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THE POLISH-GERMAN NON-AGGRESSION  
PACT

by

Michael Zurowski

A Thesis

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree  
Master of Arts

at the University of Windsor

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## ABSTRACT

The Polish-German Non-Aggression Pact, as signed by Joseph Lipski, the Polish Ambassador in Berlin and Baron von Neurath, Hitler's Foreign Minister marked the turning point in the relations between the reconstructed Polish Republic and post-Versailles Germany. For those who had been accustomed to a cooperative Polish policy with the French Republic and the League of Nations, this agreement seemed to be a volte-face on the part of the Warsaw towards the League's collective security system. Critics denounced the Polish decision as appeasement to the forces of revisionism.

This thesis will probe the reasons for the Pact from the standpoint of Polish foreign policy. Within this framework, the pact can be seen as a manifestation of Poland's search for security for her western provinces and her national independence. This search began with Poland's disillusionment with the League of Nations collective security system. The initial faith and the consequent disenchantment was the result of two basic factors (1) the position of the chief supporters of the League on the question of German territorial revision and (2) their position with regard to the chief instrument of German revisionism: the rebuilding of the Reichswehr. Realizing that the League no longer functioned as an instrument of collective security within the context of central-eastern Europe, the Warsaw government turned its focus of attention towards Berlin in the hope that it could reach some sort of understanding with the Third Reich.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The assistance given to the author by a number of scholars made this study of the 1934 Pact possible. In particular, credit ought to be extended to Dr. Chrypinski and Dr. Soderlund who throughout this project aided the author by offering timely suggestions and by rendering invaluable assistance in the general framework of the paper. The author also wishes to thank Dr. Mouratides for his constructive criticisms especially regarding the historical element of the thesis. Despite the above mentioned assistance, the possibility of shortcomings in the work could not be entirely eliminated. For this aspect, the author takes the sole responsibility.

## CHAPTER I

### INTERPRETATIONS OF THE PACT

Various interpretations of the 1934 Pact have emerged during the last thirty years. The chief defenders of the Pact are Waclaw Jedrzejewicz<sup>1</sup> and Anna Cienciala<sup>2</sup> who argue that Poland was basically compelled to alter her foreign policy strategy because of the appeasement policy of the Western Powers. Within the context of this policy, the authors point to the Locarno Treaties of 1925 and continue to cite evidence culminating with the withdrawal of Hitler from the Disarmament Conferences in October of 1933. Flexibility in the strategy of the Western European powers towards Germany exposed the eastern and central-eastern states of Europe to German revisionism. At the same time, they contend that the only other course left open which would have continued Poland's anti-German stance was an alliance with the Soviet Union. They maintain, however, that this alternative was not realistic since an alliance with the Soviets would have reduced Poland to a satellite status. In addition, such an alliance would have invited a Soviet invasion of Poland under the pretext of halting Nazi imperialism.

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<sup>1</sup>Jedrzejewicz, "The Polish Plan For a 'Preventive War' Against Germany in 1933" The Polish Review, vol XI, no 1, (Winter, 1966), pp. 62-91.

<sup>2</sup>Cienciala, Anna, "The Significance of the Declaration of Non-Aggression of January 26, 1934 in Polish-German and International Relations", East European Quarterly, vol I, no 1, (March, 1967) pp. 1-30.

Having lost the element of security which was previously provided by France and having realized that it was impossible to transform the League into an effective weapon of the Versailles treaty system, it is Cienciala's and Jedrzejewicz's belief that Marshal Pilsudski had no other alternative but to reach an understanding with Berlin. Furthermore, it is their contention that Pilsudski left the door open for a possible change of attitude on the part of the League 'establishment' (the Western powers and their supporters). They maintain that the Polish government remained loyal to its responsibilities to the international order and the French alliance. In other words, they argue that Poland had no intention of appeasing Hitler by evading her obligations to the League in the event of a German violation of the Treaty of Versailles.

Those who have criticized the Pact fall into two categories. The first group are those Western analysts who regard the Pact as a step towards appeasement and a betrayal of the ideals of the League. Hugh Seton-Watson believes that the Pact made the Polish Foreign Minister, Joseph Beck a tool of German imperialism and that it "marked the beginning of a German-Polish collaboration in an aggressive policy in Eastern Europe".<sup>3</sup> According to Seton-Watson, the aim of this policy was "the destruction of Czechoslovakia and the

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<sup>3</sup>Seton-Watson, Hugh, Eastern Europe Between the Wars 1918-1941, London: Archon Books, p. 387.



deflection of German expansion towards the southeast".<sup>4</sup> Arguing along different lines, A.J.P. Taylor maintains that the Pact contributed to the "crumbling of the system of security".<sup>5</sup> Josef Korbelt is of the opinion that the Pact weakened the peace system within the framework of the League of Nations. He also believes that it undermined the French network of alliances.<sup>6</sup> In conjunction with this, Zygmunt Gasiorowski asserts that the timing of the Pact encouraged Hitler to disregard Section V of the Treaty of Versailles relating to the limitations of German armaments and accelerated the rebuilding of the Reichswehr.<sup>7</sup>

The second group of scholars who have criticized the Pact are those who have written in present-day Communist Poland. Tadeusz Kuzminski's book Polska, Francja, Niemcy, 1933-1935. (Poland, France, Germany, 1933-1935), although it places the major responsibility for the foreign policy successes of Hitler on the Western Powers, it does portion out part of the blame on Pilsudski. Kuzminski examined the post-1926 French policy towards Germany and concluded that:

"In the light of contemporary knowledge of the subject...there is no doubt that Locarno

<sup>4</sup>Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 387.

<sup>5</sup>Cienciala, op. cit., p. 3

<sup>6</sup>Korbelt, Josef, Poland Between East and West, Soviet and German Diplomacy toward Poland 1919-1933, 1963, p. 278, 293-4.

<sup>7</sup>Gasiorowski, Zygmunt, "The Polish-German Non-Aggression Pact of 1934", Journal of Central European Affairs, vol. 15, no. 1 (April 1955), p. 20.

[the initiation of this policy] put the newly created Polish state in a very unfortunate situation".<sup>8</sup>

He cited the internal political division in France<sup>9</sup> and the military unpreparedness of the French army<sup>10</sup> as causes of French unreliability. In addition, he argued that if the Four Power Pact were put into effect, it would have turned German ambitions away from western and southern Europe and towards eastern Europe.<sup>11</sup> He contended that the Polish-German Non-Aggression Pact redirected German territorial ambitions southward towards Austria and the Sudetenland and stressed the approval of the semi-official "Gazeta Polska"'s of the Anschluss idea. In conclusion he maintains that Hitler succeeded in breaking "the strong chain of the countries defending the Versailles system",<sup>12</sup> by convincing the Poles to reach a detente with him.

Two other Communist authors have made studies in this area. One of them is Marian Wojciechowski who in his book, Stosunki Polsko-Niemieckie (Polish-German Relations) 1933-1938 examined what he views as the security dilemma, citing "the equivocal stance of France on the question of

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<sup>8</sup>Kuzminski, Tadeusz, Polska, Francja, Niemcy (Poland, France, Germany) 1933-1935, Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, p. 19.

<sup>9</sup>Kuzminski, op. cit., p. 64.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 72-3.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 153.

the Polish-German border dating from Locarno, violating the Versailles system and also the overall effect of the fall of the prestige of the League of Nations".<sup>13</sup> However, he accused Pilsudski of naivete in that the Polish dictator believed that Hitler was less of a danger to Polish interests than the Weimar politicians. In his opinion, part of the reason for this, was Pilsudski's view that Hitler would need a long time to consolidate his power in Germany.<sup>14</sup> To criticize the Polish dictator for miscalculating the time-factor required for Hitler to establish firm control of Germany does seem an unwarranted criticism, since such criticism is done from the vantage-point of hindsight. In point of fact, few people in Europe could predict, if at all, the future political developments in Germany.

The major reason--for Wojciechowski--was Pilsudski's admiration for Hitler's authoritarian methods and their common hatred for Communism.<sup>15</sup> These factors, so the argument runs, blinded the Polish dictator to the danger of Hitler's imperialist ambitions in eastern Europe. They also prevented him from seriously considering an anti-Nazi alliance with the Soviets. This association, in Wojciechowski's opinion, would have solved Poland's security problem.

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<sup>13</sup>Wojciechowski, Marian, Stosunki Polsko-Niemieckie 1933-1938 (Polish-German Relations 1933-1938, Poznan: Instytut Zachodni, (The Western Institute), p. 116.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

Unclearly related to the problem of security is the author's thesis that the Pact was integrally linked to a planned politico-military cooperation between Poland and Germany against the Soviet Union. What remains ambiguous is how Poland's search for security vis-a-vis Germany is connected with her alleged desire to work closely with that state. Either Pilsudski regarded Germany as a mortal enemy or he viewed her as a potential ally. In the latter case, a Soviet alliance predicated upon a fear of Germany can be discounted. Also one must assume, if this argument were valid, that Pilsudski was willing to transfer parts of western Poland to Hitler.

Indeed, this is what Wojciechowski claims, when he presented evidence that the Polish military elite saw their country's future in the east (i.e.), in such areas as Lithuania, Belorussia and the Ukraine.<sup>16</sup> As further evidence, he quoted a discussion on this topic between Pilsudski and the Nazi President of the Danzig Senate, Hermann Rauschning.

"I had a long personal talk with Pilsudski... In this talk, the deductions of the Marshall indicated that he believed that a war with the USSR was inevitable, equally a conflict of Poland and Russia also Germany and Russia. This was a clear allusion to a military alliance and a eventual common action which would have opened up an entirely new situation for the solving of contentuous Polish-

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

German problems, specifically the matter of frontiers".<sup>17</sup>

What in fact Rauschning was alluding<sup>\*</sup> to was a Polish-German alliance which would be preceded by the transfer of certain Polish western territories to Germany. This would be followed by Hitler's support of a Polish war against Russia and the annexation of parts of Soviet Byelorussia and Ukraine to the Polish state. It is interesting however, that in an earlier account<sup>18</sup> of this meeting, Rauschning did not make the above inferences. Also no mention of Pilsudski's desire for an anti Russian front with Hitler can be found in the diplomatic papers of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw, in the memoirs of Polish or German statesmen and diplomats, or in the Documents for German Foreign Policy which were published by a joint British and American committee after World War II. In the same book, Rauschning made a further reference to the Ukrainian question as applied to Polish-German relations: "at my first official visit to

\*Wojciechowski thinks that the reason for the latter version of the meeting may have been the desire on Rauschning's part to show that if not for Hitler, an exchange of territories with Poland might have taken place and events would have taken a different course.

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 92. The German title of the book is Das Deutsche Reich und Polen 1932-1937. Aussenpolitik und Volksgruppen-Fragen. This particular account of the conversation is not found in Rauschning's own earlier account of the same discussion in his book The Revolution of Nihilism, New York: Longman, Green and Company, 1939.

<sup>18</sup>Rauschning, Hermann, The Revolution of Nihilism, New York: Longman and Green and Company, 1939.

Warsaw in July 1933, I was asked by the Polish officials to use my influence to prevent the public discussion of such stupid ideas as those of Rosenberg on the Ukraine."<sup>19</sup>

Karol Lapter in his book Pakt Pilsudski-Hitler recognized the importance of Western appeasement on Poland's decision-makers but went on to state that the only practical alternative left open to Poland was to ally herself with the Soviet Union.\* In his opinion, Pilsudski did not do so because he feared the spread of Communism and the strengthening of Ukrainian nationalism in south-eastern Poland.<sup>20</sup> In addition, Lapter claimed that, at the signing of the Pact, Germany received from Poland an implicit promise to remain neutral in case of a German attack on a third party other than France.<sup>21</sup>

In summing up the effects of the Pact, Lapter stated that it gave Hitler the argument that German rearmament was only directed against Bolshevist Russia and that it broke the moral-political isolation which Germany imposed on herself after her withdrawal from the League in October 1933. He believed that it destroyed the chances for a league of eastern European states against Germany such as Poland and

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<sup>19</sup>Rauschnig, op. cit., p. 242.

<sup>20</sup>Lapter, Karol, Pakt Pilsudski-Hitler, Warsaw: Ksiazka i Wiedza, p. 104.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 198.

\*Wojciechowski implicitly expressed this opinion also when he suggested that Pilsudski was unwise to reject a Polish-Russian alliance in opposition to Hitler.

the Little Entente or an alliance between Poland and Czechoslovakia.<sup>22</sup> The author failed to evaluate the potential strength of such an alliance in opposition to Germany. He believed that the Pact weakened the Polish-French alliance. Yet even after the Pact, the Poles were still interested in cooperating effectively against German aggression with their French ally. This can be shown in the Rambouillet agreement of 1936 which was an attempt on the part of the Poles to reactivate the French promise of the secret military convention of 1921 to immediately come to their aid in case of a German attack. Lapter maintained that the pact promised that Poland would not join in any collective security effort against Germany.<sup>23</sup> In this sense, he maintained that the signing of the Pact was the first break in the French cordon sanitaire.<sup>24</sup>

In attempting to obtain a balanced view of the Pact, one needs to probe into the minds of Pilsudski and his advisors as revealed in the various (documentary and secondary) sources published since the end of World War II. The reader must understand that the Warsaw authorities in conducting their duties in behalf of the Polish state operated on one basic concept - preservation of national security. This goal could have been attained theoretically in three ways:

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 200.

(1) security through France and the League; (2) security by means of an alliance with the Soviets; or (3) a detente with Hitler. It is the contention of this thesis that by the middle of 1933 the first option was no longer tenable. The second in practice was unrealistic since, as mentioned above, it could only have led to a Soviet invasion of Poland under the smoke-screen of international obligations. Therefore, the third option seemed to the Polish authorities as the only practical alternative. Although that third option did not completely solve Poland's dilemma it did alleviate the situation to a certain extent.



## CHAPTER II

### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF POLAND THE LEAGUE

In addition to giving birth to the League of Nations, the Versailles Treaty significantly aided in the re-establishment of the Polish state. Thus, the very rebirth of Poland which was accomplished partly at the expense of Germany stimulated within the German psyche, a hatred for the Poles and significantly contributed to German hostility towards the Versailles Treaty system.

Crucial to understanding German-Polish hostility is the question of the rebirth of the Polish state after World War I. In point of fact, Poland was formed out of the Polish-speaking areas of the former empires of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia. The re-establishment of the Polish state after a 150 year interval occurred largely due to the collapse of the Hohenzollern and Romanov dynasties of Germany and Russia.

During World War I, the Polish question reemerged into public discussion inside the councils of the Allies. This was partly the result of a successful propaganda campaign conducted by the Polish National Committee which based its operations in Paris. The establishment of the Committee in that city was decided upon because it was the centre of Allied decision-making and after the war it served as the focal point for the victorious powers who were conferring at the conference in Versailles. The site of Paris, therefore, provided them with ample opportunities for behind the scenes contacts

with the leaders or emissaries of the victorious powers. The Committee was dominated by men who expressed the views of Polish National Democracy. Among those who figured prominently in the Committee was the noted pianist and future Prime Minister Ignacy Paderewski and the chief theoretician of Polish National Democracy, Roman Dmowski.

The most arduous task of the members of the Committee was to impress on the Entente leaders the necessity of creating an independent Polish state. Such a task presupposed the utilization of all broad Entente peace policies, in particular those of the U.S.A., for Polish aims. American insistence on retaining the independence of action, the rejection of the secret agreements and treaties of France and Britain, the refusal to be committed to the restoration of the status quo and finally the liberal stand towards the question of nationalities in Europe provided the Polish national leaders with ideal political weapons to further the cause of an independent Poland. The personal contacts of Paderewski and Wilson on a number of occasions, apparently convinced Wilson of the necessity and feasibility of creating a new Polish state. A new state in eastern Europe, Poland, would have rectified the inconsistencies and weaknesses in the old balance of power system which could not maintain peace, sustain the weak and defenseless and could only start wars. The system visualized by Wilson would promote peace and the happiness of man. A Polish state would become instrumental in the creation of a new international order and stability. Although

he had declared in general terms of the right of nationalities to self-determination<sup>1</sup> in the case of the Poles that right was clearly spelled out in his 13th Point.

"An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant."<sup>2</sup>

The idea found expression in a communique issued jointly by the Allied and Associated Governments on June 3, 1918. In addition, Poland was recognized by the Allies on June 3, 1918 as "an allied belligerent nation".<sup>3</sup>

On October 7, 1918, the Regency Council, the executive of the puppet state of Poland created by the Central Powers for the purpose of winning the Poles over to their cause, proclaimed Poland's independence and claimed jurisdiction

<sup>1</sup>Bartlett, R.J. (ed.), The Record of American Diplomacy, New York: A.A. Knopf, pp. 453-4. Wilson's address to the Senate, January 22, 1917, and his War Message to Congress, January 8, 1918 "... no right anywhere exists to hand peoples about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were property. ...the world [must] be made safe for every peace loving nation which ... wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions. ...the nations should with one accord adopt the doctrine of President Monroe as the doctrine of the world; that no nation should seek to extend its polity over any other nation or people but that every people should be left free to determine its own policy, its own way of development, unhindered, unafraid, the little along with the great and powerful".

<sup>2</sup>Reddaway, W.F. editor, The Cambridge History of Poland, vol. II, Cambridge: at the University Press, p. 488.

<sup>3</sup>Halecki, Oscar, A History of Poland, London: J.M. Dent and Sons, p. 279.

over all of the ethnically Polish areas occupied by the German armies.<sup>4</sup> A month later the Germans capitulated and this led to the liberation of Joseph Pilsudski from his internment at Magdeburg and his return to Warsaw on November 10. Pilsudski, by that time, had acquired the reputation of a national hero, due to his active role, before 1914, in the Polish Socialist Party, which was a leading force in the drive for Polish independence. Equally important, however, was his formation of the Polish Legions in the early stages of the war. The Legions formed the nucleus of the new Polish army in 1918.

The Regency Council submitted its resignation in November of 1918 and invited Pilsudski to assume the position of Chief of State. After a compromise with the Polish National Committee in Paris, a new government was constructed in which Pilsudski remained as Chief of State and a cabinet was created with Paderewski as its Prime Minister. Dmowski was designated as chief Polish negotiator at the Versailles Conference.<sup>5</sup>

The initial territorial demands advanced by Dmowski called for the incorporation of Upper Silesia, Teschen, Posnania, Eastern Pomerania, Danzig and southern East Prussia into the new Polish state. The Allied Commission on Poland agreed that these areas, with the exception of Teschen,

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 278.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 280.

ought to be turned over to the Poles. These proposals, however, were opposed by the Germans and the British Prime Minister David Lloyd-George. The final territorial decision entailed the automatic transfer only of the provinces of Poznan and Eastern Pomerania, and the institution of plebiscites in Upper Silesia and in southern East Prussia. The city of Danzig was to be incorporated as a Free City under the protection of Poland and the League of Nations.<sup>6</sup>

The Upper Silesia dispute proved to be complicated and bitter. During the course of the struggle, there were three Polish revolts, a plebiscite, and a seemingly endless diplomatic quagmire in which Poland, Germany, France, Britain and Italy were all involved, the last three having been appointed by the League to serve as mediators. The choice proved to be unfortunate since state considerations and the sympathies of the mediating powers complicated the already tense situation. The French tended to favour the Poles, while the British and Italians sided with the Germans.<sup>7</sup>

The results of the plebiscite (March 20, 1921) gave no clear result. The Poles gained the majority of the rural districts, while the Germans won predominately in the towns. The situation was further confused because in the eastern districts, the majority which the Poles received, was not

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<sup>6</sup>Debicki, Roman, The Foreign Policy of Poland 1919-1920, London: Pall Mall Press, pp. 19-22. A more extensive treatment of these deliberations is found in these pages.

<sup>7</sup>Halecki, op. cit., pp. 288-9.

overwhelmingly great, while in the western districts, the Poles had a large majority.<sup>8</sup> Eventually, an agreement was reached, by which Germany received 75% of the land and 57% of the population. Poland, on the other hand, obtained the area which contained the bulk of the industrial works, mines and factories.<sup>9</sup> A long and intricate convention on Upper Silesia was signed by both Germany and Poland. It stipulated that there would be a mutual exchange of commodities over a fifteen year period and the railway system would continue to be unified. There were regulations for the joint use of water supply systems and electrical power systems as well as a homogeneous system of unions of employers and workers. There would be free passage of workers between countries. Poland agreed to surrender her right to confiscate one third of the large German estates and the large industrial plants after a span of fifteen years. A Mixed Commission was set up for the purpose of settling disputes in Katowice and a Tribunal of Arbitration was established in Bytom under neutral presidents appointed by the League.<sup>10</sup>

Upper Silesia was voted in by the Polish Parliament on July 15, 1920 as a separate province (voivodeship) having its own legislature and enjoying, a degree of autonomy unlike the other provinces.<sup>11</sup> This autonomy stemmed from Poland's

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<sup>8</sup>Reddaway, op. cit., p. 516.

<sup>9</sup>Debicki, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>10</sup>Reddaway (ed.), op. cit., p. 519.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 515.

membership in the Minorities Treaties. The Treaties were also designed to protect the rights of the Germans in Eastern Pomerania as well as other minority groups in the country.

Initial Polish reaction to the Minorities Treaties was hostile. Poland felt, as did the other nations with large minorities that these treaties infringed upon the sovereignty of the state which was regarded as absolute and unrestricted. Prime Minister Paderewski in stating this objection went on to demand the right of the sovereign state to pursue the ideal of a racially and culturally homogenized citizenry by means of denationalizing and assimilating the various minority groups within the confines of the state. He thus expressed his opposition to the very concept of the Minorities Treaties which was to preserve and to protect within the international community the identity and well-being of minority groups. In addition, Poland and the other minority states objected to the exemption of Germany and Italy from the Minorities Treaties. They felt that these treaties were a stigma of moral inferiority fastened upon them by the Big Powers since the implication was that they would be the most likely oppressors of minorities.<sup>12</sup> As an alternative, they insisted on the universal or general application of the Minorities Treaties system. However, this did not come about. The result, in the opinion of Inis Claude, was that

"the international protection of national minorities was not accepted as a fundamental principle of international law, applicable to

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<sup>12</sup>Claude Inis L., National Minorities: An International Problem, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, pp. 31-2

great as well as to small powers... It was treated as a mere expedient to be adopted with discriminatory effect not as an expression of a universally valid normative approach to problems of human relations".<sup>13</sup>

Regardless of Poland's objections to these treaties, she was compelled to sign the treaties principally because she relied heavily on French support in the councils of the Versailles Conference. As a party to these treaties, therefore, Poland promised to institute freedom of transit to Germans and to protect the rights of those Germans engaged in commerce in Upper Silesia and to those Germans who were using Pomerania as a transit from Germany to East Prussia. The rights of the minorities were guaranteed by the constitution which stated that the Polish state intended "to protect the interests of the inhabitants of Poland who differ from the majority of the population in race, language, or religion".<sup>14</sup> The national minorities were entitled to use their languages in the public press, at public meetings and in the court system. They were free to establish their own charitable, educational and religious institutions with the full use of their own languages and religion. Large minority enclaves were entitled to use, for legal and educational purposes, their own language provided that Polish be made compulsory as a second language. In such a situation, that minority would be entitled to receive their fair share

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 35-6

<sup>14</sup>Reddaway (ed.), op. cit., p. 505.



of any educational or social subsidy by the state. The Minorities Treaties stipulated that any member of the League Council was entitled to bring up a matter touching upon these treaties and a dispute as to law or fact would be finally decided by the International Court at the Hague.<sup>15</sup>

The plebiscite which was held on July 11, 1920 in East Prussia took place during the Battle of Warsaw when the Red armies were at the gates of the city after completing a successful push westward from the Dnieper River. At the time, it was felt that the Bolsheviks would reestablish Russian control over Poland.

Under these conditions the Polish populations, who according to the Prussian census of 1911 constituted a distinct majority in the southern part of East Prussia, decided that they would rather vote for a non-communist Germany than face the possibility of joining their fellow nationals in a Soviet-dominated Poland. As a result, Poland gained only a few villages and a scanty strip of land along the right bank of the Vistula River, but lost the possibility of possessing the railway line which forms the shortest link between Warsaw and Danzig.<sup>16</sup>

The transfer of the provinces of Western Pomerania and Poznanian as well as 3,000 square miles of Upper Silesia was highly significant for Poland in that after 150 years

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 508.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 515.

the Poles were able to live together, politically united, under their own freely chosen leaders. For Germany, however, this was a moment of the deepest national humiliation. It was felt to have been the result of an unsuccessful war, an unjust price exacted by a merciless and vengeful enemy. Germany lost the major industrial area of Upper Silesia and was cut into two separate parts by the creation of the "Polish Corridor" separating Germany proper from East Prussia. All of Germany's political parties refused to recognize the loss of these territories as a permanent reality in the political framework of Europe's new international order. In particular, for the Prussian aristocracy, which still played a powerful role in the Reichswehr (in the person of its Commander Hans von Seeckt) and in the economic life of the country, this loss was especially painful. Brought up to regard the Poles as a rather inferior caste of people, the Prussian 'Junkers' of Wilhelmine Germany viewed the lands east of the Oder-Neisse rivers as potential areas of colonization and Germanization. That this process was to be reversed due to the 'accidental' fortunes of war, seemed to them incomprehensible. The crusading spirit of 'Drang nach Osten' which from 1870 on, formed part of the Bismarckian beliefs in national reunification and national greatness, permeated into the psyche of the German people as a whole, and called for the revision of existing boundaries.

German territorial revisionism can be observed most clearly in the pronouncements of its leaders. Eric Eyck

commented that Gustav Stresemann, the most influential German statesman in the Weimar Republic

"bore toward the Poles an aversion composed of hatred and contempt. That Germans should rule over Poles appeared to him just and normal but that Poles should rule over Germans - perverse. Putting an end to this state of perversion appeared to him most fervently desirable".<sup>17</sup>

In the opinion of von Seeckt,

"Poland's existance is intolerable and incompatible with the vital needs of Germany. She must disappear and disappear she will, through her own inner weakness and through Russia's action with our help".<sup>18</sup>

After the Locarno Conference of 1925, both Stresemann and Seeckt maintained their position concerning the Polish-German border. Seeckt in a cabinet meeting on June 24, 1925 stated "We must regain our power and as soon as we do, we naturally will take back everything we lost".<sup>19</sup> Stresemann, in a letter to the former Crown Prince Wilhelm outlined the three great tasks of German foreign policy. The first was the question of reparations which was "in a sense tolerable for Germany". The other two were related to the question of Polish-German relations. The second task was "the protection of Germans abroad, those ten to twelve millions of our kindred who live under a foreign yoke in foreign lands". And lastly,

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<sup>17</sup>Gasiorowski, Zygmunt, "Stresemann and Poland Before Locarno", Journal of Central European Affairs, vol. 18, no. 1 (April, 1958), p. 26.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

"the re-adjustment of our Eastern frontiers; the recovery of Danzig, the Polish corridor and a correction of the frontier in Upper Silesia".<sup>20</sup> Later, on another occasion, the Polish question figured on the top of his list "...the solution to this question [of the German-Polish frontiers] is not only the most important task of our policy, but perhaps the most important of European policy in general".<sup>21</sup> Hence, throughout the 1920's what actually occurred was the clashing of two strains of European nationalism, both regarding the issues at stake as vital to the core of their interests, resulting in an unflinchingly uncompromising stance in their relations with each other.

To protect her interests, Poland became a supporter of the League of Nations. The establishment of the League, after the First World War, signified for many, the creation of a new international order of peace, security and justice for all member states. The desire to create an international organization such as the League was to a large degree motivated by a desire to change the rules of international politics. The purpose in the minds of the League of Nations Society (which had its main adherents in Britain and the United States) was to prevent the repetition of wars and the secret diplomacy

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<sup>20</sup>Sutton, Eric, editor, and translator, Gustav Stresemann, His Diaries, Letters and Papers, vol. II, London: MacMillan, p. 503.

<sup>21</sup>Gasiorowski, Zygmunt, "Stresemann and Poland Before Locarno", Journal of Central European Affairs, vol. 18, no. 3, (October, 1958), p. 299.

of the alliance-system of pre-1914 Europe which in their opinion, inevitably led to the outbreak of World War I. An additional purpose was to prevent the practice of sacrificing the interests of smaller nations in order to preserve the balance system and to prevent the outbreak of war.

Supporters of the League of Nations Society proceeded to demand the dissolution of the alliance system and its substitution by an organization which would be composed of all independent states which would be recognized as independent by the international community. The organization's members would be dedicated to the idea of fair play and justice for all members and the resolution of disputes through methods of conciliation and arbitration. War between states would be regarded as a violation of the spirit of the international community.

In contrast to the balance system, no state in that community would be regarded as a potential transgressor. In the event of an aggression, the transgressor would have to be labelled as such by the organization after a thorough examination of the crisis at hand. Some advocates for a league of nations favoured conciliation procedures to handle such a situation while others leaned towards the immediate application of sanctions in defence of the aggrieved party. Despite this difference in tactics, League advocates shared the common view that an aggression committed against one member was an aggression committed against all. Each state regardless of its size and power would be fully entitled to

receive aid from the organization since every member would be pledged to defend the territorial integrity and independence of its fellow members.

The original concepts of the League of Nations Society were adopted by the French and fitted into the general framework of their foreign policy. The war with Germany devastated much of that country. The millions of casualties inflicted upon her soldiers and civilian population impressed upon the minds of her statesmen that this type of total war must at all costs be forever avoided. For this reason, France was determined to maintain her new found preponderance over Germany. She sensed, however, that her dominant position at the end of the war was merely a temporary phase since the population of Germany and the potential industrial and military expansion exceeded her own. Her strategy therefore was to artificially stunt Germany's growth giving France her allies time to catch up and even surpass Germany and thus preserve the peace and security of Europe for some time to come. France was well aware that a great percentage of the German people resented the military defeat and the loss of territories and aspired to a return of the status quo ante bellum. The fear of a German revenge dominated French foreign policy particularly during the deliberations at Versailles over the proposed peace treaty and the establishment of a League of Nations.

The concept for a league was first introduced at Versailles by President Wilson. The initial reaction of the

French government to Wilson's proposals was cool. However, gradually the dominant groups in power at that time (i.e. The French Right) came to believe that a league of nations could be molded in such a way as to become an integral part of the French system of security. For France, the League would be an extension of the war-time alliance. This was achieved mainly by the inclusion of the League Covenant in the Treaty of Versailles. This meant that the League being legally tied to the Treaty was made into an instrument for the preservation of the Versailles Treaty system.

The effect of this was that the collective security system was linked to a particular international order which was established by the victorious powers. The collective security system after it became a tool of the "vested interests" lost that element of impartiality which would have treated

the demands of all of its members on an equal plane. In a sense therefore some of the members were more equal than others. It became evident that the treaties could not be freely and easily altered whenever a situation arose where a change was desirable. Article 19 which dealt with treaty revision required universal acceptance of any proposed change including the assent of the affected parties. The obvious impracticality of ever successfully utilizing this article became clear to many analysts that the framers of the Covenant were in essence opposed to treaty revision and desired the preservation of the Versailles status quo.

The maintenance of this status quo by means of the

League meant also that that institution was designed to check a possible German transgression against the treaty system. It also signified that since Germany was not initially allowed to become a member of the organization, she was regarded as an outsider with potential aggressive tendencies. This had important implications for the theory of collective security. The effect was that the League seemed to be created for the expressed purpose of opposing a given and defined aggressor before that country actually committed any sort of transgression. Germany was not viewed as a full-fledged member of the international community; there was no feeling that she was "one of us", rather, she was treated basically as an outsider and a condemned outcast. For this reason, the League was transformed from a true collective security organization into an alliance of the victorious states against the defeated.

In order to strengthen this particular instrument of the new international order, the French delegates at Versailles vigorously labored for an effective collective security system with the emphasis on the immediate application of military sanctions in the event of a transgression against the treaties. One of the plans envisaged by France for this purpose was the one proposed by Leon Bourgeois which called for the creation of an international military staff responsible to the League. This staff would be empowered to train and in wartime command a League force or a force consisting of national contingents. The latter alternative was more



decentralized and it would have made each state promise to earmark a particular segment of its armed forces for League use.

The British and the Americans were opposed to this idea because they placed their emphasis of collective security on conciliation and arbitration procedures. Above all, they objected to the harsh stipulations of the Treaty which were imposed upon Germany and viewed the Bourgeois plan as an integral part of that policy. They also disapproved of the concept of a "super-state" controlling part of their national armed forces and of the French plans to have Marshal Foch as the commander of such a force.

After a great deal of deliberation, the French reluctantly agreed to a much more watered down version of their idea of collective security. In effect, this meant that the "Anglo-Saxon" interpretation of the dispute at hand (conciliation vs. sanctions) was accepted by the delegates at Versailles. As far as the application of the sanctions principle was concerned, Article 10 of the Covenant made the signatories swear "to respect and preserve as against aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all members of the League".<sup>22</sup> Article 16 made the members break off financial and economic relations with the aggressor. Military action depended upon a recommendation of the League Council which required unanimity.

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<sup>22</sup>Zimmern, Alfred, The League of Nations and the Rule of Law 1918-1935, London: MacMillan, p. 515.

Even in this case, members were free to decide whether to send military units in the service of the League in order to quell an aggressor.<sup>23</sup> This rather loose application of the concept of collective security in later years was to harm the reputation of the League in the resolution of critical disputes.

However, it is to be noted that all those states which had become members, were theoretically responsible for the security of small and weak states such as Poland. That international morality, as manifested in the League Covenant, recognized Poland's right to exist as an independent entity and acted as a guardian of its territorial integrity, was for public opinion in Poland a significant morale booster.<sup>24</sup> This, one must bear in mind, was largely due to the fact that the Poles were surrounded by potentially hostile neighbours, each with defined territorial claims against them.

Much to the dismay of League supporters [in Europe], the United States refused to become a member of that organization. This fact weakened the effectiveness of the League and placed the main responsibility for its operation on the shoulders of the French and British. It was felt that the full cooperation of these two in the service of the League was the conditio sine qua non for

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 520.

<sup>24</sup>Walters, F.P., A History of the League of Nations vol. I, Oxford University Press, p. 304.

the success of that organization particularly on the European continent. Within this context, in the eyes of the French, the success of the League in the realm of international peace and security depended on two factors. One was the effective application of Articles 10 and 16 i.e. the ability of the members of the League to deal with aggressors. The other factor was the maintenance of the post-war territorial arrangements.

It was precisely these arrangements which were singled out as the chief or at least one of the chief targets by those states which opposed the Treaty of Versailles. These powers which were labeled as "revisionist" included the defeated states of Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria as well as Italy. Those countries in eastern Europe which defended the Versailles Treaty were the so-called "successor" states such as Poland, Rumania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. These states regarded the possibility of revision under Article 19 as something hardly to be desired and they felt assured of the fact that this article required unanimity in any agreement over territorial rectifications. As creatures of the Versailles and Trianon<sup>25</sup> settlements, they became advocates of the treaty system. Hence, they wished to transform the League into an effective guarantor of the

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<sup>25</sup>Due to the Trianon Treaty (June 4, 1920), Hungary lost Transylvania to Rumania, Slovakia to Czechoslovakia and Croatia-Slavonia to Yugoslavia. As a result, Hungary lost (approx.) 68% of her pre-war territorial possessions.

post-war agreements and a defender of the status quo particularly as applied to territories.

This meant that they favoured the French position that the sanctions instrument ought to be strengthened. Their support for the various French attempts to create a more effective sanctions system during the first half of the 1920's was part of this strategy. Needless to say, the support which the Polish government gave to the League in the inter-war era was dependent principally upon the role of the League as a potential anti-German instrument. The Poles felt that in case of a German threat to their territorial integrity, the League could be used as a last resort if and when other methods would fail.

In order that the League could be molded into a weapon of the Versailles Treaty system, it was necessary that the chief supporters of that organization view German territorial revisionism as a threat to the principles of that institution, particularly when applied to Berlin's claims against Poland and Czechoslovakia, i.e. Poland's western provinces and the Sudetenland. If Britain and France would deny the legality of Germany's revisionist claims, there could still be hope that in the case of German aggression, sanctions could be used against her.<sup>26</sup> It was also assumed that the chief power which would support such a policy would be France. For this reason, it is useful

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<sup>26</sup>Walters, op. cit., p. 62 concerning the Bourgeois Plan.

to examine the role of France in the post-war order which was established at Versailles.

The course of French policy up to and after the Locarno Conference of 1925 became highly important for the decision-makers of Polish foreign policy. Linked together in a military alliance, the French and the Poles shared a common fear of Germany. The Poles regarded France as the one great power which they could rely on in the case of a German threat. Hence, they were extremely sensitive whenever they suspected the French of 'appeasing' the Germans in matters which were vital to Polish national security and well-being.

For the Poles who looked to France as the chief agent to mold the League into an instrument of the Versailles Treaty system, the attitudes of that country on the major problems of the day were of crucial importance. So long as France remained the prime defender of the peace treaties, Poland could have a reasonable degree of security vis-a-vis her western neighbour. As long as France worked to uphold the interests of her eastern allies and strove to strengthen the sanctions instrument of the League, Poland could be found in the forefront as a supporter of French foreign policy, both inside and outside the League. In other words, so long as France pursued a policy congenial to the national interests of Poland, she could always find ready support in the Polish capital. However, once France, initially regarded as the prime defender of the territorial arrangements

of the peace treaties and the purposes of the League, as applied to east-central Europe, initiated a policy which in effect undermined the very basis of the Versailles settlement, she compromised not only her own national interests and that of her Polish ally but also the international order of which the League was its instrument of preservation.

During the Versailles Conference, the French managed to bring about a number of changes in the political framework of Europe so as to temporarily, shift the scales in the distribution of power on the continent. She aided in the construction of such states as Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia. Germany according to Section V of the Versailles Treaty was to be permanently under armament limitation regulations and was exacted a heavy reparations burden. As mentioned above, she lost the provinces of Eastern Pomerania, Danzig, Poznanian and the industrially rich section of Upper Silesia to Poland as well as Malmedy and Eupen to Belgium, Schleswig to Denmark and Alsace-Lorraine to France. She was forbidden to unite with Germanophone Austria. France sought to incorporate the Rhineland but instead it was decided that this militarily strategic area was to be occupied by League forces for fifteen years. After that period, the area, would be permanently demilitarized. France, being unsuccessful in severing the Rhineland forever from Germany, was promised a military alliance by the Americans and the British. This promise later was unfulfilled due to the return of the U.S.A. to isolation and her disengagement from European affairs.

### CHAPTER III

#### FRENCH REVISIONISM: ITS CAUSES AND THE EFFECT ON THE POLISH-FRENCH ALLIANCE

The problem of security was not solved for the French at Versailles. After failing to create an effective sanctions program in the League and to make the Rhine frontier secure from invasion and after unsuccessful attempts to obtain military guarantees against Germany from the U.S.A. and Britain, she turned to the traditional form of statecraft - the alliance system.<sup>1</sup> In 1921, she concluded with Poland an alliance within which there was contained a secret military protocol which envisaged immediate aid in the case of a German invasion against either of the two signatories. German aggression was defined in Article I of the military convention as "starting from a territory dependent on the German Government".<sup>2</sup> In the case of a Russo-Polish war, the French promised to keep Germany in check on land and sea and to aid the Poles by keeping open the lines of communications in the Baltic. The protocol did not involve the dispatching of French troops to Poland. The French promised to float a 400 million franc loan to Poland and to assist the Polish war industry. There was to be cooperation between the general staffs and a French military mission

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<sup>1</sup>Jedrzejewicz's Waclaw(ed.), Diplomat in Berlin 1933-1939, New York: Columbia University Press, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Wandycz, Piotr, France and Her Eastern Allies 1919-1925, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 217.

would be stationed in Poland to aid in the improvement of the Polish army. The French promised to consult their Polish ally before concluding any agreements pertaining to east-central Europe.<sup>3</sup> The French also concluded similar agreements with Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Yugoslavia thus establishing a ring of hostile states around Germany - the famous "cordon sanitaire". These agreements, though providing a sense of security for these eastern states, did not completely solve the security dilemma for the French policy makers. They continued to seek British and American guarantees under the guise of international agreements under League auspices,

During the first half of the 1920's, the French constantly emphasized their concern with the question of national security particularly during discussions relating to the problem of disarmament. The British felt themselves morally obligated to reach some sort of agreement whereby disarmament could be reached. This was partly due to the insistence of the Germans who pointed to the Versailles Treaty which mentioned that German disarmament would be immediately followed by a general disarmament program. The French insisted, however, that their problem of security against aggression ought to be solved before they could feel safe enough to initiate a dismantling of their armed forces. This attitude was evident beginning with the naval conference held in Washington in 1921 when they refused to consider limitations

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<sup>3</sup>Wandycz, op. cit., p. 217.



of land forces and submarines because the British and Americans were unwilling to offer as a substitute, specific armed guarantees in case of aggression.<sup>4</sup>

The French reaction to the British plan of Lord Esher followed a similar pattern. This plan envisaged a simple reduction of armed forces of nations along a proportionate mathematical ratio. The rejection by Paris was explained by the fact that in the plan there was no reference made whatsoever to the problems of national security, geography and politics.<sup>5</sup> However, Resolution XVI of 1922 and the 1923 Treaty of Mutual Assistance recognized the necessary link between security and the limitation of arms and men and gave specific duties to member states in the way of military assistance to a fellow beleaguered signatory. British opposition to these plans scuttled French hopes that these plans could provide an answer to the problems of national security and disarmament.<sup>6</sup>

The next French attempt to provide security was its support of the British-sponsored Geneva Protocol of 1924. Here, it was agreed that in case of a dispute, the League Council would try to reach a settlement. If it failed, it would appoint a committee of arbitrators whose decision would be binding upon the disputants concerned. A refusal

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<sup>4</sup>Walters, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>5</sup>Walters, op. cit., pp. 220-2.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 223-4.

to submit a dispute to arbitration or to comply with the decision of the committee would lead to the automatic application of sanctions preceded by an agreement of 2/3 of the League Council members. The unanimity rule of Article 16 of the Covenant was done away with.<sup>7</sup> Considerations of geography and armaments were made for weaker states in their obligations to apply sanctions.<sup>8</sup> It was decided that the Protocol would be put into effect after the successful conclusion of a disarmament convention.

The British Labour Party which was in power during the negotiations, was willing to give to the French the 2/3 vote (in reference to the application of sanctions by the League Council) in order to continue with what they regarded as the more important matter of disarmament. They treated this concession as a sop for the hypersensitive security-conscious French and believed that this rule would act as a deterrent to future transgressors. In point of fact, they doubted that it would ever be used. Sanctions according to Article 10 of the Protocol would be instituted in the event of violations of the rules laid down for the demilitarized zone in the Rhineland.<sup>9</sup> With the defeat of Labour at the polls in late 1924 and the assumption to power by the Conservatives under Stanley Baldwin, the Protocol suffered

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<sup>7</sup>Albrecht-Carrie, Rene, France, Europe and the Two World Wars New York: Harper & Bros. Pub., p. 157.

<sup>8</sup>Walters, op. cit., p. 273.

<sup>9</sup>Wolfers, op. cit., p. 348.

the same fate as the previous plans mentioned above. The Conservatives expressed their opposition to any strengthening of the collective security principle by mentioning that they opposed any change of Article 16 of the Covenant.<sup>10</sup>

By the end of 1924, the French government resigned itself to the fact that the League could not be molded into a potentially effective sanctions weapon against Germany. This strategy proved fruitless due to the opposition of Britain. This can be seen in the British hostility towards the Geneva Protocol and the Treaty of Mutual Assistance. The British showed their opposition to further international obligations other than what was in the League Covenant by refusing to give to France a military guaranty in case of a German invasion, during discussions on this question in 1922. They suspected that the French would utilize this promise for the purpose of cajoling or threatening Germany with reprisals if she proved reluctant to comply with certain stipulations of the Versailles Treaty such as in the realm of reparations or arms limitations. Their opposition to the French policy of "bullying" the Germans was an integral part of their traditional policy of preventing any one nation from establishing a hegemony over the continent of Europe. To a large extent therefore, they viewed France's policy towards Germany as an attempt by her to preserve her newly-won advantage over Germany which she gained at Versailles. Hence it was

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 372.

after a long and protracted debate that Briand, the French Prime Minister, decided that in order to solve the problem of the Rhine frontier, the only recourse left to France was to try to reach some sort of rapprochement with the Germans themselves. The French decision to reach a detente with Germany was also the result of the fear that Germany which had established cordial relations with the Soviet Union in 1921 in the Rapallo pact, would, with Soviet cooperation, spread her influence into east-central Europe and thus effectively challenge their political superiority on the European continent and the Versailles treaty system. This they managed to do in the Locarno treaties with Germany during the first half of October 1925.

Basically what these agreements signified was that France in her search for security was ready to sacrifice the interests of her own allies who were also members of the League. While obtaining German recognition of the inviolability of the Franco-German border along the Rhine and the Belgian-German frontier, France was required to offer Germany something of substance in exchange. Briand, therefore, permitted the Germans to take the position that their eastern frontiers were not sacrosanct and could be subject to change. Although Germany signed arbitration treaties with Poland and Czechoslovakia, many eastern Europeans regarded the French position that some frontiers were less inviolate than others as undermining the new international order as it was applied to Germany. For Stresemann, these

arbitration treaties were not obstacles for "maintaining the political aims which we must pursue with regard to our eastern frontiers".<sup>11</sup>

France, being one of the two pillars of the League system, in this bargain with Stresemann weakened, in the eyes of many, the territorial integrity of two of its members, i.e. Poland and Czechoslovakia. Moreover, Poland and Czechoslovakia were military allies of France. If anything, the French action at Locarno compromised the spirit of Article 10 of the Covenant as it was related to Germany when Britain and France let Germany conduct a propaganda campaign for territorial revision in the east. Many wondered what the French position would be in the case of a German military campaign against its eastern neighbours. Even more discouraging seemed to be the attitude of Britain which refused to be concerned at all with eastern Europe. Even in her pact with France and Belgium by which she promised to aid these states in the event of aggression, she reserved the right to decide what action in fact she would take. In different degrees the Western powers expressed their 'desinteressement' in the question of territorial revision in Europe east of the Elbe. Having the main pillars of the League adopt such a cavalier attitude on matters affecting the vital security interests of such eastern European members of the League as Poland and Czechoslovakia, meant

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<sup>11</sup>Gasiorowski, "Stresemann and Poland Before Locarno",

that faith in the League system and the durability of the Versailles Treaty system was considerably damaged. This was particularly true in the case of Poland. At Locarno, France signed pacts with Poland and Czechoslovakia giving her guarantees to these countries' frontiers with Germany. These guarantees, however, were restricted in the sense that France would in the event of an aggression on the territories of these states act in accordance with Article 16 of the Covenant. This meant that the League Council would have to agree unanimously in order to act against a transgressor and as stated above, military sanctions would not be automatically forthcoming. The Poles maintained that the military convention of 1921 which promised immediate French aid in case of aggression from Germany was still legally valid. They became quite disconcerted to find throughout the late 1920's and the early 1930's that the French favoured the Locarno interpretation of their obligations. In 1927, Ambassador Jules Laroche attempted to convince the Polish government of a plan which would tailor the 1921 agreement to fit the Locarno treaties. Later, Paris sent Marshal Franchet d'Espèray to Poland for precisely the same reason.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the French in the beginning of 1929 expressed their opposition to a Polish proposal for a regional pact whose signatories would be France, Germany and Poland.

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<sup>12</sup>Pobog-Malinowski, Najnowsza Historia Polski, (The Contemporary History of Poland), vol. II, London: Gryf Pub., p. 513.

At this point, the Poles became concerned over the viability and usefulness of the French alliance. In order to clarify the situation, Marshal Pilsudski sent General Tadeusz Kutrzeba to Paris to conduct inquiries with the French Chief of Staff, General Marie Debeney. Kutrzeba informed the French general that as far as Poland was concerned, she maintained her willingness to come to the aid of her French ally in the case of a German attack on France. When asked what the French position would be in the case of a German attack on Poland, Debeney responded that the final decision remained in the hands of the civilian cabinet which in turn was influenced significantly by the position taken by London.<sup>13</sup> The French attitude was, of course, deeply affected by their decision of 1930 to build the Maginot line which meant that the French expected that a war with Germany would not be of an offensive but of a trench-type defensive nature. This attitude can be exemplified in the comments made by Generals Weygand and Gamelin to the British Military attache in Paris on October of 1932. They believed that in a Franco-German war, the French would, at the most, occupy the Rhine bridgeheads but would not do so without the naval or at least the moral support of Great Britain.<sup>14</sup> Another example of a more explicit nature can be

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 513.

<sup>14</sup>Ciencials, Anna, Poland and the Western Powers 1938-1939, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, p. 12.

given in the letter of the Counsellor of the Polish Embassy in Paris, Anatole Muhlstein, dated April 17, 1933, to the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Joseph Beck. In this letter, Muhlstein referred to rumours circulating in Paris at the time that Poland was considering a preventive strike against the new Germany of Adolf Hitler. In reference to this, he mentioned a rather informal conversation he had with the noted French parliamentarian and statesman, Joseph Caillaux. With regard to the probabilities of France agreeing to such a project, Caillaux's answer reflected the general attitude amongst Frenchmen on this question - "Ne vous orientez pas vers la guerre. Ce pays ne marchera pas!"<sup>15</sup>

The repercussions of the Locarno strategy, as it applied to military sanctions in eastern Europe, were that many in this region grew insecure within their boundaries. They began to question the value of the French alliance and the feasibility of the collective security principle within the context of eastern Europe. Integrally linked with this, as far as the Poles were concerned were the views of the main supporters of the League, Britain and France on the Polish-German dispute.

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<sup>15</sup>Cienciala, "The Significance of the Declaration of Non-Aggression of January 26, 1934...", p. 15.



## CHAPTER IV

### BRITAIN, FRANCE, GERMANY AND THE POLISH-GERMAN BORDER PART I

The views of the British and the French on the Polish-German territorial question reflected the basic desire of the West to achieve some sort of stability on the European continent and an apprehension as to the increase of military power in Germany. The British had practically disarmed on a unilateral basis and avoided any commitments which would drag them into another costly war on the continent. As will be shown later, they were willing to grant any sort of concession so as to satisfy a given revisionist power and preserve the peace of Europe just a little while longer. Having failed to obtain either American or British guarantees of military support in the event of an aggression on her territories and having failed to reach a lasting detente with a long-standing enemy (Germany), France began to muse over possibilities of reaching a new rapprochement with her eastern neighbour, at the expense of some other power or powers. Her seemingly endless search for security, having passed through so many stages, came to a point where many of her experienced statesmen were willing to almost completely undermine the very international order as it was related to Germany which was erected at the Versailles Conference. This attitude, as mentioned above, was particularly exemplified on the problems of the Polish-German borderlands.

The first expression of what we shall call Western

"revisionism" was the undermining of the status of the borders which Poland and Czechoslovakia had with Germany. The Polish interpretation of this event was expressed by Colonel Beck as follows in his memoirs: "Germany was thus solemnly invited to carry out aggression to the east and at that price, peace in the west was purchased".<sup>1</sup>

British attitudes on the Polish-German territorial question in the inter-war era was the result of a composite number of factors rooted in British political life. For one segment, the Labour Party, the dispute was integrally linked to the whole framework of international politics and the future of Europe in general. They were convinced that the world was inevitably moving towards an international socialist federation in which nations would be able to attain their aspirations within the context of the principle of self-determination. Cooperation in the establishment of a system of international conciliation and arbitration imbued by a spirit of goodwill and fair play would provide the preliminary stage for the utopian socialist federation.<sup>2</sup>

Their view was that, basically, people were internationally oriented and that the new order was just waiting to make a breakthrough. The main obstacles were thought to be narrow-minded and provincial leaders, who in their opinion

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<sup>1</sup>Beck, Final Report, p. 255.

<sup>2</sup>Gordon, Michael, Conflicts and Consensus in Labour's Foreign Policy 1914-1965, Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 38.

were the victims of misunderstandings and were deprived of the knowledge of the motives of other leaders.<sup>3</sup> If man by nature was basically good "harmony was alone natural".<sup>4</sup>

Hence "disputants had only to discover the common good which was at the same time their highest good and they would immediately see that they had every reason to modify their position and to overcome their discord".<sup>5</sup> Nationalism, therefore, was thought to be thoroughly compatible with internationalism.<sup>6</sup>

Hence for the Labour Party, the aspirations of German revisionism, were thoroughly legitimate and natural. Particularly during the 1920's when the Social Democrats were influential in the politics of the Weimar Republic, Labour leaders took a great interest in coming to terms with German nationalism.<sup>7</sup> For them the Versailles Treaty was unfair and harsh and the German nation was entitled to a fairer deal from the Western powers. The revision of those treaties was regarded as the necessary means by which Germany would join the ranks of the peaceloving democratic states of the League of Nations. An example of this attitude can be shown in the remarks

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>7</sup>Vuckovic, Milorad N., Parliamentary Opinion and British Foreign Policy 1936-1938 with Special Reference to Germany McGill University, Department of History, 1966, p.71.

of Ramsay MacDonald, the leader of the Labour Party, a few days before the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. He stated that the "immediate revision by the League of Nations of the harsh provisions of the Treaty would be...a first step towards the reconciliation of the peoples and the inauguration of a new era of international cooperation and goodwill".<sup>8</sup>

The Liberal Party was also tinted by this "Fabian humanism" of the Labour Party philosophy. They questioned the spirit of the Versailles Treaty especially the war-guilt clauses. The feeling, therefore, amongst the parties of the Left and Centre in Britain was that the post-war arrangements were unjust. This attitude continued into the 1930's despite their aversion to the authoritarian and racist practices of Hitler and the Nazi movement.<sup>9</sup> They failed to perceive that nationalism in its extreme form was antithetical not only to Fabian socialism and democracy but also to the very concepts of internationalism as enunciated in the League Covenant. Their belief that the satiation of the demands of German nationalism in terms of territorial revision in eastern Europe would win it over to the principles of the League were, as was shown later, sadly divorced from the reality of the situation.

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<sup>8</sup>Jordan W. M., Great Britain, France, and the German Problem 1918-1939 London: Oxford University Press, p. 40.

<sup>9</sup>Vuckovic, op. cit., p. 170.

The realization that the parties of the Left and Centre favoured territorial revision of the Polish-German borderlands at the expense of the Poles proved to be highly disconcerting to the Warsaw authorities and was to contribute to the undermining of the integrity of Article 10 of the League Covenant within the context of east-central Europe.

British Conservative circles were also affected by pro-revisionist sentiments and in the Polish-German territorial dispute were partial to the German side of the issue. Like their Leftist counterparts, they also possessed a guilt-complex in that they believed that Germany was treated unfairly at Versailles.<sup>10</sup> In addition they ascribed to the traditional policy of maintaining a balance of power equilibrium on the European continent. The immediate post-Versailles strategy of France of stunting the economic and military recovery of Germany and the French opposition to the disarmament proposals of Britain during the 1920's and early 1930's was interpreted in Britain as a scheme on the part of the French to establish a diplomatic hegemony in Europe.

These two factors shaped the strategy towards Germany and Europe in the inter-war era and were the underlying causes for their opposition to the French insistence that heavy reparations ought to be extracted from Germany. For these same reasons, the French occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 in conjunction with the reparations question was

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<sup>10</sup> Gilbert, Martin and Gott, Richard, The Appeasers, London: Weiden Feld, p. 9.

opposed by the British. This in the opinion of Margaret George "was an irritant that upset Anglo-French relations for the rest of the decade".<sup>11</sup> Since all parties of the House of Commons held a negative attitude towards Versailles, it is not too surprising that when Hitler occupied the Rhine-land in 1936 Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin expressed his annoyance with the French rather than with the offending Germans.<sup>12</sup>

Sympathy with Germany was connected with the public belief that eastern Europe was far away and was not vital to British national interests. This attitude can be partially explained by the preoccupation on the part of the British government with the political and economic questions involving the Dominions within the Commonwealth. It was also distracted by certain problems in its far-flung empire such as the Indian independence struggle and the Arab-Israeli quarrel in Palestine. In addition, the deepening economic crisis which began in the late 1920's and continued into the 1930's, to a significant degree drew the energies of the nation's leaders away from European problems. The resultant attitude towards Polish-German questions can be observed in the following remarks of Lloyd-George.

"The British people were not very much interested in what happened on the eastern

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<sup>11</sup>George, Margaret, The Warped Vision, British Foreign Policy 1933-1939, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, p. 33.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

frontier of Germany; they would not be ready to be involved in quarrels which might arise regarding Poland or Danzig or Upper Silesia. On the contrary, there was a general reluctance to get mixed up in these questions in any way".<sup>13</sup>

Leading Conservatives shared these sentiments. The editor of the Observer, J.L. Garvin, favoured German expansion into eastern Europe<sup>14</sup> and Lord Lothian, a member of the cabinet in 1931 wrote that "Britain has no primary interests in eastern Europe".<sup>15</sup> The British Ambassador to Berlin, Lord d'Abernon, was an outspoken revisionist so much so that Herbert von Dirksen in his memoirs referred to him as "almost a collaborator of the German Foreign Office".<sup>16</sup> Concerning the question of Poland's access to the sea, he was quoted to have said "Poland does not need any port and as Czechoslovakia could carry on its trade through the ports of other nations. She would have to be accorded suitable facilities for that".<sup>17</sup> Lloyd-George in a discussion with Aristide Briand "did not think...that this country [Britain] would be disposed to give any guarantees which might involve them militarily in any eventuality in that part [eastern Europe] of the world".<sup>18</sup> The British Foreign

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<sup>13</sup>Jordon, op. cit., p. 201.

<sup>14</sup>Gilbert and Gott, op. cit., pp. 34-35.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 39-40.

<sup>16</sup>Gasiorowski, "Stresemann and Poland Before Locarno", p. 34.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>18</sup>Jordan, op. cit., p. 201.

Secretary Sir Austen Chamberlain in a letter to his ambassador in Paris on February 16, 1925, stated that in a possible conflict between Germany and Poland over the Polish "corridor", "no British government ever will or ever can risk the bones of a single British grenadier".<sup>19</sup> In conjunction with this, the British refusal at Locarno to guarantee the borders of Poland and Czechoslovakia with Germany demonstrated beyond a doubt the Conservative party's attitude towards Article 10 as applied to eastern Europe.

For many Conservatives, the German question was part of their policy of opposition to Communism. They viewed the German Reich as a bulwark against the spread of Bolshevik revolutionary radicalism which emanated from the borders of the Soviet Union. Such notables as Lord Londonderry and members of the appeasement-minded "Cliveden set" of the 1930's, such as Lord and Lady Astor, Sir Thomas Inskip, Professor Arnold Toynbee and Barrington Ward, an editorial writer of the Times were of that frame of mind.<sup>20</sup> Amongst the Conservative 'establishment' only Sir Robert Vansittart, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, and Winston Churchill "were prepared to do anything about the Nazis".<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Gasiorowski, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>20</sup>Gilbert and Gott, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>21</sup>McDermott, Geoffrey, The Eden Legacy and the Decline of British Diplomacy London: Leshe Frewin, p. 25.



According to Vansittart, during the inter-war era, political Germanophilism was directly linked in the case of the Conservative upper classes with social and cultural Germanophilism and a dislike for everything French. He further observed that that class was "almost entirely anti-French" and that "nearly everyone was pro-German".<sup>22</sup> The Times which was a leading press organ for the Conservative establishment was favourably disposed towards Germany. The History Of The Times analyzed this attitude in the following fashion, "years of difficulties with France had increased sympathy for Germany and the romantic appeal of almost anything German to so many English minds...made the Times so pro-German after 1922 that the paper could not...even consider the necessity of modifying its policy".<sup>23</sup> It is not so suprising to find the Times advising the Poles to make concessions in order to preserve the peace in Europe.<sup>24</sup>

Another phenomenon was that the political leaders of Conservatism in the inter-war era were relatively unconcerned with the problems of the European continent and did not comprehend the rapid change which was happening all around them. They, in Margaret George's opinion, "were too absorbed with their domestic troubles to look much to the outer world."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>George, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>24</sup>Gasiorowski, "Stresemann...Before Locarno", p. 34.

<sup>25</sup>George, op. cit., p. 34.

In addition, "their personal records reveal shock, distaste, dismay, despair--that is, an awareness but no understanding; it is as though a late Victorian veil separated them from the swirling currents of the modern reality." Hence they "were out of touch with symptoms let alone the causes of the profound disturbances of the twentieth century."<sup>26</sup> This can be observed in the words of Stanley Baldwin when he was vacationing at Aix-les Bains in 1933:

"walking alone among these hills, I have come to the conclusion that the world is stark mad. I have no idea what is the matter with it, but it's all wrong...at times I am sick to death of being an asylum attendant".<sup>27</sup>

The British whether their German policy stemmed from ideological conviction (Fabian socialism, conservatism, liberalism), a guilt feeling concerning the Versailles settlement or a simple provincial outlook, failed to perceive the true nature of German nationalism as it was expressed by Stresemann, von Seeckt or Hitler. They also underestimated the political and economic importance of eastern Europe for the continent as a whole in that a Germany dominant in that part of the continent was one which was capable of gaining control over the whole of it. In doing so and by overestimating their own power, they tragically miscalculated in their attempt to apply the balance of power concept to post-World War I Europe. Also by disregarding Poland's interests in

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

regard to Germany, Britain expressed unconcern for League principles as applied to eastern Europe.

The French held similar views on the Polish-German border. The Left parties in France, according to the Polish Embassy in Paris, possessing an instinctively anti-Pilsudski stance motivated by a particular ideological prejudice, favoured, like the British, a policy of peace at the expense of territorial concessions on the part of Poland. Consequently, they desired to annul the alliance with Poland.<sup>28</sup> This sentiment manifested itself in December of 1933 in a leftist petition introduced in the Chamber of Deputies which called for the termination of the secret alliances concluded by France with Poland, Rumania and Japan.<sup>29</sup> At a meeting of Aristide Briand and Gustav Stresemann, the latter noted in his diary, during the discussions which dealt with the question of a peaceful revision of Germany's eastern boundaries, that Briand "did not utter a single word of criticism against the thought of a change of boundaries."<sup>30</sup>

As for the French Foreign Ministry, informally referred to as the "Quai d'Orsay", the Polish Embassy reported to Warsaw on September 30, 1932 the following observations:

"...However, the fact is that the Quai

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<sup>28</sup>Jedzejewicz, (ed.), Diplomat in Berlin, p. 67.

<sup>29</sup>Kuzminski, Poland, France, Germany 1933-1935, p. 32.

<sup>30</sup>Korbel, Poland Between East and West, p. 242.

thinks only about what concession they could render to Germany at the least cost to French interests and the least danger of rousing a hostile reaction from public opinion."<sup>31</sup>

The French Prime Minister in 1931, Pierre Laval, told the American Secretary of State, Mr. Stimson, that in his opinion the Polish 'Corridor' was a "monstrosity".<sup>32</sup>

French revisionism continued to be prevalent during the final days of the Weimar Republic when it manifested itself in the so-called Duchemin Protocol which was drawn up at the end of January 1933 by Jules Duchemin, a Quai d'Orsay legal expert, Wladimir d'Ormesson, the editor of Le Temps and Journal de Geneve and Paul Parmentier, an industrialist on the French side and the Germans Bernhard von Bulow, Under-secretary of State, Dr. Bucher, a German industrialist and Privy Councillor Bosh. It was agreed that Germany would receive most of the 'Corridor' and a 'retrification' of the Upper Silesian frontier. As a form compensation, Poland would be permitted to use the port of Danzig and annex the port of Memel from Lithuania. After this territorial revision, a German-French guarantee pact would be drawn up for the new Polish-German frontier. The German Foreign Minister, von Neurath, put an end to this plan since he maintained that Germany's territorial claims were more

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<sup>31</sup>Kuzminski, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>32</sup>Cienciala, article, p. 13.

\*This "public opinion" refers to that segment of French Society which was vociferously pro-Versailles, anti-German and pro-Polish.

extensive.\* Hence in his opinion, the "negotiations were steered on a wrong course".<sup>33</sup> Duchemin claimed, nevertheless, that he had received a message from Paris that the French government had approved that protocol. This whole affair was quickly terminated, owing to the rapid changes which led to the nomination of Adolf Hitler to the position of Chancellor, on January 31, 1933.

In the view of Poland's policy-makers, the general opinion of the participants of League proceedings in the early 1930's seemed to disregard the spirit of Article 10 as it was applied to their region. Many were willing to alter frontiers without bringing in the affected country at the actual decision-making process. This attitude, for the Poles, was directly linked to the entry of Germany into the organization after the Locarno settlement.

The inclusion of Germany into the League and her entry as a permanent member of the Council in 1927 gave her the status of a great power and a full member of the family of nations. It also gave her the opportunity to pursue her revisionist demands in a public forum of big powers. The method which she used was the utilization of the procedure of the Minorities Treaties. In these proceedings, beginning in 1928, Stresemann flooded the League with a variety of petitions and complaints, real or imagined, in order to

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<sup>33</sup>Korbel, op. cit., p. 280.

\*Germany claimed as her own all of Polish Upper Silesia and Polish Pomerania, Danzig and at times parts of Poznanian.

prove to the world that Poland was mistreating her German minorities. By attempting to gather support from the various representatives to the League, he aimed to show that Poland was instituting a planned program of repression and consequently, the situation would seem intolerable for the German people and detrimental for European peace in general. This being achieved, he would convince the major states of the League that the only really effective way of alleviating the problems of the German minority in Poland was the transfer of territories. This meant the revision of the treaties which Stresemann hoped to accomplish peacefully with the assistance of the Western powers and their supporters in Geneva. Stresemann's tactics were contradictory to the spirit of the Minorities Treaties which required that the strategy behind the petitions would not work towards "the severance of political relations between the minority and its host state".<sup>34</sup> In addition, his policy violated one of the fundamental purposes of the Minorities Treaties system which intended to eliminate bilateral disputes and to raise the quality of disputes to the level of internationalization. Bilateralism reintroduced the element of hostility and destroyed the atmosphere of "desinteressement" and impartiality in Council meetings when dealing with complaints of minorities.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Claude, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>35</sup>Gasiorowski, "Stresemann...Before Locarno", p. 35.

The success of Stresemann's policy in this regard was partly due, in Alfred Cobban's opinion, to the attitude of the British. "In the annual League debate on minorities of 1930, the British delegate frankly adopted the view that where German minorities were concerned, it was for the German Government to look after their interests".<sup>36</sup> Within this context, Stresemann after mentioning Germany's participation in the League proceedings, stated that in reference to Article 19, Germany could "reopen the question [territorial changes] at some future date".<sup>37</sup>

Polish reaction to this strategy was, needless to say, demonstrably hostile. This was shown in the confrontation of August Zaleski, the Polish Foreign Minister with Stresemann on December 15, 1928 in which the former accused the German Upper Silesian organization, the Volksbund, of "creating political agitation and even engaging in subversive activities".<sup>38</sup> Inis Claude agreed with Beck on Germany's intentions regarding the Minorities Treaties:

"...the bloc of states led by Germany undermined the League system by encouraging national minorities to be discontented with their position and immoderate in their demands. They went on to deal the system a fatal blow by promoting disloyalty and using disaffected minorities as pawns in the game of disrupting their host states and disintegrating the European order".<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Gasiorowski, "Stresemann...After Locarno". p. 316.

<sup>37</sup>Claude, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>38</sup>Gasiorowski, "Stresemann...After Locarno", p. 316.

<sup>39</sup>Claude, op. cit., p. 46.

Tempers grew so hot during this meeting that Stresemann slammed his fist on the Council table. In the succeeding meeting of March 6, 1929, Stresemann defended his nation's right to present petitions denying that this would be "an inadmissible political interference with the domestic affairs of a foreign power".<sup>40</sup>

The German policy of undermining Poland's position in regard to her western territories continued unabated into the 1930's. This grew on the nerves of Beck and his associates. In his memoirs, Beck made frequent mention of the debates in the Council on the question of national minorities. Beck's frustrations can be shown in the following passage.

"These various League of Nations gentlemen assumed the right to poke their noses into the internal affairs of smaller countries with a complete disregard not only for the principles of sovereignty but even for the rudiments of legal procedure. The peak was reached in the so-called minorities treaties".<sup>41</sup>

He described the meetings as comparable to trials with the Polish representatives forced to play the role of defendants. These representatives, Beck wrote, were constantly humiliated by being compelled to defend their country against "petty and trivial incidents". He had, therefore, "a profound disgust" for such proceedings.<sup>42</sup> Referring to the effect on inter-

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<sup>40</sup>Gasiorowski, "Stresemann...After Locarno", p. 316.

<sup>41</sup>Beck, Joseph, Final Report, New York: Robert Speller and Sons, p. 243.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 247.



ethnic relations in Poland's western provinces which the League investigations had, Beck wrote that "the minority treaty ... had become a destructive factor in our internal affairs".<sup>43</sup> He questioned particularly what he regarded, as trumped-up and exaggerated complaints of the German delegates relating to the German minority in Poland. This, he believed, was in violation of the Resolution concerning the Minorities Treaties which was passed by the Council on September 5, 1923. The Resolution commented that petitions "must contain information or refer to facts which have not recently been the subject of a petition".<sup>44</sup> Because of Germany's abuse of the Minorities Treaties, he voiced his opposition to her right to present petitions for her minorities in other countries.

The effect of Germany's revisionist campaign in the League Council at Geneva was that the majority of delegates there began to sympathize with the German claims. Beck was one of those who noticed this change in attitude:

"Lofty arguments were brought home in passionate discussion over some trifling detail...on the other hand, it was with a light heart that the alterations of frontiers were suggested on the ground of Article 19 of the League's Covenant even aiming at restricting the right to vote of the country directly interested in the proceedings which might have put this article into effect".<sup>45</sup>

In another passage of his memoirs, he commented:

"It is significant to review the political and

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>44</sup>Janowsky, op. cit., p. 117.

<sup>45</sup>Beck, op. cit., p. 44.

propaganda campaigns undertaken by the Third Reich while preparing an invasion of Eastern Europe to realize the support which it constantly found in the debates of Geneva and in the interpretations of the treaties on the protection of the minorities".<sup>46</sup>

More infuriating for Beck was the character of the Head of the Secretariat, Mr. Avenol, who in the opinion of the Polish foreign minister was a "mean personage balancing in a servile attitude between the ante-chambers of several great Powers without any respect for a minimum of decent covenance if not even for the written principles of the Covenant of the League".<sup>47</sup> The cavalier attitude regarding the willingness of the main supporters of the League to institute Article 16 in the event of a German-Polish clash of arms, which was generally evident in Geneva, was hardly reassuring for Beck. The Poles, therefore, viewed the general opinion at Geneva as unwilling to accept all of the implications of the principle of territorial integrity as it related to east-central Europe. They began to lose confidence in the League as an instrument to protect their national security and began to regard it more and more as a tool of German revisionism.

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., pp. 243-4.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

## CHAPTER V

### BRITAIN, FRANCE, GERMANY AND THE POLISH-GERMAN BORDER PART II: THE FOUR POWER PACT

For the Poles, the culmination of Western revisionism occurred during the discussions leading up to the Four Power Pact. This completed the process of Polish disenchantment with the League and its chief supporters. At this point, Poland decided to find another solution for her security dilemma.

The idea for a Four-Power Pact was advanced by the Italian Fascist leader and dictator, Benito Mussolini, in 1932.<sup>1</sup> It was later brought up in the discussions which Mussolini had with Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald and Foreign Secretary Sir John Simon in Rome, on March 16, 1933. The British came to see the Italian dictator in order to gain his support for the British Draft Convention which, in their eyes, would save the Disarmament Conference from collapse. Instead, they were confronted with Mussolini's plan for a Four Power Pact.

In the realm of treaty revision, Article 2 of Mussolini's Draft stated that in case of a conflict over territory, the four powers of Italy, Germany, France and Great Britain would work together so as to facilitate the peaceful revision of treaties relating to frontiers. Revision was elevated to the level of a principle. Lip service was paid to the League in that the article mentioned that the

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<sup>1</sup>Albrecht-Carrie, op. cit., p. 236.

revision principle "can only be applied within the framework of the League of Nations and through mutual recognition of the common nature of the interests involved".<sup>2</sup> The Pact, according to Article 5, would be valid for ten years. The British interpreted this article to mean that "the Great Powers shall take the initiative in examining the situation, devising a solution and directing the negotiations whereby the interested Governments shall be induced to accept such a solution".<sup>3</sup> The British, however, were opposed to the idea of mentioning the fact of inducement.

"It seems inadvisable and unnecessary to state in words that the four Powers should combine to put pressure on other parties. Pressure would necessarily result from agreement among the four Powers on any topic but it is better not to say so".<sup>4</sup>

One reason for Mussolini's plan was an attempt on his part to divert German territorial ambitions from Austria to the north-east. The Polish minister to London was able to learn this from a conversation which the Duce had with

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<sup>2</sup>Woodward, E.L. and Butler, Rohan (ed.), Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Second Series, vol 5. London: H.M.'s Stationary Office, no. 44, Enclosure B(11) Sir Ronald Graham to Lord Vansittart, March 20, 1933, p. 67. "The Four Powers reaffirm in accordance with the articles of the Covenant of the League of Nations the principle of the revision of the treaties of peace in circumstances capable of producing a conflict between nations, but they declare that such a principle can only be applied within the framework of the League of Nations and through mutual recognition of the common nature of the interests involved".

<sup>3</sup>D.B.F.P. no. 49, Memorandum, March 23, 1933, p. 101.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.102.

the Secretary-General of the League, Mr. Avenol.<sup>5</sup> This information corresponds with the knowledge of the pact which Joseph Lipski (at the time Chief of the Western Division of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs) had at that time.

"From confidential sources obtained by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it was evident that in his Rome talks, Mussolini pointed bluntly to the Pomeranian Corridor as a problem requiring settlement within the framework of the planned political pact".<sup>6</sup>

In a dispatch from Sir Ronald Graham to Sir John Simon which was written two weeks before the Anglo-Italian discussions in Rome, the British Ambassador mentioned that the Italian leader favoured,

"a solution by which the town of Danzig and a strip of coastline not deeper than 10 to 15 kilometres should be surrendered to Germany so as to permit free communication with East Prussia".<sup>7</sup>

Mussolini during his discussions with the British expressed his opposition to Sir John Simon's idea that Poland be brought into the Pact. Simon "explained that the pact would be reciprocally binding between the four powers not to attack one another. If Poland were to adhere, the pact would have the same effect reciprocally between Germany and Poland".<sup>8</sup> It was MacDonald's view at the time that "the

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<sup>5</sup>Jedrejewicz (ed.), op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>7</sup>D.B.F.F., March 4, 1933, no. 37, Sir R. Graham to Sir John Simon, p. 56.

<sup>8</sup>D.B.F.F., no. 44, March 19, 1933, Enclosure no. 4, note of a conversation held at the Palazzo Venezia at 6 p.m. p. 75.

effect of a specific agreement on the part of Germany not to attack France was to some extent an implication of her intention to attack Poland".<sup>9</sup> Mussolini persisted in his opposition to the British idea saying only that the fact of Germany's presence in the Pact was an adequate assurance of Germany's peaceful intentions towards all concerned.<sup>10</sup>

Mussolini's opposition to MacDonald's idea seemed to indicate that he wished to maintain the exclusiveness of the Pact. This the German State Secretary, von Bulow, realized as seen in his letter to the German Embassy in Rome:

"...the other European Powers are not granted equal rights as far as accession to the pact is concerned but rather provision is made that the four Powers shall if necessary force the other powers to pursue a policy of peace".<sup>11</sup>

In another dispatch, von Hassell, the German Ambassador in Rome, was quick to observe that the principle of revision as explained in Article 2 of the Pact would be agreed to by the Big Four and only later ratified by the League.

"It is self-evident that the basic Italian idea in this is to reduce in their own (and the German) interest, the influence of the smaller countries following in the wake of France and to undertake the practical attempt to place the shaping of the economic and political situation in Europe in

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>11</sup> Lambert, Hon. Margaret, Editor-in-chief. Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945, Series C, vol.1, The Third Reich, First Phase January 30 - October 14, 1933 London: H.M. Stationary Office, no. 88, March 15, 1933, The State Secretary von Bulow to the Embassy in Italy, p. 168.

the hands of a directorate".<sup>12</sup>

The British official stance on the question of treaty revision, judging from the comments mentioned above, seemed to be in favour of the idea. However the British delegates maintained a public position of neutrality throughout the deliberations. It was partly due to their concern over the question of the former German colonies, such as Tanganyika, which at the time were held as British mandates. In addition, they followed a strategy of quiet diplomacy in their attempts to get a Big Power agreement so as to preserve the peace in Europe and save the Disarmament Conference from collapse.

The French position on the problem of treaty revision and Article 2 of the Pact was much more complex owing partially to their security dilemma and to their obligations to the east European allies. The French Right, in the main, took a negative view of the possibility of treaty revision. A typical spokesman of this segment of the French political spectrum Henri Franklin-Bouillon, equated the revision of the treaties with "the disarmament of France".<sup>13</sup> Edouard Herriot, the President of the powerful Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, was one of the Pact's more vociferous opponents.<sup>14</sup> So were the Rightist Andre Tardieu<sup>15</sup> and the

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<sup>12</sup>D.G.F.P. no. 109, March 22, 1933, Ambassador in Rome to Berlin, p. 200.

<sup>13</sup>Micaud, Charles, A., The French Right and Nazi Germany 1933-1939 New York: Octagon Books, p. 27.

<sup>14</sup>Worth, Alexander, France in Ferment, Gloucester, Mass., Peter Smith Co., p. 43.

<sup>15</sup>Binion R. Defeated Leaders New York: Columbia University Press, p. 318.

Socialist Leon Blum.<sup>16</sup>

Those who expressed their approval of Article 2 and the idea of a big power directorate did so mainly because they were seeking a French-Italian alliance as a security guarantee against Germany. The French Foreign Minister, Joseph Paul-Boncour, maintained this attitude.<sup>17</sup> In addition, Joseph Caillaux, the President of the Senate Finance Committee, and his kinsman Henri de Jouvenal maintained pro-Italian sympathies.<sup>18</sup> Jouvenal, the French Ambassador to Rome, took part in the negotiations over the Pact. It was his belief that while Hitler was in the process of consolidating his power internally, France along side with Britain and Italy ought to reach an agreement with the Reich. This agreement would sanction German territorial ambitions which during the period of Nazi consolidation would be much more modest than in future years when Hitler would have built up the political and military might of the Third Reich. The attainment of an understanding with Berlin at this stage would ensure political stability in Europe giving France a greater degree of security. At the same time she would be acting in unison with Italy and Britain with the result that this alliance would preserve the peace and tie Hitler to the new system created by the Pact. This rationale can be exemplified in

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>17</sup>Kusminski, op. cit., pp. 95-96.

<sup>18</sup>Binion, op. cit., pp. 111-112.



Jouvenal's letters to Paris explaining and propagating his belief in the Pact. For him "The Four Power Pact is in reality...a pact for holding Germany in check".<sup>19</sup> He went on to state that "we can make such a settlement cheaper today than tomorrow".<sup>20</sup> He feared that lest France reject the Pact, the opportunity to preserve the peace and to "check" Hitler would be past. "Need we wait before dealing with essential difficulties for our authority in Europe to decline".<sup>21</sup>

The Prime Minister Edward Daladier maintained an officially neutral attitude during the month of March 1933. Finally, he commissioned Jouvenal and Paul-Boncour to independently draw up drafts for the French version of the Pact. The two drafts were almost identical and out of these, he constructed the official French counterproposals on the subject.<sup>22</sup> Article 2 which referred to the question of treaty revision read as follows:

"The High Contracting Parties with a view to the possible application in Europe of the articles of the Covenant particularly 10, 16, and 19 decide to examine among themselves without prejudice to the decisions which can only be taken by the regular organs of the League of Nations any proposal tending to give full efficacy to the methods and procedures provided by these articles".<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>23</sup> D.G.F.P. no. 151, April 12, 1933, Ambassador in Italy to Berlin, p. 281.

In this article the French decided to propose a bargain with the Germans. In exchange for the promise by the other three signatories to aid France in the event that she was invaded, Paris was willing to consider on an ad hoc basis, territorial revision in favour of Germany in eastern Europe. Without the promise to apply sanctions against the aggressor, i.e. the inclusion of article 16 of the Covenant in Article 2 of the Pact, France would refuse to consider the possibility of a peaceful revision of boundaries.

This particular interpretation of the French counter-proposal can be substantiated by examining the letter which Paul-Boncour wrote on April 11 to Jouvenal concerning the Four Power Pact. After paying lip-service to interests of third parties in cases of treaty revision, the author went on to reassure Jouvenal that the French had no intention of scuttling Mussolini's conception, "It is not a question of substituting independent action of political groups [the Big Four Powers] for the procedures and rules inscribed in the Covenant of the League of Nations".<sup>24</sup> The French stressed the ad hoc nature of their concept of territorial revision by substituting in the text of Article 2 of the Pact the "principle" of revision for "methods and procedures". This subtle change is referred to in Paul-Boncour's letter:

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<sup>24</sup>Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres, Documents Diplomatiques Francais 1932-1939, 1st Series (1932-1935) Tome III (March 17 - July 15, 1933), Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, Document no. 111, p. 202.

"However it is desirable that in these same questions [treaty revision] the previous agreement of the four powers [the Four Power Pact] can be foreseen, on condition that an exchange of views only be concerned with the methods to employ for giving to the procedures of the pact, their full force".<sup>25</sup>

The ad hoc feature of the French concession on treaty revision was integrally linked to its conditional nature. This can be seen in Paul-Boncour's letter. "The French government attaches the greatest importance of not separating Article 19 from the other articles of the [Four Power] pact".<sup>26</sup> The French Foreign Minister made his support for the improvement of the procedure for changing the Treaty of Versailles conditional upon the inclusion of the sanctions principle into the Four Power Pact.

"The improvements of the procedure of this article [19] are only justifiable if at the same time one is careful to assure full effectiveness to the other provisions and particularly to those which impose on the members of the League of Nations definite obligations to come to the aid of a state attacked without justification".<sup>27</sup>

The implication for France's allies in eastern Europe was that France was willing to change the Treaty of Versailles in the realm of territories in exchange for greater security for herself by obtaining a promise from Britain and Italy that they would adhere to the sanctions principle as it applied to her. The concept of treaty revision, for Mussolini and Hitler, specifically referred

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

to alterations in Germany's eastern frontiers. It is within this frame of reference that one should interpret Paul-Boncour's remarks on the subject.

Further evidence of this interpretation of the French counterproposals can be seen in the German and British comments on the subject.

Roland Koster, the German ambassador in Paris, wrote in his dispatch to Berlin that the French were wary of being pinned down on the question of revision favouring a postponement of the problem. However, he sensed that the French were willing to consider changes as to the process of reaching agreement on revision. In his interview with Koster, Paul-Boncour "brought up article 19 and said that it might perhaps be feasible to agree on possibilities which this article might offer for any wishes for revision".<sup>28</sup> Koster went on to mention "I had the impression that he would offer least resistance to an exchange of views between the Powers on expanding article 19".<sup>29</sup>

Lord Tyrrell, the British ambassador in Paris, in his dispatch to Simon (May 19) emphasized that the French insistence that the sanctions principle ought to be included in the Pact was their way of seeking a promise from Britain and Italy to apply sanctions against Germany if consultations

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<sup>28</sup>D.G.F.P. no. 217, March 25, 1933. Ambassador in France to Berlin, p. 219.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 219.

during international crises broke down. Tyrrell also noted that the French downgraded treaty revision from being a principle to "methods and procedures".<sup>30</sup>

The British counterproposals of Article 2 expressed the view that they were opposed to the practical application of Article 16 of the Covenant.<sup>31</sup> Tyrrell underlined this in a letter to Simon on May 26:

"We cannot proceed upon the assumption that the future will require Article 16 to be fully used. It is therefore necessary to speak of 'due effect' only in case of need. The French version seems to be more emphatic as far as a definite promise to institute sanctions".<sup>32</sup>

The French response was that in view of the British attitude on sanctions, it opposed unanimity of the Big Four in case of treaty revision but favoured the unanimity of all parties concerned.<sup>33</sup> In other words, France stuck to the stipulations regarding treaty revision of Article 19

<sup>30</sup>D.B.F.P. no. 159, May 19, 1933, Lord Tyrrell to Sir John Simon, p. 265.

<sup>31</sup>D.B.F.P. no. 171, May 26, 1933, Sir John Simon to Lord Tyrrell, p. 276. (Text of Article 2 of British Draft) "The High Contracting Parties in respect of Articles 10, 16 and 19 of the Covenant decide to examine between themselves and under the reserve of decisions which can only be taken by the regular organs of the League of Nations all proposals relative to the methods and procedures calculated in case of need to give due effect to these articles".

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 276.

<sup>33</sup>D.B.F.P. no. 186, May 30, 1933, Sir John Simon to Lord Tyrrell, p. 299.

of the Covenant. With the British unwilling to extend their responsibilities with regard to military sanctions in the case of aggression<sup>34</sup> and the French refusing to budge on treaty revision, the resulting text of Article 2 of the Four Power Pact was in essence meaningless and added nothing new to the concept of treaty revision as enunciated in the League Covenant.

The significance of the suggestions put forward by Mussolini, the French and the British concerning the Four Power Pact for the future security of Poland's western provinces can be shown by examining the reactions of her decision-makers during that fateful spring of 1933. For Joseph Beck, Pilsudski's Foreign Minister,

"The main idea of the Four Power Pact was quite clear and could not be misinterpreted; it was to find a means for settling disputes and friction between the great powers at the expense of the interests of the other countries".<sup>35</sup>

Hence, "Poland could not be the object of any international

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<sup>34</sup>(D.B.F.P. no. 204, June 7, 1933, to Sir Ronald Graham in Rome, p. 326). "We have already assumed obligations of the Covenant and we assumed the obligations of the Pact of Locarno. The obligations which Britain has entered into, we shall strive to perform but our friends on the continent will understand...that it is no part of the policy of Great Britain to assume further and additional obligations of this character. We take our existing responsibilities too seriously to be willing in a light-hearted and speculative fashion to enlarge them".

<sup>35</sup>Beck, op. cit., p. 256.

bargains".<sup>36</sup> As a form of protest Beck on March 24, arranged for his ambassador in Rome, George Potocki, to resign from his post and return to Warsaw.<sup>37</sup> Beck in addition warned Rome, Paris and London that if the Pact were accepted by them, Poland would consider withdrawing from the League. He planned to extend his offensive against the Pact by paying visits to Prague and Belgrade in the attempt to create an anti-Pact coalition. However, due to the successful diplomacy of the French by which they were able to convince the Little Entente that treaty revision would not be imposed upon them by a big-power cartel, Beck decided to drop his plan for a central European tour.<sup>38</sup> The Poles were quite perceptive as to what would happen if the suggestions of Mussolini were put into effect as far as the workings of the League were concerned. This is shown in Beck's interview of June 8, 1933 when he stated:

"Decisions and resolutions of the Council of the League and its organs can have binding power only if a strict observance of the letter and spirit of the Covenant of the League is respected. In case of any anomaly in the functions of the Council of the League, the Polish Government would be forced to reserve to itself an absolutely free hand".<sup>39</sup>

Although the resulting text of the Four Power Pact

<sup>36</sup> Beck, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>38</sup> Pobog-Malinowski, op. cit., p. 533.

<sup>39</sup> Jedzejewicz, (ed.), p. 65.

was harmless as far as the interests of France's allies in eastern Europe were concerned, the fact that she did consider sacrificing their interests, left behind feelings of bitterness and suspicion. This can be shown by the reaction of Colonel Beck at the time of the signing of the Pact (as reported by the Polish Telegraph Agency on June 8, 1933):

"First of all, it should be made clear that any resolutions whatsoever passed, on the basis of this pact which would directly or indirectly concern the interests of the Polish state would in any event have no binding power for the Polish Government. The Polish government did not accept any obligations concerning any kind of collaboration with the bloc of the four states as an international organ. The stand of the Polish government on this matter was clearly stated at the time".<sup>40</sup>

Even the rather innocuous phraseology of Article 1 of the Pact<sup>41</sup> (i.e. "The High Contracting Parties will consult together," "effective co-operation" as well as the promise in Article 2 "to examine between themselves," Article 10, 16 and 19) stirred up fears of a big power cooperation at the expense of the smaller powers of the League. Regardless of this, however, the impact of the initial suggestions and the subsequent negotiations for a Four Power Pact on the European political order leads one to examine the implications on that

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>41</sup> Text of Article I. "The High Contracting Parties will consult together as regard all questions which appertain to them. They undertake to make every effort to pursue within the framework of the League of Nations, a policy of effective cooperation between all Powers with a view to the maintenance of peace".



order in depth.

It has been shown above that from the signing of the Locarno Treaties up to the end of May 1933, i.e. the eve of the signing of the Pact, the leading circles of France and Great Britain were demonstrably sympathetic to suggestions for the peaceful revision of the Polish-German frontier. For the French, the sacrifice of their eastern ally was the price they were willing to pay both in 1925 as well as in 1933 in order to obtain guarantees for her security particularly against Germany. The British were explicit in stating that the problems of Europe east of the Elbe were in reality of no great concern to them. Their horizons, even at the best of times, extended only as far as the Rhine. For both of these states, therefore, the problem of the territorial integrity of the states of eastern Europe was regarded as expendable and was to be used as a bargaining weapon for their own national interests. In other words, they were quite willing to sacrifice the interests of the peoples of eastern Europe in order to appease the German Reich so as to preserve their security and divert German territorial ambitions eastward. In this sense, therefore, one can say with a significant degree of certainty that the Western European powers of Britain and France in point of fact did not regard the principles of national independence and territorial integrity as enunciated in Article 10 of the League Covenant as basic to the aims of their respective foreign policies.

Regarding the principle of sanctions it has been

demonstrated that throughout the early 1930's and during the discussions leading up to the signing of the Four Power Pact, Great Britain had no intention of doing anything concrete if and when faced with the situation of an aggression committed anywhere on the European continent. By persisting to refuse to extend to the French, definite guarantees of immediate military aid in the case of a German attack, the British expressed their disdain for the principle of sanctions even as loosely interpreted as in Article 16 of the League Covenant. The French alone were powerless to act as the policeman of Europe. This was explicitly shown in their responsive to General Kutrzeba's query (see page 41) as to their position in the eventuality of a German invasion of Poland. Also, the Maginot Line mentality of the French military ruled out completely any bold strike for the purpose of punishing a possible German transgression.

Lastly, one ought to consider the effect of the discussions leading up to the Four Power Pact on Article 19 of the Covenant. The proposals of the Italians and the French as well as the cavalier attitude of the British concerning these proposals proves that at one time or another, every member of the Pact was willing to set up a Directory whereby the great powers of Europe would barter away the rights of weaker nations so as to preserve the balance of the European apple cart. Both the French and the British were willing under different conditions to take the decision-making role of the revision of treaties out

of the hands of the League and into a small cartel of self-seeking powers. Surely the question of treaty revision, as far as the vital interests of the eastern European nations were concerned, was the most important international political factor at that time. To render to the League such a blow as to make it a mere rubber-stamp for a small directorate of big powers was in the eyes of many in Europe an undermining of the very international order in which many states on that continent were able to establish themselves as independent entities.

Needless to say, without full British and French support, the League of Nations was a powerless organization. That Japan, the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union were basically outsiders as regards to upholding the League and its principles needs no investigation or verification. With this in mind, one witnesses the sinister but very real fact that the traditional pillars of the League, Britain and France, in fact cared little for the protection of the members' political independence, were either apathetic or powerless to uphold Article 10 and 16 and were quite willing, circumstances prevailing, to disregard the stipulations of Article 19. The result of this as far as the Poles were concerned was that the effective application of the concept that the member states were banded together for the purpose of cooperation and the protection of each other's basic rights as sovereign states, in the end, became a hollow hope and a dismal failure.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE WESTERN POWERS AND THE QUESTION OF GERMAN ARMAMENTS

Connected with the question of treaty revision in respect to territories, was the problem of the restrictions put on Germany's armed forces as laid out in Section V of the Versailles Treaty. For Poland, this question was of the utmost importance to her national security. It was feared that the extreme nationalists, if in power could use a fully armed and mass-mobilized army as a tool to effect territorial revision either through blackmail or by actual use of force. It was in the Polish interest, therefore, to prevent the rearmament of the Reichswehr. Warsaw looked to the British and French to insist on the faithful adherence on the part of Germany to Section V of the Versailles Treaty. When the Western Powers lost interest in compelling Berlin to adhere to this section of the peace treaties, they became severely compromised in the eyes of the Polish government. The failure of the League (it being an instrument of the Western Powers) to effectively halt the secret rearmament of the Reichswehr (after assuming the responsibilities of supervising German armaments in 1926) and its failure to take effective action against Hitler at the time of Germany's withdrawal from the organization proved to Poland that to seek security from the League was a futile gesture.

German rearmament can be traced to the early 1920's. The actual conduct of the Reichswehr and of the Weimar

governments towards their treaty responsibilities can be gauged in the two reports of the Inter-Allied Control Commission (the IACC). The fate of these reports as well as the reaction of the Western powers to them can shed valuable light in the actual situation concerning German armaments.

The first report was issued ironically enough during the Locarno Conference on June 5, 1925. Much to the surprise of many observers, the effect of the report was a formidable indictment of Germany's failure to disarm. Among the violations were the excessive size and military character of her police, the failure to convert industrial production in certain factories to nonmilitary purposes and the stockpiling of excess weapons and strategic materials. In addition, the report criticized the revival of the pre-war General Staff which was forbidden by the treaties, the use of civilian aircraft for military purposes, the military training with the use of fire-arms not authorized by the Peace Treaties as well as the short-term enlistment of volunteers and the military activities of the Freicorps.<sup>\*</sup> The report made reference to an unending series of obstacles put by the German authorities in order to hamper the IACC in the conduct of its investigations.<sup>1</sup> It also delved into the program

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<sup>1</sup>Gatzke, Hans, Stresemann and the Rearmament of Germany Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, p. 32.

\*The Freicorps were right-wing private paramilitary organizations which consisted for the most part of veterans of the war and were noted for their anti-Polish sentiments and their vociferous opposition to the Versailles Treaty system.

of secret rearmament on the part of the Reichswehr and the German industrialists. German industry was capable of producing "quickly and in large masses, the war material which the country was lacking".<sup>2</sup> It singled out specific factories and the quantities and types of military stores that had been discovered in them. In an interview many years later, Alfred Krupp said that he was requested by von Seeckt and the Reichswehr "to keep my shops and personnel in readiness if the occasion should arise for armament orders later on".<sup>3</sup> He also mentioned that some of the basic principles of design for such forbidden weapons as tanks had been worked out as early as 1926. The report called the Reichswehr "an army of cadres" which could draw on large reserves from short-term volunteers, auxiliary police and the Freicorps. It gave the names of places and dates where Freicorps members had been given military training by the Reichswehr. It concluded by charging the German army as well as the government of complicity in these illegal activities.<sup>4</sup>

The second report was completed during the middle of July, 1926. It repeated fundamentally much of what was revealed in the first report. In addition, it stressed the fact that the German police force exceeded the 150,000 limit

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<sup>2</sup>Gatzke, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

and considered it as a semi-military outfit. It objected to the dominant position of General von Seeckt, to the use of dummy tanks in army maneuvers and the use of light machine guns for cavalry and the flight training of officers.<sup>5</sup>

These reports proved beyond a doubt that the Berlin government had no desire to comply with the arms restrictions put upon it by the victors of Versailles. Instead, after Locarno, Stresemann constantly made reference to his desire that the IACC terminate its functions on German territory. He looked forward to the day when Germany could achieve full legal equality of arms with Britain and France and be accepted as a big power. The rebuilt German army would be a symbol of Germany's greatness and an instrument for bargaining purposes for territorial revision. The Weimar politicians generally desired a return to the status quo ante bellum as far as military strength, international prestige and territorial control were concerned. For Stresemann, during the latter half of the 1920's, the process of Germany's return to a big power status was long and was to be effected through peaceful means as much as possible. This meant cooperation with Briand and the continuation of the spirit of Locarno.

Briand on the other hand after having achieved German voluntary recognition of the Rhine frontier and a British guarantee for the same border felt that to permit the

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

gradual rearmament of a supposedly friendly Germany was not against the interests of France. In reference to the critics of the secret German rearmament program, he expressed his contempt by saying "The petitions of these minor questions ...merely impeded the progress on larger issues".<sup>6</sup> He reacted favourably during a meeting when Stresemann "demanded 35,000 policemen quartered in barracks instead of 25,000, the continuation of the supreme command in the Reichswehr and freedom in the training of our troops".<sup>7</sup> In contrast to the stipulation that the IACC was to dissolve its activities in Germany only at the completion of the disarmament requirements of Section V, Briand managed to terminate its presence on German soil on January 31, 1926. Henceforth the possibility (which was never utilized) of inspecting German armaments could only be effected by the League Council by unanimous agreement. After Locarno, Germany became a permanent member thus assuring herself that in the slight change of such a proposal, her veto would be adequate to stop further action in this respect.<sup>8</sup>

Western acquiescence to German rearmament continued into the 1930's. So much so, the British and the French still under the spell of Locarno finally terminated, in June of 1930, the allied occupation of the Rhineland.<sup>9</sup> At

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>8</sup>Machray, Robert, The Poland of Pilsudski, 1914-1936

/ London: Geo. Allen and Onwin Ltd., p. 230.

<sup>9</sup>Korbel, op. cit., p. 264.



the same time, the Reichswehr continued its expansion unhampered. This can be shown, for example, by the increase in its expenditures. In the fiscal year 1925-1926, the total spending for the German army was 633,000,000 marks. The costs climbed steadily. In 1926-1927 the figure was 704,000,000; in 1927-1928, 769,000,000; in 1928-1929, 827,000,000 and in 1934-1935 the figure jumped to 894,000,000. The average per year per soldier expenditure was the highest in Germany (7,486 Swiss Francs) in comparison to Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and Poland.<sup>10</sup>

By 1932, the Western powers became concerned over the rise of the more radical form of nationalism in Germany and the gradual shift towards the more blatantly revisionist Right. The German National Party assumed power during this time under the Chancellorship of Heinrich Brüning. The British and French became anxious as to the future of world peace at a time of deep social unrest and the spread of extreme nationalism and fascism throughout Europe. They decided, therefore, to call a Disarmament Conference in February of 1932 in order to try to stabilize and reduce armaments.

Throughout the summer and the early part of the autumn of that year, the conference delved into a number of disarmament plans all of which were either rejected or

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<sup>10</sup>Litauer, S, "The Role of Poland between Germany and Russia", International Affairs, vol. 14 (September, 1935), pp. 663-4.

shelved. The Germans came to the conference seeking the Western stamp of approval (or the legalization) for their rearmament program and the recognition of their right to equality of arms. This was opposed by the French who by now were disillusioned with the Locarno strategy and were worried over events in Germany. They demanded some guarantee (which was not forthcoming) for their security as a form of compensation. As a result, a deadlock resulted and Brüning decided to take Germany out of the Conference in September of 1932.

This event shook the Western participants of the Conference. The British began a strategy to get the Germans back into the discussions and by December, they managed to do so, by gathering together the major powers of that Conference i.e. France, Britain, the United States, Germany, and Italy in a top-level meeting in Geneva (December 5-11, 1932). Out of these discussions, an understanding was reached which became labelled as the Five Power Declaration.

During the discussion leading up to the declaration, the French sought to extract from Norman Davis, the American delegate, a promise to agree to a consultative pact in which case the five signatories would promise not to aid an aggressor and the European signatories would assume "more precise obligations in a definite pact of mutual assistance".<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Woodward E. L. and Butler Rohan, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Second Series, volume IV, 1932-1933, London: H.M.'s Stationary Office, no. 202, December 2, 1932, Record of a conversation between Mr. MacDonald, Sir J. Simon and M. Paul-Boncour, p. 311.

The armies of these last mentioned signatories would be standardized. The Americans, by promising to consult with the other signatories during cases of aggression, would be legally affirming that in a way they would be morally obligated to take steps to aid a given victim of aggression. A day later (on December 3), Davis informed MacDonald that he had decided to reject the plan.<sup>12</sup> This had to be so, since the United States during this era could never have agreed to a pact which would suggest some implicit obligation moral or otherwise to be dragged once again into European entanglements.

The French in their attempt to secure some sort of guarantee from Davis were still groping in the seemingly endless dilemma of security vs. disarmament which plagued all attempts at an agreement over disarmament. They were under pressure from MacDonald and Simon to relent on Germany's demand for armament equality. This, they finally were willing to do but on a limited and provisional extent. This becomes evident in the discussions between them and the Germans and British in Geneva. The latter demanded a more detailed convention spelling out the method by which the principle of equality would be applied. The French resisted. They argued that "the object of the meeting was not to substitute themselves for the (Disarmament)

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., no. 205, December 3, 1932, Record of a conversation between Mr. MacDonald, Sir John Simon and Mr. Norman Davis at Geneva, p. 313.

Conference. They had neither the right nor the power to do that".<sup>13</sup> By stalling on the application of the equality principle, Herriot and Paul-Boncour hoped that sometime in the future they could somehow obtain security commitments from the "Anglo-Saxon" powers in exchange for the actual realization of German arms equality. At that time, however, they were aware that these powers were not responsive to French security requests. In other words, France regarded this question as a bargaining process, but at the time the ingredients of a full bargain were not present.

Nevertheless, the Five Power Declaration recognized the moral right on the part of the German government to rearm, on condition that this principle be fitted into the context of "a system which would provide security for all nations".<sup>14</sup> Germany was thus partially successful in exacting this concession from her former victors. This was largely due to her propaganda campaign which stressed that the Versailles Treaty was basically unjust and that she was not responsible for the outbreak of World War I. She also claimed that the Versailles Treaty morally obligated the other powers to disarm under a general disarmament convention which would in effect result in a substantially smaller disparity of armaments between the Western powers

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., no. 211, December 6, 1932, Record of a meeting of the Five Powers at Geneva, p. 338.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., no. 220, December 11, 1932, Sir John Simon to Lord Vansittart, p. 377.

and herself. As a result of this agreement, Germany consented to return to the Conference.

The reaction on the part of the Polish government to this agreement was one of apprehension. It interpreted the recognition of Germany's right to have arms equality as a culmination of a policy of the West which tacitly approved of (or at least was unconcerned over) the secret German rearmament programme. It regarded this as a violation of Section V of the Treaty of Versailles and deplored the Western attitude on this question. The Poles feared that since the French had conceded to Germany the moral right to rearm, they would in future negotiations ease their insistence on sanctions in order to accommodate Anglo-American and League public opinion. Being conscious of the attitude of the British and Americans on the question of sanctions, they sincerely feared that the conference would disregard the security apprehensions of many Frenchmen and eastern Europeans and increase the danger of German revisionism.<sup>15</sup>

The final act on the question of German armaments occurred on October 14, 1933 when Germany walked out of the Disarmament Conference. This occurred on the same day as her withdrawal from the League.<sup>16</sup> The implication was

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<sup>15</sup>Beck, op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>16</sup>Kuzminski, op. cit., p. 133 [This was told to the Polish Ambassador in Paris, Alfred Chlapowski, by Lord Tyrrell.]

that Hitler had decided to achieve arms equality without British and French assent. The main reason for this decision was German opposition to the procrastination at the Conference in the application of the equality principle. The French and British reaction was essentially passive because their public opinions were opposed to the use of force against Hitler.<sup>17</sup> Instead they decided to continue with the Disarmament Conference.

The significance of the Western response to Hitler's decision of October 14 ought not to be underestimated. It proved that the League being dependent on Britain and France was powerless to prevent Germany from withdrawing from its membership. The Western Powers had tolerated the Reichswehr's rearmament program which contradicted their moral obligations to the League. Germany withdrew without carrying out its international and League obligations to disarm. A state's withdrawal from the League according to Article 1, paragraph 3 could only be effected when "its international obligations and all its obligations under this Covenant shall have been fulfilled at the time of its withdrawal".<sup>18</sup> Germany had declared her intention to work for territorial revision. Because the Western powers acquiesced to the idea of territorial revision and were tolerant in regard to German rearmament, the League (acting as their

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>18</sup>Zimmern, op. cit., p. 512.

instrument) was not in a position to take effective steps against Hitler. It was unable to provide Poland with the necessary security to make her feel safe within her own borders. For Warsaw, therefore, the application of the collective security principle had proved to be an unfulfilled promise. The result of this realization led to a search on the part of Marshal Pilsudski and his advisors to provide Poland with a substitute for the security factor of the League. It was found in the form of direct dealing with Germany.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE ROAD TO BERLIN

The Polish decision to undertake a direct approach to Berlin came about in stages. Poland, being a staunch supporter of the French policy to mold the League into an effective weapon of the new international order, was visibly shaken by Briand's volte face at Locarno with respect to the German question. The Poles quickly became aware of the new situation which arose after Locarno and realized that the element of security which was previously found in the Polish-French alliance was steadily decreasing and that the possibility of League reform (re:the sanctions principle) was indeed a dim one. Hence, after the assumption of power by Marshal Pilsudski in May of 1926, the Polish government began to look for new solutions in the quest for security of their state. They commenced to think in terms of sending out feelers in the direction of Berlin in order that eventually some kind of meaningful rapprochement could take place. Unfortunately, however, this strategy proved to be fruitless due to the unwillingness of Germany to cooperate in such a venture.

Germany after Locarno was diplomatically in a far stronger position than at any time since her defeat in 1918. She had become a permanent member of the League Council, her reparations burden was substantially lessened due to the Dawes Plan and the control over her armaments was lifted by the dissolution of the IACC. She was able therefore to



continue to rearm her armed forces without the constantly troublesome spying activities of the IACC. investigator teams on her territory. The Western Powers took a sympathetic attitude towards German territorial grievances although during the 1920's they refrained from going so far as to actively aid Germany in any actual transfer of territories along that country's eastern borders. Stresemann in his relations with the West was able to attain a secure western flank in order to obtain more room for manouever in the east. The groundwork for his Ostpolitik was laid, in the initial stage, in the 1922 Rapallo agreement with the Soviet Union. That agreement was extended after Locarno in the Berlin treaty of April 1926. Russo-German cooperation involved important military, trade and technical exchanges as well as Soviet support for German territorial grievances towards Poland. In point of fact during the discussions leading up to the Berlin Treaty, Stresemann and the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Gregory Chicherin discussed the possibility of concerted frontier claims against Poland by both powers.<sup>1</sup>

The significance of Rapallo and Locarno was that Germany had achieved either the benevolent neutrality or the active cooperation of the major powers in her propagandistic campaign against the Polish state. Hence, she saw virtually no possibility of ever reaching a bargain with

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<sup>1</sup>Hans, Roos, A History of Poland, New York: A.A. Knopf, p. 127.

Poland by a process of give and take. Instead, she looked ahead to the steady attainment of her objectives vis-a-vis Poland by taking advantage of the diplomatic isolation of the Polish state. With this background in mind, one can fully understand that when Pilsudski sent his economic advisor Herman Diamand twice to Berlin in the summer of 1926, when he himself tried to reach an understanding with Stresemann in Geneva in December of 1927<sup>2</sup> and when he used Prince Michael Radziwill as a personal emissary to Stresemann while the latter was recuperating on the Riviera in 1928,<sup>3</sup> the German Foreign Minister showed himself to be completely unreceptive to these feelers. He was too well aware that Pilsudski was attempting to bargain on equal terms when in point of fact, the Polish government was in a position of relative inferiority.

The effect of the failure of Pilsudski's new approach towards Berlin in the era of Locarno was that the Polish government was caught diplomatically in a pincer movement from the west (Germany) and the east (the Soviet Union). The attempts to improve the League had failed and France herself valued her alliance with Poland much less than it was desired in Warsaw. The result for Poland was a standstill. She had no choice but to continue her previous policy of supporting the French alliance and the League of Nations

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>3</sup>Gasiorowski, Stresemann and Poland after Locarno,  
p. 314-5.

knowing full well that the security factor in this context was something less than adequate. The Polish government to an extent had to save face by putting on the pretence that in fact the Versailles Treaty system was substantially in a healthy state. In the meantime, as mentioned above, it strove to convince the French to return to their pre-Locarno policy of opposing Germany and of upholding the interests of her eastern European allies. All this while, the Polish state was waging a fierce tariff war with Germany and was the object of an increased revisionist campaign which was evident under the governments of Curtius and Treviranus in 1929-1930.<sup>4</sup>

The pincer which Poland found herself in the immediate post-Locarno years was markedly loosened from 1929 onwards. To a significant extent, this was the result of a reorientation of Soviet foreign policy. By this time, Stalin had entrenched himself as undisputed ruler of the Bolshevik state. At the same time, the Soviets became embroiled in Far Eastern problems first with the Chinese and later with the Japanese and were also experiencing serious internal economical difficulties.<sup>5</sup> The Soviet dictator realized that his state needed a stable western flank in Europe in order to deal with these questions.

An added element of insecurity was Germany. The

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<sup>4</sup>Roos, op. cit., p. 128.

<sup>5</sup>Jan Librach, The Rise of the Soviet Empire, New York: F.A. Praeger Pub., p. 60.

Russians were growing suspicious of their German partners since the death of Stresemann in October of 1929. This apprehension was increasingly evident from 1931 onwards. The Soviets much preferred a diplomatically estranged Germany reliant on them for political support. Behind these suspicions was the fear that eventually the Western powers would draw Germany closer to them in order to create an anti-Soviet alliance.<sup>6</sup> A consequence of these apprehensions of "capitalist encirclement" was a shift in tactics towards Germany. This can be seen in the resignation of the pro-Rapallo Commissar Chicherin and the appointment in June of 1930 to his post of Maxim Litvinov. Litvinov felt unsure of Germany since her foreign policy oscillated between close relations with Russia and France.

Ostensibly, Germany's foreign policy was equivocal but in fact it was centered on her desire to acquire as much territorial gains as possible and to reduce as many countries in that part of the continent to the state of satellites. Hence her movements from France to Russia were motivated by the hope that either one or the other would aid her in these grand designs. A pro-French policy could possibly extract certain concessions in eastern Europe as a price for continued recognition of the territorial status quo in western Europe. A pro-Russian policy, on the other hand, could possibly lead to a division of Eastern Europe

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<sup>6</sup>Korbel, op. cit., p. 260.

into two spheres of influence.

As part of the Soviet policy to secure a stable western flank, Litvinov in this 1930's version on peaceful coexistence, favoured close relations with Paris.<sup>7</sup> By drawing closer to France, the Soviets were initiating a mock encirclement of Germany which would induce that country to reduce their ambitions in eastern Europe and to desist (as the Soviets imagined) from joining in any hostile alliance against them. The increase of German power in that part of the continent was regarded with hostility in Moscow since it added to the fears for the security of the Soviet state. Within this context, the Kremlin was highly critical of the anti-Communist views of the ruling right-wing parties such as the German National Party and their Ostpolitik ambitions. Hence, as a result of the equivocal internal situation in Germany in the late 1920's and early 1930's, the fear of a joint anti-Soviet alliance of Germany and France, German ambitions in eastern Europe as well as the instability of the Far Eastern situation, the Soviet government saw in its interests to normalize its relations with its western neighbours.

This normalization at first took the form of negotiations for a general declaration against war i.e. as a means of solving disputes, with the western neighbours. At the same time, the Chinese under Chiang-kai-shek were increasing

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 260.

their pressure against the Soviets in northern Manchuria and along the Chinese Eastern railway.<sup>8</sup> The result of these talks was the Litvinov Protocol of February 1929 which was eventually signed by the governments of the Soviet Union, Poland, Rumania, Latvia and Estonia.<sup>9</sup> No further serious moves were made towards normalizing relations with the western neighbours. Later in 1929, a short military campaign on the part of the Soviets managed to regain the 1927 losses in northern Manchuria and along the Chinese Eastern Railway.<sup>10</sup>

By the end of 1931 the situation in this area had markedly altered. In March of that year, the Japanese had initiated an invasion of Manchuria. They rapidly occupied the whole of the province and they set up a puppet government under the nominal leadership of the last Chinese emperor Henry Manchu. As a result of the unsettled situation in the Far East, as well as the increasing dilemma regarding Germany, the Soviets once again put more emphasis on securing a stable western flank. As part of this policy, they began negotiations with the Poles in October of 1931. These talks were successful and they culminated in a non-aggression treaty which was initialed in January of 1932. In that same year, pacts were signed with Finland, Latvia and Estonia.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Librach, op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>9</sup>Korbel, op. cit., p. 242.

<sup>10</sup>Librach, op. cit., p. 64.

<sup>11</sup>Librach, op. cit., p. 62.

The Pact with the Soviets gave Poland a stable eastern flank for the purpose of dealing more effectively with the rising revisionist campaign of her western neighbour. As a demonstration of his new found confidence, Marshal Pilsudski ordered troop concentrations around East Prussia in March of 1932. This action was intended not only as a show of strength but also as a warning to the more virulently revisionist and adventuristic German political figures that the Polish government had no intention of surrendering their territorial rights in the disputed areas. He also sent in the Polish destroyer, the *Wicher*, in July of 1932 into the port of Danzig ostensibly to demonstrate Poland's rights to represent Danzig in foreign relations by hosting a visiting British destroyer.<sup>12</sup> However this action was widely interpreted as Pilsudski's answer to the rising anti-Polish campaign within Germany and the accompanying German-provoked disputes which Danzig was having with the Polish government.

Despite these somewhat provocative acts of the Polish authorities vis-a-vis Danzig and Germany, the Poles were still well aware that their diplomatic position in Europe was not the best to be in. With the normalization of relations with the Soviets achieved, Marshal Pilsudski desired a solution to his dilemma with Germany. During the years from 1926 to 1933 he saw no improvement in the French policy towards Germany and the Polish-German border. The possibility of a

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<sup>12</sup>Roos, op. cit., p. 129.

betterment of the security of the Polish state by means of France and the League was indeed slight. However, the assumption to power by Hitler radically altered the situation. For the first time, Pilsudski saw the possibility of actually attaining that security by direct dealings with Germany. The resurrection of the idea of a detente with Berlin had its beginnings in the Westplatte crisis of March 1933. The Westerplatte dispute arose as a result of the decision of the Danzig authorities to abolish the Hafenpolizei on February 15, 1933. This force established in 1921, was responsible for its activities to the League-sponsored Harbour Board, a mixed body consisting of six Danzigers, six Poles and a neutral chairman. In place of the Hafenpolizei, the Danzig government created their own port police, the Schutzpolizei, which was directly responsible to that government.<sup>13</sup>

The Poles became concerned over the new state of affairs and were disturbed over a number of incidents involving Polish ships in the Danzig harbour.<sup>14</sup> On February 20, the Polish Commissioner to Danzig, Casimir Papee, submitted two protests, one to the city government and the second to the Harbour and Water Communications Board. The first protest criticized the change in the harbour, maintained that the Schutzpolizei was incapable of dealing with the security of ships<sup>15</sup> and demanded its dissolution. A second protest was

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<sup>13</sup>Machray, op. cit., p. 318.

<sup>14</sup>Jedrzejewicz(ed.), op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 48.



presented to the Harbour Board suggesting that it form its own harbour police which would be responsible to the commander of harbour pilots (a neutral appointee of the Board). The protest repeated the demand for the dissolution of the Schutzpolizei.<sup>16</sup> The events in Germany added to the already emotionally charged atmosphere. At the time of the Danzig dispute, an election was taking place in Germany and anti-Polish statements were common occurrences. Hitler, while campaigning, crossed into East Prussia, on March 4th, and made a very provocative revisionist speech in Konigsberg.<sup>17</sup>

After waiting for three weeks for some action on the part of the League in regard to the harbour police, Pilsudski decided to retaliate by sending in a destroyer, the Wilja, to the Polish arms depot near Danzig at Westerplatte on March 6th. The Wilja transported the Marine Infantry Battalion in order to reinforce the Polish unit stationed there.<sup>18</sup>

As a result of League decisions of 1921 and 1924, Westerplatte was lent to Poland as a transit military depot for munitions which would later be transported further inland. It was fortified, and it contained a dock and some warehouses in which munitions were stored. There was a guard of ninety men<sup>19</sup> consisting of two officers, twenty

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>17</sup>Machray, op. cit., p. 318.

<sup>18</sup>Beck, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>19</sup>Machray, op. cit., p. 318.

NCOs and sixty-six soldiers.<sup>20</sup> The Wilja, in addition to the battalion of one hundred men, transported to the depot, machine guns and other weapons together with forty cases of explosives weighing 1,720 kilograms. The reinforcement was described as temporary.<sup>21</sup> The ostensible reason was that the Poles had learned that certain Freicorps organizations in the city were planning to seize the depot.<sup>22</sup> Papee informed Helmer Rosting, the League High Commissioner, of the Polish initiative a day before (March 5th) in the hope that the latter would give his assent.<sup>23</sup> On March 6th, Papee informed Rosting of developments, assured him that the Polish reinforcement of Westerplatte was a temporary action and that no Polish troops would enter the city itself.<sup>24</sup> The Danzig government lodged its protest on the same day.<sup>25</sup>

Rosting in turn informed the Danzigers that the Polish action was done without his approval<sup>26</sup> and in a letter to Papee demanded the reestablishment of the status quo at the depot, giving the Poles twenty-four hours to act. Papee responded by objecting to the passage in Rosting's

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<sup>20</sup>J.B. Mason, The Danzig Dilemma California: Stanford University, p. 209.

<sup>21</sup>Jedrzejewicz (ed.), op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>22</sup>Beck, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>23</sup>Jedrzejewicz (ed.), op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>24</sup>Machray, op. cit., p. 319.

<sup>25</sup>Jedrzejewicz (ed.), op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

letter concerning Danzig's claim to the harbour police. He also objected to the offensive and undiplomatic tone of Danzig's protests concerning this incident. The matter was referred by Rosting on March 9th to the League Council at which meeting Beck declared his intention to attend.<sup>27</sup>

The Polish decision to reinforce its garrison at Westerplatte was criticized by the Western powers. They warned Pilsudski that he was "playing with fire". Sir John Simon, the rapporteur of the Council meeting, was regarded by Beck as his "chief opponent besides the Germans".<sup>28</sup>

The reaction of the German government was mild under the circumstances. In fact, the Poles believed that after March 9th, Berlin put pressure on the Danzig authorities to adopt a more moderate and conciliatory tone.<sup>29</sup> Pilsudski, in his action directe at Westerplatte, sought to determine the Western position on the application of decisive measures against Hitler as well as to probe Germany's state of military readiness.<sup>30</sup> He realized, however, that no positive action was forthcoming from the League's chief supporters, Britain and France. Due to this situation, Beck at Pilsudski's insistence decided at Geneva to reach a compromise with the

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>28</sup>Beck, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>29</sup>Machray, op. cit., p. 318, Pobog-Malinowski, op. cit., p. 551 and Beck, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>30</sup>Beck, op. cit., p. 22.

Germans by which the Poles would reestablish the status quo at Westerplatte while Danzig would recreate the old Hafenpolizei.<sup>31</sup> The significance of the Westerplatte incident on future developments was twofold. It provided the Poles with one more example of the unwillingness of the League 'establishment' to act effectively against the growing threat of Hitler. It also convinced Pilsudski of the necessity to continue with the precedent set at Geneva and to enter into direct talks with Berlin on questions covering a broader range of subjects than the ones discussed at Geneva in March of 1933.<sup>32</sup>

Pilsudski first decided to make contact with Hitler in the beginning of April 1933. Initially, he thought of sending Jan Szembek, the Undersecretary of State on a mission to Berlin. He insisted on seeing Hitler and avoiding the Auswartiges Amt (the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs) since the latter was intensely Prussian-oriented and anti-Polish.<sup>33</sup> However, he discovered from his envoy in Berlin, Alfred Wysocki, on April 6th, that an interview with Hitler had to be arranged through the A.A.<sup>34</sup> Two days later, the Poles were informed that Hitler, because he was in the process of consolidating his power,

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>32</sup>Jedrzejewicz, (ed.), op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 71-72.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

did not feel secure enough to face the Polish minister in an interview. This was evident in the April 8th telegram of Wysocki:

"Hitler, busy with the reconstruction of Germany, intent on filling old offices and beset with struggles within the ranks of his own party and the government, might not be ready to make any declaration with regard to Poland since this might put a weapon in the hands of right-wing elements and compromise him in the court of public opinion".<sup>35</sup>

Hitler maintained this position throughout the month of April. Wysocki, realizing Hitler's predicament, suggested in a letter to Beck on April 9th that it would be advisable to limit discussions to the Danzig question. Beck, a week later, informed Wysocki that he, instead of Szembek, would be the one who would confer with the German Chancellor. He suggested that Wysocki press Hitler to renounce German interference in the political affairs of Danzig and that Hitler issue a public declaration respecting Polish rights and legal interests in that city.<sup>36</sup> Later, Hitler informed Wysocki through his Director of Protocol, Count Bassewitz, that he was ready to see him on May 2nd.<sup>37</sup>

In the Hitler-Wysocki meeting, the Polish envoy brought up the question of Danzig. He mentioned that the Nazis in that city were clamoring for an Anschluss with Germany but he conceded that he could "not find any con-

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp. 73-74

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

firmation of these threats in the personal pronouncements of the Chancellor".<sup>38</sup> He repeated Beck's instructions regarding a communique which would be issued by Hitler respecting Poland's rights and interests in Danzig. Hitler answered by affirming his fidelity to the Versailles Treaties and Poland's rights according to these treaties in Danzig.<sup>39</sup> He believed that the creation of the Polish Corridor was a mistake and was an impediment to good Polish-German relations. He stated his opposition to war and his willingness to respect the rights of the Polish minority in Germany and Poland's right to exist as a sovereign state.<sup>40</sup> He also mentioned what he regarded as the threat of Bolshevism to Europe.<sup>41</sup> He was to return to this theme again during the autumn negotiations.

With respect to Danzig, Wysocki presented his draft for a communique, part of which went as follows:

"...reckoning with the situation created by the negotiations, the Reich Chancellor is against such activity which would be directed against the rights and just interests of Poland in the Free City of Danzig".<sup>42</sup>

He also suggested that the note state: "the peaceful

<sup>38</sup> Polish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Polish White Book (henceforth referred to as P.W.B.) (New York: 1940) p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> P.W.B., p. 12.

<sup>40</sup> Jedrzejewicz(ed.), op. cit., Document 11, p. 78.

<sup>41</sup> Korbel, Poland Between East and West, p. 281.

<sup>42</sup> Jedrzejewicz, op. cit., Document 11, p. 78.

intentions of the Reich Chancellor towards Poland".<sup>43</sup> At the conclusion of the meeting, Hitler told Neurath to draw up the communique. In it, Hitler declared his intention to respect the Versailles Treaties and he "expressed his wish that the two countries should dispassionately examine and handle their mutual interests bilaterally".<sup>44</sup>

Wysocki suggested to Neurath that the note ought to be communicated to all units and organizations of the Nazi Party. The latter agreed but stated that the communique ought not to be issued by the government itself, since it would "give the impression of acknowledging some uncommitted wrongs".<sup>45</sup> Neurath then suggested another draft which Wysocki rejected as being without substance and containing "nothing but a series of empty statements".<sup>46</sup> This Wysocki interpreted as the work of the A.A. which sought to water down and belittle the significance of the latest development in Polish-German relations. The next day Wysocki at Beck's behest lodged a protest at this change of the communique on the part of Neurath, mentioning that the changes "totally altered the desire expressed by the Chancellor for a deten in mutual relations".<sup>47</sup> He insisted that the original

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<sup>43</sup>P.W.B., p. 13.

<sup>44</sup>Jedrzejewicz, op. cit., Document 11, p. 79.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., Document 11, p. 79.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., Document 11, p. 79.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., Document 12, p. 80.

meaning be retained. To this the A.A., at Hitler's insistence, finally relented. The key sentences of that communique as issued by the Wolff Press Agency were as follows:

"The Reich Chancellor stressed the firm intention of the German government to keep its attitude and its conduct within the limits of the existing treaties. The Reich Chancellor expressed the wish that both countries might review and deal with their common interests dispassionately".<sup>48</sup>

In a speech, to the Reichstag on May 17th, 1933, Hitler continued this line of thought by promising that "no German government will itself break an agreement which cannot be suppressed unless it is replaced by a better".<sup>49</sup>

The Polish decision, in the beginning of April 1933, to send an emissary to parlay with the Reich Chancellor occurred, at the same time when the Western powers were considering methods for the establishment of a big power directorate within the framework of the Four Power Pact, in order to preserve ostensibly the peace of Europe. The Poles, in this manoeuver, managed to extract from Hitler his recognition of the validity of the Treaty of Versailles and his peaceful intentions towards them. In this way they hoped to stabilize, to a degree, relations between the two states and to halt the German revisionist campaign. The event set the precedent for further discussions which the Poles hoped

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<sup>48</sup>D.G.F.P., Series C, Volume I, Memorandum by the Foreign Minister, May 2, 1933, p. 367.

<sup>49</sup>P.W.B., p. 15.



would lead to a general detente in Polish-German relations and de-escalate the disputes relating to the Polish-German frontiers.

The next significant event in the new epoch of German-Polish relations occurred after Germany's withdrawal from the League in October of 1933. The Poles by this time were completely convinced that there was a definite gap in the security factor affecting their western frontiers. They waited for almost a month for the West to react in a positive fashion to Hitler's withdrawal from the League and the Disarmament Conference. As a result of the League 'establishment's' inaction on this question, Marshal Pilsudski decided to pursue the matter of a detente with Hitler.

In his pursuit of security for the Polish state, he sought to extract as much as he could, in the way of concessions from the German Fuhrer. In particular, it was initially his hope that Germany recognize formally the inviolability of the Polish-German border. This was his maximum demand and which, under the circumstances, would have completely solved the problem of security along the Polish-German borderlands.

The belief that the League was no longer an element of security and the feeling that a substitute in the way of a direct Polish-German agreement was the only other practical alternative available can be found expressed in the statements of Poland's political elite. For example, Beck in one of his discussions with Miedzinski, the editor

of the semi-official Gazeta Polska in November 1933 stated that on the matter of security, the Western Powers had a written guarantee in the Locarno Treaties by which Germany recognized the Rhine frontier. On the other hand "nothing is obligatory for the Germans towards us, from the moment of withdrawal of Germany from the League".<sup>50</sup> In his memoirs, Beck returned to this theme:

"I saw that my imperative task would be the strengthening of our own Polish policy as the reassurance of security given to us by the international institutions was becoming gradually less and less solid".<sup>51</sup>

This belief was also expressed by the Polish Foreign Minister to the British Ambassador during a discussion on the Polish-German talks in the latter part of 1933.

"We entered these negotiations only at that time when it turned out that there would not be any collective progress amongst the interested states which one would have had hoped for".<sup>52</sup>

Beck's chief delegate at the League, Edward Raczyński, manifested a similar attitude in his comment on the League's collective security capabilities:

"Few illusions are left to us here, respecting the possibilities of improving the present situation as regards international security".<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup>Pobog-Malinowski, op. cit., p. 554.

<sup>51</sup>Beck, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>52</sup>Kuzminski, Poland, France, Germany 1933-35, p. 137.

<sup>53</sup>Machray, op. cit., p. 316.

His conclusions on this matter were identical with Beck's:

"Poland lost her guarantee which Geneva gave her...she was compelled to undertake, under circumstances which did not give such a guarantee, direct negotiations with the Germans".<sup>54</sup>

During a policy strategy meeting with Lipski and Beck on the eve of the former's interview with Hitler, Pilsudski outlined what he believed were two theoretical methods at obtaining security. One was through the League of Nations and the other was through an understanding with one's enemy. Since Germany was no longer a League member, the former method was useless. As a result, the latter alternative was the one with which Poland ought to concern herself. Lipski was to ask Hitler whether the latter desired to remedy Poland's security problem not only for the present but also for the future. The implication was a long term non-aggression pact in contrast to a communique which was rather ephemeral. As an added inducement, Lipski was to make a veiled threat at preventive war by suggesting that if Germany was adverse to such a pact, Pilsudski would be forced to damage relations with Germany "by reinforcing Poland's defensive measures".<sup>55</sup>

Lipski's interview with Hitler and Neurath took place on November 15. This rather late date was partially the result of Hitler's reticence on account of a general referendum on German foreign policy dealing with Germany's

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<sup>54</sup>Kuzminski, op. cit., p. 137.

<sup>55</sup>Jedrzejewicz, op. cit., pp. 96-97.

withdrawal from the League. Lipski conveyed to the Reich Chancellor the above mentioned instructions. In his reply, Hitler reaffirmed his acceptance of the existence of the Polish state, and expressed his belief that the Versailles settlement was unfair but not alterable by means of force.<sup>56</sup> He alluded to a possible bargain by which Germany would receive the Corridor while Poland would have a carte blanche in Lithuania.<sup>57</sup> He repeated his opposition<sup>58</sup> to war and his fear of Bolshevism.<sup>59</sup> He also expressed his peaceful intentions towards Poland and France.<sup>60</sup> At Lipski's suggestion, Hitler agreed to the publication of a communique concerning his peaceful intentions.<sup>61</sup> That communique was issued by the Wolff agency on the same day and it read as follows:

"In the presence of the Foreign Minister, the Reich Chancellor today received the Polish Minister who was paying his first visit. The conversation regarding German-Polish relations resulted in the full agreement of both Governments in the intention to take up the questions affecting the two countries through direct negotiations and also to renounce any use of force in their relations with each other to consolidate peace in Europe".<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>P.W.B., p. 17.

<sup>57</sup>Jedrzejewicz, op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>58</sup>P.W.B., p. 18.

<sup>59</sup>P.W.B., p. 17.

<sup>60</sup>P.W.B., p. 18.

<sup>61</sup>P.W.B., p. 19.

<sup>62</sup>D.G.F.P. Series C, Vol II, no. 69, Nov. 15, 1933, p. 129, n. 2.

The first stage of the Polish-German discussions dealt with the German draft for the non-aggression agreement. This began when Neurath handed Lipski his draft on November 27th. The Germans insisted that the agreement be termed a "declaration" (Erklärung) rather than an outright "pact". This was so since the implication of the word "Pact" for Germany was that there were no vital conflicts of interest between the contracting parties. The Polish desire to use the word "pact" was an attempt to secure from Hitler a de facto recognition of the inviolability of the borders. To this the Auswartiges Amt could not agree.<sup>63</sup> Hence one understands their choice of the term "declaration". In effect, the A.A. was saying that force would not be used to solve their mutual disputes, but that differences as to national interests still existed.

In the draft, there was provision for the settlement of disputes either by bilateral talks or by arbitration. Specifically, arbitration procedures were to be the ones drawn up at Locarno and in the Kellogg-Briand Pact. Lipski in a letter to Beck (November 30th) objected to the fourth paragraph of the proposed agreement, which sought to bind the parties to seek solutions to all contentious issues

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<sup>63</sup>In an unsigned memorandum (D.G.F.P. Series C, Volume II, no. 77, pp. 139-141) objection is made to the standard form of a non-aggression agreement, i.e. a pact "...a bilateral non-aggression pact between Germany and Poland. Even if it were concluded as a pure non-aggression pact without reference to territorial questions would doubtless be looked upon internationally as the relinquishment or at least a substantial weakening of the position taken by Germany, thus far with regard to the eastern boundaries".

either through conciliation or through the above mentioned general arbitration agreements, since it could be used by Germany for the purpose of raising questions relating to minorities and border changes.<sup>64</sup> The retention of paragraph four of the pact would have been a tacit admission on Poland's part that its western boundaries were subject to revision. In addition, Germany with the non-aggression agreement attained, could conceivably institute a new revisionist campaign without her being accused of provoking a conflict.<sup>65</sup>

The discussions henceforth were conducted between Lipski and the Director of the Legal Department of the A.A., Friedrich Gaus. The first meeting between the two occurred on November 20th. Gaus, who tended to favour the Kellogg Pact, understood Lipski's insistence on instituting modifications of the Polish-German Arbitration Treaty of Locarno, if and when that agreement would be included in the declaration. This was due to the fact that Locarno was linked to the League and Germany was no longer a member.<sup>66</sup> The discussions were postponed until the middle of January between which time the Poles had the opportunity to draft their own

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<sup>64</sup>This is substantiated by a German Foreign Office memorandum (D.G.F.P. Series C, Volume II, no. 81, p. 145). It mentions that paragraph four gives the "expression to the idea that the declaration is to provide a basis for the solution of all problems, including therefore the territorial problems".

<sup>65</sup>The full text of the German draft can be found in D.G.F.P., Series C, Volume II, no. 81, pp. 145-46.

<sup>66</sup>Jedzejewicz, op. cit., Document 19, Dec. 20, 1933, pp. 115-17.

counter-proposals.

The second stage of the negotiations revolved around the Polish counter proposals. On January 9th, Lipski had a conference with Pilsudski and Beck in Warsaw. In the Polish draft proposals, the Poles restricted the matters which would be considered as applicable for conciliation or arbitration procedures. Specifically, the Marshal insisted that "matters which international law keeps within the competence of states",<sup>67</sup> i.e. questions relating to the minorities treaties and territorial questions, ought to be excluded from the pact. As far as the particular regulations regarding arbitration, Pilsudski was inclined to favour the establishment of procedures on an ad hoc basis, i.e. "in each particular case".<sup>68</sup> However, if the Germans were prepared to reaffirm the validity of the Locarno agreements, he would have no objections to the inclusion of the Polish-German Arbitration agreement.

When Lipski returned to Berlin, he had another session with Gaus (January 16th) who objected to the new Polish restrictions on matters relating to arbitration.<sup>69</sup> This matter was brought up again in a meeting on January 20th when Lipski informed Gaus that Poland was willing to include the Locarno Arbitration agreement but that it ought to be applied on an ad hoc basis. Also, it was not to be

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<sup>67</sup>Lapter, Pakt Pilsudski-Hitler, p. 162.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., pp. 161-62.

<sup>69</sup>Jedrzejewicz, op. cit., Document 20, Jan. 16, 1934  
p. 120.

utilized in all matters relating to Polish-German relations.<sup>70</sup> This again implied Polish opposition to the application of the above-mentioned agreement to questions concerning territories or minorities. In an attempt to convince Gaus of this position, he argued that the clause which stated that "matters which according to international law are left with the competence of states" would prevent Poland from bringing such embarrassing problems as the Jewish minority question in Germany.<sup>71</sup>

Gaus insisted on the German version, but went to make the relevant point that the Locarno Arbitration Agreement could not be applied on an ad hoc basis since this would contradict Article 16 of the agreement.<sup>72</sup> This article made it compulsory for the signatories to submit all relevant disputes to an arbitration board. The problem of arbitration was referred to Hitler, who for fear of being diplomatically isolated within the context of the European continent, due to his withdrawal from the League, agreed to the Polish interpretation concerning the sort of questions applicable for arbitration procedures.<sup>73</sup>

The Declaration was finally signed on January 26, 1934, by Josef Lipski on behalf of the Polish government and Baron von Neurath on behalf of Germany. The agreement

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., Document 23, Jan. 20, 1934, p. 123.

<sup>71</sup>Lapter, op. cit., p. 162.

<sup>72</sup>Jedrzejewicz, op. cit., Document 20, p. 123.

<sup>73</sup>Lapter, op. cit., p. 164.



conceded that arbitration procedures would not touch "those questions which under international law are to be regarded exclusively as the internal concern of either of the two States".<sup>74</sup> The procedure was left deliberately vague but the declaration made reference to the principles of the Kellogg-Briand Pact. It was suggested that the signatories consider two alternatives. Either they would "define more exactly the application of these principles insofar as the relations between Germany and Poland are concerned"<sup>75</sup> or they would set up an entirely new and separate agreement. The declaration would last ten years from the day of the exchange of the instruments of ratification. If the declaration was not denounced by either of the two parties within this period, it would automatically continue to be valid. However, it could be denounced on the notice of six months after the ten-year period.<sup>76</sup>

As a result of the pact, a Polish-German trade agreement was signed<sup>77</sup> as well as an agreement with the Danzig government which regulated and sanctioned Poland's rights in Danzig and the rights of Poles living in the Danzig territory.<sup>78</sup> Hitler promised to abide by his promises

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<sup>74</sup>P.W.B., p. 20.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>77</sup>Machray, op. cit., p. 348.

<sup>78</sup>Mason, The Danzig Dilemma, p. 125.

to treat fairly the Polish minority in Germany. Another consequence of the pact was Poland's decision, in September of 1934, to discontinue her cooperation in her League responsibilities towards the Minorities Treaties.<sup>79</sup> This act was the culmination of a process of alienation and disgust regarding the practical application of those treaties (as mentioned above). The atmosphere of Geneva as far as the Poles were concerned was not conducive to a dispassionate judgment on problems relating to the German minority in Poland. The Polish government felt that it would be far more practical to deal with the Germans directly on these questions, as for instance, in the case of the Westerplatte affair. Other considerations\* (not related to Germany's role in this matter) were involved too in the Polish decision to denounce these treaties. However, this act cannot be completely understood by overlooking the fact that Poland was disillusioned with the League in the conduct of these responsibilities and felt that under the newly created conditions, a direct approach to Berlin was the only feasible alternative left open.

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<sup>79</sup>Gilbert and Craig, (ed) The Diplomats, Vol.II "The Diplomacy of Colonel Beck" by Henry L. Roberts, p. 586.

\*This refers to the danger of the Soviet Union abusing the Minorities Treaties with regard to the Ukrainian and Byelorussian minorities in eastern Poland.

## CONCLUSION

At the conclusion of the First World War, the victorious powers created a system which was based primarily on the Treaty of Versailles. That treaty was aimed principally against the chief defeated power of that war - Germany. Her losses in the realm of territories and armaments as well as her heavy reparations burden were designed mainly to stunt her growth and tip the balance of power in favour of the victorious states. Within this context, it was deemed highly advantageous for France to have Poland annex parts of eastern Germany including the important industrial complex of Upper Silesia. In French eyes, the very presence of an independent Poland was one means to preserve the preponderance of power in the hands of France. To a large degree, Poland owed her existence to the Big Three powers at Versailles and it could be said that the post-war treaties put a stamp of international recognition on the recreated Polish state. Poland, therefore, had a definite interest in the continuance of the Versailles Treaty system. Needless to say, that depended to a large degree on the attitude of the Big Powers towards it, in succeeding years, since they were the architects of that system.

The Versailles "establishment" in 1919, in order to guarantee the continuance of their newly created order, decided not to revert to the practice of forming that kind of alliance as was the case before 1914. Instead, their

decision was to establish an international organization which theoretically would be a meeting place for all states and an institution whereby all would be regarded as equals. In reality the League's purpose was to protect the new order and as a result, under the guise of internationalism, the old alliance system was resurrected after the war. The concept of collective security became, therefore, a weapon of the victorious powers and its meaning was twisted to serve their interests. That meant that the collective security instrument was directed against a potentially revanchist Germany. This interpretation of the concept of collective security served the interests of Poland since she was, as mentioned above, a creation of the Versailles Treaty settlement. As long as that interpretation of the purpose of the League was accepted by the international community, as long as the League basically remained an anti-German alliance, Poland felt reasonably secure within her western boundaries.

However from 1925 to 1933, it became increasingly evident that something was amiss in the international community. For reasons explained above, the chief supporters of the League, Britain and France began to waver on their attitude towards the German question. It has been shown that at Locarno they downgraded the status of the German-Polish boundary by permitting Germany to pursue, in an unhampered fashion, a noisy revisionist campaign inside and outside the confines of the League. Both France and Britain during this period shied away from promises relating to

immediate military aid to Poland in the event of a German invasion. In this way, they showed their disregard towards the concept of territorial integrity and national independence as expressed in Article 10 of the Covenant and towards the concept of aid to states which are faced with an aggression emanating from another state, as expressed in Article 16. Behind these stances was the feeling which was prevalent in the West that Germany ought not to be regarded as an international criminal and an outcast from the family of nations. In keeping with this attitude, Germany was in 1927 invited to accept membership not only in the League Assembly but also as a permanent member of its Council.

The significance of all this was that Germany was no longer treated as a potential enemy of Britain and France. These countries by granting the various concessions to Germany, ranging from reparations to armaments, strove to make her a kind of partner within the community of Big Powers. The effect of the Locarno strategy towards Germany was that the League 'establishment' ceased to treat Germany as the chief threat to the peace of Europe. Hence that organization no longer fulfilled the role of an anti-German alliance. It ceased to be an instrument of the Versailles Treaty system when its chief supporters allowed Germany to disregard Section V of the Treaty of Versailles relating to armaments and permitted her to abuse the Minorities Treaties. It also became apparent, in the spring of 1933, that the League's chief supporters were ready to disregard the spirit

of Articles 10, 16 and particularly Article 19 relating to treaty revision in the realm of territories within the context of central Europe. The Poles needed no more proof that the League was finished as an anti-German alliance and as an instrument of the Versailles Treaty system. So it seemed in any event to Marshal Pilsudski and his advisors. This meant of course that the function of the League, as viewed by the Poles, as a protector of Polish national interests in particular pertaining to the Polish-German boundary had come to an end.

The original concept of collective security as a potential weapon against the German Reich was undermined in 1925 and during the succeeding years afterwards was not replaced by another. The failure of the anti-German alliance left a vacuum in this respect, which as we well know now, had such tragic consequences. Instead, what replaced it, was an overbearingly pro-German attitude which sought to concede to that state, all of which she demanded. The League's chief supporters, Britain and France, took that attitude in order to preserve the peace, regardless of whether or not the legitimate interests of other states were treated on an equally favourable plane. A major problem in this respect, therefore, was that the Western powers swerved from a demonstrably anti-German stance towards the opposite end of the pendulum. Their fear of Germany and their own internal problems prevented them from steering a middle course, a course which would have possibly re-established the basic

idea of collective security as propounded by its intellectual founders before and during World War I. That they took the course they did, became detrimental to the security of the smaller states and later to their own security as well.

The course of events as it affected the purposes of the League and the concept of collective security was vividly perceived by the Polish government. If anything, the trend of international politics in the early 1930's as it related to the German question convinced Marshal Pilsudski that Poland was turning into an outcast. She was viewed by the Western powers as uncompromising and stubborn as regards armaments and territorial revision.

No Big Power treated the preservation of the Polish-German boundary as part of its national interests. Within this context, both Britain and France were eager for a volte-face on the part of the Pilsudski government if only to redirect German ambitions eastward. Japan and the United States were unconcerned over European events partially because of their geographical remoteness. Italy showed her true colours in regard to territorial revision during the discussions leading up to the Four Power Pact. Lastly the Soviet Union embroiled in a dispute over Manchuria with Japan and still willing to cooperate with Hitler despite the liquidation of the Communist party in Germany, expressed no desire whatsoever of assuming the role of the altruistic crusader in the defence of the Versailles settlement. No major power anywhere on the globe was willing to assume

the role which France played in the early 1920's, that of restraining German ambitions. The League, needless to say, being merely the composite of a number of independent states was powerless to act decisively against Hitler. This became evident when the policy of appeasement, with its antecedents at Locarno, became the only answer which the Western powers, as the main pillars of the League, could offer to the challenge which Hitler presented to the international order. With this in mind, one may conclude that in 1933 no international system and no major power was at all interested in preserving the Polish-German boundary.

Marshall Pilsudski and his entourage saw this clearly. They also realized that there was no other viable alternative left by which to effectively protect the Versailles Treaty system. No mythical alliance of east-central European states such as, for example, one between Poland and Czechoslovakia, could have effectively prevented Hitler from reaching his objectives. No collection of weak middle-sized states such as Poland and the Little Entente could have done much in the way of maintaining the integrity of Article 10 of the Covenant.

The unfortunate effect of this was that Poland felt herself exposed to the whims of the appeasement-minded policy-makers of the West and hence sensed herself abandoned by the international order. Pilsudski concluded, therefore, that Poland had no choice but to reach some sort of detente



with Hitler. The chief reason was to prevent a situation whereby Poland could have been the sacrificial lamb which could have been offered to Hitler by the Western powers in order to preserve their own national interests. In this sense, therefore, the Polish-German Non-Aggression Pact symbolized Poland's plight in the realm of international politics in the early 1930's. Because the Pact ought to be understood in that light, it is advisable for the present-day analyst who does possess the vantage point of hindsight not to be too critical of Marshal Pilsudski for his decision to make contact with Hitler in the autumn of 1933. This approach can only be taken when one analyzes the dynamics of European politics in that era and the policy choices which were available to the Pilsudski government. At that juncture, the analyst tempers his innate moralist frame of mind into one which appreciates the complexities of the situation as it existed during the time when the Polish-German Non-Aggression Pact was signed.

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