when, because of German troop concentrations in the Black Forest, an invasion at the northern end of the country, through the Basel area, was held to be imminent. For the only time during World War II, a widespread civilian exodus ensued from towns in line of the expected invading Germans to the safer southern cantons and the Bernese Oberland.¹⁴³

In the face of such an overwhelming threat from Germany, the Swiss government, though responding with military mobilization, adopted a political attitude that seemed defeatist to many Swiss. Throughout the war, the Federal Council wielded powers greatly exceeding those granted it by the country's constitution, and even though elections were held in 1939 and in 1943,¹⁴⁴ the role of the parliament was correspondingly extremely circumscribed. For example, the right of referendum was suspended except where the Federal Council specifically permitted it, and the nation's civilian security and police agencies were subordinated to the military, although martial law as such was never declared.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Toynebee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 210-211.

¹⁴⁴ After the 1943 elections, opposition parties were again allowed to function, with the effect of politically isolating Swiss Nazis by balancing their extreme rightist views with those from the (non-communist) left. Roland Ruffieux, "La Suisse Pendant La Guerre: de L'Ordre Nouveau la Nouvelles Preoccupations - La Débat Idéologique en Suisse Romande", *Revue d'Histoire de la Deuxieme Guerre Mondiale*, 31 (121), 97-107.

¹⁴⁵ Georg Kreis, "La Suisse Pendant La Guerre: Etat Democratique en Etat de Siege?", *Revue d'Histoire de la Deuxime Guerre Mondiale*, 1899, 71-82.

Marcel Pilet-Golaz, the federal counsellor who was president in 1940,¹⁴⁶ made a broadcast to the nation on June 25, 1940. France, had fallen a few days earlier, which meant that Switzerland was now effectively encircled by Axis-occupied or Axis-controlled territory, making its situation ominous. In his address, Pilet seemed to castigate his fellow Swiss for their "reapse into the past" - in apparent reference to the country's resistance to what he believed was clearly going to be Europe's "New Order" -and for their "indolent, comfortable and snug mode of life which would now have to come to an end."¹⁴⁷ Using Nazi jargon, he called for *Erneuerung* (renewal) and *Anpassung* (adaptation) of Swiss institutions and policies.¹⁴⁸ The effect of the broadcast on the Swiss people was one of general amazement, particularly on those army commanders using the breather of the so-called Phony War - the period after the end of the Polish conflict and before the onset of the German attack in the West - to strengthen the country's defenses against the expected German attack.

When Pilet ordered the army to be reduced by two-thirds in a last-minute attempt to propitiate the Germans, many Swiss took the view that the president was condemning their way of life, and in doing so had become a near-collaborator by easing the way for a German takeover. Though his role as a high official of a small country trying to chart its way through every conceivable kind of foreign threat would have brought criticism to Pilet in any case, the Swiss thereafter

¹⁴⁶ The seven members of Switzerland's Federal Council are equal in authority and power; normally, the member who held the presidency (for a year at a time) enjoyed no greater authority than his fellow counsellors, except that he represented Switzerland internationally as Head of State. William Bennett Munro, *Governments of Europe*, New York, 1938, 783. Pilet was holding the presidency for the second time, having occupied the post once before in 1934. Soloveytschik, *Switzerland in Perspective*, 252-253.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 253.

¹⁴⁸ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 211.

regarded the president (who would continue as a federal counsellor and foreign minister until 1944) as the country's leading symbol of appeasement.

But major Western newspapers and magazines also assumed that Switzerland would in the end have to succumb to Hitler's often-stated determination to force all ethnic Germans to return to the Reich, including presumably, the three million German-speaking Swiss. Time magazine had written in 1938 what was then commonly thought that because the German-speaking Swiss were "Germans", they must be considered "racial comrades of the Fuehrer" and thus subject to the inevitability of "Hitler...gobbling up the nation whole."¹⁴⁹

But there was a very different reaction in Switzerland to the German threat, one embodied by Henri Guisan, the major Swiss hero to come out of the Second World War. He was a French-speaking gentleman-farmer and head of the confederation's armed forces who in the summer of 1940 became the "center and personification of resistance"¹⁵⁰ to his countrymen. Exactly one month after Pilet's broadcast, Guisan took an action that shaped Switzerland's actions for the remainder of the war, and one which immediately drew from Germany a yelp of surprised indignation. Protected by a battalion of mountain infantry, Guisan convoked an unprecedented meeting with 650 of his officers at the Ruetli meadow on the Lake of Lucerne, the historic birthplace in 1291 of the Swiss Confederation. To combat what he saw as an "accommodation" to German demands that might lead to capitulation to Berlin's insistence that Switzerland merge its economy with the Reich's,¹⁵¹ Guisan elicited from his officers a pledge to "unconditional resistance" should any invader threaten the nation's freedom. The general detailed

¹⁴⁹ *Time*, July 4, 1938.

¹⁵⁰ Meier, *Friendship*, 269.

¹⁵¹ With German managers of all war-sensitive Swiss industry.

the defense policy he had worked out, one utilizing and strengthening Switzerland's natural barriers, particularly its formidable mountains.¹⁵²

Guisan and his staff officers drew the nation's system of defenses in as flexible a pattern as possible. The actual frontiers were set with elasticized forward-defense measures to take up the brunt of an invasion while giving the main Swiss forces time to fall back into second and third lines of defense based on mountainous terrain studded with heavily fortified positions.¹⁵³ The nucleus of Switzerland's military forces would retreat into this Alpine "redoubt", one virtually unreachable by any invading army and from which sanctuary they could continue to harass their pursuers indefinitely. Guisan also had as a plus the knowledge that Berlin knew it couldn't take Switzerland unaware, as it had done with, for example, Norway or the Netherlands. The Swiss military command *expected* a German invasion, and was fully prepared to thwart it.¹⁵⁴

The single weak link in Switzerland's chain of natural defenses was the relatively flat plateau stretching from the southwest at Lake Geneva to the northeast at Lake Constance. But Guisan fortified this most exposed part of Switzerland's countryside with both a forward line behind Basel and a deeper one several kilometers behind this frontier area. Together they were designed to constitute a holding action while the bulk of the armed forces retreated to their ultimate position, the great central Alpine expanse in the center-south focused on the St.-Gotthard tunnel.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Fodor, *Neutrals*, 50.

¹⁵³ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 202-203.

¹⁵⁴ Gordon, *The Hidden Weapon*, 65.

¹⁵⁵ Admittedly, Guisan's plan left half of Switzerland, all the major cities and three quarters of the population outside this so-called "redoubt", but when Guisan later had public opinion sampled to ascertain popular acceptance of the plan, the

In this massively-fortified redoubt, which would in later years become virtually a Swiss legend,¹⁵⁶ the national identity was meant to be preserved, as were, more concretely, the two supremely important Alpine tunnels, the St.-Gotthard and the Simplon. According to *Fortune*, a fortress-city had been built in the redoubt, one supplied with power plants, dormitories, stores for all kinds of necessities stocked with amounts calculated to last the defenders three years, hospitals, and "even a gymnasium", presumably in which the defending soldiers and managing bureaucrats would keep themselves fit.¹⁵⁷ Guisan calculated his army would be capable of holding out here indefinitely, but if the redoubt *were* seriously threatened, his trump card remained the destruction of the tunnels themselves, an action that would leave Italy linked to Germany by only a single connection, the Austrian Brenner Pass. Thus Guisan's strategy was that Germany would have to pay an enormous price for whatever satisfaction it would gain by incorporating Switzerland into the Reich.¹⁵⁸

The German yelp intensified when Berlin learned of Guisan's plan - much of which was openly publicized and a plan that was already serving to raise public morale. The German minister in Switzerland, Otto Koecher, wired the Foreign Ministry in Berlin:

The Army Staff reveals through the local morning press that on July 25 General Guisan, on Mt. [sic] Ruetli, personally gave the order of the day to his troop commanders down to battalion commanders. In

majority of the Swiss, evidently fed up with German threats, supported the Commander-in-Chief. Fodor, *Neutrals*, 50.

¹⁵⁶ "Impregnable in the midst of chaos, the Gotthard might become our modern myth, for it is both a symbol and a reality as hard and solid as its own granite." Denis de Rougement and Charlotte Muret, *The Heart of Europe*, in Meier, *Friendship*, 269.

¹⁵⁷ *Fortune*, September 1941, 114.

¹⁵⁸ Fodor, *Neutrals*, 50.

his order General Guisan states that Switzerland is at a turning point in her history, that it is a matter of the preservation of Switzerland....I suggest considering whether joint or separate demarchés of similar content by the Axis Powers would not be in order, expressing our surprise at renewed incitement of Swiss public opinion against Germany and Italy; if anything could make the allied Axis Powers vacillate in their resolve to maintain their previous attitude toward Switzerland, it is such an inopportune demonstration as that of the General. The German Government ought to remind Switzerland, in this connection, of the steps by which it called the attention of the Federal Council to the campaign against Germany and German nationals residing here. It would have to hold the Swiss Government responsible for any excesses which might arise from the official statements of the Swiss Army leader.¹⁵⁹

Nonetheless Germany scrapped any idea of an immediate invasion as too costly. Koecher's telegram occasioned no substantive demarché in either of the Axis members' diplomatic policies in respect to Switzerland.¹⁶⁰

In surprising contrast to the usual American press denigration of Switzerland in the late 1930s because of its seeming subservience to German demands circumscribing its own freedom of actions, such carping began to ameliorate after Guisan's actions. In an admiring article in the September 1941 issue of *Fortune* magazine,¹⁶¹ the measures the Swiss had undertaken since war's outbreak to build up their defenses against a German attack were set out. The same article editorially quashed the German "blood-to-blood" myth that had had many Americans believing the Swiss were somehow consigned by destiny to "return" to the Reich.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ DGFP, v. IX, 364-365.

¹⁶⁰ Fodor, *Neutrals*, 51.

¹⁶¹ The same issue stated that "the Swedes have already taken their place in the Nazi New Order without visible resistance" - a contention that is discussed below. *Fortune*, September 1941, 74-ff.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, 74-ff.

After the invasion of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, renewed German pressure designed to soften up the Swiss for an eventual incorporation into Europe's "New Order" was brought to bear. Among other demands, Berlin insisted that Switzerland's traditionally free press report only positive stories regarding the Axis states and, conversely, only negative stories regarding the Allies, adding to the earlier insistence that only stories reflecting favorably on Germany be printed; that Switzerland's banned German Nazi and Italian Fascist parties be re-legalized; that all elements of the Swiss military demobilize; and that every significant Swiss industry be immediately turned over to German "advisers" who would control export policies. To most of these demands, Switzerland responded unequivocally in the negative, with the exception of the Nazi strictures on Switzerland's press freedom: the nation's papers were told to tone down anti-German stories in the interests of assuaging Berlin, the Federal Council viewing concession to this relatively minor imposition on Swiss sovereignty as reasonable prudence.¹⁶³ A writer for the *Basler Nachrichten* had only recently created an incident by impudently commenting that Germany's "Kreuzzug [crusade] in the Soviet Union was at best a Hakenkreuzzug."¹⁶⁴

Because Switzerland's economy was to a large extent tied to German sufferance as regarded imports of raw materials and exports of finished materials, the reality was that the country *had* lost a very material part of its economic sovereignty. Because Switzerland was surrounded by German, or German-controlled, or German-allied territory, the September 1, 1940 Nazi decree that placed all Swiss exports under Axis control was an unavoidable reality for the Swiss, one that was faced daily by the Swiss business community which had to

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, 74-ff. No mention was made of anti-German exiles.

¹⁶⁴ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 212.

secure German permits for nearly everything the country exported. The effect was that trade with the Allies nearly stopped. For example, the 17% of the country's exports that had gone to Britain before the war was cut to virtually nothing by 1940.¹⁶⁵ With some irony, those products that the Germans would have permitted Switzerland to receive from Allied countries - primarily bulk foodstuffs - were denied entry by the Allies themselves who withheld navicerts (for shipment into Genoa, landlocked Switzerland's leased "homeport") for fear the products would be re-sold to Germany.¹⁶⁶

The German blockade forced Switzerland in the first months of the war to switch from civilian production intended for export to military production, goods which were bought by all the belligerents and which brought back 1938 export levels by the spring of 1940. With the fall of France in June of that year, exports again dropped dramatically, but within 12 months the Axis partners and their allies once again brought exports back to 1938 levels. Now that the blocs were no longer able to bid against each other, Germany effectively set prices after June 1940, cutting Switzerland's profits and in some cases forcing the Swiss to sell armaments below costs,¹⁶⁷ a policy defended by the government on the basis that it kept Swiss factories in production, thus enabling the country to produce weapons for its own defense, the Swiss army's sting depending in large part on the quality of these locally-produced armaments.¹⁶⁸ After 1940, each battalion, besides being fully armed with high-quality automatic rifles and machine guns, was

¹⁶⁵ *Fortune*, September 1941, 74.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 74-ff.

¹⁶⁷ The Reich even demanded that the Swiss extend credit to German buyers, which practice the normally cash-and-carry Swiss sometimes were forced to accept. *Ibid*, 75.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 75.

further equipped with what was in the early 1940s considered one of the world's best anti-tank guns, the 47-millimeter.¹⁶⁹

Among the gravest wartime shortages Switzerland endured was gasoline, the last dribble of free access being cut off in spring 1941 when the Germans took over the Balkan oil fields. Of the 120,000 automobiles registered in the country in August 1939, by the fall of 1941 only 15,000 were still being used. The military had its own gasoline reserve, but was able to avoid drawing down on it by tapping the gasoline accumulations the government had astutely set aside in September 1939. Private motorists could use only their own private stocks, and only in rationed amounts; car owners without reserves were forced to put their vehicles in storage.¹⁷⁰

One of the lessons the nation learned from the First World War was that the mobilization of so much of the nation's manpower could have a disastrous effect on the nation's economy if measures weren't taken to ameliorate the consequences. Hence, one difference between the two wars was that after 1940 called-up reservists were paid an amount comparable to their civilian salaries out of a national compensation fund, a fund to which employers, employees, the cantons and the federal government contributed. A result of this compensatory policy was that the nation's economic difficulties were spread relatively evenly across the population.¹⁷¹

Switzerland's role vis-a-vis the United States in World War II was probably the least important of any of the neutrals. As a "listening post", though, it was valuable - but to *both* sides: in 1941, at least six spy networks operated out of

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 114.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 112.

¹⁷¹ Thueren, *Free & Swiss*, 157.

Switzerland, including two British-sponsored, pro-Soviet rings.¹⁷² As late as March 1943, the efficient Swiss military intelligence service reported to Bern that a German invasion was imminent, one possibly meant to preempt an Allied incursion through Switzerland Hitler wanted carried out as soon as the Wehrmacht was in a position to seize Switzerland's Alpine redoubt.¹⁷³ Though the government assured the Germans that the Swiss would defend their neutrality against *all* invaders, the scare was nonetheless real in the late winter and early spring of 1943.¹⁷⁴ In an extraordinary meeting with Waffen-SS General Walter Schellenberg at Biglen, in Swiss territory near Bern, Guisan warned the Nazi commander that he should have no doubts whatsoever that the Swiss would put up ferocious resistance to thwart a German attack, and that even at this late date in the war, when it was clear that Germany had no chance to defeat its enemies, the Swiss army would still destroy the three Alpine rail tunnels rather than let an invader have use of them.¹⁷⁵ In any event, after the collapse of his Italian ally, Hitler buried for good any notions of invading Switzerland, apparently reasoning that functioning Alpine tunnels, whose use the Swiss still freely allowed German military forces in occupied northern Italy, would best serve Germany's interests.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² John Lukacs, *The Last European War - September 1939/December 1941*, Garden City, 1976, 362.

¹⁷³ Germany feared that after 1943 the Swiss would allow their territory to be freely crossed by Allied armies chasing retreating Axis armies throughout Europe.

¹⁷⁴ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 221-222.

¹⁷⁵ In a telegram dated April 8, 1943, the American minister in Bern wired the Secretary of State: "Developments in the military situation with respect to Europe will put an increasing strain on the Axis partners. They will, in turn, make greater demands of the neutrals, which, in the case of Switzerland, may include passage of troops. The Swiss have assured us that any such demands will be refused and that the country will resist with its full strength any such attempt to violate Swiss neutrality." FRUS, v. ii, 1943, 901.

¹⁷⁶ Thueren, *Free & Swiss*, 158.

The most important Allied official in Switzerland during the war was Allen Dulles. Officially posted to Bern as assistant to the U.S. ambassador, Dulles' real role was chief of American intelligence operations for occupied Europe, his primary task to follow events inside the Third Reich itself.¹⁷⁷ Operating for the Office of Strategic Services, Dulles made special efforts to find out who in Germany opposed the Nazi regime, and whether such persons would actively cooperate with the Allies in an attempt to overthrow it. In carrying out his operations, Dulles received the close cooperation of the Swiss intelligence services. He was not, however, much surprised when he learned that the Swiss were providing exactly the same assistance to the German intelligence services - a situation Dulles judged beneficial to the Allied cause since it gave him broader and more accurate information than would otherwise have been possible.¹⁷⁸

An area in which Swiss interests came up against those of the United States concerned Switzerland's airspace. Both U.S. and British military aircraft regularly overflew Switzerland on their wide-ranging bombing operations, particularly missions over Italian targets. The 300 Swiss air force pilots were under order to ignore what appeared to them to be accidental, single-craft incursions, but if entire formations were spotted the pilots were either to force them to land, or, if necessary, to shoot them down - irrespective of the origin of the aircraft involved. In April 1944 alone, 650 incursions were reported, most of them by then Allied. At war's end, some 150 American B-17s and B-24s were interned at Swiss air bases - their crews the relatively pampered guests of the Swiss state.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Jozef Garlinski, *The Swiss Corridor*, (London, 1981), 120.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 121.

¹⁷⁹ Fodor, *The Neutrals*, 60.

An especially unsettling incident for Swiss-American relations involved the accidental bombing of Schaffhausen, Switzerland's only major town on the northern, German side of the Rhine. The town had been mistaken by the American bombing crews for the German city of Tuttlingen, 21 miles from Schaffhausen. The 1944 raid left 150 casualties and 50 buildings destroyed, for which in 1949 the United States paid Switzerland \$62 million in compensation, a figure set by the Swiss during the war and which included interest from the day of the raid.¹⁸⁰

There was an additional function filled by Switzerland during the war, one which was of great value to the Allies in respect of the importance of which American and British policy judged it wiser not to push the Swiss into difficult choices. The country served as the protecting power for Allied interests in Germany and in Japan. Most important in this regard was the role fulfilled by Swiss officials of inspecting enemy prisoner-of-war camps, reporting on the treatment of Allied internees and having the ability - most important late in the war - of uncovering and protesting, albeit on a limited basis, the frightening conditions they found. The Swiss also arranged prisoner-of-war exchanges between Allies and Axis, with the International Red Cross, headquartered in Geneva, serving as the clearance center for messages between prisoners and their families.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 58.

¹⁸¹ Toynebee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 194-197.

SWEDEN

"Every attack against the freedom and independence of the realm will be met with force....Sweden can and will defend itself."
Civil Defense pamphlet¹⁸²

Sweden was, with Switzerland, one of only two legally- and traditionally recognized neutral states in Europe. Its position of neutrality from the outbreak of war was in large part a result of its disappointments in the utility of the League of Nations and the growing realization that it could rely only on itself. In consequence, Swedish foreign policy took on an increasingly isolationist bent in the six years between Hitler's installation as chancellor and the start of the European war.¹⁸³ In the 1930s Sweden was the single Scandinavian state to have a military force of any real substance,¹⁸⁴ and was therefore compelled in the years just prior to the outbreak of World War II to play the central part in Scandinavia's relations with both belligerent blocs. The Scandinavian bloc policy that Sweden formulated in those years was designed to keep the North aloof from Europe's power plays, but the region was nevertheless brought into war in 1939 with the Russian attack on Finland, the latter becoming in 1940 a German ally; later that year, Norway and Denmark were invaded and occupied by the Germans, leaving Sweden on its own and surrounded by the Axis, its allies or its captives.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Donald S. Connery, *The Scandinavians*, New York, 1966, 338.

¹⁸³ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 171.

¹⁸⁴ In 1940, the army consisted of four divisions, the navy of 49 ships (including two cruisers and ten destroyers), and an air force whose size was kept secret. *Statesman's Year Book for 1941*.

¹⁸⁵ Gordon, *The Hidden Weapon*, 5.

Sweden's successful neutrality in the Second World War was the result of three primary factors: its geographical position, its military preparedness and willingness of its government and citizens to fight if invaded, and - perhaps most importantly - its acquiescence to Germany's demands that it maintain at prewar levels shipments of essential military supplies to the Reich. This last factor included the high-grade iron ore vitally necessary to Germany's armaments factories: for the Germans to have converted steel production to their own low-grade ore would have placed a considerable, some say intolerable, burden on its war economy.¹⁸⁶

Sweden underwent a critical test of its neutrality policies with the Russo-Finnish winter war of 1939-40. The Soviet attack on Finland on November 30, 1939 caused a public outcry among Swedes, a people with closer ties to Finland than any other Scandinavian state. Though many Swedes demanded active intervention on Finland's side, the Danish and Norwegian governments urged Sweden to realize that such intervention would inevitably involve all the powers in a general Scandinavian theater of war. In fact, Sweden's government did understand the danger to its status as a neutral by becoming too involved in the Finnish war, even its surreptitious and relatively minor military and humanitarian aid to its neighbor. Historian Ake Thulstrup characterized the new attitude of the Swedish government as essentially a negative one though:

There arose early on an unhealthy ideology of neutrality, remote from reality, which put forward such ideas as that the war in actual fact was no concern of ours and that the neutrals were morally far superior to the Powers who were involved in the war.¹⁸⁷

Nonetheless, Sweden continued to quietly help Finland to the extent possible by terming its assistance "non-belligerent interventionism", even though

¹⁸⁶ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 97. Toynbee says in such a scenario "Sweden would have been unable to conduct a major industrial war effort."

¹⁸⁷ quoted in *ibid*, 174.

considerable quantities of materiel were involved and the recruitment of about 9000 Swedish volunteers to help the Finns was permitted. Sweden realized, however, that eventually Finland would be forced to bow to the massive Russian superiority in numbers (if not in quality) of troops, and refused to jeopardize its own neutrality any further by acquiescing to Allied requests to allow troops to cross Sweden to come to Finland's assistance.¹⁸⁸ During most of this first Russo-Finnish war, Sweden's actions vis a vis Finland have been compared to American participation in 1940 and 1941 in the European war, when the United States was most active in supporting the British cause.¹⁸⁹

As to its western flank, Sweden had made limited joint military preparations with Norway before April 1940, including joint military planning conferences. But in 1939 Swedish defense strategists neither anticipated nor planned for a western war. When Germany invaded Norway, necessitating a defense of the entire Swedish-Norwegian border, Sweden was utterly unprepared for such an undertaking.¹⁹⁰

On April 12, 1940, three days after the German invasion of neighboring Denmark and Norway, Swedish prime minister Per Albin Hansson went on the radio to outline his country's policy in regard to its warring neighbors:

Sweden is firmly determined to continue to follow the line of strict neutrality. That implies that we must reserve for ourselves independence of judgment and independence of action in every direction. It is not consistent with strict neutrality to permit any belligerent to make use of Swedish territory for its activity. Fortunately no demands in such a direction have been made of us. Should any such demands be made they must be refused.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Henning Friis, *Scandinavia Between East and West*, Ithaca, 1950, 278-279. Some U.S. and French war materiel was allowed through.

¹⁸⁹ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 176.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 179.

¹⁹¹ DGFP, v. IX, 142.

From the very beginning of the war, official Swedish actions involved expanding the country's defense capabilities to ensure that Hansson's words could be supported. Speaking from the throne on September 9, 1939, King Gustav V expressed his government's determination to stay out of the conflict, and, to back up this determination, to greatly expand the country's armaments and defense expenditures.¹⁹² For the remainder of the war, this military preparedness, tempered with the pragmatism to bend to bearable demands on its sovereignty, would be the policy Sweden would successfully follow.

The reasons for Germany's failure to invade Sweden when Denmark and Norway were occupied have never been made completely clear. But it is known today that a German invasion of Sweden, while unquestionably within the Reich's military capabilities in 1940, would have upset Germany's carefully worked-out timetable had such an attempt been meaningfully contested - which Berlin fully believed it would be. The Norwegian and Danish occupations (the former meant specifically to counter a British occupation of northern Norway's coast) were to be followed within weeks by the attack in the West, and the Germans, accurately assessing the strength and resolve of the Swedish nation and its military defenses, must have reasoned that they could get what they wanted from Sweden by means far less burdensome than a military invasion and occupation. Berlin further knew that after the *Weseruebung* moves on its Scandinavian neighbors it could no longer surprise Sweden. Though Sweden's terrain is admittedly less formidable than that of Switzerland, the forested, lake-filled northern parts of the country, almost bereft of communication lines, would also have presented the *Wehrmacht* with a very difficult undertaking. Finally, the coveted and rich Kiruna iron ore

¹⁹² Toynebee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 172.

deposits lay in the north, allowing the Swedes plenty of time to fulfill their promise to destroy them in case of a German invasion.¹⁹³

An additional, less measurable but still important factor was the attitude of Stalin, who - allied with Hitler at the time - let it be known that he would regard unfavorably an invasion of Sweden by Germany. The Soviet dictator evidently reasoned that Sweden was in the Soviet sphere of influence, thus presenting a constraint on German movements in the North that Berlin couldn't at the time entirely disregard.¹⁹⁴

In 1940, the United States publicly announced that it considered Sweden's neutrality policy to be the realistic course for the country to take,¹⁹⁵ the State Department noting with approval Sweden's avowed intention to defend its territorial integrity against any invading force.¹⁹⁶ The United States further supported a nebulous plan for a Finno-Swedish union, designed to take Finland out of the war but which the Soviet Union resisted, as did the Germans.¹⁹⁷ All in all, American policy looked more at the substance of Sweden's actions than at its necessary concessions to overwhelming German economic pressure.¹⁹⁸

The most sensitive problem affecting relations between Sweden and both belligerent blocs was the famous issue involving transshipment of German soldiers and war materiel across Swedish territory to re-garrison and re-supply the

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, 173.

¹⁹⁴ Friis, *Scandinavia*, 279.

¹⁹⁵ W.M. Carlgren, *Swedish Foreign Policy During the Second World War*, New York, 1973, 119.

¹⁹⁶ Friis, *Scandinavia*, 282.

¹⁹⁷ Lukacs, *The Last European War*, 365.

¹⁹⁸ Carlgren, *Swedish Foreign Policy*, 120.

Wehrmacht in Norway.¹⁹⁹ There were many breaches in Sweden's neutrality, but none would be so controversial, not to say odious, in Sweden itself or among the members of the anti-Nazi alliance.

After the invasion of Norway and Denmark in April 1940, Germany demanded that Sweden allow the *Wehrmacht* transit facilities across Swedish territory so it could keep its northern Norwegian garrison centered on Narvik supplied. The undertaking would have been too costly - if not impossible - for the Germans to have carried out entirely by sea: though their control of the Skagerrak guaranteed them relatively safe access to southern Norway, getting to Narvik meant broaching the superior British naval forces in the North Sea.²⁰⁰ In response to these German demands for the use of its railroads, on April 12 the Swedish prime minister announced: "Sweden is firmly determined to continue to follow the line of strict neutrality...It is not consistent with strict neutrality to permit any belligerent to make use of Swedish territory for its activity."²⁰¹ But Sweden, which had been expecting the demands,²⁰² concluded by late April that it had no realistic

¹⁹⁹ It should be re-noted that Sweden and Norway had in January 1940, during the first Russo-Finnish war, agreed to an Allied request to allow war materiel - though not, as requested, troops - to pass through their territory bound for Finland. Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 175.

²⁰⁰ John M. West, *The German-Swedish Transit Agreement of 1940*, Colorado, 1978, 76-ff. There was no land connection between Trondheim and Narvik in Norway itself, either by rail or road, and the OKW calculated that because of weather air transport was too unreliable to successfully connect them. Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 178-182.

²⁰¹ West, *Transit Agreement*, 77.

²⁰² A few days after the April 9 invasion of neighboring Norway, Swedish Chief of Staff Axel Ruppe outlined the situation: "To the extent the Germans can maintain their sea communications with Norway intact we may not be subjected to such heavy pressure, but if this is not possible there will certainly be immediate demand on us to make territory and railroads available to them....The most immediate demand would probably be to ship supplies to their troops in Narvik." West, *Transit Agreement*, 76.

alternative but to partially accede to Germany's demands. It did stipulate, however, that shipments must be strictly limited to medical supplies until *after* the fall of Norway, when Stockholm would at least be able to justify its actions by rationalizing that nothing more could be done to help Norway in its fight against the Nazis.²⁰³

At first, a subterfuge was employed which seemed, in the narrowest technical sense, to get around the matter of violating Sweden's neutrality: Sweden would allow "Red Cross" trains, operating as regular commercial freight carriers, to transit its territory carrying "non-military" goods - food, clothing, gasoline, etc. - for the Narvik garrison. The German "medical personnel" on the trains were in reality critically needed military specialists, and the "non-military" goods were in fact lethal. As the price for this acquiescence, the Swedes demanded from the Reich substantial arms shipments for its own defense build-up, a price which Berlin met.²⁰⁴

But the issue was far from permanently settled. Now the Germans began to demand the transit of undisguised and unlimited war materiel - which the Swedes refused. At first promises of reward were held out, but increasingly there were threats to restrict Sweden's allowable imports through the German-controlled shipping lanes. Before April 9 Germany had predictably demanded that Sweden remain strictly neutral. But after the Norwegian and Danish occupations and Sweden's removal from the possibility of help from the west, Germany²⁰⁵ insisted

²⁰³ Henrik S. Nissen ed, *Scandinavia During the Second World War*, Minneapolis, 1983, 105.

²⁰⁴ DGFP, v. IX, 245-246.

²⁰⁵ The threats often came from Hermann Goering himself, who because of his Swedish connections personally involved himself in these negotiations. Goering's first wife, Carin von Kantzow, née Fock, was the member of an aristocratic Swedish family. Leonard Mosley, *The Reich Marshal*, Garden City, 1974, 59.

that Sweden effectively relinquish its neutrality in what to the Reich had become the critically important matter of protecting its far-northern Atlantic flank. All through this, the Narvik commander, General Edouard Dietl, continued to urgently request more men and materiel to ward off the expected Allied landing, Dietl's pleas meaning ever-nastier demands that Sweden drop all restrictions on the use of its railroads.

Even the proffered promise of additional war materiel to bolster its own defense needs didn't budge the Swedes from their negative position. On April 27, the German minister in Stockholm, Prince Victor zu Wied, reported to the Foreign Ministry in Berlin that "an expeditious way to take up the question of transit to Narvik...without danger of an official rejection...is receiving those deliveries of arms to which we have already committed ourselves",²⁰⁶ but three days later he had to report to Berlin that "the impression of our negotiators is that offers of further German deliveries of arms are not regarded by the Swedish Government as compensation for [further] modification of its neutrality policy",²⁰⁷ and that "the German suggestion that transit of arms and ammunition to German troops in Norway be permitted in conjunction with the German supplies of arms to Sweden was rejected in these discussions."²⁰⁸

German policy now moved to undisguised force meant to budge Stockholm from its obstinacy. First came an embargo on any more arms, arms which Sweden needed to protect itself from the source from which they came. Concessions on overseas Swedish shipping - shipping controlled, of course, by Germany²⁰⁹ - were

²⁰⁶ DGFP, v. IX, 245.

²⁰⁷ West, *Transit Agreement*, 79.

²⁰⁸ DGFP, v. IX, 258.

²⁰⁹ The Germans had granted Sweden safe-conduct passes - their own navicerts - for a small number of ships to pass through the Straits to the North Sea,

canceled. While Dietl was expecting a British attack on Narvik at any moment, and wiring to Berlin his urgent pleas for artillery (he estimated he would be able to hold out against an Allied assault for only ten to fourteen days without it), Sweden remained firm in its refusal to permit the shipments to be expanded to meet Germany's demands. Neither, though, did Britain make its move, which resulted in giving Germany additional time to pressure Sweden for the transit rights.

Finally, Goering offered Sweden two options by which he held the "formalistic" Swedish objections could be successfully overcome.²¹⁰ Either continue to send the military materiel in sealed railroad cars across Sweden, marked with the Red Cross symbol, or else allow the Swedes to appear to the Allies to have been duped by having the Germans seem to sneak it through by delivering it to a northern Swedish port as having been meant for Sweden.²¹¹ After Goering openly blustered that the best way to change Swedish opinion would be a few bombing attacks, the Swedes responded by redeploying their armies, now at the highest state of combat preparedness, to the sites most likely to receive a German invasion. On May 13, the Swedish military command ordered mobilization preparatory to state of war with Germany.

but goods bound for Allied countries were strictly banned. Both blocs closely checked this Swedish shipping (most of which was bound for Argentina): Germans to make sure no Swedish goods were bound for Britain or the U.S., the Allies to make sure no goods for Germany were sent on the return leg. Small amounts of material bound for Britain could get out through Petsamo, in Finland, but this represented a trickle of the 70% of Swedish exports that had been sent to the West before the war. Gordon, *The Hidden Weapon*, 62, 75.

²¹⁰ Germans expressed their outrage at Sweden by stating it was "the unrealistic *application* of the - in itself commendable - [Swedish] neutrality policy." Italics mine. West, *Transit Agreement*, 78.

²¹¹ Ribbentrop is thought to have come up with this last idea, but it was held to be so potentially cumbersome that it was meant only as a last resort. DGFP, v. IX, 259-260.

Ribbentrop now took over the negotiations. Summoning Arvid Richert, the Swedish minister in Berlin, he lectured the diplomat on the "factors of *Realpolitik*", that it was in Sweden's interests to allow the transit rights, by now specifically quantified to three trains, each with 30 to 40 sealed cars containing mostly artillery and anti-aircraft guns, with ammunition, so the British and French could be removed from Norway and thus would not represent a threat to Sweden. State Secretary Ernst von Weizsaecker added that although "Narvik was of no significance to the outcome of the war", nonetheless

in spite of this it would, judging from my experience, affect the Fuehrer with his soldierly nature most unfavorably if the Swedish Government, unduly exaggerating its neutral feeling, did not fulfill the wishes....Such an attitude on the part of the Swedish Government would be the more incomprehensible since the interests of Sweden and Germany were identical in this question.²¹²

Still the Swedish cabinet refused to accede to the German demands.

Though Minister Richert urged the government to give in, it would not. Only the Commander-in-Chief of the army advised capitulation to avoid war with Germany, adding that in its present state of military strength the country had no hope of holding out against Germany for any length of time. Ironically, a Swedish agreement at this time - late May - might have led to Sweden being dragged into the war anyway, through an attack by the British, who coveted the prospect of cutting off Germany's iron ore supply from Sweden and who are known to have planned bombing raids on the ore shipments had Sweden acquiesced to the expanded transit demands at this juncture.²¹³

What continued to be the basis for the Swedish government's extremely dangerous thwarting of Germany's demands was its honor in the Nordic

²¹² West, *Transit Agreement*, 82.

²¹³ *Ibid*, 84.

community, honor which it felt would be forfeit if it allowed Swedish territory to be used to harm its fellow Scandinavian state. The text of Richert's explanation to the German government for his own government's actions gave his view:

In the eyes of the Swedes, it would...be an almost dishonorable action. It would call forth the greatest indignation and would burden the government with a sense of shame which it, in view of the Nordic sense of community, would be able neither to shake off nor to bear.²¹⁴

The wrangling on the question was tempered in the last critical days before the Narvik campaign began by a Swedish offer to serve as a neutral protector and administrator of the Narvik area if all belligerents would abandon the area. The plan had little support from any quarter, but it did have some utility for the feint it provided at the height of the crisis. Finally, on May 28, the combined British, French, Polish and Norwegian assault on Narvik began, with Dietl immediately being pushed back into the coastal mountains along the Swedish border. For Sweden, though, the situation was resolved when the Allies were forced to withdraw their troops to stave off an expected invasion of Britain itself. While this took the immediate pressure off Sweden, it also meant that the Allies were now totally withdrawn from Scandinavia and Sweden no longer able to position herself diplomatically between two blocs: the country was now completely under the military and physical dominance of Germany, and was "thus more than ever dependent on Germany's goodwill."²¹⁵

Not only was Sweden wedged ever firmer in Germany's orbit with the Allied withdrawal, but it now also lost its primary reason - its stand of honor - for refusing German transit. With the collapse of Norwegian resistance on June 10, Germany realized, too, that Sweden would now have far less firm ground on which to

²¹⁴ *Ibid*, 85.

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, 88.

continue its refusal.²¹⁶ And because Germany still wanted the Narvik area heavily fortified to protect its naval and military positions in the North Sea area, it continued pressure on Sweden to acquiesce. With its huge victories in the West - France having just been defeated - Germany's position seemed stronger than ever, and Sweden fewer options in resisting German demands. The last straw was a telegram received from Sweden's minister in Britain, Bjoern Prytz, who cabled that the British government would now accept a "reasonable" peace offer, and Halifax would replace Churchill as prime minister, if necessary, to accommodate these ends.²¹⁷

Thus, with Britain very possibly out of the picture, with Germany controlling Sweden's commercial links with the world, and with only diehard anti-Nazi optimists believing anything less than a complete German military victory was in the offing, Sweden decided it could no longer risk destruction and occupation. At a cabinet meeting on June 18, 1940, a unanimous decision was taken to accede to German demands. Neutrality "should not be maintained as an abstract idea, but rather as a practical policy aimed at keeping us out of war", wrote one observer.

An acceptance of the German demand did not have to imply that we abandoned our policy of neutrality. In this difficult situation I had sought consolation in an image: a dead tree stands in the storm with rigid branches, which break, but a living tree [bends].²¹⁸

Sweden would henceforth permit transit facilities more than adequate for the *Wehrmacht* to keep Narvik garrisoned.

For three years, Sweden was forced to give way to German military traffic across its territory. Transports increased in size during the early months, from one

²¹⁶ Nissen, *Scandinavia*, 105.

²¹⁷ This telegram was suppressed for many years after the war at Britain's insistence. West, *Transit Agreement*, 90.

²¹⁸ *Ibid*, 91.

a week at first, until finally the German demand for one train a day was agreed to. What one Swedish diplomat characterized as "the price Sweden paid for its peace" was summed up by a German diplomat visiting Stockholm a few months after the agreement was reached:

...we expected not a rigid, but rather a living, constantly developing neutrality which realistically takes account of the changes in the military and political situation in Europe - in other words not an inflexible neutrality 'toward all sides' when...today 'all sides' no longer exist for Sweden.²¹⁹

Sweden continued to be beholden to other German demands, including the standard Nazi pressure applied more or less successfully to all neutrals to slant their press policy in favor of the Reich and against the Allies. In June 1941, Minister Wied wired Berlin that the German effort "to reorient the Swedish press in our favor has apparently been successful."²²⁰

But the transit problem was the issue that continued to plague Sweden. A contretemps arose in June 1941 when Germany demanded that the Oslo Division (the 163rd Infantry Division) be allowed to cross Sweden, at which the cabinet finally balked. King Gustav is reported to have threatened abdication if his ministers didn't accede, which they finally did on June 25. Minister Wied wired the Foreign Ministry in Berlin of his meeting with the monarch that day:

He [Gustav] has gone far in giving his personal support to the matter. He added confidentially that in doing so he had found it necessary to go even so far as to mention his abdication.²²¹ The King then expressed the hope that Germany would make no demands on Sweden going beyond these limits.²²²

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, 93.

²²⁰ DGFP, v. XIII, 12.

²²¹ Historian Henrik Olsson takes the view that the king never seriously intended to abdicate, but rather that Hansson used the threat of a royal veto to bring the Social Democrat government around to his way of thinking. Henrik A. Olsson, "Abdikationskrisen, 1941", *Statsvelenkapalig Tidskrift*, 1963, 28-49.

²²² DGFP, v. XIII, 20.

But then Germany demanded transit in the *opposite* direction, meaning that 15,200 Norwegian-based troops should be allowed to traverse Sweden to replenish German forces in Finland. Although another Swedish cabinet crisis nearly ensued over this last outrage, Hansson gave in on a "one-time" concession,²²³ not on the basis of helping Germany but rather of actively taking Finland's side in its own struggle.²²⁴ What it demanded of Germany in return was airplane engines, Messerschmitt 110s, French Twin Wasps, Daimler-Benz tanks, half-ton half-tracks from Demag, 21-cm. Skoda cannon together with their ammunition and equipment, and a long list of optical and radio equipment. Wied approved the "order" in gratitude for Sweden's transit cooperation.²²⁵

There is some speculation that Germany planned to attack Sweden in August or September of 1941 to forestall any more Swedish equivocation, but the German foreign office and military records do not verify such accounts. In any event, it should be remembered that Sweden was still more important to Germany as an economic partner than as a conquered vassal, a realization that underlay Germany's actions toward Sweden throughout the war.²²⁶

A legacy of the transit resolution was, of course, the bitterness it engendered in Norway. The Norwegian government-in-exile in London vehemently

²²³ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 188. Further demands for troop transit after the initial 15,200 were, in fact, denied by Sweden.

²²⁴ These concessions created another sort of public relations problem for Sweden: whenever it gave in to German demands, such concessions had to be publicly announced, but as regarded the many German requests that were refused silence had to be maintained lest Berlin further pressure the Swedes so German prestige in the matter wouldn't be jeopardized. Friis, *Scandinavia*, 284.

²²⁵ DGFP, v. XIII, 68-69.

²²⁶ Martti Terae, Lt Col, Finnish Army, "Ruotsi Saksan Sucinnetelmissa Vuosina 1940-1941", *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja*, 1967, 65 (3), 226-248.

protested the concessions, refusing to concede the Swedish position that the war between Norway and Germany was over. Britain protested just as strongly, but in reality neither Norway nor the United Kingdom had any desire to see Sweden be dragged into the war. When Sweden instituted an unneutral act in the Allies' favor - the leasing of the half of Sweden's fleet that had been cut off in Allied ports in April 1940 - both Britain and the Norwegians were somewhat mollified.²²⁷

Sweden's next invasion scare came in early 1942. After the American entry into the war, Hitler expected a joint Anglo-American attack on Norway, with Sweden joining the Allied cause, a scenario which led him to consider ordering a German preemptive occupation of Sweden. So alarmed was the Swedish government on learning of these plans from Richert that an emergency session of the cabinet was immediately convened to decide how best to react. King Gustav provided the German ambassador with solemn assurances that Sweden would totally resist any Allied incursions on Swedish territory, assurances which Hitler seems to have respected. In all likelihood however, the increased Swedish military preparedness that had gone hand in hand with the king's message probably influenced Hitler as much as the monarch's pledge.²²⁸

There is evidence that in their negative decision for this 1942 invasion, the Germans also took into account the formidable obstacles Sweden's western terrain would have presented the *Wehrmacht*. Swedish preparedness and the size and quality of its increased armed forces were a major factor, but the Germans' reputed plan to drive for the iron ore fields was probably dampened equally by the fact that only two divisions were available for the task - troops were needed far more badly for Russia and North Africa than for Scandinavia. Also, the Norwegian garrison's

²²⁷ Friis, *Scandinavia*, 284.

²²⁸ Carlgren, *Swedish Foreign Policy*, 129.

relative inexperience was a factor in the Germans dropping serious planning for a Swedish invasion at this point in the war.²²⁹ The Swedish military response to this threat, drawn up as war plans "Shield" and "Sword", was to use border guards and home defense units to absorb the initial blow, a delaying action designed to allow Sweden's first-line troops to come fully into play. The Swedish general staff calculated 350,000 of its own troops, supported by 380 Swedish air force planes, would come up against 280,000 German troops.²³⁰

After December 1941, Washington's earlier understanding position regarding Sweden's dilemma had begun to change. In 1942, the British started to pressure the Swedes to reduce German troop trains to Narvik, as well as to cut iron ore and ball bearing exports to Germany.²³¹ In the wake of these demands, the Americans pushed even harder - indirectly threatening Sweden by withholding Swedish food and fuel imports through the navicert system. Stockholm promptly responded that Swedish foreign policy did not meet with "proper understanding from London or Washington."²³² But American pressure on Sweden, especially in respect to ball bearing shipments to Germany, increased significantly in early 1944, when U.S. military planners became insistent that Germans not be able to replenish their supplies after the planned forthcoming invasion.²³³ Through the efforts of Erik Boheman, Secretary-General of the Swedish Foreign Ministry, who went to Washington in 1942 to argue his country's case, Sweden managed to convince

²²⁹ Herman Muellern, "Tyskt Anfall mot Jaemtland och Haerjedalen", *Aktuellt och Historiskt*, 1963, 25-60.

²³⁰ Boerje Furtenbach and Herman Muellern, "Vi Var Beredda", *Aktuellt och Historiskt*, May 1962, 67.

²³¹ West, *Transit Agreement*, 93.

²³² Carlgren, *Swedish Foreign Policy*, 133.

²³³ Nissen, *Scandinavia*, 289.

Washington that its actions were justified to preclude a German invasion.²³⁴ Oil shipments to Sweden, totally embargoed for a short period, were subsequently resumed via the neutral Swedish shipping which the Germans allowed into the Baltic.²³⁵

Throughout the war, it was the avowed American foreign policy to act tough with the neutrals - a toughness usually missing from the more leniently-disposed British Foreign Office (except where Ireland was concerned).²³⁶ The United States declared that its primary interest in Sweden sprang from the serious breach it unquestionably represented in its strategic blockade of Nazi Europe. Fortunately for the Swedes, their country was never critically important to either side - at least not critical enough to invade or bomb. For Germany, so long as Sweden fulfilled its trade obligations (or what Germany thought of as "obligations"), there was never an overriding reason to invade it. Sweden found out that respect for the principles of neutrality was far less important to the Allies than were their own interests - a maxim it found itself obliged to carry out in counterpoint.²³⁷

²³⁴ In Washington it was Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau and the military chiefs who were least likely to accept Sweden's protestations, especially over ball bearing shipments to Germany; Roosevelt and his State Department advisers overrode them and decided to deal more leniently with Sweden. Carlgren, *Swedish Foreign Policy*, 138.

²³⁵ *Ibid*, 138.

²³⁶ The British continued in their sympathy for Sweden's plight. Erik Boheman, who would later be Swedish ambassador to the United Kingdom, in an October 1942 mission to London to press for oil deliveries Sweden needed for its defense, reported on advice Churchill gave him: "You want oil to defend yourselves and I think you should have it [the oil]. I advise you to arm, arm, and arm again. We don't want another German victim; all we ask is that you defend yourselves in the event of an attack, that you grant no unnecessary concessions and that you take back those that you have made as soon as you can." Toynebee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 190.

²³⁷ *Ibid*, 229.

By 1943 it became apparent to the Swedes, as it did to the other neutrals, that Germany could no longer win the war, even though the Reich was still capable of inflicting a heavy penalty on states that thwarted it. At the end of July, Sweden notified Germany that the transit traffic had to stop in the following months, at the same time mobilizing its own reserve troops to counter possible German reprisals in retaliation for the new policy. On August 5, 1943, transit traffic was halted and Swedish exports to Germany - primarily iron ore - were reduced.²³⁸

The Swedish general staff drew up plans to liberate Norway and Denmark late in the war (the plans for the Norwegian operation were more complete), but were not implemented, in part because of recognition that Swedish troops still wouldn't have arms superiority over the still-relatively fresh *Wehrmacht* elements in Norway and Denmark.²³⁹ It might furthermore be noted that Sweden was probably influenced by the notable lack of enthusiasm on the part of the British to assist Norway to free itself at the war's end.²⁴⁰

The services that Sweden was able to provide as a neutral to its Scandinavian neighbors - Denmark, Norway and Finland - far outweighed what it had cost them by its giving way to German demands on transit and materials. By

²³⁸ *Ibid*, 189. Alan Milward disagrees with the popular viewpoint in the matter of the importance of Sweden's iron ore to Germany, saying the ore was useful, but Germany could have, with little appreciable difference in the prosecution of the war, continued military production by utilizing its substantial high-grade iron-ore stockpiles, in conjunction with "more extensive exploitation" of the ore available in the occupied Low Countries, France and Eastern Europe. Alan S. Milward, "Could Sweden Have Stopped the Second World War?", *Scandinavian Economic Historical Review*, 1967, (1/2), 127-147. But the Allies believed throughout the war that "under no circumstances could Germany dispense entirely with Swedish supplies [of iron ore]." Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 9.

²³⁹ Boerje Furtenbach, "Planlaeggingen RN-RD", *Aktuellt och Historiskt*, May 1956, 25.

²⁴⁰ Reidar Omang, "Norges Frigjoering 1945", *Internasjonal Politik*, January 1958, 16-18.

the end of the war, 43,000 Norwegians had found refuge in Sweden, as had 18,000 Danes - including very nearly all of Denmark's Jewish citizens. Sweden actively and often interceded with Germany for the release of Scandinavian inmates in German concentration camps and prisons, traded wounded German soldiers from Finland, and sent supplies for all such persons through its own humanitarian relief services. Count Folke Bernadotte, a cousin of the king, personally arranged for the release from German concentration camps of 15,000 prisoners, including not only Danes and Norwegians, but also French, Polish, Dutch, Czech, British, American and even Argentine prisoners. None of this would have been possible had Sweden been occupied by the Germans.²⁴¹

²⁴¹ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 193.

IRELAND

"Who are we neutral against?"
Anonymous²⁴²

On August 29, 1939 - two days before Germany's attack on Poland - Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop instructed the German minister resident in Dublin, Edouard Hempel, to clearly appraise the Irish government of Germany's offer of normal relations so long as Ireland remained neutral in the coming war.

In accordance with the friendly relations between ourselves and Ireland we are determined to refrain from any hostile action against Irish territory and to respect her integrity, provided that Ireland, for her part, maintains unimpeachable neutrality towards us in any conflict. Only if this condition should no longer obtain as a result of a decision of the Irish Government themselves, or by pressure exerted on Ireland from other quarters, should we be compelled as a matter of course, as far as Ireland was concerned too, to safeguard our interests in the sphere of warfare in such a way as the situation then arising might demand of us.²⁴³

Two days later, Hempel wired back to the Foreign Ministry in Berlin:

I carried out my instructions...De Valera repeated the statement that the Government's aim was to remain neutral. The final decision would have to be taken by the Irish Parliament in due course...He said that in spite of the Irish Government's sincere desire to observe neutrality equally towards both belligerents, Ireland's dependence on Britain for trade vital to Ireland on one hand, and on the other the possibility of intervention by Britain if the independence of Ireland involved an immediate danger for Great Britain, rendered it inevitable for the Irish Government to show a certain consideration for Britain, which in similar circumstances they would also show for Germany....My general impression was one of a sincere effort to keep Ireland out of the conflict, but of great fear, which de Valera discussed in the usual doctrinaire fashion.²⁴⁴

Ireland was during the Second World War, in theory at least, still a dominion in the British Commonwealth, the United Kingdom's configuration of colonies,

²⁴² Fodor, *The Neutrals*, 156.

²⁴³ DGFP, v. VII, 422-423.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid*, v. VII, 471-472.

former colonies and dependencies. But Ireland's dominion status did not, in the eyes of its government, require it to fight alongside Britain in its war against Nazi Germany. Dublin's determination to remain neutral in 1939 was received with sharp concern in Whitehall,²⁴⁵ and it came as a surprise even to the Irish people. It was, however, a decision firmly supported by the overwhelming majority of the country's people and virtually every interest group, including politicians, diplomats, writers, unionists, the press and the churches.²⁴⁶ Given the peculiarities of Irish history, especially the festering sore of partition, political reality allowed no other course but neutrality.

But even in Britain, many influential persons considered Ireland's neutrality probably the best course for both countries, reasoning that defending Ireland as a co-belligerent would require stretching even further the Allies' already over-extended resources.²⁴⁷ Other British voices however - most notably Winston Churchill's - advocated not neutrality, but an Allied occupation of Ireland so the island could serve as a forward base from which to protect Britain's sea approaches as well as to preempt a German occupation.²⁴⁸

The famous remark, "Who are we neutral against?", asked by some unknown Irishman at the war's outset,²⁴⁹ found its way into the international press and became during World War II a sort of epigrammatic symbol of Ireland's moral

²⁴⁵ John Bowman, *De Valera and the Ulster Question 1917-1973*, Oxford, 1982, 208-ff.

²⁴⁶ T. Ryle Dwyer, *Irish Neutrality and the U.S.A. 1937-1947*, Dublin, 1977, 220.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 208.

²⁴⁸ In writing to Roosevelt on June 2, 1940, Churchill said "an American squadron at Bereshaven would do no end of good." Churchill, *Their Finest Hour*, 152.

²⁴⁹ Fodor, *The Neutrals*, 156.

dilemma. Because Ireland was almost entirely dependent on Britain for its overseas trade, it was a source of considerable anxiety for many Irish to contemplate their country not actively supporting Britain and its allies' cause against that of Germany.²⁵⁰ Yet it was the same Britain that many Irish hated because of the deeply-wounding partition of the island.

If during World War II Spain became to the United States the most reprehensible of the neutrals, it was Ireland that held that distinction for Britain. Ireland's dilemma in World War II was, at bottom, a result of the resistance of its prime minister, Eamon de Valera, to compromise Ireland's neutrality to a degree acceptable to Britain in the person of *its* prime minister, Winston Churchill. But de Valera regarded that neutrality as a test of Ireland's freedom from the United Kingdom, and came to virtually "sanctify it as a principle...to abandon which would be apostasy."²⁵¹ To the extent that Churchill's reaction to de Valera was tempered, it was Roosevelt's White House that urged such moderation, despite the generally anti-Irish attitude of David Gray (a relative by marriage to Roosevelt), the American ambassador appointed to Dublin in March 1940. As late as 1943, Gray urged on Washington the seizing of Irish bases by force, for which he would become virtually *persona non grata* in Ireland by the end of the war.²⁵²

There wasn't in September 1939, and wouldn't be throughout the nearly six years of war, the slightest possibility that an unaided Ireland would be able to successfully militarily defend itself against invasion by either Axis or Allies. In September 1939, the total manpower of the Irish Army amounted to 7494 regular

²⁵⁰ Joseph T. Carroll, *Ireland in the War Years*, Newton Abbott, 1975, 11.

²⁵¹ Rosenberg, J.L., "The Consecration of Expediency: The Wartime Neutrality of Ireland", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 1979, 25 (3), 327-331.

²⁵² Timothy Patrick Coogan, *Ireland Since the Rising*, New York, 1966, 119.

troops, 5066 reservists, and 7223 "volunteers", the latter a sort of home guard. This force was charged with guarding a coastline of 3000 miles and the 250 miles of intra-Irish border separating Ulster and the south, the latter popularly called the Twenty Six Counties.²⁵³ The army had at its disposal two "serviceable" tanks and 21 armored vehicles, most of which were in 1939 already antiques - 1920, and earlier, Rolls-Royce's. The air force, a branch of the army (as in the United States at the time), was equally toothless, with only 24 craft of which 10 might be called modern by the standards of the time. The Twenty Six Counties were just about completely defenseless in the terms of 1939 Europe.²⁵⁴ But in a speech to the National Defense Council in May 1940 (by which date the situation had changed little from eight months earlier), de Valera put the best possible face on the situation when he said the country's greatest chance to escape the European conflict lie in mobilization and making the island too costly for any aggressor to attempt to invade.²⁵⁵

The Irish government squandered the months before outbreak of war, when war was obviously imminent, as well as the period of the Phony War, to strengthen its utterly inadequate armed forces. As a consequence, after the blitzkrieg in western Europe in the spring of 1940, Dublin began making desperate appeals for weapons to the United States. The British government concurred with these pleas,

²⁵³ There is some difficulty in what to call the non-Ulster part of the island at this time. "Eire" was the co-official Irish (Gaelic) language name, but officially it was theoretically meant to include Ulster as well. The south couldn't be called the "Republic", which it didn't become until 1949. Just calling it "Ireland" doesn't distinguish between the south and Ulster (officially Northern Ireland). Perhaps "the Twenty Six Counties" - a commonly used term in Ireland and Britain in 1939 - is the clearest name.

²⁵⁴ Robert Fisk, *In Time of War - Ireland, Ulster, and the Price of Neutrality 1939-1945*, Philadelphia, 1983, 66.

²⁵⁵ Nicholas Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Wartime Cooperation and Post-War Change 1939-1952*, London, 1958, 66.

but with the proviso that any weapons sent to Ireland not take precedence over American arms committed to Britain.²⁵⁶ Though it seems curious that Britain would approve aid to Ireland at a time when it was badgering de Valera's government over the former Treaty Ports, it is an indication of British concern that a German invasion of a weak Ireland would equally imperil Britain.²⁵⁷ But Washington hedged on Dublin's appeals, finally informing de Valera that any arms would have to come out of those sent to Britain and at Britain's discretion - Roosevelt's way of expressing his displeasure at Irish neutrality. He told Gray that Ireland was going to "have to fish or cut bait"²⁵⁸ - appease Britain in the matter of the ports or go its own way without American help.

De Valera's government had rationalized the Treaty Ports' denial to the Royal Navy and to its *de facto* American ally in a way that received the full support of the Irish parliament and people. He declared that the ports had been returned by the British government at a time (1938)

when war was evidently imminent and after consideration of the political and strategic factors involved...there was, therefore, no constitutional or political claim which the United Kingdom could advance for their return.²⁵⁹

Such remained Irish policy throughout the war, even though it meant incurring London and Washington's undisguised wrath.

In June 1940, Dublin began to undertake new defense measures against the increased threat posed by German-occupied France. It also feared a Britain desperate to protect its shipping and to whom violation of Ireland's neutrality was

²⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 69.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 69.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 69.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 75.

far less worrisome than the specter - then deadly real - of losing the war at sea. New calls for army volunteers went out (there was no draft) and a Local Security Force was instituted for increased patrol and observation duties. Dublin's urban defenses were expanded, major roadways and beaches were fitted with anti-aircraft landing obstacles, and major ports were placed under military authority. Most ominously, the government gave the violently anti-British Irish Republican Army a sharp warning not to engage in any treasonous activities designed to assist Germany in its war against Britain.²⁶⁰

Because Ireland chose to stay out of Britain's conflict, the Irish people faced real and serious hardships in a world in which the war had cut normal trade to a relative trickle. The government had to institute measures early in the conflict to ensure that the population would be fed, including nearly doubling the acreage under crops through a compulsory planting policy decreed by parliament. Bread nonetheless came under rationing from 1942 onward, as did tea, sugar and fuel. Industrial capacity fell as a result of the drop in imports of raw materials, which in turn resulted in higher unemployment. As in most of the world at war, a thriving black market developed.²⁶¹

Like all the other successful neutrals except Switzerland, Ireland was concerned not only by the threat of German invasion, but also by the possibility of Anglo-American incursions or invasion to preempt the possibility of Axis use of its territory. Though Hempel had on the day the war broke out given assurances to the Irish government that Germany would respect Ireland's neutrality irrespective of its Commonwealth dominion status, Dublin was given no such assurances from

²⁶⁰ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 239-240.

²⁶¹ Terence Brown, *Ireland - A Social & Cultural History 1922 to the Present*, Ithaca, 1975, 136-ff.

London that Britain would respect Ireland's neutrality.²⁶² Nonetheless, de Valera informed Hempel that Ireland was bound to show "a certain consideration for Britain",²⁶³ and subtly warned the envoy that any German violation of Ireland's neutrality - especially an attempt to coopt the IRA to carry out espionage against Britain on Irish territory, *including* Ulster - would inevitably lead Ireland into closer cooperation with Britain. The "certain consideration for Britain" was eventually carried to very un-neutral lengths in favor of the Allied cause that Hempel - sure of Dublin's antipathy to London - couldn't have foreseen in 1939,²⁶⁴ and which will be discussed below. Hempel informed Berlin, though, that he thought it "improbable" that Britain would use force to regain use of the Treaty Ports - despite Irish fear that Britain might indeed do just that.²⁶⁵

Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden described the dilemma posed by Irish neutrality in a memorandum to the cabinet written two weeks after the war began:

On the constitutional side the question of any formal recognition by this country of the neutrality of Eire²⁶⁶ presents a serious difficulty. We do not want formally to recognise Eire as a neutral while Eire remains a member of the British Commonwealth. To do this would

²⁶² Because of fundamental disagreement between London and Dublin regarding their legal relationship, there was no British diplomatic mission in Ireland at the war's outset. The British insisted that any diplomatic representation be headed by a High Commissioner, as was the case in the other dominions (Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa), but de Valera, wanting to discard what he considered "imperial trappings", demanded a full minister in what was in reality far more a republic than a "dominion." Carroll, *Ireland*, 14. The governments of the United Kingdom and of its other dominions all continued to regard Ireland as a full member of the Commonwealth after the External Relations Act of 1936 was confirmed in 1937 by Ireland's new Constitution - this despite Ireland's repudiation of *any* allegiance to the Crown itself. Mansergh, *Survey*, 58-59.

²⁶³ Carroll, *Ireland*, 13.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 13.

²⁶⁵ Mansergh, *Survey*, 65.

²⁶⁶ Officially, "Eire" was the Gaelic name and "Ireland" the English name for the entire island set in the 1937 constitution.

be to surrender the hitherto accepted constitutional theory of the indivisibility of the Crown. Equally we do not want to take the line that Eire is no longer a member of the British Commonwealth. This would involve the rejection of the policy followed with the assent of the other Dominions since the establishment of the new Constitution of Eire in 1937 and would moreover have serious repercussions in many directions, e.g. the status under United Kingdom law of individual Irishmen.²⁶⁷

In the event, the advice tendered to the General Staff by Lord Chatfield, Chief of the Naval Staff, was clear cut: the practical alternatives regarding Ireland's role in the war were either a neutral Ireland or a hostile Ireland.²⁶⁸ In 1941, Minister for Co-ordination of Defensive Measures Frank Aiken wrote of this policy from the Irish side:

If America comes first we are determined to *shoot down the Americans*. If Britain comes first we will shoot them down with greater relish. If the Germans comes first we will shoot them also. If Britain genuinely believes that she is forestalling a German invasion and rushes her Northern [Ulster] troops down along our coast or her naval craft into our harbours, we are engaged immediately in *bloody war with England*.²⁶⁹

In 1940, at the most dangerous point in Britain's fight with Germany, shipping losses²⁷⁰ seemed so desperate to Whitehall that an offer was made to Ireland that Britain would unilaterally end the country's partition if Ireland would agree to come into the war on the Allied side. In the late spring of that year, after the German attacks on neutral Belgium and Holland, the British became convinced that Ireland was about to be subject to a German invasion attempt.²⁷¹ Whitehall

²⁶⁷ Carroll, *Ireland*, 19.

²⁶⁸ Mansergh, *Survey*, 63.

²⁶⁹ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 219. Italics the author's.

²⁷⁰ By the spring of 1940, Britain had lost 460 merchant ships; after France's fall, the losses rose precipitously - rising to 350,000 tons in March 1941 alone. Fodor, *The Battle of the Atlantic*, 23-ff.

²⁷¹ Kevin T. Nowlan and T. Desmond Williams, *Ireland in the War Years and After - 1939-1951*, Dublin, 1969, 17. In his war memoirs, Churchill's papers show

tried to persuade de Valera's government to immediately allow British troops into Ireland to better enable those already in Ulster to repel the invasion in alliance with the Irish Army.

In light of this situation, a formal British offer, signed by the Lord President of the Council Neville Chamberlain,²⁷² was on June 28, 1940 conveyed to de Valera with the following proposal:

A declaration to be made by the United Kingdom government accepting the principle of a United Ireland. This declaration would take the form of a solemn undertaking that the Union is to become at an early date an accomplished fact from which there shall be no turning back....A joint Defence Council representative of Eire and Northern Ireland to be set up immediately....The Government of Eire to invite British naval vessels to have the use of ports in Eire, and British troops and aeroplanes to cooperate with the Eire forces and to be stationed in such positions in Eire as may be agreed between the two Governments, for the purpose of increasing the security of Eire against the fate which has overcome neutral Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium and Luxemburg....The Government of Eire to intern all German and Italian aliens in the country and to take any further steps necessary to suppress Fifth Column activities.²⁷³

Lord Craigavon, the British governor in Northern Ireland, lobbied against this proposal from the viewpoint of Ulster, which is to say of Ulster's Protestant majority. For his part, Churchill asserted he no wish to be "a party to the coercion of Ulster", but "had no objection to Ulster being persuaded."²⁷⁴ Writing to Roosevelt on December 23, 1940, Churchill said:

It is not possible for us to compel the people of Northern Ireland against their will to leave the United Kingdom and join southern Ireland. But I do not doubt that if the Government of Eire would show

he had pondered on whether the Germans would "go to Ireland" invade the island. Churchill, *Their Finest Hour*, 161.

²⁷² Because Chamberlain had as prime minister been responsible for the return of the Treaty Ports, Churchill entrusted him with the responsibility for these negotiations. Bowman, *De Valera*, 220.

²⁷³ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 486.

²⁷⁴ Bowman, *De Valera*, 224.

its solidarity with the democracies of the English-speaking world at this crisis, a Council of Defence of all Ireland could be set up which the unity of the island would probably in some form or other emerge after the war.²⁷⁵

Had this offer been accepted and later come into fruition, the history of Anglo-Irish relations in the second half of the twentieth century would, of course, have been greatly changed. But for many reasons, it was not accepted. For one, the Protestants of Ulster believed that an integration into the south would represent a desertion of the United Kingdom at a time when Britain and its commonwealth were in enormous peril. Neither did Britain really want to risk a postwar neutralized Ulster, the bases in that province providing its merchant shipping with forward protection that Ireland would not allow in the Treaty Ports stand-off. But perhaps most important, de Valera was utterly loath to send another generation of Irishmen to their deaths in a European war. It was in repayment for the Home Rule Bill before the first war that John Redmond had agreed to send to send thousands of Irishmen into the trenches and to their deaths between 1914 and 1918. De Valera had no wish to be his generation's Redmond.²⁷⁶ And after centuries of English duplicity, the prime minister knew also there was no guarantee that Britain would honor its pledge of a united Ireland in the eventuality that it won the war.²⁷⁷ Robert Menzies, the Australian prime minister, in commenting on de Valera's actions in 1941, summed up the Irish leader's pragmatism:

...Great Britain could not possibly throw Ulster into Eire if that meant that Ulster was also to become neutral and that Great Britain was to be deprived of even those bases which she had then. In effect, [this] campaign for union could not usefully or sensibly be pursued during the war, *assuming* the neutrality of Eire.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ Churchill, *Their Finest Hour*, 564.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 235.

²⁷⁷ Fisk, *In Time of War*, 159-ff.

²⁷⁸ Bowman, *De Valera*, 253. Italics mine.

The value of Ireland's neutrality to Germany was put forward most strongly in the person of the German minister in Dublin. In October 1939, Hempel had told Berlin that consistent adherence to its neutrality was supported by the vast majority of the Irish, and had "strengthened Irish national self-consciousness."²⁷⁹ When Berlin was expressing fear in November 1940 that the IRA-German connection would give Britain an excuse for invading the dominion, Hempel said such an eventuality would cause the Irish first to seek aid from the still-neutral United States, and only if unsuccessful would they turn to Germany. But he warned Berlin that *any* violation of neutrality by Germany (most especially attempting to forcibly gain a port for U-boat repairs) would cause de Valera to make good on his promise to defend neutrality in the words: "if we must die for this then we will die for it."²⁸⁰ It isn't recorded what effect this somewhat toothless threat had in Berlin, but Ireland's neutrality did in fact continue to be respected by Germany.

In reference to Britain's concern about the IRA-German connection, Irish neutrality *had* been violated by Germany in a way that embarrassed Ireland and caused Germany to fear losing what tepid popular Irish sympathy it had. German agents were dropped by parachute and landed by submarines with instructions to make contact with anti-British IRA elements, but with express orders not to take any hostile actions against elements of the Irish army or of the Irish government. Two of the agents were caught and tried, causing Dublin to be concerned that relations with Germany would deteriorate dangerously, and causing Berlin to worry about loss of face in Ireland.²⁸¹

²⁷⁹ Mansergh, *Survey*, 60.

²⁸⁰ John P. Duggan, *Neutral Ireland and the Third Reich*, Dublin, 1985, 127.

²⁸¹ Mansergh, *Survey*, 66.

The basis of Germany's strategic plans regarding Ireland continued to be that the island should not be driven into Britain's camp before a possible German invasion could take place, presumably after Britain's surrender. Such was the primary reason for Germany excluding the Twenty Six Counties from its naval blockade, a decision made on June 1, 1940 and for which the most pressing argument was that a blockade would make the Irish people think that it was still linked to Britain, "for better or for worse."²⁸² Though Hitler accepted this logic, active planning for an Irish invasion was put off.²⁸³

A German invasion of Ireland was most cogently argued against by the German navy, which through its planning staff reasoned that as long as Britain remained paramount in naval strength, any German invasion could still be successfully thwarted by the Royal Navy. Britain's naval superiority remained overwhelming in comparison to Germany's: two to one in battleships and twenty to three in cruisers. Furthermore, surprise was out of the question because of Ireland's location. The hope of developing secure supply lines was equally slim, again because of Britain's superior naval strength. Even air support from Germany's theoretically stronger air force was judged not to be decisive, mostly because Ireland's notorious weather could at any time make air offense, defense or supply unreliable. And finally, Northern Ireland was armed to the teeth.²⁸⁴

Nonetheless, there is evidence that at least preliminary plans for an invasion of Ireland were prepared by the Germans. Documents captured in Belgium in October 1944 included a set of maps of every town in Ireland as well as maps of the coastline and comments on conditions that the German troops could be

²⁸² *Ibid*, 70 and DGFP, v. IX, 500-501.

²⁸³ Mansergh, Survey, 70.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 72.

expected to encounter; the maps were printed in 1940 and 1941, with the latest revisions made in 1943.²⁸⁵ But in the absence of Irish cooperation, which Hitler judged couldn't be expected because of de Valera's strong, consistent and popularly-supported pledge to defend Ireland against any aggressor, he never allowed any significant preparations for an Irish invasion to go forward.

One of the most pressing problems that faced de Valera throughout the war was the need to "neutralise"²⁸⁷ the Irish Republican Army, which saw in Britain's troubles the path to its own ends, namely the forcible political reintegration of Ulster into Eire. The Dublin government, of which several ministers had been in the Civil War period comrades of current IRA members, declared the organization illegal just before the war broke out, reasoning that it could jeopardize the country's neutrality policy.²⁸⁸ But the IRA saw the start of the war as a signal to step up its own war on Britain, a war taking the form of a bombing campaign in Britain that culminated in a famous explosion in Coventry killing five people and injuring sixty.²⁸⁹ Even on its home ground, the IRA was able to sabotage the Irish Army and de Valera's policy of even-handedness: on December 23, 1939, the outlawed organization broke into Dublin's Phoenix Park's armory and stole over a million and a half rounds of rifle and machine-gun ammunition. It was this exploit that prompted the prime minister to crack down on both the IRA *and* civil liberties, including instituting press censorship meant to keep political opinion "under

²⁸⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, October 18, 1944, quoted in *ibid*, n. 72.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 73.

²⁸⁷ Carroll, *Ireland*, 14.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 15.

²⁸⁹ Fodor, *The Neutrals*, 179.

control."²⁹⁰ The *Abwehr* meanwhile set up its own courier and communication network with the IRA, a sabotage campaign in Ulster being one of the principal ends of this network of IRA agents abetted with German expertise and materials.

Ireland's diplomatic contest with the Allies was never an easy one, not even in relatively sympathetic Washington. Frank Aiken, Dublin's special envoy to the U.S., visited Roosevelt in April 1941 to explain his government's case against co-belligerency with Britain. Aiken told Roosevelt that Ireland considered Britain as much an invasion threat as it did Germany, but promised to be more forthcoming to the British cause if Britain would give firm assurances that Ireland's neutrality would be respected. Roosevelt railed against what he thought to be a suggestion of moral equivalency between Britain and Germany,²⁹¹ but the outcome remained that London would never at any time in the war assure Ireland that its borders would be respected by British military forces,²⁹² a scenario de Valera believed would provoke a German military response and turn the South into the battlefield that Ulster had become.²⁹³

After America entered the war, Churchill renewed his pressure on Dublin for - as he phrased it - the "Orange and Green to unite",²⁹⁴ proposing a reunification of Ireland within the Empire under the old Home Rule scheme, a suggestion to which his Irish counterpart didn't even deign to formally respond. De Valera's reaction was emotional:

²⁹⁰ Mansergh, *Survey*, 60.

²⁹¹ Roosevelt asked "if the Nazis [win], would Irish freedom be permitted as an amazing pet exception in an unfree world?" W.Y. Elliott et al, *The British Commonwealth at War*, New York, 1943, 476.

²⁹² Fodor, *The Neutrals*, 182-183.

²⁹³ Bowman, *De Valera*, 243.

²⁹⁴ Nowlan, *Ireland in the War Years*, 23.

from the moment that the war began there was for this state only one policy possible - neutrality. Our circumstances, our history, the incompleteness of our national freedom through the partition of our country made any other policy impracticable. Any other policy would have divided our people, and for a divided nation to fling itself into this war would be to commit suicide.²⁹⁵

Churchill shifted the onus onto the now-belligerent United States to punish Ireland.²⁹⁶ He persuaded Roosevelt (who evidently needed little persuasion after the interview with Aiken) to embargo food supplies from the U.S. to Ireland, adding greatly to the already-serious shortages.²⁹⁷ Arms promised Ireland's Defense Force were also held back at Churchill's insistence. None of this changed de Valera's stand at all, Churchill as well as Roosevelt underestimating both the Prime Minister's commitment to neutrality and his fear that once Britain was back in Ireland, it would never again leave. Fortunately for de Valera, he was backed to the hilt in his recalcitrance by the vast majority of the Irish people, and, if anything, Churchill's maneuver hardened Irish resolve to remain neutral.²⁹⁸

After American entry into the war, Ireland's value as a potential co-belligerent with the Allies began to lose its appeal,²⁹⁹ its worth as a partner far

²⁹⁵ Memoirs of Winston Churchill quoted in Mansergh, *Survey*, 160.

²⁹⁶ In a letter from Churchill to Roosevelt, the former concluded "you will realise also that our merchant seamen, as well as public opinion generally, take it much amiss that we should carry Irish supplies through air and U-boat attacks and subsidise them handsomely when de Valera is quite content to sit happy and see us strangled." Churchill, *Their Finest Hour*, 606-607.

²⁹⁷ Churchill added "...we are so hard-pressed at sea that we cannot undertake any longer the 400,000 tons of feeding-stuffs and fertilizers that we hitherto convoyed to Ireland...we need the tonnage for our own supply and we do not need the food which Eire has been sending us." Ibid, 606. Admittedly though, Ireland exported to Britain nearly all of its "exportable surplus of foodstuffs." Elliott, *The British Commonwealth at War*, 477.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 181.

²⁹⁹ It became apparent at the same time to the Germans that Ireland's chief value to their cause was to remain neutral and thus withholding use of its ports to the Allies. Toynebee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 245.

outweighed by the estimated cost of supplying and defending it. But when forces of the now-belligerent U.S. landed in Ulster in January 1942, de Valera was still quick to protest:

...it is our duty to make it clearly understood that, no matter what troops occupy the six counties, the Irish people's claim for the union of the whole of the national territory, and for supreme jurisdiction over it, will remain unabated...the maintenance of the partition of Ireland is as indefensible as aggression against small nations elsewhere, which is the avowed purpose of Britain and the U.S. in this war to bring to an end.³⁰⁰

For the remainder of the war, the stand-off between Allies and Ireland - particularly between Churchill and de Valera - continued with a passion. The economic war of retaliation Britain waged with the U.S.'s help against its former possession went on, and Ireland learned to make do entirely with what it could grow on its own soil. It also lost much of the sympathy of formerly supportive American groups: thousands of Americans went down on ships that might not have been lost if Irish bases had been available for forward sealane protection.³⁰¹ The fact that nearly 100,000 Irish volunteers served (and were freely allowed by their government to serve) in the British army was discounted, as were the growing compromises Ireland made to base Allied sea rescue services from its soil and the fact that Ireland lent Ulster - particularly Belfast - great assistance throughout its trials from German bombing.³⁰²

³⁰⁰ Mansergh, *Survey*, 161. These troops, together with the British troops, had as their official mission in Ulster to stay in "readiness to sweep down the entire length of Eire to destroy an enemy force landed on its southern coast." Elliott, *The British Commonwealth at War*, 479.

³⁰¹ Mary C. Bromage, *De Valera and the March of a Nation*, New York, 1956, 282.

³⁰² *Ibid*, 185. Furthermore, another 180,000 Irish citizens were engaged in war work in Britain. Elliott, *The British Commonwealth at War*, 475.

Before the war ended, Ireland would be subjected to one last broadside, this time from Washington. The issue that caused the U.S. government to present through its embassy in Dublin a formal demarché to the de Valera government was the continued presence of German diplomatic representation in the Irish capital, which Washington believed allowed Germany greater freedom in its spying on Allied activities. The following highly-charged diplomatic note was delivered to the Irish government on February 22, 1944:

The neutrality of the Irish government has in fact operated and continues to operate in favor of the Axis powers and against the United Nations on whom your security and the maintenance of your national economy depend...one of the gravest and most inequitable results of this situation is the opportunity for highly organized espionage which the geographical position of Ireland afforded the Axis and denies the United Nations.³⁰³

But de Valera rejected without equivocation this American demand that Hempel and his staff be returned to Germany, a decision to which virtually all Irish political factions agreed on the rationale that the German and Japanese diplomats in Ireland were incapable, at this late date, of carrying out successful espionage activities in light of the Irish precautions taken to prevent them.³⁰⁴ Privately, the response of the Irish prime minister to the American demand was one of shock - de Valera believed the aid given by Ireland to the Allied cause far outweighed the hardship it cost them by Ireland remaining neutral. His response to the demarché was that the Irish people had newfound respect for the British because of Britain's respect for Ireland's neutrality during the war, and it would be regretted if this latest American demand should mar these new feelings. With Dublin's promise to

³⁰³ Mansergh, *Survey*, 162.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 163.

institute additional security measures against the Axis missions in Dublin, and on Churchill's advice, Washington dropped the matter.³⁰⁵

At the European war's end, in a victory speech reflecting the sentiments of his American and Soviet allies, Churchill showed no magnanimity toward Ireland and its policy of neutrality, the policy that had, in de Valera's view, saved Ireland's citizenry and its cities from the fate suffered by Europe's belligerents. Instead, the British prime minister heaped abuse on the Irish for not coming to the aid of the anti-Nazi alliance. But in a speech to the *Dail* shortly after learning of Churchill's harsh words, de Valera quoted a letter he had received from a fellow Irishman. It said that neither America nor the Soviet Union could justify their criticism of Ireland for remaining neutral when they themselves had remained neutral at a time when *their* neighbors and allies were being attacked - both waiting to join the fray only after coming under the gun themselves. De Valera concluded that the difference was only that Ireland had *not* been attacked - but would have fought like a tiger had it been.³⁰⁶

The war probably was the factor that most firmly set Britain's future course in Ulster. The debt the British owed the loyal Unionists in Northern Ireland gave the latter a security they wouldn't otherwise have gained, and drove a deep wedge between the two political parts of the island.³⁰⁷

But the Twenty Six Counties were well-served by Eamon de Valera. Had he taken his country into war, he would have been thwarting the will of the vast majority of his countrymen. De Valera was right that most of the belligerents - especially the United States - didn't come into the war until they themselves were

³⁰⁵ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 251.

³⁰⁶ Fodor, *The Neutrals*, 185.

³⁰⁷ Bowman, *De Valera*, 255.

attacked, which was long after the deprivations of Nazism were documented. Nonetheless, thousands of Irish citizens voluntarily fought - and many died - on the Allied side. Eight Victoria Crosses attest to their valor.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁸ Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, 259.

TURKEY

"What we would like is for the Germans to destroy the Russians and the Allies then to destroy the Germans."
Anonymous Turkish wartime quote³⁰⁹

That Turkey remained a non-belligerent almost until the final days of World War II was the result, primarily, of a stand-off between the blocs due to a geographical position coveted by both, and, to a lesser but nonetheless significant degree, of its military capabilities and political determination to defend its own territory. It was Turkey that controlled the overland route from Europe to the Middle East, the Suez Canal and the Persian Gulf, areas in which the Germans believed they could knock Britain out of the war and which Britain knew it had to control *not* to be knocked out of the war. For Turkey's neutrality, the British had in reality good reason to be grateful: with Turkey a German ally in 1940 or 1941, the Middle East may well have been lost to the British.

Even though Turkey's military capacity and political will were lesser contributors to its neutrality than was its geography, there is evidence Hitler judged the *Wehrmacht* would not be able to take Turkey against its will.³¹⁰ Though in no position to engage in state-of-the-art mechanized warfare, the Turkish army was in 1939 reputed (accurately) to be of tenacious fighting capacities - a situation conversely abetted by the fact that Turkey's communications and supply lines were, at best, rudimentary.³¹¹ Turkey's leaders knew the country was unable to ward off the Germans alone, but because of their well-trained and determined army

³⁰⁹ Fodor, *The Neutrals*, 167.

³¹⁰ Weber, *The Evasive Neutral*, 214.

³¹¹ Toynebee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 345.

(though one deficient in modern arms) they calculated that Germany wouldn't casually pay the very high price required for violating the country's neutrality. Furthermore, Turkey's leaders were loathe to damage the carefully-built framework of a modern state Atatürk had created on the Ottoman ruins. Finally, the experiences of the debacle between 1914 and 1918 were still very fresh in memory.³¹²

An important factor besides geography in the relationship of Turkey to the warring blocs was the country's chromite ore, of which in 1939 Turkey controlled 16.4% of the world's production.³¹³ From chromite is derived both chromium and chrome: chromium, the more strategically important, is an essential component in the manufacture of high-grade steel. Germany obtained nearly its entire supply of chromite ore from Turkey during World War II, a factor which allowed the Turks to play their chromite card to great advantage: for critical materials which only Germany would supply, the Turks would pay in chromite, and any sense of disadvantage³¹⁴ was swallowed by the Germans as they saw their stocks of this critical material steadily erode after June 1941.³¹⁵

The Allies had tried to preempt Turkish chromite when in 1940 Britain negotiated an agreement with Turkey, contracting for the following two years' near-total supply at highly inflated prices (and having to buy along with it some relatively unimportant foodstuffs) on the condition that none whatsoever be sold to

³¹² *Ibid*, 345.

³¹³ During the war years, Turkey's entire chromite production was exported. Lewis W. Thomas and Richard Frye, *The US & Turkey & Iran*, Cambridge, 1952, 28.

³¹⁴ 90,000 tons of chrome paid for by RM100 million in arms. Gordon, *The Hidden Weapon*, 121.

³¹⁵ Bruce R. Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, Princeton, 1979, 23.

Germany. Germany quickly felt the resulting tightening of supplies, and its special trade representative, Dr. Karl Clodius, went to Ankara to negotiate an end to Britain's monopoly of Turkey's production.³¹⁶ Clodius was partially successful. In October 1941 the Turks agreed that when the British deal expired it would ship 90,000 tons of chromite to Germany, providing Germany also buy, at grossly inflated prices, a large portion of the domestic farm commodities then glutting the Turkish market. But when the Germans couldn't wait until the beginning of 1943 (when the agreement with Britain was scheduled to expire) and its ambassador, Franz von Papen,³¹⁷ tried to arrange to smuggle ore out of the country, the offended Turks nearly canceled the deal.³¹⁸ As it happened, after January 1943, Turkish chromite again was being openly sent to Germany.³¹⁹

A key in understanding the motivation behind Turkey's behavior - Turkey's "duplicity", as the belligerent blocs might have put it - during the war is understanding the traditional hatred felt by Turks for Russia and the Russians, a hatred going back three centuries and 13 wars. When the Ottoman Empire began to crumble in earnest in the early 19th century, the ascendent Russian Empire was,

³¹⁶ Gordon, *The Hidden Weapon*, 121.

³¹⁷ In his memoirs, Papen called the RM100 million payment for the ore a "loan" which Turkey could pay off in "goods, particularly chromium." Franz von Papen, *Memoirs*, London, 1952, 488.

³¹⁸ Weber, *Evasive Neutral*, 129-131.

³¹⁹ Supply routes between Germany and Turkey weren't cut until September. Brigadier Peter Young, ed., *World Almanac Book of World War II*, New York, 1981, 296. The Turks were at this time concerned about the Balkan routes from Germany being cut, since it meant they would then be totally dependent on Allied goodwill for their imports. FRUS, v. v, 1944, 823. Not until April 20, 1944 would Ismet Inonu, Turkey's president, order complete suspension of chromite shipments to Germany, when Allied pressure on the issue - and threats to embargo the country - finally became overwhelming. Two months later, Turkey decided to cut in half all other commodities it was selling the Reich, the Allies continuing to rail against any materials still going to Germany.

along with Great Britain, the nation most concerned with picking up the broken pieces. The Russians yearned for guaranteed free passage through the Straits, and Britain worried that if Russia became a Mediterranean power its own newly-acquired lifeline to the Orient through the Suez Canal would as a result be threatened.³²⁰

In the Constantinople Agreement of March 18, 1915, between Great Britain, France and Russia, Russia was promised the capital, the Bosphorus, the Sea of Marmara and the Dardanelles. The Bolshevik Revolution rendered the agreement void (Lenin specifically repudiated it), but the war's end nevertheless resulted, through the October 1918 Armistice of Mudros, in Allied-guaranteed free passage through the Straits to the new Soviet state.³²¹ Throughout the latter part of the 1930s Turkey nonetheless felt relatively safe from Russian aggrandizement, having established normal diplomatic relations with Moscow in 1934; during this period the busy-elsewhere Soviets adopted a status quo policy with Ankara in which no demands on Turkish territory were made. But when the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was announced on August 29, 1939, the Turks were shaken to find the Soviets joining the Germans in their plan to redraw the map of Europe. Ankara's belief that a false military step might provoke the Soviets into invading Turkish territory led to a policy of realism vis-a-vis the Soviets, one that finally ended in a November 1940 non-aggression pact with their old enemy.³²²

³²⁰ Some scholars take the view that rather than being primarily interested in expanding her power into the Mediterranean, Russia's most intense interest in the Straits in the 19th century was to exclude any of the Powers from gaining access to the Black Sea. Kuniholm, *Origins*, 9.

³²¹ Nuri Eren, *Turkey Today - Tomorrow - An Experiment in Westernization*, New York, 1963, 59-60, 228; Geoffrey Lewis, *Turkey*, New York, 1960, 46-47.

³²² Kuniholm, *Origins*, 25.

A prime part of German diplomatic policy in the period just before its attack on Poland was to keep Turkey from cooperating with Britain and France, with whom it expected to put together a series of encircling pacts and alliances in the Middle East. But the Soviets, too, wanted to ensure that Turkey stayed as isolated as possible from the western European allies, not only to appease Moscow's new German partners, but because a Turkey close to the Western powers would likely allow them use of the Straits to aid Rumania in wartime, and Russia wanted to keep any European war as far from the Soviet Union as possible.³²³

When the European war broke out on September 1, 1939, Turkey's policy was to keep clear of the fray, but the various means it took to this end were inevitably shaped by its everpresent fear and distrust of Russia. Turkey's only major move during the early part of the war was closure of the Straits to foreign warships,³²⁴ a move taken in accord with the policy set out in the Montreaux Convention of 1936 that regulated the use of the Straits. But matters became complicated when Italy entered the war against Britain and France and therefore theoretically requiring Turkey to take action against Italy in accordance with the Tripartite Treaty it had signed with France and Great Britain on October 19, 1939, a treaty that had been a kind of reward to France for its forbearance in the Hatay controversy involving the Sanjak of Alexandretta, Turkey's only irredentist claim since the establishment of the post-Ottoman republic.³²⁵

³²³ George Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs*, Ithaca, 1962, 135-137.

³²⁴ Although until the summer of 1944 Turkey quietly allowed Germany to send minor naval craft through the Straits. Lenczowski, *The Middle East*, 143.

³²⁵ The provisions of the Tripartite Pact, concluded on October 19, 1939, stipulated that France & Great Britain were committed to give Turkey all aid and assistance if attacked by a European power; that all three would help one another if a European power attacked any one of them in the Mediterranean; that Turkey would give the other two assistance if they got into a war while carrying out pledges to protect Rumania and Greece; that if Turkey found it couldn't do so, it would

But by the spring of 1940 the European military situation had changed so much from that in effect when the treaty was negotiated that Turkey decided to stay neutral and to avoid repeating its error of the First World War,³²⁶ foreseeing co-belligerency with the Allies bringing only German invasion and destruction to its own shores. Although Turkey was diplomatically bound by this treaty to enter the war on the Allied side against Italy after the latter became involved in June 1940, Britain did not press Ankara to honor its obligation. Turkey was militarily relatively weak in terms of armor and artillery, and for it to have declared war on an Axis partner might well have had the effect of turning Nazi armies into the Middle East through Turkey in the pursuit of Hitler's aim to close the Suez Canal. The British at this point principally desired that the Turks maintain friendly neutrality against the day when the country's help might be vitally needed. As long as Germany wished to stay friendly with a Soviet Union which would be antagonized at any German advance through Turkey and the Middle East, Ankara's concurrence in this policy held.

But Hitler's real diplomatic objective regarding Turkey was to assure its neutrality after his planned attack on Russia. After Turkey was assured by the German chancellor in March 1941 that he had no designs on it, and that his troops, which had just invaded Bulgaria, would be kept 60 kilometers back from the Turkish frontier, President Ismet Inonu responded to Hitler that Turkey would also remain neutral as regarded the Axis, a signal that German troops could proceed

consult with them and maintain benevolent neutrality; and, finally, that if any European country attacked any nation in such a way to threaten the others, all would consult with view to common action. Quoted from Chester M. Tobin, *Turkey - Key to the East*, New York, 1944, 143-144. The treaty, incidentally, in no way required Turkey to become involved with the Soviet Union, even if Britain and/or France and the USSR should become allies - except to allow Soviet naval vessels through the Straits. Eren, *Turkey Today*, 223.

³²⁶ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, London, 1961, 289.

into Yugoslavia and Greece without having to worry about Turkey's reaction. The cautious Turks did, however, blow up the bridges over the Maritsa River - the Turco-Bulgarian frontier - as a defensive measure.

Not knowing, of course, that Germany was soon to be at war with Russia, the Turks believed a peaceable relationship was a necessity with the power that was now in a position to immediately attack its whole western seaboard, including its two chief commercial cities of Istanbul and Izmir.³²⁷ Papen had been urging a non-aggression pact on Ankara, and when in June 1941 Turkey became nearly surrounded by German-occupied countries or countries in political accord with Germany, Ankara felt it had to give the Germans what they wanted.³²⁸ Hitler's lightning conquest of the Balkans and subsequent concentration of forces in Bulgaria so impressed Ankara that it yielded to Papen's pressure to sign a treaty of friendship and non-aggression³²⁹ (which treaty nonetheless "allowed" it to reserve its obligations to Britain under the Tripartite treaty³³⁰). On June 14, Papen wrote to the Foreign Ministry in Berlin:

As a consequence of Italy's entry into the war and upon requests by the English and French Ambassadors the Turkish Government has examined the situation and decided: Turkey's entry into the war in the present situation might possibly help her in a war with the USSR. The Government has therefore decided to invoke Protocol No. 2 of the

³²⁷ Toynebee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 350.

³²⁸ Lenczowski, *The Middle East*, 140-141.

³²⁹ Article 1 - The German Reich and the Turkish Republic undertake mutually to respect the integrity and inviolability of their territories, and not to take measures of any sort aimed directly or indirectly against the other contracting party. Article 2 - The German Reich and the Turkish Republic undertake in the future to consult with one another in a friendly spirit on all questions affecting their common interests in order to reach an understanding regarding the treatment of such questions. Such were the substantive passages of the treaty. Hans Adolf Jacobsen, *World War II Select Documents with Commentary, Strategy & Policy*, Santa Barbara, 1979, 115-116.

³³⁰ Langer, *The Undeclared War*, 798.

English-French-Turkish Pact and to maintain its neutrality in the new conflict accordingly.³³¹

Hitler would have, of course, preferred an active ally of Turkey, but was willing to settle with its "friendship" rather than risk the Russian campaign by diverting forces to conquer a Turkey militarily allied with Britain.

When Germany attacked Russia on June 21, 1941, the revised state of affairs made the question of passage for Russian vessels - guaranteed to an Allied partner in the 1939 pact with Britain and France - a matter that Ambassador von Papen discussed with some urgency with the Turkish authorities. In a telegram to Ribbentrop two days after the Russo-German war began, Papen outlined the Turkish response.

Today I discussed with Saracoglu [the Turkish Foreign Minister] the question of Russian shipping. Passage of Russian naval vessels is completely out of the question. The Bosphorus and the Dardanelles are closed by net defenses and sown with mines. Passage of Soviet merchant vessels appears to the Foreign Minister not very likely at this time because in the initial phase of the war Russia would undoubtedly not want to divest herself of her merchant tonnage for the benefit of England. In any event, he is apparently willing to cooperate with us in this matter also, and he promised that he would promptly inform me of any Russian demarché in that regard.³³²

Turkey justified refusing passage to Soviet *naval* vessels through the Straits by the prior constraints of the Montreaux Convention of 1936, but Germany wanted Turkey to cooperate in the immediate denial of passage to Russian merchant shipping as well, primarily so the Germans could capture the 400,000 tons of merchant vessels in the Black Sea. A secondary reason for Germany's urgency in this regard was to prevent Britain's use of Russian tonnage in the Mediterranean, a

³³¹ DGFP, v. IX, 566.

³³² *Ibid*, v. XIII, 3.

highly likely Anglo-Russian arrangement in light of Britain's dearth of merchant ships in the Mediterranean.³³³

Because of the rapid advance of the *Wehrmacht* in Russia after June 22, German demands on Turkey's freedom of action became increasingly bolder, and Turkey conversely less willing to resist those demands. Although Turkey stood by her agreement with Britain regarding the preemptive buying of chromite, it still couldn't ignore the inescapable fact that the German armies were within 100 miles of Istanbul.³³⁴ Another consideration in Turkish politics was the fact that because it was the Soviets who were getting butchered by the *Wehrmacht*, Germany was gaining sympathy from the right-wing segment of Turkey's political elite. The Germans were helped further in their psychological position by revealing to the Turks the Soviets' long-term goals of controlling outright the Straits, information which Molotov had revealed to Ribbentrop during the period of the Nazi-Soviet collaboration.³³⁵

In the months following Germany's attack on Russia, it was the German contention that in the event of an Allied victory Turkey would have nothing to gain and a great deal to lose. Germany furthered its propaganda war in Turkey by promising German assistance to the right-wing in supporting the Pan-Turkic movement, especially in the reversion to Turkey of Moslem-speaking areas of the Soviet Caucasus. While many Turks would have appreciated adding these Soviet lands to their own territory, not even the Pan-Turkists, however, wanted to give Stalin or his armies the slightest pretext to slaughter the Turko-Mongol minorities then still firmly under Soviet control. Turkey continued to remain officially neutral,

³³³ *Ibid*, v. XIII, n 3.

³³⁴ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 289.

³³⁵ Lenczowski, *The Middle East*, 142.

and Ribbentrop ordered Papen to discontinue any further inducements of German-abetted Pan-Turkism. By this time - mid-1942 - it was becoming apparent to the Turks that the German ability to back either promises or threats in regard to Turkey were becoming increasingly limited.³³⁶

After June 1941, Turkish knowledge of Soviet designs on the Straits was a major factor in hindering a closer relationship between Turkey and the Allies.³³⁷ When Stalingrad fell in February 1943, the Soviets tried to bring Turkey into the war, tactically to draw German divisions off the Russian front and thus to permit more rapid Russian progress in the East, but strategically to create a situation which could later be exploited to allow Soviet armies to enter Turkey. Soviet insistence after 1943 that Turkey enter the war - in contradiction to its British and American allies' stand that Turkey could legitimately follow a less drastic, albeit pro-Allies, course of action - seemed proof to Ankara that Russia's primary motivation was to find an excuse to make an occupation possible, and, more importantly, to legitimize Soviet claims to control over the Straits in the postwar world.³³⁸

But increased non-Soviet Allied pressure on Turkey in late 1942 to bring the country into the war did begin to be exerted, although it was relatively low-key and with no ultimatum being issued to force Turkey's hand: neither London nor Washington wanted Turkey to refuse "future" belligerency outright, which might have led the Germans to better use the 26 divisions they had sitting virtually immobilized on the Bulgarian frontier. The Turks in any case procrastinated, as

³³⁶ *Ibid*, 142.

³³⁷ Kuniholm, *Origins*, 69.

³³⁸ *Ibid*, 69-70.

was their wont, requesting more weapons and supplies before thinking seriously of coming into active co-belligerency.³³⁹

There was another major issue, separate from this political see-sawing, but one which gives an insight to the domestic political scene in wartime Turkey. In 1942 and 1943, Turkey became embroiled in a controversy that has become one of the most infamous episodes in its modern history: the *Varlik Vergisi*, or Capital Tax. This levy emulated some of the worst features of Nazi Germany's racialism mixed with the old Ottoman Empire's fanaticism, and is adjudged the most shameful episode of Turkey's domestic government policies during this period.³⁴⁰

Approved by the Grand National Assembly, the tax was a seemingly reasonable measure to raise money in an economy mired in constant war-induced fiscal crises. The target of the tax was the great fortunes that had hitherto been pretty much free from taxation as a result of the ease of tax evasion then common in Turkey. In reality, the levy was undisguisedly aimed at three "alien", minority communities: the Greeks, the Jews, and the Armenians. Failure to pay the assessments - in many cases, the amounts levied were considerably higher than the victims' total assets - led to confiscations and even to imprisonment at hard labor.

The measure's preamble stated that it was "aimed at those who have amassed inflated profits by exploiting the difficult economic situation but do not pay commensurate taxes" - clearly meaning Turkey's overly-successful alien minorities.³⁴¹ The remissions that the Finance Ministry did finally allow late in 1943, essentially because of Allied pressure in the matter that had been prompted by

³³⁹ Gordon, *The Hidden Weapon*, 123-124.

³⁴⁰ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 291-296.

³⁴¹ G. Lewis, *Turkey*, 118.

outrage in the American Armenian community, were too late to save the victims, almost all of whom were non-Muslim. In March 1944 the Assembly finally canceled all amounts still unpaid, but added insult to injury by "penalizing those who had made payment and rewarding those who had somehow managed to avoid it".³⁴² The legacy of the Capital Tax was the damage done to Turkey's reputation in the West. The German press hailed the tax as a "justified" measure against "alien blood."

When Turkey was of greatest importance to the non-Axis cause by serving as a buffer to Axis expansion into the Middle East - which is to say before the United States became a belligerent - relations between Ankara and Washington were relatively low-key, the greatest American emphasis in Turkey being on persuading the Turks to remain neutral, and using economic assistance as its primary tool to ensure such neutrality. The ever-sanguine (except where de Valera was concerned) Churchill assured Roosevelt that Turkey was doing as little for the Nazi cause as could be expected of it under the circumstances.

Even after the American entry into the war and the subsequent lessening of Turkey's strategic geographical importance to the Axis, the Allies still decided in December 1942 they wanted to bring Turkey and its two-million man army into the war "in principle."³⁴³ Two months later, Churchill met with President Inonu at Adana, in southern Turkey, to try to bring this about. But Inonu told Churchill that before his country could come in on the Allied side, Turkey would have to have more military supplies, a demand to which the British leader reluctantly agreed. While these Allied-Turkish negotiations were taking place, Germany still had the strength to force a withdrawal of the British landing on the Dodecanese Islands,

³⁴² Lewis, *The Emergence*, 294.

³⁴³ Lenczowski, *The Middle East*, 144.

German-held Greek islands immediately off Turkey's west coast. It served as a pointed reminder to Ankara that it had still better proceed with caution where an open declaration of belligerency against the Reich was concerned.³⁴⁴

In mid-1944, the United States finally demanded that Turkey break relations with Germany, that the Straits be barred to German shipping, and that all shipments of chromite ore to the Axis be stopped - the threat being backed up with an immediate and complete cut-off of further arms to Turkey.³⁴⁵ The Turks yielded, knowing that little danger from Germany now existed and that their country had become - gratefully - not much more than a backwater in the war. Furthermore, they wanted the American arms for the postwar fight they expected with Russia.³⁴⁶ On June 15, 1944 Turkey finally ceased to allow (at Allied urging) Germany secret passage of any naval craft through the Straits, and on August 25 diplomatic relations between Berlin and Ankara were suspended by the latter.³⁴⁷ On January 12, 1945, Turkey opened the Straits to supply ships bound for Soviet ports, and two weeks later cut relations with Japan. Nonetheless, when in early 1945 Turkey's 1935 ten-year friendship pact with the Soviet Union expired, the Soviets gave notice to Ankara that the treaty wouldn't be renewed unless the Turkish provinces of Kars and Ardahan were handed over to the Soviet Union, along with an agreement to Soviet "participation" in the defense of the Straits. All the demands were instantly rejected by the Turkish government.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 144.

³⁴⁵ Edward Weisband, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1943/1945: Small State Diplomacy and Great Power Politics*, Princeton, 1973, 258.

³⁴⁶ Fodor, *The Neutrals*, 172.

³⁴⁷ Lenczowski, *The Middle East*, 143.

³⁴⁸ G. Lewis, *Turkey*, 121. In June 1945 the Soviet Government officially informed Turkey that the USSR endorsed "border rectifications" on the Soviet-Turkish northeastern border (in the Soviets favor, of course), and that Soviet bases

Finally, on February 22, 1945, Turkey declared war on Germany so it could become a charter member of the new United Nations Organization, and thus have a place at the victors' table to better protect its sovereignty on the Straits against Russian expansionism. Even this *pro forma* declaration didn't engender much enthusiasm in the government, however, the country's leadership feeling the move too closely paralleled Mussolini's despised declaration of war on the West in June 1940. Though the Allies had by this time become heartily sick of Turkey's foot-dragging on the issue of co-belligerency, it was nonetheless important to Western interests that Turkey secure a respectable place in the United Nations to better "uphold her sovereignty over the Straits."³⁴⁹ On March 21, a month after the declaration of war by Turkey, Moscow formally confirmed that the Soviet-Turkish Friendship Pact would not be renewed, signaling the beginning of an increasingly dangerous period of relations between the neighboring countries.³⁵⁰

In summary, perhaps Turkey's behavior in World War II can best be explained by its unwillingness to dissipate its strength in any fight against the Axis, when it believed that strength would eventually be needed to defend itself against the Russians. In light of Soviet demands on Turkish sovereignty at the war's end, and the knowledge of Molotov's designs on the Straits, the country's course can at least be understood in a framework of self-preservation.

should be established on the Straits - both involving flagrant violations of Turkey's sovereignty. Eren, *Turkey Today - and Tomorrow*, 228-229, 233.

³⁴⁹ Toynbee, *The War & the Neutrals*, 366.

³⁵⁰ Lenczowski, *The Middle East*, 145-147.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSIONS

The Swedish diplomat Gunnar Haeggloef wrote that

neutrality has to be supported by a reasonably efficient defense system; politics of neutrality require steady support from all the important political groups of the country; and, most important of all, the basic condition of neutrality is a balance of power.¹

This was largely the underlying formula that allowed six countries to stay out of the European catastrophe that was the Second World War. Many other factors contributed to the neutrals' removal from harm's way - geography, personalities, the fatigue following civil war, luck. But Mr. Haeggloef's first point - a strong defensive capability - was for four of the World War II European non-belligerents a major contributing factor in their neutrality: Germany calculated that Spain, Switzerland, Sweden and Turkey represented nuts not worth cracking as long as they did the Axis little harm and continued to provide it with vital war materiel. Self-defense capabilities were not primary guarantors of Portuguese and Irish neutrality, but these two states' promises to tenaciously defend their territory against any aggressor were known to and undoubtedly figured to some degree in the strategic planning of the belligerents.

It should be noted that while the neutrals maintained military forces that were in most cases much larger than their normal peacetime defense establishments, all six were still very much less burdened in this regard than were the fighting nations. Even though inflated relative to the neutrals' pre-war defense

¹ M. Gunnar Haeggloef, "A Test of Neutrality: Sweden in the Second World War", *International Affairs*, 1960, 35 (2), 153-167.

budgets, the proportion of money, manpower and production facilities of the warring states dedicated to military-related purposes vastly exceeded in virtually all cases that which the neutrals were required to spend in this regard.²

No one of the neutrals stayed out of World War II simply because it *wanted* to, or because the belligerents had any real regard for neutrality as such. Rather it was a matter of weighing the costs of overcoming armies, in the cases of Switzerland, Sweden and Turkey, or of supporting their participation in the case of Spain, or of fighting their protectors, as with Ireland and Portugal. Though the majority of Europe's states *also* wished in 1939 and 1940 to remain neutral, the balance in their regard came down on the other side, a fact which would seem to confirm that the *concept* of neutrality was in itself valueless in Europe during the Second World War. The chance of success was the real factor a potential aggressor weighed in determining whether to violate a state's neutrality.

Though historians have tended to lump together the two Iberian dictatorships in terms of World War II policies, Spain and Portugal presented differing problems for the belligerents. Spain may very well have voluntarily joined the Axis as a co-belligerent had Franco considered that his country could have gotten more out of such a move than it would have cost it. But due to its own civil war Spain was a pauperized nation, and Hitler wasn't willing or able to meet the (admittedly high) material demands that were Franco's price for bringing his country into the conflict. Though the Germans considered the possibility of taking Spain *against* its will, such a move never became a serious option, primarily because Spain's military capacity to defend its sovereignty would have been too much for the *Wehrmacht* to overcome in light of Hitler's other, evidently more pressing, military obligations. Though a German-controlled Gibraltar would have

² Gordon, *The Hidden Weapon*, 213.

been of supreme military significance, in 1940 and 1941 Hitler must have calculated that the Axis could count on Franco's cooperation after his other enemies were beaten. But by 1942, it was becoming apparent that this scenario was no longer likely to play and that the over-extended Reich no longer had the capacity to impose its will on an unreceptive Spain.

The Allies never had plans to militarily take Spain, and considering their ability to choke off the country's trade through embargo, they never had to - at least not as long as Spain kept the Germans out. The biggest Ally concern was whether Franco might in some way oppose the North African Torch campaign of 1942, but it turned out that it was Franco who was concerned - that the Allies would use Spain as their access point to re-enter occupied Europe.

Portugal could never be considered by the Germans separately from Spain: an invasion of a hostile Spain would have inevitably meant including Portugal, and, conversely, there was no realistic way to occupy Portugal without Spanish acquiescence or without Spanish hostility. That Portugal remained scrupulously neutral was all Germany could expect, and which was in fact very much to Germany's benefit. Though Hitler couldn't have Azores bases, Portugal saw to it that until late in the war neither could Britain or the United States. And while the Azores weren't all that critical to Germany's war effort, the islands would have been a tremendous tactical and strategic boon to the Allied cause had they been available earlier in the war.

Portugal didn't have the wherewithal to make military might an important part of its neutrality policy, but it did have the political consensus for non-interference that was necessary to successful neutrality, and it was fortunate that the power of the belligerent blocs balanced each other in respect to Portugal. Had Germany made the first move on the Azores, the still-neutral United States would

very likely have contested it as an infringement of the Monroe Doctrine; and both sides knew that any attempted move against the Portuguese mainland would have meant taking on Spain as well.

Switzerland and Sweden both used the threat of destruction of vitally-important resources as primary barriers to German invasion. In both cases, these threats were importantly backed-up with the military capacity to cause any invader substantial losses while waging a holding action during which, in Switzerland's case, Alpine tunnels were destroyed, and, in Sweden's case, iron ore facilities put to the torch. It is clear that in neither of these countries' cases were their long-time professions of neutrality a factor in their safety. It came instead from the *will* to remain neutral by paying the substantial cost of arming themselves meaningfully and to destroy a large part of their infrastructures if the military shields were insufficient.

Sweden also had to face the possibility of an Allied violation of its territorial sovereignty, one in conjunction with a move against occupied Norway or to assist Finland. Though neither Britain nor the United States coveted Sweden for the purpose of getting at its natural resources, which would have represented a primary German consideration, any such move against it or Norway would have very likely invoked a German response,³ the effect of which would have been a devastated and/or occupied Sweden. Although the Allied threat was minimal and short-lived, Sweden's pledges to Berlin given in the name of its king to fight *any* invader were undoubtedly heard as unambiguously in London and Washington as they were in the German capital.

³ This according to the Swedish ambassador in London during the war, Gunnar Haeggloef. Quoted in Ogley, *Theory & Practice*, 171.

Switzerland faced no physical threat to its territory from the Allies, suffering only material blockade from that quarter. Its military shield was aimed solely at the *Wehrmacht*. (Mussolini never waved a sword in Switzerland's direction, even though Italy's entry into the war in June 1940 completely changed Switzerland's economic position.) In purely military terms, the Swiss defense shield played the most important part in the success of any of the six states' neutrality. Though like the other neutrals it can be said that Switzerland was fortunate in that Germany simply never *had* to have it for strategic purposes, the reverse is also true that Germany *would* have taken Switzerland if it had been easy enough. But the Swiss went to expensive lengths to convince Berlin that it wouldn't be anything like easy, and that the advantages Berlin could have from the Swiss for the asking (or, more precisely, for the paying) would be violently denied if its territorial sovereignty was threatened.

Turkey walked as fine a line between the demands of the belligerents as any of the neutrals. The fact that it was at the juncture point of the great wartime blocs - the Axis dominating the Balkans to the west, the Russians to the north, and Britain and its allies preeminent in the Arab world to the south - meant that the country straddled the eye of the wartime hurricane. With its control of crucial communications lines between these blocs, and thus threatened by their needs (even though after June 1941 the latter two were allies, their reasons for wanting to control Turkey were not, of course, in harmony), never was Turkey as in need of diplomatic skills as during the war and never were those skills so successfully employed.

Not all of Turkey's tightrope walking was seen as evenhanded, which is unsurprising. The Soviets used the matter of Ankara allowing minor German naval craft through the Straits during the war as a pretext for urging the "revision" of

control of the waterway in its favor after the war. There is, however, no evidence that Turkey's concessions in this regard contributed significantly to the Axis war effort. In any event, just as many concessions were made in the Allies' favor, the matter of allowing western preemption of chromite ore being one of the most important. Turkey was, after all, being forced to balance demands from all quarters to protect its neutrality, a neutrality which the Turks regarded as critical to their own well-being - a not unreasonable view in light of the condition of most of the rest of Europe in 1945.

Ireland was, of the neutrals, odd man out. In addition to the usual contempt the warring nations felt for the non-belligerents, Britain deemed itself betrayed by the neutrality of a nation that had been for centuries a part of "its" world. Still legally an integral component of the political association of the United Kingdom (even though the Irish government held that its membership in the Commonwealth was essentially meaningless), the attitude of the Irish toward Britain was shaped mostly by simple hatred for having been bled white for all those centuries and for the fact that a good chunk of its national territory was still being denied it by the despised British.

But Dublin's ability to remain neutral was partly predicated on the awareness that had Germany launched an invasion against Ireland, Britain would have had to repel it. In retrospect, Ireland never stood in any substantive danger of such an undertaking, although if an assault on Britain had been successfully carried out, Ulster would very likely have been eventually taken, which would have ended with the rest of the island coming under German domination even without the Twenty Six Counties being technically violated.

It can't be said that Ireland's military defense capabilities would have been of any significant consideration in either side's decision to occupy all or part of the

island. As dearly as the Irish population may have held their neutrality and sovereignty, their military capacity to defend such were never highly developed. That Britain retained Ulster after the establishment of the rest of Ireland's independence accounts in largest part for the fact that Irish neutrality was not violated by the Allies: Ulster was available to serve as a forward base from which to protect Britain's sea lanes, and therefore taking the southern Treaty Ports never became absolutely necessary. Had it been, the ports would have become a legitimate German target, and Ireland might very well then have slid into the war on the Allied side on the basis of 'in for a penny, in for a pound.' Ironically, such a scenario may have had a profoundly important postwar effect: loyally orange Ulster became so antipathetic to the Twenty Six Counties between 1939 and 1945 that the chances for ending the island's partitioned status after the war were greatly diminished, not to say unattainable.

The lessons learned about European neutrality in the Second World War seem most clearly to indicate that neutrality was a failure. Of the 20 "neutrals" at war's outbreak, only six successfully maintained their outsiders' status. There were, as Gunnar Haeggloef put it, more Norways - and Hollands and Belgiums and Hungarys and Greeces - than there were Swedens. Following the war, almost all the European states joined one of the two Great Power blocs that re-jiggered the continent along all new lines of dialectic.⁴

It was doubted right after World War II that neutrality could any longer have much meaning. Major wars of the future were seen, *ipso facto*, as being potentially nuclear conflicts, thus making the idea of sitting them out meaningless. In truth, neutrality now has almost no meaning in terms of nuclear war. But as

⁴ Switzerland, Sweden and Yugoslavia are still theoretically aloof from such alliances, but few doubt in which direction their basic political orientations lie.

regards all the regular little wars, military capabilities would appear today to be the most popular guarantor of "neutrality", an observation borne out by the astronomical levels of military spending in virtually every country in the world. In fact, the endless procession of quite ordinary, if just as lethal, wars has gone on in the last forty-plus years quite unabated, and while most of the several dozen new states created in those decades have declared their total impartiality in struggles between the Powers, they've nonetheless continued the small-time slaughter of each other's citizens with something that has often approached abandon.

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