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RIBBENTROP AND THE DETERIORATION OF ANGLO-GERMAN RELATIONS
1934-1939

by

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MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY, 1951

Presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
1956

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May 29 1956
Date

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CHAPTER I

From Versailles To Valhalla

On September 1, 1939, the dark cloud which had hovered over Europe for the previous twenty years finally unleashed its tragic contents. Before the storm subsided six years later, over half of the globe had been washed in the blood of mankind. Imperceptible to most, the storm began to form immediately after the 1919 Peace Conference and as the years passed it gradually increased in size and threat, finally assuming the shape of a wild-eyed, dark-haired, mustachioed little man whose voice pealed like thunder from the beer halls of Munich. By 1933, a few realized its ominous portent, many more saw and chose to ignore it, thinking it would pass and become absorbed in the atmosphere of a false peace. Consequently, not until 1939 did the world fully realize that a major catastrophe was upon it.

If Napoleon was child of a revolution, Hitler was born of a peace treaty. When the victorious powers met at Versailles in 1919, they fashioned five fundamental ingredients into what they called a formula for

peace; in reality, it may be argued, they wrote out a recipe for war. Essentially, the terms provided for: territorial changes commensurate with the idea of self-determination; reparations in restitution for beginning an aggressive war; disarmament and demilitarization; security; and the Covenant of the League of Nations. In some measure, all five directly affected defeated Germany. The terms of Versailles were hard and exacting but hardly Carthaginian in nature. They were the result of a succession of compromises. While the other victorious powers, notably Great Britain, favored less demanding terms, France, with her traditional fear of German might, insisted upon a prostrate Germany. Instead of an atmosphere of tranquility, the peace conference created a psychosis of war, and with it the assertion of German "war guilt," an accusation no German was willing to accept. Thus, the peace conference convoked to end future wars produced a "Diktat," and the "Diktat" helped give rise to a dictator who in turn completed the vicious circle by beginning another war.

From 1919 to 1925, because of reparation payments and military occupation, Germany suffered constant and personal reminders of defeat. Not until the conclusion of the Locarno Pact in 1925 by Germany, Great Britain, France, Italy, and Belgium did Germany attain any

measurable degree of equality with other nations. In addition to other measures, Locarno provided for a joint guarantee of Germany's western frontiers and the demilitarized Rhineland zone, and as a result created a more peaceful atmosphere for the next four years and prepared Germany's entry into the League of Nations in 1926. The Locarno spirit was short-lived, however, for as the financial crisis became the focal point of world attention, the year 1929 found Europe once again torn by anxieties.

Throughout the post-war period, reparations constituted one of Europe's most serious problems. It was a bitter pill for Germany to swallow, not only because she was financially bankrupt but also because the payment of reparations implied sole guilt for the war. To facilitate the cumbersome reparation payments, the Dawes Plan went into effect in 1924 but ended in failure five years later. Consequently, because of Germany's reluctance and inability to keep up her obligations and owing to the decline in European prosperity, the Young Plan was instituted to provide a saner, more liberal reparations policy. The Young Plan really never went into effect, however, for as the depression deepened, hope was largely abandoned of continuing the present system of reparations. In

1931, President Hoover proposed a one year moratorium, and in 1932 Chancellor Bruening announced Germany's inability to continue payments.

By 1932, disarmament was once again one of the main problems confronting European statesmen. It had been one of the principal issues evolving from the Treaty of Versailles, the idea being that all nations would disarm on a basis of equality. While attractive in theory, it was disappointing in practice. France had remained the strongest military power in Europe and her friends had maintained their armies at an impressive strength. This was rankling to a Germany now almost totally disarmed, and so it was with some justification that Chancellor Bruening, at the opening of the World Disarmament Conference in 1932, put forward Germany's claim to rearm on a basis of equality with other nations. France, on the other hand, proposed an international military force. Between the two, Great Britain followed an uncertain, vacillating policy. By the end of 1932, a compromise proposal had been advanced but one which each state interpreted differently, so that by the end of the year the cause for disarmament was steadily losing ground, finally reaching its demise when Hitler came to power in 1933.

In evaluating Anglo-German relations between 1919

and 1933, certain basic facts seem to be paramount. First, it must be remembered that Germany enjoyed, during this period, very little of what might be called an independent foreign policy. What small amount of independence she did have was closely tied to the Treaty of Versailles and through it to the League of Nations so that she was generally almost entirely dependent upon the policies of the other Great Powers. Consequently, Germany lacked any real power to make bilateral agreements and its foreign policy is, thereby, difficult to evaluate. This was clearly perceptible in 1931 when Germany, in an attempt to solve her financial dilemma, was prevented from joining Austria in a customs union largely because of French objections. In general, however, Germany was much less hostile to Great Britain. France was still her real enemy and the principal barrier to her ever again becoming a first-rate power. As a result, Germany looked to Britain as her only hope in breaking the shackles of Versailles and freeing herself of diplomatic isolation.

The British seemed to reciprocate this friendly spirit. Britain's policy during this period, however, essentially seemed to be one of allaying French fears of Germany on the one hand and helping Germany overcome

her feeling of inferiority and resentment on the other without taking sides with either one. Great Britain failed to appreciate France's traditional fear of Germany and often appeared to look upon France as more of a potential enemy than Germany. Several times during this period, Britain found herself at odds with her old ally of World War I and did not want to see a powerful France the dominant force in European politics.

Other factors also caused Great Britain to adopt a friendly attitude towards Germany. Britain wanted to see a stronger, more prosperous Germany emerge from the ashes of World War I because she felt that a stable Germany would commercially benefit both countries. She did not, as some maintain, fear an economic rivalry to any great extent. In addition, she looked favorably on a strong Germany as a bulwark against the communist threat from the east. It is easy to exaggerate the importance of this factor in terms of a prospective Russian invasion of Europe; on the other hand Britain had justifiable fears that Germany might undergo an internal conversion to communism. But probably her most important reason for favoring a strong Germany lay in Britain's desire to see established in central Europe a force strong enough partially to off-set the powerful position of France. In this, she returned to

her old policy of the balance of power, a policy which had to be revised somewhat to conform to the spirit of Versailles and her commitments in the League of Nations.

In summary, therefore, it can be said that Anglo-German relations from 1919 to 1933, and even up to 1938, rested on a fairly friendly basis. Perhaps more than anyone else, Britain was responsible for the restoration of a strong German state. In this light, it is not difficult to understand Britain's later policies of appeasement. They were not new, for they had their origins in the period from the Treaty of Versailles to the rise of Adolph Hitler.

When Hitler came to power in 1933, he was not unaware of Great Britain's past friendliness towards Germany. Nor had his earlier admiration for the British changed. In Mein Kampf, Hitler had revealed an early admiration for the British. "With England alone," he said, "could one begin the new Germanic invasion. To gain her favor no sacrifice should be too great."¹ His actions upon accession to power indicated that he

¹ Adolph Hitler, Mein Kampf, (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1939), 182-83.

had not altered these earlier feelings. In fact, in 1933 the idea of securing an alliance with Great Britain constituted the number one point of his foreign policy program. Hitler was not motivated by feelings of brotherly love for the British, however, for his policy was one of trying to convince Britain that Russia, being Germany's obvious enemy, was also Britain's enemy, and that a strong Germany would be Britain's best guardian against a Russian threat from the east. In other words, Hitler was willing to recognize British supremacy on the seas for a free hand in eastern Europe.

When Hitler failed in his early attempts to reach an alliance with Great Britain, he began to look around for someone who could complete this important task. In this regard, he became interested in a rising young diplomat named Joachim von Ribbentrop. From the time of his first meeting with Hitler in 1932, Ribbentrop began to play an ever increasing role in the Fuehrer's foreign policy, and between 1934-1939 his influence with Hitler increased so rapidly that eventually he was to become Hitler's "second Bismarck." Although at the outset both Hitler and Ribbentrop were pro-British, both believing that an alliance with Great Britain could be obtained, it was Ribbentrop, much before Hitler,

who realized that this could never be.

But despite the favorable relations existing between Great Britain and Germany between 1919 and 1933 and despite Hitler's pro-British sentiments, the two countries in 1939 found themselves once again at war. Why? Did Hitler believe that because Britain had favored a stronger Germany after Versailles that she would not oppose him if he attacked Poland? Or was it because he believed that on the basis of Britain's record of appeasement and pacification she was too weak and cowardly to fight a rearmed Germany? If so, what led him to these convictions? These are the important questions of this paper, and a considerable portion of the answer seems to lie in Joachim von Ribbentrop and his role in Hitler's foreign policy during the eventful years, 1934-1939.

CHAPTER II

BERLIN

The life of Joachim von Ribbentrop began amid rather modest circumstances. Anyone observing young Joachim during his youth would have seen nothing to foretell his future notoriety and fame and it is doubtful if Ribbentrop even glimpsed the path that was to carry him, at Hitler's side, to world prominence.

But in describing Ribbentrop's early life, one is unfortunately confronted with obscure and conflicting reports. Most of the details have been furnished by Ribbentrop himself or by his friends and acquaintances and to what extent they have been colored is difficult to say. It is, consequently, safe to assume that the "official" account of Ribbentrop's early life is not entirely reliable.

The youngest of three brothers and one sister, Joachim Ribbentrop was born on April 30, 1893 in Wesel-am-Rhein.¹ Joachim's father, Richard Ribbentrop,

¹ Paul Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954), 46.

a captain in the Kaiser's army, was the fifth generation of his family to serve as officers in German and Hanoverian armies. In tracing Ribbentrop's direct ancestry, it appears that the only one to attain even a slight degree of fame was General Friedrich Wilhelm Johann Ribbentrop who served beside Blucher² at Waterloo and was reported to have been a close friend of General Yorck.³

Three years after Joachim's birth, the family moved to Metz (a German city since 1871), and there the mother died of tuberculosis in 1902. Young Ribbentrop received his early education in the Kaiserliches Lyzeum in Metz. While in Metz, his father encouraged his son to continue his studies at a reputable military school to prepare him for an army career. Joachim, however, owing in part to a frail condition inherited

²Blucher, Gebhard Lebrecht von: 1742-1819, Prussian Field Marshal, aided Wellington in Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo; nicknamed "Marshall Forward."

³Yorck, von Wartenburg, Hans David Ludwig, 1759-1830, German count, German Field Marshal, Governor-General of East and West Prussia, commanded segment of the Army of Liberation against Napoleon.

from his mother, showed little enthusiasm for the rigors of German militarism and chose to disappoint his father by expressing an interest in less exacting fields.

The details of Ribbentrop's early childhood are extremely sketchy. Even so, it is evident that he was much spoiled, first by his mother and later by his aunt, Gertrude von Ribbentrop, who, following his mother's death, lived for long periods in the Ribbentrop household. His early school years comprise a record of mischief, frequent brushes with trouble, and less than mediocre scholastic achievements, except for a marked aptitude for languages. Pursuing this linguistic talent, and supported by his aunt, Ribbentrop spent the next several years studying in French, Swiss, and English schools. In later years, conflicting reports were circulated regarding the results of these various academic pursuits, his friends maintaining that he was "an excellent student" while his enemies countered that he had been:⁴

a mediocre student; expelled from three schools for infractions of discipline; and that he dissipated a fortune inherited from an uncle in drinking and other debaucheries while in London and Paris.

Regardless of the truth of these reports, the

⁴"Who Is Ribbentrop," Living Age, CCCL (Mar-Aug, 1936), 328.

fact remains that he neither finished his course at London University nor subjected himself to examination at the completion of any of his linguistic studies. Why Ribbentrop chose not to abide by normal academic procedures remains somewhat of a mystery, and he was always reluctant to discuss this phase of his life in later years. But despite the fact that he never formally completed his London studies, he managed to acquire considerable fluency in both French and English. In addition to the acquisition of these language skills, which he put to good use in later years, Ribbentrop also made many English friends. It is this latter factor that appears to be the foundation for Ribbentrop's Anglophilism and which prompted him in later years to refer to England as his "second home."

At the age of eighteen, Ribbentrop left London for Canada. During his four years there, he was employed variously as a laborer, bank clerk, time-keeper, and small scale importer of wines and liquors. Although his wine business was of little success, he did enjoy some degree of social recognition. The Governor-General of Canada at this time was the Duke of Connaught, (son of Queen Victoria, youngest brother of King Edward VII, and uncle of Kaiser Wilhelm II) in whose household German was the predominant language.

Since Ribbentrop could speak fluent German, French, and English and possessed a certain social charm, it was apparently not too difficult for him to secure invitations to some of the festivities held at Rideau Hall. Here, his linguistic skills, his talent for playing the violin, his adeptness at tennis and bridge, a flair for dramatics, and the soon-to-be famous Ribbentrop charm, enabled him to become something of a favorite in Ottawa's better social set. It was always a mystery to his Ottawa friends who later met him while he was ambassador to London how the Ribbentrop charm had evolved into an exaggerated and overbearing arrogance.⁵ Nevertheless, the many friends and acquaintances Ribbentrop acquired in Canada served further to enhance his fondness for Britain and the British people.

Ribbentrop left Canada at the outbreak of World War I and thus avoided detention as an enemy alien. The year 1914 consequently found him back in Germany. He enlisted in the Hussar Regiment Number 12, was soon promoted to lieutenant, and saw action in Poland and Russia where he distinguished himself by winning two Iron Crosses, First and Second Class. In 1918, he

⁵ Paul Schwarz, This Man Ribbentrop (New York: Julian Messner, Inc., 1943), 27.

was transferred to Constantinople, but since the particular mission to which he was attached ended in failure he returned to Berlin later that same year. Ribbentrop later claimed in his autobiographical sketch in the German Who's Who that after his return to Berlin he was assigned to the one-hundred-and-eighty member German delegation to the Versailles Peace Conference.⁶ But the official and un-official publications relating to this delegation have yet to reveal his name.

Ribbentrop was no exception to the thousands of other demobilized German officers who after the war looked hopelessly about for an occupation partially commensurate with their former status. Two of the most common solutions to this dilemma were to become merchants or to marry wealth. Ribbentrop was more fortunate than most in that he succeeded in doing both. Immediately after the war, Ribbentrop once more entered the wine business and began a successful career by bribing the sergeant in charge of the liquor supplies for Berlin's officer messes to channel a few cases his way. In this manner, he was able to sell his merchandise at a profit and replenish his stock.

As Ribbentrop's commercial fortunes increased,

⁶ Seabury, op. cit., 47.

his social ambitions grew proportionately. In 1920, he married Annelies Henckell, the daughter of Otto Henckell the millionaire champagne manufacturer. Although the elder Henckell was insufficiently impressed with his new son-in-law to take him into his firm as a partner, he nevertheless contributed substantially to Joachim's spiralling success by manipulating several business deals in the latter's favor. Some of these manipulations created a virtual monopoly in some brands for Ribbentrop's company.

Berlin's inflationary post-war days were marked by loose morals, the breaking down of old barriers, and the rise of the nouveaux riches. As one of this latter group, Ribbentrop attained considerable prominence. He made an effort to be seen at all the boisterous functions, including the much publicized "tea dances" which continued to all hours of the night. Occasionally he was seen with his wife, but more frequently alone. Ribbentrop was an excellent and enthusiastic dancer, two qualities that, when combined with his charming manner, made him popular at these various functions.

In 1925, Ribbentrop's social status received a boost when he was legally adopted by his Aunt Gertrude and thus entitled to affix the coveted "von" before

his name.⁷ Most of the old German nobility sneered at this change, especially since there was some question as to its legality. But undaunted, Ribbentrop widely publicized his new fortune and lost no time in renaming his business "The Von Ribbentrop Company."

Still, despite the fact that he was now a wealthy merchant, the son-in-law of a millionaire, and a member of a titled family, Ribbentrop's appetite for social prominence remained unsatisfied. He longed to break into diplomatic society, and to this end he exploited every means at his disposal. He made an effort to be seen at as many diplomatic functions as possible and entertained minor diplomatic officials at his lavish Dahlem Villa, presenting them with generous gifts of wines and liquors. These efforts resulted in his becoming better known, but it was not until he attached himself to Hitler's band wagon that they began to bear fruit.

When the Nazi Party first began to take roots during the 1920's, Ribbentrop was neither a Nazi nor a Nazi sympathizer. But he was a fanatical anti-bolshevist

⁷Department of State. United States Office of Chief of Counsel For Prosecution of Axis Criminality, Nazi Conspiracy & Aggression, I-VIII, 2 supplements, (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1946), VII, 114. Hereafter known as Nazi Conspiracy & Aggression.

and a clever opportunist who never failed to take advantage of any favorable opportunity to express publicly his hatred of bolshevism. There is some question as to when Ribbentrop formally joined the Nazi party. One version claims that it was in 1930 under an assumed name, but a more official source dates his party membership from 1932. However this may be, it is certain that Ribbentrop was active in Nazi party circles on the eve of Hitler's accession to power.

The first meeting between Hitler and Ribbentrop was brought about through the efforts of Vicco Karl von Buelow-Schwante, a black sheep of a famous family. One day in 1932, Hitler was lamenting the fact that he had no one around him who could intelligently read the London Times and Le Temps. Vicco immediately interested Hitler in von Ribbentrop whom he described as a prosperous young wine merchant fluent in both French and English and who had many influential English contacts. Hitler was interested and the two men finally met at Hitler's Berghof in Berchtesgaden on August 12, 1932. Hitler was not only impressed with the young wine merchant's potential political value to the party but with his sociability as well. In the ensuing months, Hitler was a frequent dinner guest at the Ribbentrop home; and he came to be equally fond of Ribbentrop's wife as

they shared the same tastes in cuisine and art.

Ribbentrop assisted in Hitler's accession to power by acting as a go-between in arranging the meetin⁸ between Hitler and von Papen at Ribbentrop's home in January 1933. It was at this meeting that the infamous bargain was struck making Hitler chancellor. Ribbentrop later exaggerated the importance of his role in Hitler's accession to power by stating that it was through his mediation the Hitler government was formed.

When Hitler came to power in 1933, he named Alfred Rosenberg⁹ as chief of the Nazi Party's foreign

⁸ Papen, Franz von - German diplomat who was Military Attache in Washington and Mexico City, 1913-1915, and was expelled from U.S. for fomenting sabotage; Reich Chancellor (succeeding Bruening), June 1932-August 1934; Reich Commissar for Prussia, 1933; Special Plenipotentiary for the Saar, 1933-1934; negotiator of Concordat with the Vatican, July 1933; German ambassador to Austria, 1934-1938; appointed Plenipotentiary Minister Extraordinary on special mission to Austria by Hitler, 1936; awarded Golden Party Badge of Honor by Hitler after Anschluss; Ambassador to Turkey, 1939-1944.

⁹ Rosenberg, Alfred - First editor of Nazi newspaper, Voelkischer Beobachter, 1921; participated in 1923 Munich putsch; appointed Hitler's private envoy in London, 1933; Reichleiter and head of Nazi Party Office for Foreign Policy and Ideology, 1933; Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories, 1941; member of the Reichstag; publisher of party periodical, Monatshefte; official Nazi philosopher; author of Myth of the 20th Century and other involved treatises on Nazi doctrine.

program and empowered Ribbentrop to assist him. In time, this liason led to the formation of a special bureau later to be known as the Buero Ribbentrop. It had no official government sanction other than as the party's watchdog on the Wilhelm strasse. Soon, Ribbentrop and Rosenberg were competing with each other for Hitler's favor - both with an eye on the foreign minister's position in the foreign office. Ribbentrop was not above severely criticising Rosenberg in an attempt to discredit him with the Fuehrer.

The competition between the two men took a favorable turn for Ribbentrop when Rosenberg was sent to London in May 1933 on an important diplomatic mission. Both before coming to power and after, Hitler had placed great emphasis on the importance of an Anglo-German Alliance. It was, therefore, Rosenberg's task in 1933 to sound out the British as to how this alliance could best be reached. The form it was to take is uncertain, but in 1933 Hitler apparently saw in a British alliance his only chance of breaking the shackles of the Versailles "Diktat."

The Rosenberg Mission, however, proved to be a significant disappointment. On Rosenberg's arrival in London on May 8, 1933, he was coolly received by officials of the British foreign office, and on May 9

Foreign Secretary Simon reluctantly consented to an interview with this pseudo diplomat. On May 10, Rosenberg made the preposterous error of placing a swastika wreath at the Cenotaph, Britain's monument to her World War I dead, and on the next day members of the British Legion snatched away the wreath - calling Rosenberg's lack of judgement "an act of desecration." Rosenberg left London the following day, forty-eight hours earlier than scheduled and without seeing the prime minister, the principal object of his visit. The London Times commented the day after Rosenberg's departure that "his visit will hardly be regarded as a success even by those responsible for it."¹¹

Rosenberg returned to Berlin disgraced in the eyes of his Fuehrer and leading Nazi Party officials.

¹⁰

Simon, Sir John Allsebrook (First Viscount of Stackpole Ellidor, 1940) - British Conservative Party member who was Solicitor General, 1910-1913; Attorney General, with seat in Cabinet, 1913-1915; Secretary of State for Home Affairs, 1915-1916; Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1931-1935; Secretary of State for Home Affairs and Deputy Leader of the House of Commons, 1935-1937; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1937-1940; Lord Chancellor, 1940-1945.

¹¹

Seabury, op. cit., 36-37.

is unfortunate mission undoubtedly cost him much, especially his ambition someday to become the Reich's foreign minister. And thus with Rosenberg's diplomatic star in decline, Ribbentrop's began its ascent. Hitler, more and more impressed with Ribbentrop, assigned him a new task. He was to use his Buere to collect and compile information and scandal on every individual in Germany and abroad who was of any public consequence. Since this entailed working even more closely with officials of the foreign office, it was thus as collector of scandal and rumor that Ribbentrop first succeeded in getting his foot effectively in the front door of the Wilhelmstrasse.

The two organizations, the Wilhelmstrasse and the Buere Ribbentrop, so Hitler ordered, were to complement each other in all matters of foreign affairs, a supposition that existed only in theory and rarely in fact. As a result, a bitter animosity developed between Ribbentrop and the career diplomats, who looked upon Ribbentrop as an interloper in diplomacy and as an irresponsible social climber without diplomatic qualifications. They fully expected him to go the same route as Rosenberg, but in this they were mistaken. They grossly underestimated their man or "the poacher was soon to become the gamekeeper."

Soon after the Nazis assumed power in 1933, they deadlocked the World Disarmament Conference by insisting that Germany be allowed to rearm on a basis of equality with other nations. Compromises were proposed by both the British and German delegations but no results were achieved. Finally, in October 1933, Hitler withdrew simultaneously from the World Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations.¹² His decision shocked everyone, including high ranking officials of the foreign office. Even more surprising was the fact that Hitler, although he withdrew from the League and Disarmament Conference, left the door open to further negotiations by allowing it to be rumored throughout the European capitals that he still desired a solution to the disarmament question. In other words, Hitler made it plain that he would not return to Geneva and that he favored bilateral agreements with France and Britain rather than a multilateral League disarmament pact. In this way, he hoped to drive a wedge between the western European countries.

To assist him in the execution of this new policy, Hitler in April 1934 appointed Joachim von

¹²Documents On International Affairs, 1933, ed. John W. Wheeler-Bennett (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 285 & 286-87.

Ribbentrop as Special Commissioner for Disarmament Problems. The appointment was approved by the aging President von Hindenberg¹³ only after Hitler had persuaded him that Ribbentrop was the man for the job, apparently on the grounds that one of Ribbentrop's ancestors had fought with Blucher at Waterloo. Hindenberg's reservations were more than seconded by the top officials of the Wilhelmstrasse who protested that a post of such responsibility should only have been given to an experienced member of the foreign service. Added to the Buero Ribbentrop, the insult of the new appointment began the feud between Ribbentrop and the career diplomats which was to last until the end of the war.

Soon after his appointment, Ribbentrop set off on a round of trips to the western European capitals where he accomplished little except invariably to incur the wrath of the resident German diplomats. Since in his special diplomatic status he was responsible to no one save Hitler, Ribbentrop arrived in these

13

Hindenberg, Field Marshal Paul - World War I German military leader who dethroned the Kaiser, hero of Tannenberg; President of Germany, 1925-1934; died on August 2, 1934 leaving a political testament indicating in passages suppressed by the Nazis when the document was published, a wish not to have Hitler succeed him as President.

capitals without informing the resident German ambassador and then only to wander off without proper credentials to consult state officials on foreign policy. The German foreign office, frustrated in its attempt to find out the nature of Ribbentrop's activities, finally assigned a junior diplomat as his assistant to report directly to the foreign office.¹⁴

Ribbentrop's first trips were disappointing. Shortly after his appointment, he flew to London to confer with Anthony Eden¹⁵ and Sir John Simon in the hope of discovering Britain's attitude toward the re-opening of disarmament discussions. Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin¹⁶ evaluated the results of Ribbentrop's

¹⁴

Schwarz, op. cit., 104.

¹⁵

Eden, Rt. Hon. (Robert) Anthony-British Conservative Party Leader who was Parliamentary Under Secretary in the Foreign Office, 1931-1933; Minister without Portfolio for League of Nations Affairs, 1935; Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in Baldwin and Chamberlain cabinets, 1935-1938 (succeeded by Halifax); Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, 1939-1940; Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in Churchill cabinet, 1940-1945; also from 1950-1955; Prime Minister, 1955-?

¹⁶

Baldwin Stanley-British Conservative Party Leader who was Privy Councillor, 1920; Chancellor of Exchequer, 1922-1923; Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury, 1923-1924; also from 1924-29 (succeeded by MacDonald), and 1935-1937 (succeeding MacDonald and succeeded by Chamberlain).

visit for the House of Commons by remarking that "the conversations had added nothing concerning the disarmament issue to the material already issued," and at the same time the British foreign office released a statement that "the German representative was not encouraged to expect support from Britain for Germany's armament policies."¹⁷ In Paris, Ribbentrop met with as little success and was told to take his proposals to Geneva. After experiencing setbacks in other attempts to sell Hitler's policy to western Europe, Ribbentrop faded temporarily from the European diplomatic scene.

Thus, Ribbentrop in the space of a few short years had risen from meager commercial beginnings to a place of diplomatic prominence. Even more surprising is the fact that within two years after his first meeting with Hitler, Ribbentrop had begun to occupy a significant position in the Nazi hierarchy. His achievements up to this point were nothing to be heralded, but the important factor is that he had sufficiently impressed the Fuehrer, an impression which laid the groundwork for more important tasks to come. In the course of the next few years, Hitler's confidence in Ribbentrop's abilities was to increase

¹⁷ Schwarz, op. cit., 105.

to a point where the former wine merchant stood as the man closest to Hitler's ear.

Ribbentrop re-entered the diplomatic spotlight in March, 1935. Since January, 1935, negotiations had been carried on between Germany and Britain to bring the leaders of both countries together around the conference table. It had been decided earlier that Sir John Simon would visit Berlin, but due to Hitler's irritation at the publication of a British White Paper the visit had been cancelled. The situation was further aggravated when Hitler, on March 16, 1935, announced the introduction of universal military training. Great Britain, thereupon, and over the protests of France who wanted the matter referred to the League, decided to reopen negotiations on the proposed Simon visit. Agreement was finally reached and the day of the visit set for March 25, 1935. As originally scheduled, the participants were to have been Hitler, Eden, Simon, and Neurath,¹⁸ but the

¹⁸ Neurath, Constantin H. K., Baron von - German diplomat who was Ambassador to Denmark, 1919, Italy, 1921-1930, and England, 1930-1932. On 2 June 1932, he was appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs and continued in office by Hitler; succeeded by Ribbentrop in February 1938 and appointed President of Secret Cabinet Council; first Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, 1939; temporary retirement, 7 September 1941 (succeeded by Heydrich); final retirement, 1944; member of the Reichstag; member of the Reich Defense Council; Reich Minister without Portfolio.

appearance of von Ribbentrop surprised the British and gave an awkward balance to the meeting. The British objected but Ribbentrop resolved the situation by suggesting to everyone's amazement, that Sir Eric Phipps, British ambassador in Berlin and a bitter enemy of Ribbentrop, be invited to the conference. This seemed to satisfy everyone, and the conference proceeded without further incident.

In general, the discussions produced no definite settlement. Hitler refused to participate in an eastern mutual assistance pact. He favored, on the other hand, bilateral non-aggression pacts with powers interested in eastern European countries, and with respect to disarmament, Hitler was particularly uncompromising. He declared that Germany needed not only thirty-six divisions (amounting to a half-million men) but also all types of armaments possessed by other countries. He would not stop construction of these arms, he declared, so long as other powers used them.

Hitler also told Simon that Germany would need a naval force totalling 35% of British tonnage and would expect air parity with Great Britain and France.

¹⁹ Phipps, Sir Eric - British Ambassador to Germany, 1933-1937 (succeeded by Henderson); Ambassador to France, 1937-39.

At the conclusion of the discussions, he made it perfectly clear to the British foreign secretary that Germany would not return to the League except on a basis of complete equality. By this, Hitler implied that he meant equality in colonies as well as armaments.²⁰

Ribbentrop played a silent role in the course of the discussions. As on most occasions, Hitler was the dominant figure. It must be remembered, however, that at this point Ribbentrop was just beginning to make his bid for Hitler's favor, and it is possible that Hitler insisted upon Ribbentrop's presence as part of his training for the post of foreign minister.

By May, 1935, relations between Great Britain and Germany had steadily improved. On May 2, the British prime minister, Ramsay MacDonald,²¹ expressed in a speech the hope that Britain and Germany would

²⁰ Mildred S. Wertheimer, "Aims of Hitler's Foreign Policy," Foreign Policy Reports, XI (June 1935), 71.

²¹ MacDonald, (James) Ramsay - Leader of the British Labor Party who was Prime Minister of Great Britain, January-November 1924 and from 1929 to 1935 (succeeding and succeeded by Baldwin both times); author of the Geneva Protocol, 1924; Lord President of the Council, 1935-1937.

soon arrive at some kind of an agreement in relation
to the limitation of naval armaments.²² Hitler was
encouraged. The idea of an Anglo-German naval agreement
had been kept alive in Germany since the Simon visit.
Hitler declared in a speech before the Reichstag in
May that he hoped to build a fleet equal to 35% of total
British tonnage. Although Hitler was optimistic about
an agreement along these lines, his diplomats in the
foreign office were not. Neurath was extremely
pessimistic.²³ Von Hoesch, the German ambassador to
London, was also doubtful. Both advised Hitler that
Britain would never consent unless the broader issue
of security was also discussed. At this, Hitler flew
into a rage and shouted, "if the [Neurath and von
Hoesch] do not believe in the feasibility of such an
agreement, I know one who does - Ribbentrop."²⁴

²² Documents On International Affairs, 1935,
I, ed. John W. Wheeler-Bennett (London: Oxford
University Press, 1936), 141.

²³ Hoesch, Leopold von - Attache in Peking, 1909;
Paris, 1910; Secretary in Madrid, 1911; Secretary in
London, 1911-1914; Military service, 1914-1918;
Secretary in Sofia, 1915; in Constantinople, 1916;
Secretary to Foreign Office in Berlin, 1917; Counsellor
of Legation in Norway, 1918; Charge d'affaires in
Madrid, 1919; Counsellor in Paris, 1921-1922; Charge
d'affaires in Paris, 1923; Ambassador in Paris, 1924-
1932; Ambassador to Court of St. James, 1932-1936.
Died 1936.

²⁴ Schwarz, op. cit., 119.

Hitler's announcement naming von Ribbentrop as the head of the delegation to London for the naval talks greatly surprised the diplomats of the foreign office. In fact, they were shocked. Ribbentrop, however, seized the opportunity to better his diplomatic status. He told Hitler that he would be hampered in his negotiations unless he enjoyed the same diplomatic rank as those with whom he would be dealing. Hitler agreed and commissioned him as "Ambassador-at-Large," a rank here-to-fore unheard of in the hierarchy of Germany's diplomatic officialdom.

The German delegation arrived in London on June 3, 1935 amidst a festive throng celebrating the Twenty-Fifth Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary. Ribbentrop joined in the gaiety by ordering the management of the Carlton Hotel to hang a huge swastika flag over the hotel's Haymarket entrance. He also ordered his official cars decorated with similar pennants. That evening the entire German delegation, impressive in dress uniforms especially designed for the occasion, attended a ball at Londonderry House.

Despite this merriment, the discussion opened on June 4 amid an atmosphere of pessimism. Neither the British press nor public opinion believed that a substantial agreement could be reached. The German ambassador, von Hoesch, was especially pessimistic,

owing partly to his belief in the firmness of the British policy and partly to his lack of faith in Ribbentrop's diplomatic experience. Ribbentrop, however, prudently left the more technical aspects of the negotiations to his Wilhelmstrasse experts.

On June 18, 1935, after almost two weeks of constant negotiations, the results of the Anglo-German naval discussions were published. Germany secured the desired 35% of British tonnage which amounted to near parity in the North Sea area. The British were successful in getting the 35% restricted to a percentage of each warship category instead of a straight 35% of all British tonnage. Germany also received equal parity with Great Britain in the building of submarines.²⁵ The agreement was clearly a victory for Germany and a personal triumph for Ribbentrop.

Ribbentrop was elated with his success. In an interview with the Manchester Guardian on June 23, 1935, Ribbentrop stated:²⁶

I believe this naval agreement is the beginning of a practical peace policy. It settles the vital naval problem between Germany and Britain once and for all. From

²⁵ Documents on International Affairs, 1935, I, 143.

²⁶ Ibid., 146-47.

now on there will be no more naval rivalry. It is wonderful to think what it will mean for these two countries.

Now I will say something more. I read in one of yesterdays papers that Germany has tried to drive a wedge between France and Britain. Here I must tell you that we in Germany completely fail to understand such queer insinuations, which seem to me rather small talk of people who cannot free themselves from a pre-war, if not antediluvian, mentality. I think we all ought to try and be wise and forget our domestic troubles in the Old World. If we all want the renaissance of the West, as Chancellor Hitler said in his speech, we must learn to think in a broader way and must believe in it.

And now, finally, you want to know what the next step might be. On this I will make a personal remark. People say I have made it my life task to help bring about a close collaboration between Britain, France and Germany in which the other European states would gladly join. I believe these people are right, and I am convinced we are on the best road now.

The Anglo-German Naval Agreement was a personal triumph for Ribbentrop as well as for Hitler. It marked a turning point in Ribbentrop's career, for Hitler now looked upon him as a "second Bismarck." Had not Ribbentrop pulled off a brilliant diplomatic coup when all others, even the most experienced diplomats in the foreign office, had voiced the opinion that it could not be done? Hitler was jubilant. He had legally broken the "Diktat" of Versailles, for technically the agreement constituted a violation of that pact. The British appeared satisfied but not enthusiastic. They considered the agreement as a choice

between two evils. They signed the pact with the hope that it would end the naval rivalry between the two countries and with the conviction that this was the only way to limit Hitler's naval rearmament policy. The French, on the other hand were unable to hide their bitterness at what they considered a broken promise and an obvious concession to the German dictator. As a result, a rift appeared in Franco-British relations.

Although much of the credit for this diplomatic feat undoubtedly belongs to Ribbentrop, the circumstances of the time contributed greatly to making his task easier. The Washington Naval Conference which had established the 5-5-3-1-1 ratio for naval disarmament was to expire the following year with no indication that it would be renewed. Britain, therefore, realizing that the Versailles Treaty could no longer restrict Germany's naval rearmament program, was forced to grant concessions to Hitler in order to commit him to a written agreement. She also realized that Hitler's naval armament ambitions constituted a serious threat to her naval supremacy, a threat which she regarded as more serious than the annoyance of France.

So it seems that the conditions and circumstances

of the times probably had as much to do with Ribbentrop's success in London as his own diplomatic skill. Be that as it may, the important result of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement in respect to Ribbentrop was the high prestige as a diplomat that he gained in the eyes of Hitler and the Nazi leaders. It was clearly a turning point in his career and paved the way for more important and more responsible positions to follow.

In reviewing Ribbentrop's life from his early years to the beginning of his political career, certain aspects of his personality, attitudes, and political development clearly stand out. Ribbentrop was a vain, arrogant person, socially and politically ambitious. In the struggle to realize these ambitions, he exploited every favorable opportunity, as the manner in which he acquired his title of nobility aptly demonstrates. On the other hand, these traits were offset by a winning charm, a charm graced by an air of distinction. Above all, and in contrast with the other Nazis surrounding Hitler, Ribbentrop was a man of the world, a cosmopolitan, widely travelled and fluent in three languages. It was undoubtedly these factors which accounted, at least in part, for Ribbentrop's rapid rise to Hitler's favor.

To these qualities was added Ribbentrop's policy of never disagreeing with his Fuehrer.

These are important factors in Ribbentrop's rise to diplomatic consequence, but even more important in relation to the events which followed was the growth of his pronounced Anglophilism. This fondness for Britain and the British people dates from his school years in England, where he made many English friends, and was strengthened during his stay in Canada and during his commercial activities after the war. His success in concluding the Naval Pact further convinced him of the soundness of his Anglophile views.

CHAPTER III

LONDON

The Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935 had been acceded to by the British not only in the hope of satisfying Germany's rearmament ambitions but at the same time of gaining a specific and written limitation on Germany's rearmament program. But by March 1936, the clouds over Europe began to assume a darker aspect. Italy had begun to push her colonial ambitions in Ethiopia, when on March 7 in one of his many Saturday coups Hitler announced Germany's re-occupation and re-militarization of the Rhineland. To the German people, Hitler gave the following¹ reasons for his action:

France has infringed on the Rhine Pact through a military alliance with the Soviet Union and in this manner the Locarno Rhine Pact has lost its inner meaning and ceased in practice to exist. Germany regards herself for her part as no longer bound by this dissolved treaty.

In taking this action, Hitler insisted upon the fundamental right of every nation to secure its frontiers and to insure its defense. Hitler acted contrary to the advice of the diplomats in the

¹Nazi Conspiracy & Aggression, IV, 994-95.

foreign office and the warnings of his top military leaders. Ribbentrop, on the other hand, was practically alone in advising Hitler that a more propitious moment would never again present itself.

In the same speech, Hitler proposed both a twenty-five year non-aggression pact among the western powers and the establishment of a bilateral demilitarized zone with complete parity for both France and Germany. Hitler also hinted at the possibility of Germany's returning to the League and of his willingness to conclude an air pact. He made an important reservation, however, in that he insisted upon the restoration of the German colonies, an issue which was to be an excellent bargaining point for the next few years.

The western powers were sufficiently concerned to convene the League Council in London to examine Germany's violation of the Locarno Pact. The German government also demonstrated anxiety over the situation and through the German ambassador in London suggested that Germany be invited to send a delegate to the council's meetings. The British agreed, and once

again Joachim von Ribbentrop appeared on the diplomatic scene, this time as head of the Reich's delegation to the League Council, the same council from which Germany had bitterly withdrawn three years before.

Ribbentrop and his delegation arrived in London on March 18, 1936. The following day, Ribbentrop delivered a twenty-five minute speech before the Council in which he reiterated Hitler's previous contentions that France had broken the pact by her alliance with Russia and that Germany was more than anxious to come to an amicable settlement with France. Ribbentrop argued that because of the French action, Locarno had ceased to exist. He also repeated Hitler's new offer, guaranteeing peace for twenty-five years, as the³ solution to Europe's problems.

Despite his glowing speech, which came as a disappointment to many because it did not elaborate on Hitler's proposals, Ribbentrop failed to impress his audience. That same afternoon and with little deliberation, the Council voted to censure Germany's re-occupation of the Rhineland on the grounds that it constituted a serious violation of the Locarno⁴ pact. Ribbentrop later attributed his failure to win

³The New York Times, March 20, 1936, p. 1.

⁴Ibid., March 20, 1936, p. 1.

Germany's case to the fact that he spoke in German and was therefore, perhaps misunderstood. After the censure, the Council drafted a memorandum calling for a demilitarized strip in the Rhineland and requesting Germany to present her case to the Hague Court.

Ribbentrop then flew to Berlin to confer with Hitler, but returned a few days later to inform the Locarno powers that Germany rejected everything in the Council's proposals and that Germany would soon come forward with a plan of her own. On April 2, Ribbentrop informed the Council in vague terms that Germany proposed not to increase her forces in the Rhineland within the next four months, that Belgium and France should make similar pledges, and that an international commission should be appointed to see that these promises were carried out.⁵ Eden promptly informed Ribbentrop that the proposals were not enough and that further proof of Germany's sincerity would have to be forthcoming. On April 10, 1936, Ribbentrop left London with no apparent plans to return. Ribbentrop's stay in London was not without some result, however, for as the New York Times remarked:⁶

⁵ Ibid., April 2, 1936, p. 1.

⁶ Ibid., April 4, 1936, p. 1.

Hitler has Joachim von Ribbentrop and his other agents in London to thank for hastening Mr. Eden's conversion to his present view. Since their arrival in London they have indulged in a campaign of increasing violence, denouncing to politicians and influential members of society the young foreign secretary as a puppet, humbly submissive to orders from Paris.

The end result, therefore, of the proceedings of the League Council was a formal censure of Germany's action in occupying the Rhineland. But unfortunately the Council's proposed solutions soon became mired in committees and their effect wasted with the result that Hitler came off with a bloodless victory while the staggering League received another devastating blow.

On April 10, 1936, the very able German ambassador to Great Britain, Leopold von Hoesch, died suddenly. Ribbentrop was appointed his successor but not until August the same year, and he did not officially occupy his post until three months later, a most irregular procedure. There appear to be several reasons for Ribbentrop's reluctance to assume his London assignment. First of all, the position of State Secretary had recently been vacated and Ribbentrop had already expressed his desire for that appointment. At the same time he had also wanted the opportunity of going to London to secure Hitler's

long-sought alliance with Great Britain. Moreover, Neurath firmly opposed Ribbentrop as State Secretary and threatened to resign if Hitler confirmed it. Secondly, there was the question of Ribbentrop's status while "Ambassador-at-Large" in London. To go to London as a mere ambassador implied, to Ribbentrop at any rate, a demotion in rank. Neurath had also objected to Ribbentrop's going to London as "Ambassador-at-Large," because it was known at the time that the British government had objected to receiving Ribbentrop in any other status but ambassador. Finally, Neurath, in his anxiety to be rid of Ribbentrop and his meddlesome Buero and convinced that the mission to London would fail within three months, consented to a compromise whereby Ribbentrop would officially go to London as ambassador but would unofficially retain his rank as "Ambassador-at-Large" and thus could be called upon by Hitler to perform varied and private diplomatic chores.⁷

The reaction to Ribbentrop's appointment as

⁷ Schwarz, op. cit., 191-92.

See also: Franz von Papen, Memoirs (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1953), 372-76.

See also: Walcom Muggerridge, Ed., Ciano's Diplomatic Papers (London: Odhams Press Limited, 1948), 59-60.

ambassador was varied. It irritated most of the career diplomats in the Wilhelmstrasse. News reports from London stated that the announcement of his appointment was received "without regret but without enthusiasm."⁸ The French Temps commented that "he is credited with an almost Machiavellian genius for hoodwinking the British by his good humor and personality" and went on to say that the news of his appointment could be looked upon as a dangerous threat to future Anglo-French relations.⁹ At any rate, Ribbentrop's impending mission to London was viewed by many with both interest and anxiety as to what new turn Anglo-German relations might now take.

After almost three months of wrangling over his diplomatic status, Joachim von Ribbentrop finally arrived in London on October 26, 1936. Upon his arrival and clad in the brown uniform of a Nazi storm trooper, Ribbentrop gave his welcomers a brisk Nazi salute and a short speech calculated to lay the ground work for a future Anglo-German alliance.

He stated:¹⁰

⁸ New York Times, August 12, 1936, p. 1.

⁹ Ibid., August 13, 1936, p. 8.

¹⁰ Ibid., October 27, 1936, p. 9.

Germany wants the friendship of Great Britain, and I think the English people want German friendship. The Fuehrer is convinced that the only real danger for Europe is the further spread of communism, that most terrible of all diseases..... terrible because the people only realize the danger when it is too late. Closer collaboration between our two countries in this sense is not only important, but in my opinion, is a vital necessity in our struggle for upholding our civilization and cultures. I am only too willing to do everything I can to help.

This initial speech was intended as a trial balloon, but contrary to Ribbentrop's expectations it met with much adverse reaction. Similar to other responses, was the reply of Sir Austen Chamberlain,¹¹ published November 4 in the Daily Telegraph, in which he said:¹²

If our friendship be sought, let it be for its own sake. Common sympathies, common interests, and a common purpose are a more stable and healthier foundation for friendship than prejudice and passion.....The verbal contests of Nazi and Bolshevik are not worth the bones of a British Grenadier.

¹¹ Chamberlain, Sir Austen, 1893-1937 - Civil Lord of the Admiralty, 1895, 1900; Chancellor of Exchequer, 1903-1906; M.P., 1892-1914; Secretary of State for India, 1915-1917; Member of War Cabinet, 1918; Chancellor of Exchequer, 1919-1921; leader of House of Commons, 1921-1922; Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1924-1929; First Lord of the Admiralty, 1931; Chancellor of Reading University, 1935-1937.

¹² Schwarz, op. cit., 200.

Thus it seems that Ribbentrop's rather ostentatious beginning in London failed to strike the harmonious chord he had anticipated.

What, therefore, was the real aim of the Ribbentrop Mission to London? In answering this question, one must rely heavily upon Ribbentrop's post-war testimony and the testimonies of his contemporaries. At Nuremberg, Ribbentrop testified that he persuaded Hitler to send him to London with the hope of bringing home an alliance with Great Britain. He further testified that a British alliance had been an idée fixe with Hitler for some time and that the Fuehrer felt confident that it could be achieved at this time.
13

Granted that both Hitler and Ribbentrop desired an alliance with Britain, what form was this alliance to take and what was Ribbentrop's attitude toward England at the time that he took up his post as ambassador? For purposes of understanding the Ribben-

13 International Military Tribunal. Trial of Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal Nuremberg, 14 November 1945 - 1 October 1946, I-XLVI, (Nuremberg: International Military Tribunal, 1947-1949), X, 236-39.

See also: G. M. Gilbert, Nuremberg Diary (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1947), 230.

trop mission and its eventual failure and Ribbentrop's changed attitude and the effect of this change on Hitler's decisions, these are important questions. Judging from Ribbentrop's speech at Victoria Station, one could assume that the real aim of his mission was the alignment of Britain with Germany against Russia. In this manner Britain could be neutralized, and Hitler could pursue his policies in central and eastern Europe unmolested. Ribbentrop told Winston Churchill¹⁴ in 1937 that the terms of this alliance would simply be: a permanent Anglo-German naval parity agreement along the lines of the 1935 agreement; a joint guarantee of the low countries; and a provision that Germany would agree to guarantee the solidarity of the British Empire. For her part, Britain would recognize Germany as a strong power in Europe and not

¹⁴ Churchill, Rt. Hon. Winston Leonard Spencer - British writer and Conservative Party leader who was president of the Board of Trade, 1908-1910; Home Secretary, 1910-1911; First Lord of the Admiralty, 1911-1915; Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1915; Minister of Munitions, 1917; Secretary of State for War, 1918-1921; for Air, 1918-1921; for the colonies, 1921-22; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1924-1929; First Lord of the Admiralty, 1930-1940; Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury, and Minister of Defense, 1940-1945; was defeated and became opposition leader, 1945; re-elected Prime Minister, 1950; retired, 1955.

See also: Seabury, op. cit., 56.

interfere in Hitler's policies in eastern and central
Europe.¹⁵ The essence of this hoped-for alliance
seems to have been merely an attempt to neutralize
Britain and thus gain for Germany freedom of action
in eastern Europe.

As to Ribbentrop's current attitude toward
Britain, there seems to be little doubt that he was
still extremely fond of England and the English people.
Partial proof of this was supplied in some detail in
the preceding chapter. Further evidence has been
brought to light in the post-war memoirs of Herbert
von Dirksen¹⁶ and Count Ciano.¹⁷ Dirksen, who later
replaced Ribbentrop as ambassador to Britain, in ex-
pressing his surprise at the failure of Ribbentrop's
mission, stated that when Ribbentrop left for England
he was "pro-British to a degree bordering on snobbery."¹⁸

¹⁵Winston S. Churchill, Gathering Storm (Boston:
Houghton Mifflin Co., 1948), 222-23.

¹⁶Dirksen, Herbert von - German Ambassador to
Soviet Union, 1929-1933; Ambassador to Japan, 1933-
1938; Ambassador to Great Britain (succeeding Ribben-
trop), 1938-1939. Resigned from German foreign office,
1939.

¹⁷Ciano di Cortellazzo, Count Galeazzo, Italian
Foreign Minister, 1936-1943, Mussolini's son-in-law,
executed by the Nazis, 1943.

¹⁸Herbert von Dirksen, Moscow, Tokyo, London
(Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), 174.

Ciano stated in his notes that in a conversation between himself and von Neurath the latter explained Hitler's reluctance to believe in Britain's policy of encirclement towards Germany as "due to the work of Ribbentrop, who every so often attempts to inject Anglophile optimism into the Fuehrer."¹⁹ The date of this conversation corresponds closely to Ribbentrop's arrival in London and leads one to conclude that at the outset Ribbentrop was unmistakably a thoroughgoing Anglophile. The reversal of this attitude during the twilight months of Ribbentrop's ambassadorship was later to have significant effects on Hitler's decisions while Ribbentrop was foreign minister.

At the beginning of his mission, Ribbentrop attempted to ease the difficulty of his task by persuading the German press and propaganda ministry to reduce the vigor of their campaigns for the restoration of the German colonies. Ribbentrop knew that the British government considered these repetitious and unwelcome attacks on the British Empire a serious impediment to closer relations between the two countries.

Although successful in reducing this source of friction, Ribbentrop nevertheless caused himself many

¹⁹ Muggerridge, op. cit., 59-60.

petty difficulties during the first period of his stay in London. The first of his troubles started when he made his arrival speech on the danger of bolshevism. This led to Sir Austen Chamberlain's retort which has already been mentioned, but a further repercussion was found enscribed on the walls and sidewalks of London to the effect that "Ribbentrop must go."²⁰ At the same time, people were being arrested throughout London for throwing bricks through the German embassy's windows and shouting defamatory re-²¹marks about Ribbentrop.

Ribbentrop's speech on bolshevism also produced a reaction in the House of Commons. The Communist W.P., William Gallacher, caused a stir when he arose and said "Ribbentrop comes to England with hands red with murder," demanding that the newly arrived am-²²bassador be driven from the country. Ribbentrop complained bitterly to Eden about this criticism in the House of Commons, thus setting some sort of a precedent for complaining about the utterances of a member of Parliament, something, as Eden explained to Ribbentrop, over which the Government had no control.

²⁰New York Times, November 7, 1936, p. 7.

²¹Ibid., November 7, 1936, p. 7.

²²Ibid., October 30, 1936, p. 2.

Nevertheless, despite these anti-Ribbentrop demonstrations, he continued to make untactful remarks that bolshevism was the common enemy of both countries. The situation finally reached such a point as to force Eden officially to inform Ribbentrop that "the British government refuses to share the German view of the necessity of an anti-communist crusade."²³

These incidents are unimportant alongside the more significant happenings in European diplomacy at the time but are related here to demonstrate the unfavorable circumstances under which the Ribbentrop mission to London was conducted. These, and similar incidents which took place later, all had their effect on the British government and public and contributed in some degree to the widening of the gulf which separated Britain and Germany. But since a consideration of the effects of Ribbentrop and his mission upon the British public is beyond the scope of this project these small incidents are brought to light as illustrations of the origins of Ribbentrop's later Anglophobia.

Not all of Ribbentrop's early accomplishments were recorded in red in the diplomatic ledger, for he

²³ Ibid., November 21, 1936, p. 1.

managed to score at least three early successes. The first, which could hardly be described as a major diplomatic feat, was to arrange for the exchange of the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Dresden Opera Company between London and Berlin.²⁴ The second and more signal success was registered when Ribbentrop negotiated a naval agreement in which Germany agreed to accept certain limitations on submarine warfare which had been adopted by the Western Powers at the London Naval Conference of 1930.

The third and most crowning success of this early period was Ribbentrop's negotiating and signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact in November 1936 between Germany and Japan. The pact itself was not a military alliance as many suspected at the time but merely a joint declaration on the part of the two countries concerned to work together in combating the devilish work of the Comintern. But its effect amounted to a detente between Germany and Japan.²⁵ The whole affair

²⁴ Ibid., November 13, 1936, p. 1.

²⁵ Frederick L. Schuman, Europe On The Eve (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942), 240-46.

was an unusual piece of diplomacy, since it was accomplished without the participation of the German foreign office and because the German signatory was not the German foreign minister but the German ambassador in London. Neurath told his post-war interrogators that he refused to sign the pact because he regarded it as a dangerous policy for Germany and because it would only succeed in driving China further into the arms of communism. Describing Ribbentrop's signing of the pact as "a most unusual procedure," Neurath went on to say that Ribbentrop should have minded his own business in this matter but instead went out of his way to give the British a deliberate slap in the face by signing the pact while he was ambassador there. Naturally the British had no use for him after that."

Ribbentrop was also successful in his activities as a member of the Non-Intervention Committee which had been established shortly after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. It was supported by twenty-seven European countries for the purpose of applying

26
Gilbert, op. cit., 225-26.

a policy of non-intervention in the Spanish conflict. This meant essentially an attempt to prohibit the flow of arms and foreign volunteers into Spain. When Ribbentrop took his place on the Committee, it was hoped in London that he would boost its effectiveness - since Ribbentrop after all was close to Hitler. But from the very beginning, Ribbentrop thwarted the communists at every turn and time after time threw the committee into deadlock and inaction.

Ribbentrop used the Committee as a sounding board for vehement attacks on the Soviet Union as well as to inhibit the Committee's efforts to stop the flow of fighting men from Germany into Spain. On October 30, 1937, Ribbentrop delivered a speech before the Committee which virtually wiped away all previous proposals advanced to solve the non-intervention problem.²⁷

Throughout the entire course of the proceedings of the Non-Intervention Committee, Britain and France showed a vacillating and sometimes compromising attitude. Therefore, it is quite possible that Ribbentrop's experiences as a member of the Committee constitute one of the vital links in the formation of his belief that Britain was

27

New York Times, October 31, 1937, p. 9.

decadent and reluctant to go to war, an opinion later to play so important a part in the Austrian, Czech, and Polish crises. Even at this time, articles appeared in the British press contending that Ribbentrop was advising Hitler that the British public would not tolerate military action against Germany under
28
any circumstances.

To return to the chronology of the mission, Ribbentrop returned to London in February 1937 after spending an extended holiday vacation in Berlin. The London atmosphere upon his return was less favorable to an Anglo-German understanding than upon his departure. The new British coolness was due in part to Hitler's recent speech in the Reichstag in which he again attacked the "Diktat" of Versailles and the loss of the German colonies. Another somewhat minor factor was the work currently being conducted on the German embassy in London. The embassy was swarming with workmen engaged in a vast remodeling project aimed at making it the most lavish social center in London and at the same time an outward sign that Germany wanted close relations with Britain. Although his intentions were no doubt good, this was but another instance in

28
Ibid., November 28, 1936, p. 1.

which Ribbentrop's scheming worked out in reverse. Over half the workmen had been imported from Germany; they were being housed in extra-comfortable quarters, paid a good salary which was sent home to their families, and in addition given an expense account in excess of the amount paid British workmen. From London laboring groups, currently suffering from depression and unemployment, and from Labourites in Commons came loud protests because British workmen were not used.²⁹ This public reaction, however, did not prevent Ribbentrop from speeding up the work to ready the embassy for his lavish coronation reception in the spring.³⁰

Throughout this same month, Ribbentrop's ill-luck continued to plague him. It was on February 4, 1937, that he committed one of his worst blunders. The occasion was the court reception in which King George VI received the heads of the diplomatic legations for purposes of accepting their credentials. During this solemn procedure, it was customary for the diplomats, escorted by the Marshal of the Diplomatic Corps, to

²⁹ Ibid., February 4, 1937, p. 6.

³⁰ Ibid., May 15, 1937, p. 3.

advance slowly in a series of bows toward the king, present their credentials, bow again and sedately retire. Ribbentrop, however, in full evening dress, saw fit to depart from the established procedure. He advanced briskly, completely outdistancing his escort, halted sharply before the British monarch, clicked his heels, and gave the king the Hitlerian salute. He then forcefully shook the king's hand, presented his credentials, retired a short distance and rendered another salute. According to eye witness reports, the king although taking the matter calmly, smiled somewhat uneasily.³¹ It is difficult to explain why Ribbentrop put on this untactful exhibition, but it is unlikely that he deliberately meant to affront the country to which he was accredited. Rather, it seems certain that the future German foreign minister meant to demonstrate forcefully the triumph of the National Socialist Revolution - without realizing the reaction it would create. It is, of course, a striking measure of his ineptitude as a diplomat, and the wide publicity it received in the press constituted another link in the series of incidents contributing to Ribbentrop's growing bitterness toward Britain. After all, no one

³¹ Ibid., February 5, 1937, p. 1.

can be more bitter than a "misunderstood" man.

From the very beginning of his mission, Ribbentrop had unsuccessfully bombarded the British foreign office with requests to take up the issue of Germany's lost colonies. On February 11, 1937, he took advantage of the fact that Eden was on a holiday to confer with Lord Halifax³² on the colonial problem. Much to his surprise he received a stiff rebuff and was told that Great Britain could not recognize Germany's colonial claims or her repudiation of the Versailles Treaty. Ten days later, Eden gave him the same answer, accompanied by a protest over Germany's failure to answer the British questionnaire of the preceding November. But Ribbentrop, in a speech at Leipzig on March 1, refused to refrain from his loud claims for Germany's colonies and severely denounced the country to which he was accredited for refusing to settle the question of Germany's "stolen colonies." The speech was ill-received in London and sections of the British press

32

Halifax, Earl of (Edward Frederick Lindley Wood) - British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1938-1940; Ambassador in Washington, 1941-1946. At the time of his interview with Ribbentrop, Halifax was Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

described it as "very ill-timed."³³

A few days later, Ribbentrop's vanity and Anglo-philism suffered another blow. In a gesture of friendship, Ribbentrop personally presented a monumental historical collection of 2600 volumes to London University. But when he arrived on the campus to make the presentation, he was greeted with boos, catcalls, and jeers from demonstrating students.³⁴ Since this incident was the first time within recent memory that a foreign envoy had been jeered at in the streets of London, it served to inform Ribbentrop of Britain's growing anti-Nazi attitude and to increase his bitterness and hatred toward England.

Yet, by the summer of 1937 and despite Ribbentrop's obvious failures, hope had not been abandoned by the two governments of reaching and understanding. Ernst von Weizsacker,³⁵ the State Secretary, stated in his Memoirs that the foreign office felt that the relations between the two countries could be improved by a step-by-step process, the first step of which was to have been a visit of Neurath to London in June

³⁴ Ibid., March 17, 1937, p. 16.

³⁵ Weizsacker, Ernst, Baron von, Head of the Political Department of the German Foreign Ministry, August 1936-March 1938; State Secretary, April 1, 1938-April 1943.

³⁶
1937. The agenda of the discussions was to have been concerned with the possibilities of creating a multilateral western pact and with the setting up of a bipartite committee to resolve the colonial issue. But on the eve of Neurath's departure, Hitler cancelled the visit. The reasons Hitler gave were exceedingly weak, and it seems apparent from the Ciano Papers that the real reason was Italy's fear lest the visit weaken the Rome-Berlin Axis. Ciano himself stated that he could see no useful purpose to be served by Neurath's going to London.³⁷ What the Neurath visit would have produced had it occurred invites interesting speculation, but according to later observers,³⁸ Sir Neville Henderson for one, the cancellation was most unfortunate in that it came at a time when conditions seemed favorable for reaching an understanding.

On the other hand, Anglo-German relations fared better concerning naval matters. In July 1937, the two countries signed a naval agreement extending the

³⁶ Ernst von Weizsacker, Memoirs, trans. John Andrews (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1951), 112.

³⁷ Muggerridge, op. cit., 222-24.

³⁸ Henderson, Sir Neville - British Minister to Yugoslavia, 1929-1935; Ambassador to Germany, 1937-1939; died, 1942.

provisions of the 1936 naval agreement to the rival Baltic naval powers. It also restricted the size and gun caliber of warships. The agreement was hailed in Germany as proof that the Reich desired peace, while in London it was regarded as being better than nothing.

During the summer months, efforts were continued to bring the leaders of both countries to a conference table, and finally in November 1937 Lord Halifax visited Berlin to confer directly with Hitler. In the course of the conversations, Hitler reiterated his objections to the Versailles Treaty and informed Halifax that no agreement was possible except on a basis of equality and reality. He argued that the colonial question was now the main source of friction between Germany and Britain, insisting, however, that this matter should be settled bilaterally. Halifax, whose mood was appeasing, told Hitler that the status quo in Europe did not necessarily have to be maintained and that a colonial solution could be reached were it done in a multilateral conference. The conversations concluded with Halifax's expressed hope that other conversations would follow in the near future and with Hitler's reassertion of his distrust of democratic processes and statement that he would pursue the

colonial matter through diplomatic channels, pre-³⁹
sumably via Ribbentrop in London.

Although the conversations produced nothing sensational or concrete, they were regarded as satisfactory. It was clear that Great Britain was willing to make concessions on the colonial issue. The rub came when Hitler objected to these issues being solved by a general agreement. It is evident from the Secret Conference on German foreign policy which Hitler held just prior to the Halifax visit that Hitler was convinced that Britain would not participate⁴⁰ in a war on the continent. This is what Ribbentrop had been telling Hitler for some time, and Halifax's compromising and conciliatory attitude further convinced both Hitler and Ribbentrop of the correctness of their views.

Halifax in London later told Ribbentrop that Britain was willing to make concessions on the colonial issue but that the British people expected something in return, namely, a limitation on Germany's rearmament.⁴¹

³⁹ United States. Department of State. Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945, Series D, I-IV, V, VIII, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949), I, 55-67.

⁴⁰ Nazi Conspiracy & Aggression, III, 295-305.

⁴¹ Documents On German Foreign Policy, I, 124-25.

Ribbentrop was told the same thing by Neville Chamberlain.⁴² From both conversations, Ribbentrop concluded that the two men viewed subsequent negotiations with considerable skepticism and that Great Britain would be extremely reluctant to go to war over any continental issues.⁴³

By the end of 1937, Ribbentrop was convinced that his mission had failed and that his earlier admiration of the British people had been a mistake. This changed attitude was clearly evidenced in a lengthy Memorandum he wrote to Hitler in January 1938. In this document, which contributed to his conviction at Nuremberg, he advised Hitler that Britain was behind in her armaments and was stalling for time. He argued that the British government had not really intended to use the Halifax visit to seek an understanding with Germany, and he concluded that Britain would not go to war. Germany consequently should follow a policy of outwardly trying to further an understanding with her but should secretly build up an anti-British coalition, mainly with Italy and

⁴² Ibid., 131-34.

⁴³ Ibid., 86-87.

⁴⁴ Japan. Ribbentrop was convinced, owing to the bitterness with which he had come to view Britain, that further attempts at reaching an understanding with the "intolerable British" would be futile.

Ribbentrop's changed attitude became doubly important when it was announced on February 4, 1938 that, in the midst of a vast cabinet and military shakeup, he had been appointed to succeed von Neurath as foreign minister, important because he regarded a peaceful solution of Europe's problems with pessimism. Ribbentrop's hatred and anti-British attitude were not to show their full effects until a year and one-half later when Hitler was influenced by his calamitous advice during the Polish crisis.

There is no doubt that Ribbentrop's mission was a failure, but why it failed is not so clear. Did it result from Ribbentrop's incompetence as a diplomat? Sir Neville Henderson, who had placed much faith in the proposed Neurath visit to London and who consistently blamed Ribbentrop as a contributing force in the deterioration of Anglo-German relations during this period, stated:⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Ibid., 162-68.

⁴⁵ Neville Henderson, Failure Of A Mission (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1940), 62-63.

This visit of Neurath's had never appealed to Ribbentrop because Ribbentrop, in addition to his London post, was Ambassador-at-Large, and felt that Neurath's visit would be detrimental to his own prestige and wounding to his personal vanity. I feel that he did his utmost to dissuade his Master from agreeing to the course proposed by his Majesty's Government. The notorious failure of his mission was already rankling, and it was intolerable that another should come to show up the personal cause of that failure. History will assuredly attribute a large share of the blame for September 1939 to Ribbentrop.

46

At another point Henderson remarked:

From the very beginning, I felt that his vanity, his resentments, and his misconceptions of England and English mentality were a serious bar to any prospect of a better understanding between the two countries.

Ribbentrop himself, however, attributed the cause of his failure to circumstances and attitudes on the part of the British government over which he had no control. He stated to his post-war interrogators:

47

Very often in my work on the Non-Intervention Committee, I was obliged to take a stand against the British, which was very unfortunate and which, during my whole stay in London, interrupted very much of my real work, which was, trying to establish good relations with Great Britain.

46 Ibid., 109.

47 Nazi Conspiracy & Aggression, Supp. B., 1214-16.

Commenting upon the political situation in Britain as a deterrent to an Anglo-German alliance, Ribbentrop⁴⁸ went on to say:

In the year 1937, when I was in London, I saw that two clearly different trends were gradually forming in England; the one trend was very much in favor of promoting good relations with Germany; the second trend did not wish such close relations. There were - I believe I do not need to mention names, for they are well known - those gentlemen who did not wish such close relations with Germany, Mr. Winston Churchill, who was later prime minister, and others.

As another factor for the failure of his mission, Ribbentrop maintained that because of her conception of the balance of power Britain was reluctant to enter into an alliance with Germany. In this, Ribbentrop claimed, he disagreed vigorously with Hitler who regarded the idea of the balance of power as old⁴⁹ fashioned.

There are also those who argue that the economic issue was the dominant force which kept Britain and Germany apart during this period. But a detailed account of this and other factors, although important and no doubt significant, are nevertheless beyond the limitations of this paper. Suffice it to say,

⁴⁸ Trial of Major War Criminals, X, 238-39.

⁴⁹ Documents On German Foreign Policy, I, 127.

therefore, that all these factors constituted a blend in contributing to Ribbentrop's London failure.

There are, moreover, other more important factors to consider in evaluating the Ribbentrop Mission to London. First of all, Ribbentrop came to London an Anglophile and left an Anglophobe. Why? This abrupt change of heart can first of all be traced to the fact that his mission was a disappointment. He had failed in what he had set out to do: to secure an alliance with Britain along the lines desired by Hitler. This, added to the fact that his pride and vanity were injured by British reactions to his diplomatic misjudgements, produced a bitterness and hatred toward the country he had once regarded as a "second home."

Secondly, what was Ribbentrop's attitude toward Britain at the end of his mission? Ribbentrop had come to view Britain as a weak, cowardly country, whose empire was fast becoming decadent and whose people were unwilling to go to war. He had been led to these conclusions by Britain's vacillating actions in the Non-Intervention Committee, the conciliatory and appeasing policies of Chamberlain

and Halifax, and his own conception of Britain's state of preparedness. It was on the basis of these conclusions that Ribbentrop began to advise Hitler that he could wreak his will in Europe without fear of British intervention,⁵⁰ advice which finally bore its tragic fruit when Hitler decided to invade Poland.

⁵⁰ Papen, op. cit., 376.

CHAPTER IV

FROM VIENNA TO PRAGUE

Ribbentrop assumed the duties of German foreign minister at a critical point in European politics. During the course of the next twelve months, from March 1938 to March 1939, the world witnessed such historic events as the Anschluss, the Munich Conference, and the liquidation of Czechoslovakia. To the foreign office Ribbentrop brought his recently acquired Anglophobia and convictions that Great Britain was a weak, decadent country, led by a government that would avoid war at any cost. Throughout this period Ribbentrop stood as the man next to Hitler, his closest confidant. Consequently during the ensuing crisis, Hitler took Ribbentrop's advice more and more into account in shaping his territorial policies. In each instance, as Ribbentrop's advice proved correct, Hitler became increasingly convinced that his foreign minister's judgement of Britain and the western powers was infallible and that in Ribbentrop he had a "second Bismarck."

Ribbentrop entered the foreign office when the Rome-Berlin Axis was growing stronger and the policies of Great Britain were becoming more appeasing. Chamberlain was still convinced that appeasement held the key to world peace, and the world was not yet aware that the Nazi appetite for territory was insatiable.

Although Hitler publicly praised Ribbentrop, others did not hold the new foreign minister in such lofty regard. Von Neurath, Ribbentrop's predecessor, expressing surprise at Ribbentrop's appointment, explained Hitler's choice as a result of the Fuehrer's desire to be surrounded by "yes men."¹ Francois-Poncet,² French ambassador to Berlin, wrote even more disparagingly:³

¹Nazi Conspiracy & Aggression, Supp. B., 1491.

²Francois-Poncet, Andre, French Ambassador in Germany, 1931-1938; Ambassador in Italy, 1938-1940.

³Andre Francois-Poncet, The Fateful Years, trans. Jacques LeClercq, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949), 233-34.

The new Minister for Foreign Affairs was neither prepared nor fitted for his office. Culturally and intellectually he was mediocre. His ignorance of historical and diplomatic questions was prodigious. His Mission as Ambassador to London proved a resounding failure; his personal spite at this was to falsify his every judgement of Great Britain's material and moral resources. This, then was the man of whom Hitler said, as he wagged his head admiringly: 'he is smarter than Bismarck!' Such an appalling error proves how blind the Fuehrer was to men and events at the very moment he was about to embark upon the rashest of undertakings. Truly this Ribbentrop, whom he lauded to the skies, was to exercise upon him the most constantly nefarious influence.

Despite reactions of this kind to his appointment, Ribbentrop nevertheless took up his task with authority and determination. He was resolved to gain back for the Wilhelmstrasse some of the prestige and prominence that he had been, heretofore, so instrumental in reducing. He was also anxious to convert the career diplomats wholeheartedly to the National Socialist Revolution. As illustrations of his method, Ribbentrop on occasion assembled his diplomats in military fashion in the courtyard and passed in review, saluting each in turn. Also by Ribbentrop's command, the black "republican" frock coat, customary dress for post World War I German diplomats, was discarded in favor of a dark blue uniform, complete with gold buttons, arm insignia,

oak-leaf clusters and dagger. The new foreign minister, however, was never entirely successful in making ardent Nazis out of the Wilhelmstrasse diplomats, who humorously referred to themselves as "men behind foliage."⁴

Ribbentrop was in the foreign office less than a month when he flew to London to wind up his affairs as ambassador. He arrived there on March 10, 1938, at a time when circumstances in British politics were considered favorable for an Anglo-German understanding. Great Britain wanted to avoid war as long as possible and since the general elections were due in the fall, the Conservative leaders felt that an agreement with Germany would win more votes than the less appeasing policies of Eden. And finally, Great Britain wished, in the event war should come, to be in a position to say to her dominions and potential allies that every possible means had been exhausted to prevent it.⁵

⁴ Paul Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), 52.

⁵ New York Times, March 9, 1938, p. 1.

Ribbentrop, however, did not appear willing to exploit this favorable situation. His attitude was cool as he presented five rather harsh demands to the British government. In summary they were: (1) Restraint of the British press in its attacks on Nazi Germany, (2) recognition of Germany's colonial claims without the colonial question forming the basis of a general agreement, (3) British assurance of non-intervention in the affairs between Berlin and Rome, (4) British sympathy for Germans living outside the Third Reich, and (5) recognition of Germany's right to defend herself against Bolshevism.⁶

After presenting these demands, Ribbentrop's manner mellowed somewhat, and he spent the rest of his visit attending luncheons and conversing with British statesmen. The ironic part, however, was that while he was speaking in glowing terms of an Anglo-German understanding, German troops were marching into Austria. British reaction was bitter, and the British press in particular resented Ribbentrop's apparent hypocrisy.

⁶
Ibid., March 10, 1938, p. 15.

Following news of the Anschluss, Ribbentrop left London, saying as he departed that he expected to return often. As a result, the Anglo-German discussions which were to have taken place at this time were postponed indefinitely. This was probably fortunate, for as the New York Times recorded:⁷

There appears to be a mood throughout Great Britain that might even result in an explosion if the conversations were resumed in the near future.

Whatever Ribbentrop's intentions in going to London his visit accomplished little and did much to harm Anglo-German relations. It was generally felt throughout Britain that Ribbentrop came to London to distract British attention away from events in Austria. His friendly manner was interpreted as an "ungracious" and "treacherous" performance.

Before Ribbentrop left London, he conferred with his ambassador, Herbert von Dirksen. Dirksen observed that during these conversations Ribbentrop spoke of the need to foster friendly relations with Great Britain and to convince her that German claims on Austria were justified. Dirksen noted that

⁷Ibid.

Ribbentrop spoke with ill-will towards Britain but failed to express any bitterness at the failure of his mission.⁸ Dirksen was under the impression that Ribbentrop was using him as a screen to conceal his true attitude and intentions toward the British government. But while it appears that Ribbentrop intentionally misled the British, the facts do not seem to support this assertion.

While Ribbentrop was in London, von Neurath was called back to the foreign office to take charge of the diplomatic details of the Anschluss. Yet Ribbentrop's name appeared on the German-Austrian Treaty of Re-Union, signed while Ribbentrop was still in London. The question, therefore, arises, why was Ribbentrop absent from his post at such a crucial time? Was it because Hitler preferred the more experienced von Neurath, or was Ribbentrop's role to be in London to cushion the British reaction? Or was it possible that Ribbentrop knew nothing of the Anschluss until after it was an accomplished fact? To find an answer to these questions, it is first necessary to briefly review the circumstances and events leading to Hitler's march on Vienna.

On February 15, 1938, Hitler called Chancellor

⁸ Herbert von Dirksen, Moscow, Tokyo, London (Norman: Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), 194-95.

⁹
Schuschnigg to Bertchesgaden. Among other demands, Hitler insisted that certain members of the Austrian Nazi Party be included in the Austrian cabinet. Following these discussions, tension over the Austrian question mounted steadily. Finally in March 1938, Schuschnigg announced that a plebiscite would be held to decide Austria's fate. But two days before the scheduled plebiscite, a German ultimatum was delivered to the Austrian government demanding cancellation of the plebiscite and resignation of the Austrian chancellor. Schuschnigg, lacking popular support, had no choice but to comply with the German demands. Thereupon, Seyss-¹⁰Inquart, Nazi leader of the Austrian provisional government, telegraphed Hitler requesting German troops to restore law and order in Austria.¹¹ Hitler complied on March 12, 1938, and on the following day the Law of Reunion was signed, integrating Austria with Nazi Germany.

It seems apparent, therefore, that although the Anschluss had been Hitler's objective for some time, its

⁹Schuschnigg, Kurt von, Austrian Federal Chancellor, July, 1934-March 11, 1938.

¹⁰Seyss-Inquart, Dr. Artur, Austrian Nazi; Minister of Interior in Schuschnigg cabinet, February 15, 1938; Austrian Federal Chancellor, March 12, 1938; executed at Nuremberg October 16, 1946.

¹¹Documents on German Foreign Policy, I, 580.

time table had not been definitely established; and that Hitler, realizing the favorable turn of events, acted swiftly and without consultation with his advisers in order to present the western powers with a fait accompli before they could intervene. On this basis, therefore, Ribbentrop's presence in London at the time of the Anschluss appears accidental.

Although Ribbentrop probably did not know of Hitler's exact intention to march on Vienna, he nevertheless had earlier advised Hitler that if Germany sought a forceful solution to the Austrian problem, the western powers would not interfere. Ribbentrop, two days¹² before the Anschluss, wrote from London:

What will England do if the Austrian problem cannot be settled peacefully? Basically, I am convinced that England of her accord will do nothing in regard to it at present, but that she would exert a moderating influence upon the other powers. I believe that the French would not go to war now over a German solution of the Austrian question, and neither would the allies of France nor Italy. The prerequisite, however, would be a very quick settlement of the Austrian question. If a solution by force should be prolonged for any length of time, there would be danger of complications.

Ribbentrop's memorandum leaves little doubt as to his opinions regarding the strength of the western powers. He was also convinced that the key to avoiding western intervention was a swift and forceful solution

¹²Ibid., 263.

to the Austrian problem, a move that should not be postponed. That Ribbentrop advised Hitler is well established, but to assess the extent to which his advice influenced Hitler's decision to annex Austria is more difficult. But this much is certain: within a few days, Hitler responded to the advice set forth in the foreign minister's note, observing the suggestion that it be a quick solution. Furthermore, considering the confidence that Ribbentrop then enjoyed with the Fuehrer, it seems logical to assume that his influence was more than negligible. After all, prior to this, Hitler had depended heavily upon his foreign minister for information concerning Great Britain and the west and he had no reason to believe that Ribbentrop was wrong on this occasion.

Throughout the spring of 1938, various attempts were made by Great Britain to reach a detente in her relations with Germany. To foster an understanding, the British were willing to make concessions, especially concerning the colonial problem. Hitler, however, seemed unwilling to negotiate and repeatedly told Henderson that no understanding could be reached until the campaigns against him in the British press ceased. Although other factors undoubtedly played their part, Ribbentrop clearly exercised an obstructing influence upon these efforts to bring about an Anglo-German rapprochement. The effect of

Ribbentrop's advice upon Hitler in this regard is in-
herent in the remarks of Otto Dietrich,¹³ Hitler's
press chief,¹⁴ when he wrote:

Since Ribbentrop's return from London, Hitler has displayed intense distrust of England - in marked contrast to his former attitude. It is true that I recall conversations in which Hitler commented sarcastically upon Ribbentrop's exaggerated hatred for England. But Ribbentrop's one sided appraisals soon began to have their effect. As Hitler became aware of England's stiffening attitude toward him, he fell more and more under the sway of Ribbentrop's Anglophobia.

It is not implied that Ribbentrop cast a spell over Hitler, for the Fuehrer was not a weak personality who could be led to and fro by his advisers. But at the same time, as Hitler's confidence in Ribbentrop increased he depended more and more upon the advice of his foreign minister, especially in matters concerning Great Britain.

In the summer of 1938, as the Czech crisis became more acute, Hitler, Ribbentrop, and the German foreign office were not without warning concerning the seriousness of the situation and what Great Britain's reaction might be in event of a conflict. From London, von Dirksen consistently advised Ribbentrop during the summer of 1938 that unless Germany and Great Britain reached agreement

¹³Dietrich, Dr. Otto, State Secretary and Head of Press Division in Reich Ministry of Propaganda; Reich Press Chief of Nazi Party.

¹⁴Otto Dietrich, Hitler (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1955), 40-41.

oon, war could not be avoided. Dirksen further cautioned that he was convinced that if Germany resorted to military means to solve the Czech question, England would "without a doubt" go to war on the side of France. ¹⁵

Ribbentrop, however, placed little value on Dirksen's advice and passed it off as "astonishing" and "mere threats." He continued to assure the Fuehrer that those in authority in Great Britain were half-hearted in their attitude toward central European problems and could be relied upon to back down at the last minute. ¹⁶ From conversations with Henderson, Ribbentrop even concluded that Great Britain would undoubtedly stand aside in the event of a Czech-Franco-German conflict. From Ribbentrop's diplomatic correspondence, it is apparent that he tried to elicit a statement from British statesmen to the effect that Great Britain would not enter a conflict over Czecho-¹⁷lovakia. It is possible that Ribbentrop wanted to prove

¹⁵ Documents On German Foreign Policy, II, 395.

See also: Documents on German Foreign Policy, I, 158-59.

¹⁶ R. W. Seton-Watson, From Munich To Danzig (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1939), 44.

¹⁷ Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert, ed., The Diplomats (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 84-85.

See also: Documents On German Foreign Policy, II, 77, & 409-11.

conclusively that the British would not risk a war over central European problems and thereby show Hitler that the less bellicose Nazis were wrong in fearing British intervention.

Ribbentrop, to insure that views contrary to his own regarding Britain's probable reaction in event of conflict did not prevail, disseminated in late summer of 1938, the following circular to all his foreign missions.¹⁸

As you know, intensive foreign propaganda has for some time been spreading the fable that France would intervene in such a case and that Great Britain would not stand aside. This propaganda leaves us cold, and I ask you not to let yourselves be influenced by it in any way. I am convinced, and have repeatedly given expression to this, that no third power would be so foolhardy to attack Germany in such a case. I expect you to express this in your conversations, naturally as being your conviction also.

This circular and the manner in which Ribbentrop treated Dirksen's advice well reveal how intolerant he was of contrary opinions and how strongly he desired that his thesis of Britain's weakness be accepted.

Throughout the summer and fall of 1938, the Czech problem continued to be the major concern of European statesmen. In September 1938, Hitler and Chamberlain met for three conferences designed to arrive at a lasting settlement of German claims on Czechoslovakia. Ribbentrop, however, due to the objections of Chamberlain, was denied

¹⁸Documents On German Foreign Policy, II, 529.

an official role in the discussions.¹⁹ Bitter, the foreign minister attempted to exercise an influence from the background. Weizsacker related that Ribbentrop's attitude during the Munich Conferences was extremely bellicose and that he repeatedly advised Hitler to be harsh with the British, advocating war if necessary. In fact Ribbentrop²⁰ seemed to prefer war as a final humiliation on the British.

Strangely enough, the Munich Conference represented a low ebb in Ribbentrop's influence with Hitler. At Munich, the Fuehrer was not always sure of himself and of Ribbentrop's advice that the West would do nothing in regard to Czechoslovakia. Also, Hitler still demonstrated a tendency to follow the leadership of Mussolini. He also felt that war at this time would not have the necessary popular support in Germany. It could also be that at Munich Hitler was testing the West to see exactly how far he could go. Be that as it may, this much is certain; Munich amply substantiated Ribbentrop's convictions and convinced Hitler that the western leaders were "little worms" who would never go to war over Czechoslovakia. For as the New York Times²¹ recorded in October 1938:

²⁰Ernst von Weizsacker, Memoirs, trans. John Andrews (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951), 150-55.

²¹New York Times, October 14, 1938, p. 1.

The view held in London is that Herr von Ribbentrop, who is the leader of the anti-British forces in Berlin, now enjoys the 100% confidence of the Chancellor because the Foreign Minister was right in predicting that Britain and France would not go to war under any circumstances at the present time.

Hitler soon became dissatisfied with Munich. He regretted that he had not demanded more. He resumed his attacks on Britain and the British press. But with Hitler's change in attitude came a stiffening of British policy. The British felt that Hitler was to blame for the rapid deterioration in Anglo-German relations because he had not taken full advantage of the favorable atmosphere created at Munich. Consequently, Europe once more faced the threat of war.

Ribbentrop also was disappointed in Munich. He felt that Hitler had not fully exploited the Western powers. As a result, Ribbentrop put two theses into circulation: first, that Germany had not fully exploited the west's fear of war; and secondly, that England had used the Munich Conference to gain time in order to strike at a later date, when she was better armed. ²² Although there is no specific evidence to bear it out, it would probably not be far from fact to conclude that Ribbentrop, with these two contentions, was, to a large degree, responsible for Hitler's changed attitude.

²² Weizsacker, op. cit., 156.

After Munich, and throughout the winter of 1938-39, Hitler and his foreign minister continued their efforts to keep the western powers apart. In December 1938, Ribbentrop went to Paris to sign the German-French Declaration, a document declaring that no outstanding territorial differences existed between the two countries. Ribbentrop concluded from this that France had renounced her interest in eastern Europe and would limit her affairs to her Empire.²³ Ribbentrop also interpreted the German-French Declaration as a major division in the relations between Paris and London. With these conclusions, and mindful of the weakness the West had displayed at Munich, Ribbentrop advised Hitler that he could now solve the Czech question without fear of intervention.

Ribbentrop's advice eventually found its mark, for in March 1939 the Czech crisis came to a head. The German press increased the violence of its propaganda denouncing alleged atrocities occurring behind the Czech border. Slovakia and Ruthenia declared their independence of Prague and appealed to Germany for protection. Finally, on March

²³ Ibid., 171.

For text of German-French Declaration see: Documents On German Foreign Policy, IV, 470.

15, 1939, President Hacha flew to Berlin in an attempt to stay Hitler's hand. His efforts were in vain, however, because while the Czech president was conferring with Hitler and Ribbentrop, German troops marched into Prague.

The capitulation of Prague once again proved to Hitler that his foreign minister was right, for apart from verbal protests the western powers stood still. Although there are no documents to prove that Ribbentrop's advice was the major factor in Hitler's decision to march on Prague, it is not difficult to make this conclusion. The anschluss had increased Hitler's confidence in Ribbentrop's advice and Munich had confirmed it. Ribbentrop preached a doctrine of Britain's moral and material decadence, a doctrine to which Austria, Munich, and Prague seemed to bear ample testimony. The occupation of Prague and the final liquidation of the Czech state therefore convinced Hitler that he had a free hand in Europe and served to set the stage for the final act - the destruction of Poland.

²⁴Hacha, Emil, President of Czechoslovakian Supreme Court, 1925; member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague; President of the Czechoslovak Republic, November 30, 1938 to March 15, 1939.

CHAPTER V

FROM PRAGUE TO DANZIG

Prague, resulting in the final dismemberment of the Czech state, again proved to Hitler the correctness of his foreign minister's advice concerning the reactions of the western powers. Ribbentrop was consequently elevated in Hitler's esteem. Now having seen demonstrated this new evidence of British and French weakness, Hitler confidently turned to a settlement on the Danzig problem. And as in the Czech crisis, Ribbentrop from the beginning assured Hitler that he would have nothing to fear from the west in forcing a solution of the Polish question.

But Prague had at last brought about a change in the attitude of the British government. While warning that he would never again believe in Hitler's assurances, Neville Chamberlain announced Britain's peace efforts would be based on armaments and protective defense. To Ribbentrop, still posing as Hitler's expert on Great Britain, these warning went unheeded. And therein lies the tragedy of the opening of World War II.

Before turning to the Danzig question, Hitler and his foreign minister decided first to settle the problem

of Memel. On March 21, 1939, seven days after the occupation of Prague and under heavy German pressure, Lithuania surrendered Memel to Nazi Germany. Western reaction was slight, the result not so much of the suddenness of Hitler's action as of the fact that Memel represented one of the most legal of Hitler's claims. For a long time, it had generally been accepted throughout Europe that Lithuania had little justification in retaining this small territory bordering East Prussia. With the Memelland placed on the rack with the Rhineland, Austria, and Czechoslovakia, Hitler and Ribbentrop began to concoct a case for the annexation of Danzig.

The German-Polish problem, so far as it concerned Nazi Germany, dates from 1934, when Hitler, in an effort to relieve existing tensions, concluded a ten year non-aggression pact with Poland. From 1934 to 1938, relations between the two countries followed a relatively smooth course. But the Anschluss, the Munich Conference (to which the Poles were not invited), and the capitulation of Prague revived old anxieties and caused the two countries to drift rapidly apart.

Shortly after the Munich Conference and in a conversation with Lipski,¹ the Polish ambassador, Ribbentrop set

¹Lipski, Josef, Polish Ambassador to Germany, November 15, 1934 to September 1, 1939.

forth the German claim to Danzig and proposed that: (1) Danzig be incorporated within the Third Reich; (2) extra-territorial roads and railroads be built across the Danzig territory and across the Corridor by Germany and Poland; (3) Poland have a free port in Danzig; (4) the frontiers be mutually guaranteed; and (5) the Non-Ag-²gression Pact be extended to twenty-five years. Lipski replied no agreement was possible so long as Germany³ demanded the incorporation of Danzig.

In January 1939, Ribbentrop went to Warsaw for a three day visit under the pretext of repaying a recent⁴ Beck visit to Berlin. Since his attitude was unusually friendly (he spoke in glowing terms of Germany's fondness for her Polish neighbor) Ribbentrop's main objective seems to have been to draw Poland into the Anti-Comintern Pact. To this suggestion, and in reply to the proposals previously submitted to Lipski, Beck gave his guest a strongly worded almost wholly negative reply. And thus with the failure of yet another mission, Ribbentrop left Warsaw

² L. B. Namier, Diplomatic Prelude, 1938-1939 (London: MacMillan & Co., Ltd., 1948), 39-40.

³ Ibid., 40.

⁴ Beck, Josef, Polish Foreign Minister from 1932 to 1939.

"greatly discontented," displaying "coldness and ill-humour."⁵

In March 1939, Ribbentrop again conversed with the Polish ambassador, but on this occasion his manner was sharper and more demanding. He insisted that his earlier proposals were still viewed by the German government as a sine qua non in any discussions seeking a solution to the Danzig question. At the conversations' end, Ribbentrop handed Lipski a note embodying his earlier proposals and requested an immediate reply.⁶

Beck replied to the German note on March 25, 1939 by setting forth a counter-proposal providing for a joint German Polish guarantee of Danzig to secure both the political and economic rights of Danzig as well as the rights of the German and Polish populations within the Danzig territory. Beck's note made it clear that were Germany to persist in demanding the incorporation of Danzig into the Third Reich, Poland saw no easy solution of the problem.

Beck's refusal to bow to Ribbentrop's demands deadlocked German-Polish negotiations, and the situation rapidly assumed crisis proportions. To Ribbentrop's astonishment and anger, the next development came from London.

⁵ Nawier, op. cit., 58.

⁶ Nazi Conspiracy & Aggression, VIII, 492-94.

Following a brief visit by Beck to Great Britain, the British government announced on April 6, 1939 the conclusion of an Anglo-Polish Pact. Referred to as the "blank check" of World War II, this agreement provided that Poland and Britain were to give each other mutual assistance should either or both parties be attacked by a third power.⁷ This unrestrained guarantee to Poland represented an almost unbelievable change of policy on the part of the Chamberlain government, for it was the first time Britain had ever unreservedly given a military commitment to an eastern European power whose geographic position obviously rendered direct British help impossible.

This development in what now became a three-cornered Polish problem surprised both Hitler and Ribbentrop. After the war, Goering recalled that the conclusion of the Anglo-Polish Pact "made a deep impression on Hitler" - but not to the point of convincing him that Britain would go to war.⁸ Similarly taken aback by the Pact, Ribbentrop likewise refused to believe that Britain would intervene in the event of a forceful annexation of Danzig. Von Papen, for instance, spoke with Ribbentrop on April 7, 1939 and concluded that the foreign minister was still

⁷ Nazi Conspiracy & Aggression, VIII, 492-94.

⁸ Nazi Conspiracy & Aggression, I, 713.

convinced "that Great Britain was only bluffing."⁹ Nor did Ribbentrop's attitude change during the next month, since he told the Hungarian prime minister "that it was his firm conviction that, no matter what happened in Europe, no French or English soldier would attack Germany."¹⁰

Hitler answered the Anglo-Polish Pact in his Reichstag speech of April 28, 1939. After dwelling briefly on the justification for his action in Czechoslovakia, Hitler turned to the Polish question. He stated with regret that since Great Britain saw fit to oppose Germany over Poland he therefore had no alternative but to denounce the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935. In concluding, Hitler restated the German claim to Danzig, once more insisting that a settlement could be reached only on the basis of the German proposals.¹¹

On the same day as Hitler's speech, Ribbentrop notified the Polish government that his demands must be the basis of any agreement. The Poles answered in May with the assertion that they saw no contradiction between

⁹ Franz von Papen, Memoirs (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1953), 445.

See also: Namier, op. cit., 135.

¹⁰ Nazi Conspiracy & Aggression, VII, 192.

¹¹ R. W. Seton-Watson, From Munich To Danzig (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1939), 235-36.

the Anglo-Polish Pact and the German-Polish Agreement of 1934. The Polish note further argued that the Polish government viewed the German demands as an ultimatum; it would never willingly see Danzig become part of the German Reich.¹²

In Hitler's speech and Ribbentrop's diplomatic correspondence, it seems apparent that, despite Poland's refusal to submit to German pressure and Britain's hardening policy as indicated in the Anglo-Polish Pact, both Hitler and Ribbentrop steadfastly refused to believe that their actions would precipitate a general war in Europe.

Hitler's confidence in Germany's position vis-a-vis Great Britain was increased as a result of the Pact of Steel concluded between Ciano and Ribbentrop on May 22, 1939. The German-Italian Alliance, which transformed the loose Rome-Berlin Axis into a formal military alliance, increased Hitler's and Ribbentrop's expectations of resolving the Polish issue without incurring the intervention of Britain and the western powers.¹³ With this in mind, Hitler began to formulate his plans for the liquidation¹⁴ of Poland. He told his generals on May 23, 1939, that:

¹² Nazi Conspiracy & Aggression, VIII, 445-48.

¹³ Malcolm Muggeridge, ed. Ciano's Diplomatic Papers

¹⁴ Nazi Conspiracy & Aggression, I, 392-400.

We must attack Poland at the first suitable opportunity. We cannot expect a repetition of the Czech affair. There will be a war. Our task is to isolate Poland. There must be no simultaneous conflict with the Western powers. Fundamentally, therefore, conflict with Poland - beginning with the attack on Poland - will only be successful if the Western powers keep out of it. If this is impossible it will be better to attack in the West and settle Poland at the same time.

Hitler went on to state the reasons why he thought Great Britain would not intervene.

England's stake in the war is unimaginably great. Our enemies have men who are below average. No personal ties, no masters, no men of action. The English did not emerge from the last war strengthened. From a maritime point of view, nothing was achieved. Conflict between England and Ireland, the South African Union became more independent, concessions had to be made to India, England is in great danger, her industries are unhealthy. A British statesman can only look in the future with concern. Therefore the probability is still great that the West will not interfere. It may, however, turn out differently with England and France, one cannot predict with certainty. I figure on a trade barrier, not on blockade, and with it the severance of relations.

That Ribbentrop shared this same view is revealed in a conduit de langage he sent to all foreign missions in May 1939 in which he stated that the Polish problem could be settled at anytime by Hitler in forty-eight hours and that the western powers would be unable to render effective assistance to Poland. It is alleged that Ribbentrop stated at this time that if he heard of anyone expressing an opposite view, he would personally shoot him and assume full responsibility to Hitler for his

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action. General Guderian, writing in the post-war
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period and commenting upon events in June 1939, con-
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cluded:

There was no lack of political warnings. But Hitler and his foreign minister had persuaded themselves that the Western powers would never risk a war with Germany and that they, therefore, had a free hand in Eastern Europe.

Throughout the summer of 1939, Hitler was uncompromising in his demands on Poland. The British, however, demonstrated a willingness to reach an understanding. In
18
July, Sir Horace Wilson, presumably at the instruction of Chamberlain, approached von Dirksen with a broad outline for a solution to outstanding political, economic, and military matters. At the heart of Wilson's proposals

15
Namier, op. cit., 223.

See also: Craig & Gilbert, The Diplomats, 436.

16
Guderian, Col. General Heinz, World War II Commander of Panzer Troops; Chief of Staff, 1944-45; helped defeat July 1944 putsch against Hitler; succeeded by Krebs.

17
Heinz Guderian, Panzer Leader, trans. Constantine Fitzgibbon, (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1952), 65.

18
Wilson, Sir Horace, Chief Industrial Adviser to British Government, 1930-1939, seconded to the Treasury for service with the Prime Minister, 1935-1939.

was the suggestion that Great Britain and Germany conclude a non-aggression pact which would, thereby, free Great Britain from her Polish commitments.¹⁹ In early August, Wilson again put forward the same suggestions, emphasizing the need for Great Britain to undo the Polish knot as a basis for an understanding with Germany.

In both instances, Dirksen cabled Wilson's proposals to Berlin but received not the slightest response from his foreign minister.²⁰ Thereupon, and convinced of the importance of Wilson's proposals as the key to avoiding what otherwise appeared an inevitable conflict, Dirksen travelled to Berlin in mid-August personally to present these views to Ribbentrop and Hitler.

Dirksen arrived in Berlin on August 13, 1939, the day following the discussions between Ribbentrop, Hitler and Ciano at Salzburg. Dirksen first, and without success, requested an interview with Ribbentrop. He next conferred with Weizsacker concerning the fate of his reports from London. Weizsacker gave a vague reply inferring that Ribbentrop had filed them in the wastebasket. Dirksen did learn, however, that his analysis of Great Britain and the reports of his discussions with Wilson had been in-

¹⁹ Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert, Ed., The Diplomats (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 505-06.

²⁰ Herbert von Dirksen, Moscow, Tokyo, London (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), 227-28.

terpreted by Ribbentrop "as further signs of British
weakness."²¹ After waiting for several days without
receiving an interview with Ribbentrop, Dirksen, in dis-
gust, resigned from the foreign office and wrote Ribben-
trop a lengthy memorandum stating that Great Britain would
most certainly go to war if Germany attacked Poland.²²

This discussion of Ribbentrop's relations with von
Dirksen significantly reveal Ribbentrop's predisposed
conviction that regardless of what happened Great Britain
would not fight. Ribbentrop either believed this so
strongly or else had doubts of the strength of his own con-
victions so that he refused to listen to anyone with a
contrary opinion, regardless of how good the source. There
is, however, one additional factor which might have in-
fluenced Ribbentrop to disregard Dirksen's advice. At this
point, German-Soviet negotiations were proceeding at a
rapid pace and it seemed possible that an alliance could
be reached with the Soviet Union. It is possible, there-
fore, that Ribbentrop concluded that if this alliance
could be realized it would force Great Britain into an even
weaker position and that Germany could therefore well afford
to turn its back on the British offer.

21

Ibid., 229.

22

Ibid., 230.

The conversations between Hitler, Ribbentrop, and Ciano, held in mid-August, 1939, at Salzburg, provide additional proof that Hitler and Ribbentrop firmly believed that a German-Polish conflict would not draw Great Britain into a war. Ciano recorded that:

Hitler repeatedly stated that he is convinced that the conflict will be localized and gives the following reasons: France and England will certainly make extremely theatrical gestures but will not go to war, because their military and moral preparations are not such as to allow them to begin the conflict. At the most the English can set up a blockade in the North Sea between the coasts of Scotland and Scandanavia and at the mouth of the Channel. They might even attempt some air action against German centres, but that is not probable, either for fear of German anti-aircraft defences or fear of reprisals.

Ribbentrop expressed his conviction in this regard by remarking to Ciano that "his information and above all his psychological knowledge of England made him certain that any armed British intervention is ruled out." Ciano disagreed with Hitler and Ribbentrop but sincerely hoped that they were correct. Ciano recalled that on one occasion during these discussions, he and Ribbentrop were walking in the garden and he asked the German foreign minister: "Well, Ribbentrop, what do you want? The Corridor or Danzig?" "Not any more," Ribbentrop replied, "We want War."

²³ Muggerridge, op. cit., 301.

²⁴ Ibid., 297.

²⁵ Galeazzo Ciano, The Ciano Diaries (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1946), 582.

Ciano's recollections seem to leave little doubt that Hitler and Ribbentrop were bent on the invasion of Poland and that both were firmly convinced that Great Britain would remain passive. To what extent Hitler's attitude was influenced by Ribbentrop is difficult to judge, but that his influence was more than slight is implied in Von Hassell's Diary when he wrote: "Goering no longer has much to say; Himmler, Goebbels, and Ribbentrop are now managing Hitler."²⁶ At another point, Von Hassell recorded that: "According to all reports, Ribbentrop is the man who has the most influence with Hitler."²⁷ It is understandable that Hitler was dependent to a considerable degree upon Ribbentrop's advice and judgement, because after all Ribbentrop had been entirely correct in his predictions of the reactions of the western powers. And the Fuehrer had no reason to believe that Ribbentrop's "psychological knowledge" of Britain was anything but correct.

On August 23, 1939, Ribbentrop returned from Moscow bearing the German-Soviet Treaty of Non-Aggression. This culminated a work of several months, beginning roughly

²⁶ Ulrich von Hassell, The Von Hassell (Doubleday Company, Inc., 1947), 60.

²⁷ Ibid., 45.

fter Britain's guarantee to Poland, and was aimed at dividing Russia and the Western powers. It had been Ribbentrop's contention throughout that if a Russian alliance could be obtained, Great Britain would be left without a potential ally in eastern Europe and would therefore be even more reluctant to involve herself in a general war over Poland. The German-Soviet Alliance increased Hitler's esteem for Ribbentrop and his diplomacy and convinced the Fuehrer that Great Britain had been forced into a position from which she could do nothing but sit back and passively witness events.

The importance Hitler attached to the Russian alliance in ruling out possible British intervention is clearly revealed in a conference with his generals on August 28, 1939. He stated:

Colonel General von Brauchitsch has promised me to bring the war against Poland to a conclusion within a few weeks. If he would have told me that it would take two years or even one year only, I would not have issued the order to march and would have temporarily entered into an alliance with England instead of Russia. For we cannot conduct a long war. In any case a new situation has now been created. I have witnessed the miserable worms Daladier and Chamberlain in Munich. They will be too cowardly to attack. They will go no further than blockade. Against it we have our autarchy and the Russian raw materials. Poland will be depopulated and colonized with Germans. My pact with Poland was only meant to stall for time. And besides, gentlemen, in Russia will happen just what I have practiced in Poland. After Stalin's death

(he is seriously ill) we shall crush the Soviet Union.

From this point, events moved swiftly. On August 25, 1939, Britain answered the German-Soviet Alliance by announcing that the Anglo-Polish Pact had been signed and thereby made official. It is plain that neither Hitler nor Ribbentrop had counted on this development. Ribbentrop testified at Nuremberg that following the British announcement he went to Hitler and persuaded the Fuehrer temporarily to halt the invasion of Poland.²⁹ Goering testified that Hitler was also disturbed. Goering stated that on the same day that Britain gave her guarantee to Poland Hitler called him on the telephone to tell him that he had stopped the invasion scheduled for the following day. Goering asked for how long, and Hitler replied that it was just temporary but he would first have to see if he could eliminate British intervention.³⁰

Although Britain's unreserved announcement to support Poland disturbed Hitler and his foreign minister, it nevertheless did not destroy their convictions that Great Britain would not go to war. General Guderian, commenting upon these events of August 25-26, substantiated this when he writes³¹

²⁹ Nazi Conspiracy & Aggression, VIII, 535-36.

³⁰ Ibid., 534.

³¹ Guderian, op. cit., 66.

By means of a secret agreement with the Russians during these days Hitler had insured the protection of his rear in the event of war but owing to Ribbentrop's disastrous influence, illusions were still being cherished concerning the probable reactions of the Western powers; it was considered unlikely that they would declare war.

Meanwhile relations between Great Britain and Germany continued through Henderson in Berlin. On August 8, 1939 Hitler, Henderson and Ribbentrop met in conference. Henderson read a letter from Chamberlain in which he latter acknowledged the need for a settlement and for the friendship of Germany and suggested that direct negotiations begin immediately on the principles of safeguarding Poland's essential interests and resolving the Polish problem by an international guarantee.³² Chamberlain's letter apparently left the door open for agreement and passed the initiative to Hitler. At this point, it seemed difficult for Hitler to decide on agreement or war. Weizsacker recorded that Hitler and Ribbentrop spent the remainder of the day trying to decide on which course to take. One minute, according to Weizsacker, they spoke in the friendliest terms about Great Britain and the next minute they talked of waging war at any price, but as the day wore on their thoughts turned more and more towards

³² The British War Blue Book (New York: Farrar & Rinehart & Company, 1939), 162-65.

33
war.

Finally on August 29 Hitler answered Chamberlain's letter by telling Henderson that he still desired an Anglo-German understanding but that the Polish problem constituted a barrier to agreement. Hitler also stated that he saw no possibility of resolving the question by negotiation but was, however, still willing to enter into direct discussions. At the same time, Ribbentrop told Henderson that he would immediately draft a set of proposals aimed at a solution. He further assured the British ambassador that if a Polish representative appeared within twenty-³⁴four hours, he would be well received. Although the

Chamberlain letter seemed to have moderated Hitler's tone somewhat, it by no means convinced Hitler and Ribbentrop that Great Britain would honor her Polish commitments.

³⁵General Halder, in his Diary, stated that "as a result of the Chamberlain letter, the impression in Berlin was that Great Britain was still soft on the issue of a major
³⁶war."

³³ Ernst von Weizsacker, Memoirs (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951) 208.

³⁴ Nazi Conspiracy & Aggression, VIII, 466-69.

³⁵ Halder, Franz, German General, Chief of Army General Staff, December 1938 to October 1942.

³⁶ Franz Halder, The Private War Journal of Generaloberst Franz Halder, I-VIII, (Office of Chief Counsel For War Crimes: Headquarters, European Command, mimeographed copy), 37.

In the late evening of August 30, 1939, Ribbentrop accompanied by the interpreter Schmidt,³⁷ met with Henderson to receive the British government's reply to Hitler's note of the preceding day. Ribbentrop's mood was hostile. He ranted at Henderson because the Polish representative had not yet appeared. Henderson replied that to expect within twenty-four hours a Polish representative who had not even seen the German proposals was unreasonable. Following a heated debate, Ribbentrop furiously produced a document and read the German government's proposals in German so rapidly that Henderson was unable to grasp their full content. When Ribbentrop finished, Henderson asked for a copy of the proposals for transmittal to the British and Polish governments. But much to Henderson's, and even Schmidt's surprise Ribbentrop refused, saying, it was now too late anyway since the Polish representative had failed to appear. With this, the conversations ended in the most unpleasant atmosphere.³⁸

³⁷ Schmidt, Dr. Paul Otto, interpreter in the German Foreign Ministry, 1923-1945.

³⁸ Nazi Conspiracy & Aggression, VIII, 472-73.

See also: Nevile Henderson, Failure Of A Mission (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1940), 283-86.

See also: Paul Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter, R.H.C. Steed, ed. (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1951), 151-52.

Both Henderson and Schmidt later claimed that they firmly believed that Ribbentrop had refused to give Henderson the proposals because he feared that Great Britain would be able to persuade Poland to agree to the German demands and would thus nullify any excuse to attack Poland.³⁹ This judgement seems valid since it was felt at the time that the German demands were not, in themselves, entirely unreasonable and might well have served as a basis for negotiations. But instead, Ribbentrop chose to cut all threads leading to a peaceful solution, thereby failing to do his part in preventing a situation which could only lead to war.

On August 31, 1939, Hitler definitely decided upon war and gave the order for the attack on Poland to commence the following morning. On September 3, 1939, after two days of the Polish-German fighting, Great Britain declared war on Germany. Dr. Schmidt, who translated the British note to Hitler, clearly recorded Hitler's and Ribbentrop's⁴⁰ reactions when he wrote:

When I entered the room, Hitler was sitting at his desk and Ribbentrop stood by the window. Both looked up expectantly as I came in. I stopped at some distance from Hitler's desk, and slowly

³⁹ Schmidt, op. cit., 151-52.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 158.

translated the British government's ultimatum. When I finished there was complete silence. Hitler sat immobile, gazing before him. He was not at a loss, as afterwards stated, nor did he rage as others allege. He sat completely silent and unmoving.

After an interval which seemed an age, he turned to Ribbentrop who had remained standing by the window. "What now?" asked Hitler with a savage look, as though implying that his Foreign Minister had misled him about England's probable reaction.

Ribbentrop answered quietly: "I assume the French will hand in a similar note within the hour."

Although Schmidt was the only other person present when Hitler and Ribbentrop received the British ultimatum, others shared the same view. Otto Dietrich, Hitler's press chief, writing in the post-war period, remarked:

Hitler had not expected England and France to enter the war on behalf of Poland. It was plain to see how stunned he was by the declaration of war. He thought the Western powers were not sufficiently re-armed and believed the West Wall constituted a political shield against them. This miscalculation on Hitler's part was ultimately rooted in his complete lack of understanding of moral factors in international politics and his exclusive faith in force. But Ribbentrop also undoubtedly played a fateful part. It is true that Hitler could not be swayed once he had made a decision, but without Ribbentrop he would not have come to such perverse conclusions about England. Although unteachable, he depended upon his foreign minister for the facts of life about foreign countries and diplomatic relations. If Ribbentrop had advised against it, he would scarcely have undertaken the attack on Poland, with the consequences that inevitably flowed out of it, given the political situation of the time.

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Otto Dietrich, Hitler, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1955), 47-48.

42

Admiral Raeder, in his post-war testimonies, placed the major portion of the blame for the outbreak of the war

43

squarely on Ribbentrop when he said:

In my opinion, it was not given to the Fuehrer to grasp fully the mentality of the English. The person of Ribbentrop was in this connection a special obstacle insofar as he made difficult the transmission to the Fuehrer of conceptions, based on decades of experience, and on historical studies of experienced diplomats like von Neurath and the diplomats of the Navy, which conceptions could have served the Fuehrer as the basis of his judgements and decisions.

On the part of the English, the die-hard Germanophobes began to poison the atmosphere. On the part of the Germans, the appointment of the equally stupid and conceited and diplomatically unusable von Ribbentrop as ambassador in London, and later as successor to Neurath as foreign minister, made it impossible for every tediously prepared agreement to develop.

Levile Henderson, writing at the end of his mission, generally agreed with Dietrich, Schmidt, and Raeder and compared Bismarck and the Ems telegram incident to Ribbentrop and his refusal to submit the German proposals the night of August 30, and concluded that Ribbentrop felt he needed a war to prove he was a "second Bismarck."

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Henderson further observed that:

It is impossible to exaggerate the malign influence of Ribbentrop, Goebbels, Himmler, and company. It was consistently sinister, not so much because of its suggestiveness (since Hitler alone de-

⁴²Raeder, Erich, Grand Admiral, Commander in Chief of German Navy, 1935-1943.

⁴³Nazi Conspiracy & Aggression, VIII, 688.

⁴⁴Henderson, op. cit., 263-64.

cided policy) nor because it merely applauded and encouraged, but because Hitler did appear to hesitate and the extremists of the party at once proceeded to fabricate situations calculated to make Hitler embark upon courses which even he at times seems to have shrunk from risking.

The list is almost endless of those who generally shared these opinions of Ribbentrop and the effect of his advice upon Hitler. Included would be such personalities as Weizsacker, Kesselring, von Hassell, von Mackensen, and Ciano, to only mention a few. Some of these men kept day-to-day diaries, others reserved their comments for the post-war period, and all had different reasons for writing. Some wrote for personal vindication, others to apologize for Germany. But the fact remains that all of these men, many of whom were close to Hitler, Ribbentrop, and events of the time, essentially agreed in their estimations of Ribbentrop and his influence upon Hitler. Therefore it seems reasonable to conclude that Ribbentrop, from the end of his London ambassadorship to the attack on Poland, consistently advised Hitler that Britain and the western powers were weak and unwilling to fight and this advice exerted an important, even major influence upon Hitler and his decisions.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Essentially this has been a study of attitudes and influences; or to be more precise, the attitudes of Joachim von Ribbentrop and his influence upon the policies and decisions of Adolph Hitler. By its nature, a study of this kind is both complex and inconclusive, one about which the final word can probably never be written. But because of its complexity and inconclusiveness it does not thereby defy interpretation or preclude one from drawing certain conclusions.

Ribbentrop's meteoric rise from a wine merchant to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Third Reich within the space of six years represents a phenomenon in the realm of diplomacy, phenomenal because of his lack of diplomatic preparation. Why Hitler chose Ribbentrop when he could have selected from among the many capable and experienced members of the German foreign office can only be answered in terms of Ribbentrop's character and Hitler's distrust of German officialdom.

In Ribbentrop, Hitler found many appealing qualities. He was something of a yes-man who, if he did not share

Hitler's views, at least seldom disagreed with his Fuehrer. He always made it a policy to tell Hitler what he wanted to hear and in this manner was able to burrow his way into Hitler's confidence. Ribbentrop moreover possessed qualities which set him apart from the usual type of Hitler's subordinates. He was wealthy, polished, widely travelled, and fluent in three languages. In addition, and probably most important of all Ribbentrop was openly pro-British with many important and influential British contacts.

The claim that Ribbentrop was a fanatical devotee of the tenets of Nazi ideology is questionable. What evidence there is tends to show him as a political opportunist. Whether Hitler was of this opinion is also questionable, but at least he found in Ribbentrop the type of man with whom he had more in common than with the career diplomats of the Wilhelmstrasse. These latter were far too conservative, so the Fuehrer felt, to be enthusiastic about the dynamics of the National Socialist Revolution. Instead, Hitler preferred more eager, more emotional men who would not shrink from violence in executing the dictates of the Nazi doctrine. These he considered more important prerequisites than political intelligence and formal preparation. And Ribbentrop had all of these qualifications in abundance.

Mindful therefore of his British sentiments and contacts, Hitler sent Ribbentrop to London in 1936 with the hope that he would be able to obtain the long-sought Anglo-German alliance. But Ribbentrop went to London an Anglophile and came away an Anglophobe. In the course of his ambassadorship, his optimism turned to pessimism, his friendliness to bitterness. It was a bitterness born of disappointment. It was in this frame of mind that Ribbentrop formed his distorted and disastrous opinions of the British people. He came away from London convinced that Britain was weak, that her empire was decaying, and that her people were unwilling to fight another war. In holding these views in 1937 and 1938, Ribbentrop was not alone, for in those years there was a decided, popular, and widespread aversion to war in both Britain and France. Ribbentrop's misjudgement lay in his assumption that there was no limit to what the people of Britain and France would endure from Nazi Germany before they resorted to war.

These were unfortunate views for one who headed the German foreign office and steered German foreign policy through the treacherous waters of the next two years. Early in 1938, Hitler took a dim view of Ribbentrop's analysis of Britain, considering it a product of his exaggerated Anglophobia. But as time passed, Hitler came more and more to share Ribbentrop's calamitous assumptions.

The policies and actions of the western powers certainly seemed to substantiate Ribbentrop's contentions, for France and Britain even before had stood passively by while Hitler reoccupied the Rhineland. When German troops marched into Austria, again there were protests but no concerted action, and when the west capitulated to Hitler at Munich (the high point of his hold over Europe), Hitler was convinced of the correctness of Ribbentrop's advice.

The question can be asked whether Hitler, by himself and without the help of Ribbentrop, would have arrived at these same conclusions. To say that he would is selling Ribbentrop's influence a little short. Had not Ribbentrop been Hitler's right hand man, it is very possible that this position would have fallen to Goering, and it is well known that Goering was much less warlike in his views and favored, instead of war, a second Munich. On the other hand, Hitler had much evidence to substantiate his convictions, yet, at times he appeared to hesitate and doubt the strength of these convictions. When this occurred, Ribbentrop was at his side to suggest and encourage. This seems to be the key factor in Ribbentrop's influence with Hitler and partially, at least, answers the question of whether Hitler would have come to these perverse conclusions without the Assistance of his foreign minister.

But in the period following Munich a gradual change was evident in British policy. The Munich settlement was

not exactly popular, but at least it was generally felt in Britain that everything reasonable had been done to satiate Hitler's territorial ambitions in Europe, and time had been bought. But there was also an increase in military preparations and people began to face the thought of war with more reality. On the other hand, Ribbentrop's views regarding the west were essentially unchanged. He and Hitler approached the Czech crisis with confidence that nothing was to be feared from either France or Britain. Their confidence seemed justified. For in March 1939 when Hitler marched into Prague, the western powers stood passively by. The time for a showdown had not yet arrived, but in Britain it was realized that the Munich agreement was just another "scrap of paper" and Hitler ambitions had not been satisfied through appeasement.

With such remarkable successes behind them, it was hardly astonishing that Hitler and Ribbentrop turned to the Polish problem with assurance that their way was unobstructed. Had not the Rhineland, Austria, Spain, Munich, and Prague demonstrated that Britain and France did not intend to interfere? Ribbentrop was convinced that there was little danger in another throw of the dice, and he advised and encouraged Hitler to settle the question of Danzig without fear of British intervention. He was apparently totally unaware of what Prague meant to the

British. Not as fully convinced of British decay as Ribbentrop, Hitler entertained some doubts, especially after Britain gave her "blank check" to Poland in April 1939. But Ribbentrop kept up his consistent advice, and when he brought home the German-Soviet Pact in August 1939, Hitler's fears were allayed. Even after Britain made her guarantee to Poland official and Hitler again showed signs of hesitating, Ribbentrop was at his side to advise and encourage. And when finally confident that his foreign minister was correct, Hitler decided to take the step that plunged the world into the abyss of World War II.

In all the catalogue of crimes and mistakes made by Ribbentrop and Hitler, the really decisive error lay in their failure to perceive Britain's change of policy after Munich and more pronouncedly after their rape of Prague. Neither Hitler nor Ribbentrop was oblivious of the surface reflections of Britain's policy, the Anti-Aggression Front and guarantee to Poland were there for all to see. Rather the mistake was in the interpretation Hitler and Ribbentrop gave to these external signs of Britain's change of heart. For them it was mere bluff, a feeble attempt to intimidate Germany. In the Anglo-Polish Pact they failed to see either any evidence of British political morality or the extent to which Britain had indebted her national honor. They failed to realize that this time Britain

could not back down. Ribbentrop showed himself as something considerable less than the "second Bismarck" Hitler saw in him. In his ignorance, folly, capriciousness, and diplomatic ineptness, he resembled a second Berchtold.

The central question in this sordid drama will always be the extent of Ribbentrop's influence on Hitler. To some, Neurath for instance, Ribbentrop was a mere yes-man, Hitler's messenger boy. To others, such as Goering, Ribbentrop's influence was more significant, and Goering frequently referred to "Ribbentrop's war." In reality, however, the extent of his influence seems to lie somewhere between these two extremes. Ribbentrop was not wholly a yes-man, for he had strong opinions of his own and exerted considerable effort to convince Hitler of the logic of his convictions. On the other hand, he had no real power to make policy decisions, and he realized that the permanence of his position rested solely on his ability to please the Fuehrer. But Ribbentrop took advantage of his position to advise and encourage whenever Hitler faltered. In this manner, Ribbentrop was an important, and sometimes even a major, influence upon Hitler and his decisions from 1934 to 1939.

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- Royal Institute of International Affairs. Documents On International Affairs, 1935. I-II. Edited by John W. Wheeler-Bennett and Stephen Heald. London: Oxford University Press, 1936.
- Royal Institute of International Affairs. Documents On International Affairs, 1936. Edited by Stephen Heald and John W. Wheeler-Bennett. London: Oxford University Press, 1937.
- United States. Department of State. Documents On German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945. Series D, I. "From Neurath to Ribbentrop, September 1937-September 1938." Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1949.

ited States. Department of State. Documents On German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945. Series D, II. "Germany and Czechoslovakia, 1937-1938." Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1949.

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ited States. Office of Chief Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality. Nazi Conspiracy & Aggression. I-VIII, 2 supplements. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1946.

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These various documents comprised a major portion of the material for this paper. Of them, the Documents On German Foreign Policy and Nazi Conspiracy & Aggression were by far the most valuable. They represent compilations of the most pertinent material gleaned from the vast amount of documents captured by the Allies at the close of World War II. The Documents On German Foreign Policy, however, have one major weakness in that they present no material covering the period from March 15, 1939 to September 1, 1939, or in other words the Polish Crisis. This absence of material for such an important period might warrant official explanation.

The Trials of Major War Criminals were excellent for individual testimonies of the various Nazis on trial, especially since large sections were devoted to Ribbentrop.

The documents, Nazi-Soviet Relations, although not pertaining directly to this period, presented

useful material on the German-Soviet Pact of 1939.

The Documents On International Affairs are comprehensive, giving a wide range to all aspects of world politics during these respective years.

Langsam's Documents and Gantenbein's Documentary Background are sources containing documentary material of a general, commonly known nature.

The two color books are selective and by their nature slanted and should be used with caution. However, The British War Blue Book was helpful in supplying material on the Polish crisis.

II. Memoirs

Churchill, Winston S. Gathering Storm. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948.

Churchill, Winston S. While England Slept: A Survey of World Affairs, 1932-1938. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1938.

Strich, Otto, Hitler. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1955.

Sachsen, Herbert von. Moscow, Tokyo, London. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952.

Child, William E. Jr. and Martha Dodd (Editors). Ambassador Dodds Diaries, 1933-1938. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1941.

de Ancis-Poncet, Andre. The Fateful Years: 1931-1938. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949.

Johnson, Hugh (Editor). The Ciano Diaries, 1939-1943. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1946.

Libert, G. M. Nuremberg Diary. New York: Farrar, Straus, 1947.

Merian, Heinz. Panzer Leader. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1952.

Halder, Franz. The Private War Journal Of Generaloberst Franz Halder, 14 August 1939 to 24 September 1942. I-VIII. Headquarters European Command. Mimeographed copy.

- ssell, Ulrich von. The Von Hassell Diaries, 1938-1944. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1947.
- Anderson, Sir Neville. Failure Of A Mission. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1940.
- Hitler, Adolph. Mein Kampf. New York: Reynal Hitchcock, 1939.
- Chandler, Louis P. (Editor). The Goebbels Diaries, 1942-1943. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1948.
- McGregor, Malcolm (Editor). Ciano's Diplomatic Papers. London: Odhams Press Limited, 1948.
- Pen, Franz von. Memoirs. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1953.
- Schmidt, Paul. Hitler's Interpreter. London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1951.
- Weizsacker, Ernst von. Memoirs. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951.

Generally, these memoirs were all helpful and yielded much useful information. The memoirs of Henderson, Ciano, Weizsacker, and Dirksen were the most useful. All four of these men came into frequent contact with Ribbentrop and his diplomacy. They were close to Hitler, Ribbentrop and scenes of the major events and thereby in a position to draw fairly accurate interpretations. Each, of course, had his own reason for writing and their personal opinions must be carefully evaluated.

The memoirs of Dodd and Francois-Poncet were of little value concerning Ribbentrop himself but did provide good background material of a general nature. In this same manner, Churchill's books were also useful.

The memoirs of Schmidt and Dietrich were especially helpful in providing information of personal conversations between Ribbentrop and Hitler, information which could not have been obtained from official sources.

Hitler's Mein Kampf, although cumbersome to wade through, provided useful insights into Hitler's early attitude towards Great Britain.

The remaining memoirs of von Hassel, Goebbels, Gilbert, and Guderian were helpful only in providing character sketches and other bits of information on Ribbentrop and other top ranking Nazi leaders.

III. Books

- Mr. Edward Hallett. The Twenty Years Truce, 1919-1939. London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1942.
- Big, Gordon A. and Gilbert, Felix (Editors). The Diplomats, 1919-1939. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953.
- Key, Lord. Diplomacy By Conference, Studies In Public Affairs, 1920-1946. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1946.
- Len, Konrad. Der Fuehrer. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1944.
- Stzsch, Otto. Germany's Domestic and Foreign Policies. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929.
- McCott, W. N. British Foreign Policy Since Versailles. London: Methuen and Company, Ltd., 1940.
- Mer, Lewis B. Diplomatic Prelude, 1938-1939. London: MacMillan and Company, Ltd., 1948.
- Mer, Lewis B. Europe In Decay, A Study of Disintegration, 1936-1940. London: MacMillan and Company, Ltd., 1950.
- Mer, Robert M. The Twenty Years Truce. London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1943.
- uman, Frederick L. Europe On The Eve, The Crisis of Diplomacy, 1933-1939. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1942.
- uman, Frederick L. Germany Since 1918. New York: Henry Hold and Company, 1944.
- warz, Paul. This Man Ribbentrop. New York: Julian Messner, Inc., 1943.
- bury, Paul. The Wilhelmstrasse, A Study of German Diplomats Under the Nazi Regime. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954.
- on-Watson, R. W. Britain And The Dictators, A Survey of Post-War British Policy. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1938.

ton-Watson, R. W. From Munich To Danzig. 3rd edition, revised. London: Methuen and Company, Ltd., 1939.

eeler-Bennett, John W. The Nemesis Of Power. New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1954.

skemann, Elizabeth. The Rome-Berlin Axis. London: Oxford University Press, 1949.

lfers, Arnold. Britain And France Between Two Wars. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1940.

There are a myriad of sources respecting Hitlerite Germany and international relations between the two world wars. The above list represents only a select number of the most useful of these sources, especially for information on general background, Ribbentrop, Hitler, and Anglo-German relations between 1919-1939.

For general background for the period 1919-1933, Seton-Watson's Britain And The Dictators and Wolfers's Britain and France were the most valuable. Seton-Watson gives a clear but general picture of the main events and their interrelationships from the Treaty of Versailles to the rise of Hitler. Wolfers presents a particularly penetrating study of the balance of power theory as it operated in British foreign policy during this period. For general background, Hankey's Diplomacy and Carr's Twenty Years were the least helpful.

For portraits of Hitler, his thoughts, his attitudes and policies, the book by Heiden was indispensable. Heiden gives a complete and detailed analysis of Hitler's early life and background, roughly from his birth to his accession to power.

The two books by Namier and the one by Seabury represent the best sources for information concerning the diplomats and the diplomacy of the period. Seabury's Wilhelmstrasse is the best source thus far advanced on the German foreign office and German foreign policy under the Nazi regime. It is well documented and represents a great deal of careful research. Namier's books are of a more general nature, giving a blow-by-blow account of the main diplomatic events of the critical years, 1936-1939. The Diplomats, although less helpful, is a well documented source and has a valuable section on Ribbentrop and the German foreign office.

Schwarz's This Man Ribbentrop was a valuable source because it provided one of the few accesses to Ribbentrop's early life and background. Undocumented, the facts are mostly related from memory and at times are not in agreement with other writers. Schwarz was decidedly anti-Ribbentrop and his book should be used with extreme caution.

For secondary materials of a more specific nature, Seton-Watson's From Munich, Schuman's Europe, and Wheeler-Bennett's Nemesis are especially good. Wheeler-Bennett's Nemesis is by far the most exhaustive but deals primarily with the military aspect of the Nazi regime. Both Schuman and Seton-Watson wrote before the end of the war and thereby without the essential documentary material. Seton Watson leaves many questions unanswered. The books by Medlicott, Rayner, Hoetzsch, and Wiskeman were of little value.

IV. Articles

- mbassador No 1," Time, XXIX (February 15, 1937), 22-23.
- ritain Veers Toward Germany," New Republic, LXXXIII (July 17, 1935), 267-68.
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- nc, Josef. "From Prague To Warsaw," Journal Of Central European Affairs, I, (October 1941), 287-306.
- ord Halifax In Germany," Contemporary Review, CLIII (January 1938), 101-06.
- vins, Allan. "The Anglo-German Naval Agreement," Current History, XLII (August 1935), 506-12.
- ole, DeWitt C. "Light On Nazi Foreign Policy," Foreign Affairs, XXV (October 1946), 130-54.
- epresentative Men, Herr von Ribbentrop," The English Review, LXII (April 1936), 413-15.
- ibbentrop: Hitler's Gloved Hand," The Literary Digest, CXXI (March 28, 1936), 38.
- rthelmer, Mildred. "The Foreign Policy of The Third Reich," Foreign Policy Reports, X (March 28, 1934), 14-28.

- Wertheimer, Mildred. "Aims of Hitler's Foreign Policy,"
Foreign Policy Reports, XI (June 5, 1935), 70-83.
- How Is Ribbentrop," Living Age, CCCL (June 1936), 328.
- Wolfe, Henry C. "Ribbentrop: Hitler's Oracle,"
Current History, LI (December 1939), 23-25.

Unfortunately, little has been published by way of periodical literature on Ribbentrop and his diplomacy. What has been published differs little in value from most of the secondary material. The articles in the English R., Living Age, and Lit. Digest, represent the common type of journalistic impressions and were of little value. The articles by Wolfe was more valuable but only in a general way. The startling fact in most of these articles is that the majority of the writers hailed Ribbentrop as a great and coming statesman, from whom great deeds could be expected in the future. How wrong they were.

The two articles by Hancock represented some careful research and provided good background material.

For articles of a specific nature, the two on Halifax's visit and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement were somewhat helpful. The two articles by Wertheimer were valiant attempts but written much too close to the period, without benefit of documentary material.

Of all the articles, the one by Poole was the most valuable. Poole wrote from authority as he was a member of the U.S. State Department team in charge of evaluating and selecting the captured German documents for the Nuremberg Trials and also had the opportunity of interrogating many of the Nazis on trial. In his article, Poole summarizes the main events of the period 1933-1939 with a revealing discussion of Hitler, Ribbentrop, and Nazi foreign policy. For a seemingly accurate thumbnail sketch of the background of World War II, this is an excellent source.

V. Newspapers

New York Times

For several reasons the New York Times was the only newspaper source consulted. Many other excellent newspaper sources could have been used, notable of which would have been the London Times, Manchester

Guardian, and the Daily Telegraph, but due to the expense involved these were not consulted. It was thought that the New York Times would give the best, most accurate, and most comprehensive accounts of events occurring in Europe during this period since many of its dispatches were taken from London and Berlin newspaper releases, appearing in this country a day later. As it worked out the New York Times provided many bits of information not readily obtainable from memoirs and official documents. It was of especial help in tracing the details of Ribbentrop's ambassadorship in London.