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LEBENSRAUM: THE IDEA OF EMPIRE

CONTENTS

Department of History

Lebensraum: The idea of empire Meredith Blake Lentz

Alexander Herzen: A study Jacqueline Long

Submitted as a Master's Paper
in the
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Woods College of the University of North Carolina
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LEBENSRAUM: THE IDEA OF EMPIRE

by
Meredith Blake Lentz

Submitted as an Honors Paper
in the
Department of History

Woman's College of the University of North Carolina
Greensboro
1959

Approved by

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PREFACE

This work is submitted in partial fulfillment of a Program

Wars of religion, of alliances, of rebellion, of aggrandizement, of dynastic intrigue or ambition-- wars in which the personal element was often the predominant factor--tend to be replaced by frontier wars, i.e., wars arising out of the expansion of states and kingdoms, carried to a point as the habitable globe shrinks, at which the interests or ambitions of one state come into sharp and irreconcilable conflict with those of another.

Lord Curzon

In the Collective Relationships of mankind ruthless aggression must be encountered by resolute defense; and the impulse of dominion must be resisted, if slavery is to be avoided. A sacrificial submission to a ruthless antagonist may mean a noble martyrdom if the interests of self alone are considered. But if interests other than those of the self are sacrificed, this nobility becomes ignoble "appeasement."

Reinhold Niebuhr

The title of this paper is "Lobengramm: The Myth of Empire," which refers to the novel which was published in 1888. The word Lobengramm, which is a German word and is a term applied to a number of issues dealing with the conceptions of the nature and role of the German "race" and the destiny of the German state. Basically, Lobengramm refers to the belief that, since the Germans were a great and numerous people, they deserved to control a much greater geographic area, that Germany was overpopulated in relation to her soil. The usual claim made by apologists was that Germany possessed something like 6.5% of the world's area and about 4%

PREFACE

This work is submitted in partial fulfillment of a Program of Honors Work at the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina. In reading for this paper, attention has been centered to the greatest possible extent upon the study of the documentary records of the Nazi Era as found in the captured German Archives and printed by the governments of France, Great Britain, and the United States following World War II, and in the records of the trials of the Nazi war criminals.

Consideration has also been given to secondary material, both that covering the entire period of the paper in general and that dealing in a more detailed manner with the various parts of it-- for instance, with the economic phase of Nazi aggression. However, because of the limited time available, obviously no claim for completeness of coverage can be made, especially with regard to periodical literature.

The title of this paper is "Lebensraum: The Idea of Empire," and the subject is the course which this idea has taken within recent German history. The word Lebensraum translates into English as "living space," and is a term applied to a complex of ideas dealing with certain conceptions of the nature and role of the German "race" and the destiny of the German state. Basically, Lebensraum refers to the belief that, since the Germans were a great and numerous people, they deserved to control a much greater geographic area, that Germany was overpopulated in relation to her soil. The usual claim made by apologists was that Germany possessed something like 0.5% of the world's area and about 4%

of the world's population. Hence, the demand for "living space". It was feared that the "race," being cramped and confined in a space unworthy of it, might decline to the point of extinction.

The space was to be obtained through an extension of German influence throughout East Central Europe, an area including Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and the rest of the Balkan Peninsula--a large region holding the Baltic nations at one extremity and the islands of Greece at the other. The area is central because it constitutes the amorphous dividing line between Western and Eastern Europe; it is Eastern in the sense that the average observer is oriented geographically from a Western European viewpoint.

In the Nazi era Lebensraum meant the belief that all racial Germans, being the main bearers of civilization, should unite into a great industrial nation, while the surrounding spaces, inhabited by inferior Slavs, owed its "masters" a living by serving them as an agricultural hinterland. In another sense, Lebensraum is a Germanic "Monroe Doctrine," a belief in German predominance over her neighbors and an unwillingness to allow any other power to challenge this predominance. It was this milder form of the concept which figured in the Mittleuropa schemes of World War I. But as a Nazi rationale for aggressive expansion, Lebensraum was the corollary of the Aryan race theory, the belief that the German "race" was superior to all others and hence predestined to rule. Lebensraum was the major slogan of the Nazi propagandists to excuse further expansion after the partition of Czechoslovakia marked the surrender to Reich control of the most important peripheral settlements of Volksdeutsche, of racial Germans.

Lebensraum has its ties in German tradition reaching back into the Middle Ages. It combined romantic and nationalist appeal with the authority of a semi-scientific basis drawn from racist and geopolitical thought. The concept achieved the position of a major tenet of German nationalism due to the humiliation of the Versailles Peace Treaty ending World War I and was part of the official dogma of the super-chauvinistic National Socialist Movement.

The aims of this paper are, after a brief outline of German aggression in the period before World War I, to concentrate upon the strategy and methods--military, political, economic, and ideological--utilized to this end by the Third Reich; and secondly upon the diplomatic ramifications of these aggressions on the major powers. Finally, Nazi techniques and objectives--including the concept of Lebensraum--are illuminated by specific focus on Hitler's destruction of Czechoslovakia and Poland.

For his aid and guidance in compilation and writing, special thanks are due to Dr. Lenoir Wright, and also to Miss Marta Nahikian whose timely typing contributed to this paper in a most concrete way.

April 30, 1959

Meredith Blake Lentz

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THE LEBENSRAUM CONCEPT AND ITS ANTECEDENTS

PART I
THE LEBENSRAUM CONCEPT AND
ITS ANTECEDENTS

The concept of Lebensraum, or "living space," is a central theme in the ideology of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime. It is a concept that has its roots in the writings of Friedrich Ratzel, a German geographer and anthropologist. Ratzel's theory of "Lebensraum" was based on the idea that a nation's power and survival depend on its geographical expansion. He argued that a nation must acquire more territory to support its growing population and to ensure its long-term survival. This concept was later adopted and expanded upon by Hitler, who saw it as a necessary condition for the survival and growth of the German nation. He believed that Germany needed to expand its territory to the east, into Eastern Europe, to provide living space for its people. This concept was a key element of Nazi ideology and was used to justify the aggressive foreign policy of the Third Reich.

Herbert R. Goldhamer, *Adolf Hitler: The Man and His Rise to Power*, New York: Harper and Row, 1947, p. 178.

PART I

THE LEBENSRAUM CONCEPT AND ITS ANTECEDENTS

When, in the 1930's, the shadow of Adolph Hitler fell across the East-Central European "shatter belt," and a radical National Socialism rose up to do battle with its neighbors, these phenomena were no drastic new departure in German development. If one could only have read the signs aright, the seeds lay deeply embedded in the history of Germany and of Europe, in one sense being as old as the struggle between Teuton and Slav, and in another sense as new as integral nationalism. This dynamic expansionism was European nationalism reaching its logical but demonic conclusion--proud, total, brutal--the evolution of a master race demanding a master destiny, a place in the sun, a Lebensraum.

The temptation to expand must have come easily to the German State, a highly organized, homogeneous "island" with few fixed natural borders to contain its population. Eastern Europe, moreover, was soft, a weaker, relatively backward area of conglomerate nationality, into which the Germans had for centuries been filtering, founding numerous linguistic islets within the formless eddies of the surrounding population. Germany has been aptly designated the "land without a back."¹ If to these geographic and ethnological conditions are added a radical nationalism smarting under a sense of humiliation, a military race accustomed to win and ashamed to be defeated,

¹Derwent S. Whittlesey, German Strategy of World Conquest (New York: Larrar and Rinehart, 1942), p. 172.

a machiavellian civil government and a pseudo-scientific racism, the results are perhaps inevitable.

Since the expansionism of Twentieth Century Germany is the abortive development of German nationalist sentiment, it seems logical to search for its roots in the movement for political unification. The country was ripe for nationalism when Napoleon I appeared and triggered its outbreak. But unlike the other European national units, Germany had an additional problem. There was a disparity between the location of German racial stock and the areas of German political administration: The wider the Volk were scattered, the harder it would be to collect them all into one common fatherland. Conservative Austria advocated a large Germany, a Gross deutschland; but Prussia, jealous of her prestige and power, sought to create a Kleindeutschland, a small Germany totally under the hegemony of Berlin. Therefore, in 1871, there came to be two "German" powers. Bismarck, a Junker, had worked, not for the ingathering of the Volk, but for the glory of the Hohenzollern crown.

Even before 1871, there were some radical nationalists who looked beyond the limits of Bismarck's Kleindeutschland to the vision of a racial German state. There were also a few isolated planners who saw that a unified Germany could exploit immensely rich economic opportunities in the East Central European hinterland. The first of these planners was Friedrich List, who visualized a balanced central European economy integrated by a well planned transportation system and drawing upon the common cultural, political, and economic institutions of the area. Since the world's colonies were preempted, Germany must seek hers upon the continent. Even

in Austria, the Schwarzenberg cabinet advocated a Central European customs union in order to save the dying Empire.

But the idea of a Lebensraum, always complicated by the patchwork of mid-European races and nationalities, lapsed after the Grossdeutsch defeat of 1871. Demanded by a few scattered voices in the wilderness, the idea lived only in intellectual tradition, in the universities and in student societies, until World War I. It did not succeed until it could rally behind itself the awful dynamism of an offended German nationality.

But the idea lapsed. Nor is this lowering of the German national horizon very strange:

The Second Reich of Bismarck and William II had many hopes, but a recreation of the Holy Roman Empire was not one of them. A random sampling of scholarly and more popular histories published in Germany between 1897 and 1910 illustrate how the vision of the medieval Reich had faded.... These confident examples of the Wilhelman era...at best bespoke a philistine sense of security in the political and cultural achievements of their times. The historical process that would lead to reorientation and reevaluation was to begin at a later date.²

The idea of a large national Germany possessing economic hegemony over Central Europe ran counter to the politics and diplomacy of the times, and was submerged except for two threads of thought. Some Austrian sentiment remained in the labors of the demagogue Freiherr von Schönerer; and among the Reich-Germans Paul de Lagarde campaigned for "a strange mixture of Prussian dynastic conservatism, anti-semitism, and radical nationalism."² Lagarde was virtually

² Henry C. Meyer, Mittleuropa in German Thought and Action (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1955), p. 28.

³ Ibid., p. 31.

ignored until the Nazi era, while Schönerer's social and economic proposals were too liberal for the conservatives, his anti-semitism offended the Liberals, and he was precluded by the polygot nature of the Austrian Empire from too great an emphasis on German nationalism. The movement died out, but not before it had had its effects upon a young Austrian named Hitler.

So the German people were split into Reich Germans, Viennese, Sudeten, Alpine, Styrian, Carinthian. Since both the Hapsburgs and Bismarck were suspicious of nationalism, and since public opinion was largely disinterested, it fell to numerous private societies to keep the Lebensraum idea alive. These school, defense, and patriotic societies, of which the Pan-German League was one, were propagandist, middle-class advocates of the ingathering of all racial Germans, and of the economic, political, and military expansion of the fatherland.

Although the Prussian government repudiated the national and racial claims of the extremists, it did acknowledge its economic interests in Eastern Europe. There the interests of Germany and Austria ran parallel, and the commercial antagonisms of the 1870's led to a halfhearted consideration of a customs union, a scheme which lost out to a policy of protectionism. But

as a commercial power, Germany often became a creditor of those nations to which she exported large amounts of goods. In the light of her vigorous internal activity and growth, she pursued a remarkable energetic policy of foreign lending. In the Age of Imperialism capital was not entirely a fluid agent following the promise of greatest return. It functioned as well to strengthen the national state, became its instrument of domination in smaller or underdeveloped nations, and reinforced the diplomatic system to which its nation of origin belonged. In Germany there were indeed "two needs for every Mark." More than in England and France, the German government was able to influence the trend of German foreign investment

both as to type and destination. The Emperor and Foreign Office were in private and unofficial, yet direct contact with the heads of important banks and commercial and industrial organizations. Consultations were often held on the political significance of loans and investments.⁴

While Central Europe was never neglected as a sphere of German investment, it should be emphasized that Germany was never dominant there. Nor did this region attract more than a small part of the total German investments. By World War I, Germany had invested 24 billion marks abroad, only one-fifth of which were in Central Europe.⁵ This area, moreover, was a source of markets more than a supplier of raw materials, for which Germany depended on world trade. The economies of these smaller nations were not compelled to become subservient to that of Germany. And the volume of trade was insignificant as compared to the total of German world trade, a condition which remained true until the blockade of World War I and until the disintegration of the Empire opened up new possibilities. There is absolutely no sign, despite the popularity of the famous Berlin-to-Baghdad Railroad, that before 1914 there was any plot to link Turkey with Germany by way of some mid-European political or economic scheme.

Those propagandist groups which were interested in such schemes did seize joyfully upon the implications of the Berlin-to-Baghdad Railroad, and an alarmed West watched suspiciously. Among these interested groups was the Pan-German League, a small but active

⁴ Ibid., p. 66.

⁵ Ibid., p. 68.

organization which preserved a slender contact with post-Napoleonic pan-Germanism. Anti-semitic nationalism had been deliberately fanned by Bismarck to obtain support for a state-directed colonial policy; the League also capitalized on these sentiments:

In 1884 the colonial interests in Germany forced the government to undertake a colonial policy officially, but it was felt to be an uphill task. It was out of the movement for colonial expansion that the Pan-German League was born. The League was interested in stimulating that spirit of nationalism in the German people which would back any German anywhere and be super-sensitive to any suspected tarnish on the clear surface of the national honor. Other patriotic societies worked for specific things; acquisition of colonies, enlargement of the navy, national security, German schools abroad. The League advocated all these, agitated for all of them, but strove in particular to inspire in the German people a spirit of nationalism which should always be ready to burst into flame. Because it felt that the only way in which Germany's position as a world power could be advanced was through the support on an intensely nationalist-minded public opinion, the⁶ Pan-German League worked primarily to create such an opinion.

The handbook of the League described its functions in this manner:

It is an organization of all German-minded people...who aim, without respect to the pleasure of the government and the great mass of the people, independent of political parties and factions, to oppose everything which is un-German and to stretch a helping hand to all those Germans, whether at home or abroad, who are oppressed. It believes that the national development of the German people is not completed.⁷

Pan-Germanism was also receptive to the ideas of Gobineau and of H.S. Chamberlain. Thus it incited the populace to antisemitism and to fear of minorities, especially Slavic minorities. One of the early leaders, Franz Hasse, described a national state as one "in

⁶ Wertheimer, Mildred S., The Pan-German League, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), p. 206.

⁷ Ibid, p. 95.

which the boundary lines correspond exactly with the boundaries of nationality, though we consider that a state in which there are racial minorities beside the ruling race, may be termed a Nation-⁸alstaat if it pays no special attention to these minorities."

Considering the scattered conditions of the Volk, such doctrine was inevitably dangerous. It embarrassed the government, and was harmful to Bismarck's policies. The League made far more of a noise outside of Germany than inside. The other super-nationalisms of the world looked suspiciously upon what they conceived to be a plot to control the world, or at least East Central Europe. The League became a major source of anti-German propaganda.

The League's concern for Germans as a race led to an anxiety lest emigrants from the fatherland should lose their national identity. It organized expatriates into community centers and sought to influence the local press and to obtain the sympathies of local leaders. To keep nationals and also German capital under the flag, the League advocated colonies. To promote a proud independence from the world economic order, it advocated autarky.

The League was interested in the economic aspects of das Deutschtum as well as in its racial aspects; indeed, aside from the sentimental satisfaction which the leaders felt in their super-patriotism, an undercurrent of fear seems to have greatly influenced their opinions. "How can the 53 million Germans in the German empire," asks Hasse, "hope to compete with more than 122 million Anglo-Saxons, Yankees, and Russians?" The answer to this question was to be found in the formation of a closed mid-European commercial area, an idea which is reminiscent of Fichte's Geschlossener Handelsstaat. This mid-European plan embraced Germany and Austria-Hungary primarily and was directed mainly against the British Empire, Russia,

⁸ Ibid., p. 97.

and "Pan-America." The idea was nebulous and hazy and the means by which it was to be carried out were limited to a customs' union and closer railway connections....However, it was such a nebulous scheme and the hopes of its fulfillment were so far in the future that the treatment of the whole matter was decidedly academic.⁹

Important as the League was as a forerunner of Nazi expansionism, its influence upon its own times should not be over-emphasized. It was a minority pressure group. The majority were indifferent. The main contribution of the League was its most lasting one, the galvanization of this majority and its education in the passions of super-patriotism. The League spread itself too thin in its wide interest in everything conceivably pan-German, from language reform to foreign policy. Absorbed in broad principles and vague purposes, it never brought its full forces to bear upon the idea of the German Lebensraum. Nevertheless, it laid the ground for a national monomania.

A further development of the Lebensraum concept came during the First World War, which Germany entered chiefly in order to stand by her best ally, Austria. The war was the result, not of any scheme of world conquest, but of the diplomatic bankruptcy of Wilhelminian Germany. It was during the war that Germany was forced to turn away from the Weltpolitik, a foreign policy world-wide in scope of post-Bismarckian policy, to the development of a Mitteuropapolitik. Germany was choked off from the world by the allied blockade:

The Mitteuropa was primarily the result of an accident with delayed, but catastrophic, results. Mitteuropa was the unanticipated product of a total strategic situation that was largely unforeseen by both alliance systems and which the Central Powers were almost completely unprepared to meet.

⁹ Ibid., p. 101.

Seldom have the so-called fortunes of war produced social and economic changes that had such a relatively great effect upon certain nations and peoples within so brief a span of time.¹⁰

The blockade found the Central Powers without stockpiles of food or munitions. The governments therefore began to look eastward, drawn together by feelings of wartime comradeship, urged on by such groups as the Pan-German League, by the importunities of industry pinched for raw materials, and by the pride of the military groups. Annexation became a possible war aim. A German Mitteleuropa was envisioned. This term was never very clear. It meant different things to different groups, picking up various historical, economic, military, and political shades of meaning. After World War I, the term was taken over by the geopoliticians. Mitteleuropa meant different things also to the Slavs and to the Allies, for it was never a plan, but a concept, an idea, and hence complicated and complex.

The expression, Mitteleuropa, gained currence in the German world during 1915; within a year the knowledge and fear of it had entered intimately into the awareness of the Entente people. Subsequently it circulated widely. Few slogans have ever had greater international implications or provoked such strong reactions.¹¹

A practical mid-European plan was impossible due to the diversity in the development of the various regions, to the lack of economic co-operation, to the forcible breakup of the Austrian Empire, and to political jealousies. Only short-range wartime decisions spurred on by patriotic emotionalism made its consideration possible. The idea of a Central European customs union to compensate for the loss of world trade was submitted to the chancellor in 1914 by Walter Ratheneau.

¹⁰ Meyer, op. cit., p. 117.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 2.

It was an economic plan entirely apart from ideas of Pan-German nationalism, which precipitated some discussion and investigation. The idea led finally to an abortive customs union with Austria in October, 1918.

The governments acted from military necessity. The long range planning which resulted in the popular growth of the Lebensraum concept was again carried on by independent patriotic organizations and private persons. Organizations such as local chambers of commerce, the Bavarian Kanalverein and the Hansasbund espoused the idea with greater or lesser degrees of enthusiasm. They constituted sources of pressure upon the governments of both monarchies. Pamphlets, magazines and newspapers propagandized the concept, and by 1915 there was a growing deluge of Mittleuropa writings. Austria took the lead. She was fighting to save her empire, and the economic arguments were her chief pillar.

The scarcity of raw materials and the absence of trade and foreign capital led to internal financial changes. Great changes offer great opportunity. The economic organization of Central Europe, it was argued, would promote the military, political, and economic power and international prestige of the organizers. The modern tendency was towards large economic units, and at any rate the German people could expect to be met after the war with the hatred and economic discrimination of their former enemies. ¹² Would Britain share her Empire? Mittleuropa represented in the eyes of the most idealistic of its

¹² Ibid., p. 163.

supporters much more than "merely a combination of resources and policies, but a creative and productive economic organism greater than the sum of its several parts."¹³

But by 1917, the strength of internal politics proved to be strong enough to outweigh any possible economic advantage which might result from economic union. The vested interests, especially the powerful agrarian Junkers, demanded protection from Balkan competition. As a war measure, Mittleuropa was far more feasible than as a peacetime policy. In terms of normal economic criteria, Mittleuropa was a return to mercantilism in an era of the free market.

The hope of fulfilling the plan lingered in Austria up to the very end of the war. The Hapsburgs were struggling to retain their political control of Central Europe. But as might have been expected, strong support from this quarter merely led to increasing opposition from the Slavic groups. In Austria, therefore, as well as in Germany, the idea was defeated.

Frustrated, many of the Austrian Germans turned to the leadership of a sincere man named Friedrich Naumann. "Both at home and abroad, it was Naumann who gave the Mittleuropa agitation a sense of unity, meaning, and perspective."¹⁴ He was also the chief popularizer of the concept. Theologian, social reformer, student of capitalism, Naumann envisioned a German spiritual union. An economic plan alone was not enough, nor must this union be the exclusive property of one nationality.

¹³ Ibid., p. 163...

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 193...

Conceived in a spirit of tolerance, compromise, and flexibility, and completely devoid of antisemitism, Naumann's Mittleuropa was to be "a superstructure, not a new building."¹⁵ "Mittleuropa is the fruit of war," he said. "We have sat together in the prison of our war economy. We have fought together; let us henceforth live together."¹⁶

Such noble aspirations, of course, were doomed to failure. While they appealed to moderates, Naumann's ideas failed completely to understand the nature of radical nationalism. They were repudiated by both Slav and German. As one cynical critic said, "These are the kind of economic ideas which only a clergyman could produce."¹⁷ Freidrich Naumann, heir to the Liberal tradition, suffered the fate of all European Liberalism in the environs of East Central Europe.

The governments of Germany and Austria, insofar as they were willing to consider a practical Mittleuropa at all, refused to move beyond purely economic schemes. Naumann's influence was not on policy but on public opinion. Allied propaganda seized upon his ideas as proof of German determination to conquer the world. They were also grossly distorted and put into Hitler's service by the Nazi idea men.

But Naumann

gave the Mittleuropa movement a sense of unity and higher purpose...He represented Mittleuropa at its best, as a conviction that out of the destructiveness of war must arise a positive contribution to the future well-being of all the mid-European peoples.¹⁸

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 206.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 212.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 217.

The interest of the governments was due not so much to motives of future control as to the immediate necessities of war. The Mittleuropa concept reached its peak of popularity in 1916, which date was also the peak of military success for the Central Powers. The pan-Germans, understandably, had always opposed Mittleuropa. They advocated annexation and Germanization. These conservatives were talking of Aryan purity and of fulfilling the unification of the fatherland, whereas the advocates of Mittleuropa were Liberals. The idea of Mittelafrika became a competitor, supported by the colonial, export, and shipping interests. Thus Mittleuropa, child of seige and warfare, rose and fell with the fortunes of war.

The last upsurge of enthusiasm was the result of the Paris economic conferences of 1916, where a tightened blockade and stricter control of neutrals were advocated, and plans were made for the economic strangulation of postwar Germany through abrogation of treaties, boycott of exports, and monopoly of raw materials. The West was still suspicious for a long time. Due to a translation lag the decline of Mittleuropa sympathies was not at first noticed.

There was a gradual decline of popular interest. As the war became grimmer, the horizon no longer seemed to be unlimited. At the Salzburg Conference of September-October 1918, a very tame customs treaty was signed between Austria and Germany. Even so, the negotiators were out of touch with the trends of German business. But the idea of Mittleuropa made an impression upon the German national consciousness which was not forgotten.

1916, p. 274.

²Robert Strausz-Mapó, Geopolitics, The Struggle for Space and Power (New York: D. V. Paterson's Sons, 1942), p. xii.

The spatial perspectives of the Nazi era were coming into focus. If, as on this occasion, they ran under the false colors of Naumann's well-known slogan, it was to trade on its popularity and destroy the genuine meaning he had given. ¹⁹

Speaking of the Nazi spatial perspectives, it has been said that ²⁰
 "The key to Hitler's global mind is geopolitics." Geopolitics had been an obscure pseudo-science since the publication of Mackinder's famous book, Democratic Ideals and Realities, in 1919; but during the First World War and afterwards it took root in Germany and grew steadily in popularity, especially within the universities. Geopolitics is the science, not of how to conquer, but of what and why. It is concerned with the relationship of geographical space to political organizations, teaching that frontiers were merely reflections of the current power balance. Frontiers were dynamic, not static. Since there were many types of them, such as ethnic, topographical, economic, linguistic, cultural, historical, military, offensive, defensive, etc., they were not inviolable, but could be changed as desired. There could not be sure peace until one power was clearly so strong that no other could challenge its frontiers. If one may indulge in pat formulizing, it would not be too great an exaggeration to say that geopolitics plus the "superman" or F hrer concept plus racism plus integral nationalism plus the organic state equals Nazi Germany.

In geopolitical theory, it was land power which determined world dominance. The most strategic land area in the world was the so-called Eurasian heartland, centered in East Central Europe and including Russia and Germany. The coastal areas of the world were

¹⁹Ibid., p. 274.

²⁰Robert Strausz-Hup , Geopolitics, The Struggle for Space and Power (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1942), p. xii.

merely peripheral, and whoever controlled this land fortress could rule the world. That this theory was adopted by Germany was a tacit admission that it was really English seapower which had defeated Germany in World War I. A powerful new Germany must consolidate its position for a landward drive against the bases of this seapower.

First economics, then geography, and finally German history fell in behind the new geopolitical theories. They began to have popular circulation, especially due to the propagandist activities of a certain Haushofer.

The geopolitician saw "the political structure of the earth as growing out of stresses between different peoples in the process of settling and occupying their respective territories."²¹ These stresses were aligned along an axis. To achieve its maximum greatness, a state must be completely independent: Economically, by a careful scientific study of surrounding resources, a state might become autarchic, or independent of world trade. This ambition implied a strong government able to reach beyond its own language area and lead its neighbors into economic captivity. Geopolitics posited a sort of "law of enmity between neighbors."²²

The methods of the geopoliticians involved careful study, planning, and organization, "a very exact knowledge of all political, ethnographical, economic, social, military, and naval problems, not only of Europe, but of the whole world."²³ This task was carried on,

²¹ Whittlesey, op. cit., p. 98.

²² Ibid., p. 100.

²³ Ibid., p. 55.

not by German diplomats, but by private persons and organizations, and also by the German secret service. Geopolitics, however, was "not a rigorous discipline, but rather a mixture of science with political aspiration."²⁴ The theories of the geopoliticians, over and above their factual labor, had tremendous influence upon Hitler's theories as expounded in Mein Kampf. Geopolitics started merely as the geographic study of the nation state from the standpoint of foreign policy. The Nazis made it the chief justifier of the German need for Lebensraum.

The concept of a Mitteleuropa and the growth of geopolitics, then, were two results of the First World War. To all practical extent, the Mitteleuropa concept was lost to the German public from 1919 to 1933. The popularity of geopolitics, however, grew strongly during the whole interwar period, and the system was accepted by the geographers in an area or political sense and incorporated into their theories. So matters stood. But the system, if it were espoused by a strong government, would be extremely dangerous, for

in the final analysis, geopolitics is nothing but the idea of imperialist expansion. What little intelligible geography it has retained, as in the arguments for certain frontier rectifications, is neither new nor particularly important within the whole structure. The bulk of geopolitics is a hodgepodge of ethical, military, economic, racial, demographic, historical, and political considerations....

As a scientific justification for expansion, geopolitics is nonsense, of course.... Obviously, the answer does not lie in geography--it lies in power.²⁵

Postwar Germany, defeated, isolated, and disgraced, was certainly not possessed of the requisite power to implement the geopolitical theories.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 77.

²⁵ Franz Neumann, Behemoth, The Structure and Practice of National Socialism (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 147.

The Versailles Treaty which ended World War I, although harsh, was a compromise, for the views of the victors were quite divergent. Both England and France desired to rid Europe of the menace of war; but fearful France desired to hold down her former enemy by force and by economic castration. England returned to her old balance of power policy, stirred by sportsmanlike pity for the underdog, unwilling to take any responsibility for the new order on the continent but willing to let things develop as they would, provided that they did so in a peaceful manner. From 1924 to 1929, the European scene was comparatively tranquil. But then came the Great Depression which weakened the victors, galvanized the vanquished, and released pent-up radical and revolutionary nationalistic passions.

Any German government which kept power would have had to have agitated for the revision of the Versailles Treaty. So much the worse for the victors, for

everything depended on Germany's acceptance of or conversion to a conservative attitude. That sort of acceptance would require, at least during the first phase of two or three decades, a mixture of contentment and impotence. The Treaty of Versailles created a maximum of discontent and an impotence that was only transitory. Whichever way she turned her eyes, towards Poland or Czechoslovakia or Austria, Germany saw grievances which she could only consider legitimate. The disarmament clause, the demilitarization of the Rhineland, and the Little Entente made her temporarily helpless; but they did not weaken her for good and all. Having saved her unity and her industry, she had thereby kept intact the means of recovery. As Jacques Bainville put in a famous phrase, "the Treaty was too harsh for its softer elements, and too soft for the harsher ones!"²⁶

The Versailles treaty not only sought to repress Germany but also to create a new order in the area of East Central Europe. The French Revolutionary idea of political nationalism was imposed

²⁶ Raymond Aron, The Century of Total War (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1954), p. 29.

CORRECTION



***PRECEDING IMAGE HAS BEEN
REFILMED
TO ASSURE LEGIBILITY OR TO
CORRECT A POSSIBLE ERROR***

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upon the Balkan melting pot of nations, a plan which, however well it might have worked in homogeneous Western Europe, wrought only confusion and antagonism in the East. Czech or Polish or Serbian chauvinists, "on account of some medieval victory which should have made some stretch of soil forever theirs, wanted more than they got, while many Germans, Hungarians, and Bulgars were obviously not treated to very much self-determination."²⁷ Nevertheless, the Versailles settlement worked, and the discontents it engendered might have been overcome under better circumstances. But Central Europe, which was an economic whole under the Hapsburgs, soon found itself in the throes of nationalistic excitement. Each small new country made haste to raise its own tariff barriers. Each proudly strove for autarky. A poor peasant country must impose still further poverty upon itself if it is to accumulate enough capital to become industrialized. The Allies, who had their own national interests, were not eager to trade with their step-children. And the Depression was disastrous to their economies.

The weakness of the Central European "shatter belt" left it ready for picking. In Germany, the awareness of Mitteleuropa was not destroyed completely; "the years of economic blockade and ideological isolation; the vast military-geographic panorama opening to the East and South East; the fact of discovering kinsmen in remote parts of the middle-European area, personally experienced by at least a million men: These were events that had made a permanent impression on the thinking and attitudes of Germans at a time of acutely aggravated national sensitivity."²⁸

²⁷ Elizabeth Wiskemann, Prologue to War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 6.

²⁸ Meyer, op. cit., p. 291.

German leaders could not but remember that they had been defeated by superior economic power and by the blockade.

PART II

THE ADVENT OF HITLER:
THE LEBENSRAUM CONCEPT
BECOMES POLICY

CHAPTER I

WESTERN EUROPE BETWEEN THE WARS

The French Alliance System was the cornerstone of postwar Europe. Therefore, an overview of its makeup and administration is quite important to any study of how Nazi aggressiveness penetrated the European scene and sought to dominate it.

Five nations supervised the reconstruction of Europe. Of these, the United States withdrew and Russia was debilitated by the Communist Revolution. The remaining three--England, France, and Italy--were somehow unwilling to assume responsibility either for the preservation of the good or the alleviation of the bad in the Versailles system. No attempt was made to secure the cooperation of Germany, who was left to fester in her own resentment. France's lack of domestic unity, and the fact that throughout the interwar period she was never sure of her wartime ally England, made her an ineffective barrier to the resurgence of German power. There was no unity among the allies, either for the job of keeping Germany down by force as France at first advocated, or for the mediation of European troubles. The potential of the League was in effect left untried.

The primary concern of postwar French diplomacy was sécurité. From 1920 to 1924, it sought to obtain this illusive state by means of strict enforcement of the Versailles system. After the withdrawal of England from continental politics, France was the most powerful European nation; yet even so, fear of Germany became an obsession with her, and security from direct attack, which was guaranteed by the

League, did not seem to be enough. Indirect attack, or aggression, any alteration of the status quo, seemed to be a monstrous omnipresent threat, if Germany were ever to become strong again. All French diplomacy, therefore, was "an attempt to lay the specter of a German revisionist 'explosion' against the established order by assigning superior force to the defenders of the 'law.'"¹ France demanded a physical guarantee of her position. But instead of a permanent military occupation of the Rhineland, which she desired, she was forced by her allies to settle for the demilitarization of that area. Nor would England cooperate in holding Germany down by force, and England was France's most important ally. France felt herself obliged to seek military alliances elsewhere, and the newly established states of Central Europe seemed to offer a desperate chance for building a bulwark to support the status quo. A treaty was made with Belgium in September of 1920, and a Franco-Polish agreement was signed in February of 1921. This marked the beginning of the French alliance system.

Most of the other European powers either ignored the German problem or underestimated it. England even employed a mildly encouraging attitude, real or tacit, towards her old enemy, and in this her policy was mutually frustrating with France's. Versailles to her was not a rigid system but a temporary settlement which would be modified as need arose. Feeling safe, she was willing to pacify and to appease. She soon found herself in the position of mediator between Germany and the French wrath. A moderately strong Germany was to England a welcome bulwark against the insanities of Communist Russia. Aside from Dominion opposition to continental entanglements, Britain also was deterred by a fear that France would become too powerful and

¹ Arnold Wolfers, Britain and France Between Two Wars: Conflicting strategies of Peace since Versailles (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1940), p. 20.

would upset the European balance. It was believed that as long as Germany did not endanger British interests elsewhere, she should be strengthened.

The new nations of Central Europe did not wait for French initiative to organize themselves in support of the status quo. In 1920, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia joined in an alliance called the Little Entente, which was directed against Hungary and the possibilities of a Hapsburg restoration. France regarded her Polish treaty to be the keystone to her alliances, a barrier against Russia and a counter-weight to Germany. She also signed treaties with Czechoslovakia in 1924, Rumania in 1926, and Yugoslavia in 1927. From 1924, France definitely abandoned the attempt to repress Germany by force, and relied on her system of collective security.

In 1925, after the failure of Europe to adopt the Geneva Protocol for compulsory arbitration, France sought to reinforce her position by means of a collective guarantee against Revisionism. Britain, along with Italy, was persuaded to become a guarantor of the Franco-German frontier. In exchange for pledging to recognize her western borders and for negotiating arbitration treaties with Poland, France, Czechoslovakia, and Belgium, Germany received membership in the League and a permanent seat on the Council. These were the Locarno Treaties. Neither England nor Germany nor Poland, however, was willing to sponsor an Eastern Locarno. As a method of keeping Germany within her appointed bounds, therefore, the whole elaborate system was a farce. The "Land without a Back" was not obligated to recognize its eastern frontiers.

The Locarno treaties were not only, in the last analysis, futile. They undermined the League of Nations. They:

contained certain important implications which none of the signatories would have cared to admit, but which became more apparent as time went on. In the first place, there was a tacit assumption that the voluntary endorsement by Germany of her western frontier gave that frontier a more sacrosanct character than had hitherto attached to it, or that now attached to her other frontiers; and this implies that obligations imposed by the Versailles Treaty were morally, if not legally, less binding than obligations voluntarily accepted. Secondly, the readiness of Great Britain to guarantee certain frontiers and her refusal to guarantee others had the practical effect of grading frontiers, from the point of view of security, into first and second class; while the British government firmly protested that all its obligations under the Covenant would be honored, the impression resulting from the Locarno Treaties was that Great Britain was not prepared to take military action to defend frontiers in Eastern Europe. In the long run, the Locarno Treaty was destructive both of the Versailles Treaty and of the Covenant. It encouraged both the view that the Versailles Treaty, unless confirmed by other engagements of a voluntary character, lacked binding force, and the view that governments could not be expected to take military action in defence of frontiers in which they themselves were not directly interested. Ten years later, nearly all governments appeared to be acting on these assumptions.²

From 1930 on, European conditions became more and more strained. The first Nazi victories in the Reichstag came in 1930, and growing German power made the allies, especially France, increasingly nervous. The period was marked by a return to naked power politics. The League Assembly of 1930, which attempted and failed to have the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact incorporated into the Covenant, was the last attempt to find security through international organization. The years 1924-30 marked the zenith of the League's efficiency.

As the League declined, the French alliance system grew more and more elaborate, and at the same time ^{it was} the cause and the effect of the

² E.H. Carr, International Relations between the Two World Wars, 1919-1939, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1947), p. 96.

weakening of that international body. But even as France elaborated her alliance system, in a manner of speaking she spread herself too thin. Her position grew progressively weaker as Germany's grew stronger. In January of 1933, Hitler came to power. On October 14, he withdrew from the League and gave plain indications that Germany was about to rearm. The prewar period had definitely begun.

Its advent, however, was slow and cautious. In June of 1933, on Italy's proposal, Britain, France, Italy, and Germany had signed a Four Power Pact reminiscent of the Concert of Europe. Neither Italy nor England wished to see France or Germany grow too powerful. Since these Big Four seemed to assume hegemony of European politics and implied that revision of Versailles would be considered, suspicion was generated in Eastern Europe as to the true intentions of France, patroness of the status quo. Italy was led by her jealousy of France to sponsor the revisionist countries of Central Europe, Hungary and Bulgaria. Although the Big Four Power Pact was quite innocuous from the standpoint of workability--indeed, Germany and France never ratified it--it paved the way for an important new alignment of power.

The alliance systems which France endorsed in East Europe had a rich potential which they never realized, partly through their own inability to cooperate and partly due to the diversionary activities of Germany and Italy. Each country in the Little and Balkan Ententes had received territory in the Versailles settlement. It was decidedly to their interest to unite in the protection of the status quo. The Little Entente, which included Czechoslovakia,

Rumania, and Yugoslavia, worked so well at its inception that the three countries together almost acquired great power status. The Little Entente, however, was an alliance against Hungary and not against Germany, with whom Italy was prevented from making a settlement because of her endorsement of Hungarian revisionism. The Little Entente was extremely important in the postwar diplomatic scene because

it enlarged France's conception of her own security. She was now definitely committed to the maintenance not only of the Versailles Treaty, but of the whole European peace settlement. It was no longer her concern merely to keep Germany at bay on the Rhine and prevent her from strengthening her position in the east. It became a recognized French interest to support Poland against Lithuania, Czechoslovakia against Hungary, and Rumania against Bulgaria, and even to save her friends from the inconvenience of a too rigorous interpretation of their obligations towards their minorities.³

In 1934, a French-Czechoslovakian-Russian alignment emerged, directed against Germany. At this point French diplomancy made one of its greatest mistakes. German power was definitely on the rise. The year 1934 also saw the Röhm massacres and the abortive coup by the Austrian Fascists, in which Chancellor Dollfuss was slain. Italy saved her protégé then by rushing troops to the Brenner pass in time to prevent a Nazi occupation, and with skill might at that time have been induced to align herself formally with the West against Germany. Instead, however, France chose to concentrate upon courting Russia. This miscalculation had great consequences later. In December of 1934 the West's position on Italy's Ethiopian venture shoved her bodily into alignment with Nazi Germany. France could have solved her problem by a definite alliance with either Russia or Italy. By

³ Ibid., p. 42.

taking half measures, she niffed both possibilities; and her halfway-measures, both in alliance and in application of the League Sanctions, lost to her the possibility of peace.

In February, 1934, also under French auspices, the Balkan Entente was formed by Yugoslavia, Rumania, Greece, and Turkey. It was directed against Bulgarian revisionism as the Little Entente was against that of Hungary. It was never very strong, however, and never had the potential for unity that the Little Entente possessed.

A year later, in February, 1935, the success of the Saar plebiscite gave Nazi Germany a tremendous boost of confidence. In March Hitler openly violated the arms limitations imposed at Versailles, causing Italy to veer slightly to the West again. In April, Britain, France, and Italy united in the so-called Stresa Front whose ostensible purpose was to keep Germany in check and to guarantee Austria. The whole amounted merely to "a spirited display of finger-shaking."⁴

The Franco-Russian pact worked in the long run to the advantage of Germany. It fitted in well with the popular Nazi anti-Communist propaganda. Because Germany could claim that the pact violated Locarno and rendered it void, the way was open for the downfall of the whole French alliance system. By the end of 1935, furthermore, Mussolini was definitely estranged from the West and had begun to cooperate with Germany. Poland, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia had pro-

⁴ John A. Lukacs, The Great Powers and Eastern Europe, (New York: Henry Regnery Co., 1953), p. 51.

German elements in their governments, and these elements were becoming stronger in Hungary, Greece, and Turkey. "By 1936 France could boast of the richest collection of alliances and agreements which any power had ever made since the Emperor Charles VI attempted to safeguard the Pragmatic Sanction and rights of his daughter by paper guarantees."⁵ France found herself losing both the initiative and the moral leadership of interwar Europe.

As Germany gradually assumed the military predominance, she reaped all the benefits of an offensive position. It would have been an impossibly large task to keep a rich and populous Germany in the state of defeat, especially a Germany motivated by a lust for vengeance and organized totally for the recovery of its national prestige. France's halfhearted measures, unsupported by the Allies, were merely salt in the German wounds. With Russia untested, Italy recalcitrant and the League debilitated before the test came, unable to give her Central European allies effective economic aid and unable to complete her alliance chain, France found herself face to face with a rearmed Germany. The only legal excuse for a collective intervention in Eastern Europe would have been under the auspices of the League. The Little Entente had been the League's most enthusiastic supporter. Now the states of Central Europe saw their patroness growing steadily weaker and more remote at a time when there was no one else to rely on. Germany swiftly filled the void left by retreating French influence.

⁵ L.B. Namier, Diplomatic Prelude, (London: Macmillan, 1949), p. x.

France may pride herself for her part in the consolidation of the new and aggrandized states of the Vistula and the Danube during the most difficult period of their infancy. But at the same time she rendered impossible any adjustment or change of the status quo which might have permitted pre-Hitlerian Germany to play a constructive role in shaping a new economic and political order in the East and Southeast and might have given sufficient outlet the German energies to save both the German Republic on the one hand, and the new Slavic states on the other. Instead, a policy of resistance based primarily on military force prepared the way for the aggressive methods and demands of Hitler's revisionist policy and thus contributed to the series of circumstances which plunged Europe into a new and disastrous struggle.⁶

For France, alliance with England was the conditio sine qua non of safety. Therefore, as she began to lose her hold in Eastern Europe, she began to retreat behind the Maginot Line, and to submit more and more to English leadership.

⁶ Wolfers, op. cit., p. 110.

CHAPTER II

EASTERN EUROPE BETWEEN THE WARS

But what of the objective of Nazi aggression, that confused and disunited, backward area known as East Central Europe, the area destined by the Nazi ideology to be the Lebensraum of pure Aryan Germany? "It is clear that the states of the region, certainly singly and perhaps collectively, had only a marginal control over their destiny. Traditionally they have been the objects rather than the subjects of history."¹ Eastern Europe had been the pawn of the Romanov, the Hapsburg, the Hohenzollern and the Ottoman dynasties. Its struggle for autonomy had lasted for over a hundred years, and at last the region was relatively free following domination by the three most autocratic of the great powers in Europe--Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary. Central Europe was the battleground of three cultures: Teutonic, Byzantine-Greco-Slav, and Turkish. Isolated, agricultural, splintered by differences in geography and climate, the void left by the fall of the old governments was glazed over for a time by a thin veneer of parliamentary democracy, which was later displaced by an accelerating trend towards authoritarian government. The heady nationalism of these secession states meant hatred, rivalry, trade barriers, attempted autarky and the frantic stimulation of heavy industry to the additional impoverishment of the peasantry. It was physically impossible in this region to draw boundaries suitable to everyone. The minority problem was a continual bone of contention.

The new nations needed time, but they were denied it. No sooner had they been well established than they were cruelly knocked down by the I C. E. Black, Ed., Challenge in Eastern Europe (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1954), p. 194.

forces of inflation and depression. Furthermore, the ruling classes found themselves confronted by an increasingly dissatisfied peasantry and by the threat of Communism. War, economic crisis, nationalism, parliamentary weakness, reaction against the Left, and old regime influences led to authoritarianism. "The Eastern European states, semi-democratic, semidictatorial, balancing between bankruptcy and future recovery, between socialism and aristocratic-bourgeois traditions, were a brutally realistic mirror of Europe's modern revolution."² The Eastern European nations began well by working among themselves and in cooperation with France. Their hopes were highest when Germany and Russia were weakest. They were in trouble when these two giants grew strong again, and were in real danger when they joined forces. The trend towards authoritarianism did not mean gravitation towards Germany, for in Eastern Europe there was a strong desire for freedom. But in its traditional fear of Russia, red or tsarist, this unhappy region closed a door on itself, a possible way out of its isolation before Nazi Germany. But Western Europe was guilty of the same miscalculation and perhaps the psychology of the times prevented its ever being a real alternative.

But the attempts at alliance should not be played down simply because they failed. The Ententes showed real promise and held their own up to the rise of Hitler. The Ententes were weakest in that they did not include every country in the area. The major stimulus in their formation was not cooperation but fear of their neighbors; they never really transcended the principle of nationality. Nationalism, social dissatisfaction, poverty, anti-semitism, the minority questions, and political instability seemed to be the things which the nations of

² Ibid., p. 147.

Central Europe had most in common. Nazi Germany was able skillfully to manipulate these fears and ambitions to her own ends.

Yet these centripetal forces are not wholly the fault of East Central Europe itself. The Allies had provided the countries with no unifying policy, but merely abandoned them to their own political devices. The League was never permitted to grow into an instrument which could arbitrate with any real effectiveness among them.

Owing to the expanding power of Germany and Russia, and to the growth of revisionism, regional security pacts were popular. Besides the Ententes, Italy, Austria, and Hungary were informally allied under the Rome Protocols of March, 1934. In November of that year Esthonia, Latvia, and later Lithuania formed the so-called Baltic Entente.

Poland was the exception. Like Italy, she was in that amorphous state halfway between major small power and minor great power and terribly conscious of her prestige and independence. Poland believed she was strong enough to take care of herself. When Britain, Italy, France and Germany signed the Four Power Pact in 1933, which seemed to aim at the dominance of the great powers at the expense of the lesser, Poland indignantly asserted her independence by turning away from France and more towards Germany. Hitler at that time withdrew from the disarmament conferences and the League. The German-Polish declaration of January, 1934, was the result. Germany was anxious to break her isolation and to protect her rear if France should attack. The treaty, Hitler's first diplomatic activity, was also an attempt to pull Poland away from France. It "pulled out an

important stone from the postwar structure and unbalanced the whole conception of East European solidarity."³

Germany had a special interest in Poland, not only due to the existence of a German minority under Polish administrations, but because Poland barred Germany's way eastward. The Polish corridor which separated East Prussia from the rest of the Fatherland was an abomination in the eyes of the Germans, as was the estrangement of Danzig and its inclusion within the Polish tariff area. Hitler desired an understanding with Poland to offset suspicions of his aggressive intent, to stabilize his position in case of attack, and as peace propaganda to counteract his abandonment of the League. The signing of the pact creating a ten year truce between the two countries took place quietly, and outside the influence or acquiescence of the League or of France. Upon its ratification the Four Power Pact was dead.

Poland was clearly in a very difficult position and it is hard to understand the attraction of an offer which seemed to promise an alleviation of the German revisionist campaign. The pact served, however, to increase the disunity of Eastern Europe. Although it was the basic intention of the Polish policy to maintain an even balance between its two great neighbors, this agreement served in effect to bring Poland increasingly to a position increasingly paralleling that of Germany. This tendency was heightened when Czechoslovakia, by its 1935 pact with the Soviet Union, came to look eastward for its support. Here again the local Polish-Czechoslovakian conflict became involved in a more extensive and dangerous diplomatic issue.⁴

Poland's border dispute with Czechoslovakia had estranged Poland from the Little Entente, as had her friendship with Hungary,

³ Josef Hanc, Tornado across Eastern Europe, (New York: Grey-stone Press, 1942), p. 127.

⁴ Black, op. cit., p. 190.

another revisionist power. Hungary's policy was similar to Poland's, namely, to play off the various opposing powers to her own advantage.

Austria was also one of the prime areas of early German concern. There can be no doubt that the Austrians basically desired to unit with their kinsmen to the north. Their reaction to the Nazi revolution was not one of repulsion but of imitation. The fascist-type government under Dollfuss was sponsored by Mussolini. Germany sought to influence events through subsidies of money and arms to the opposition groups within Austria, and by such economic pressure as the placing in 1933 of a prohibitive fee on the Austrian tourist trade. The Austrian government retaliated by suppressing the Austrian Nazis in February, 1934. In July, the Nazis attempted a coup which was foiled by Italian resistance. Hitler was forced to be conciliatory until the events of European diplomacy made Italy his ally.

The rise of German power had important repercussions in East Central Europe. For one thing, it stimulated revisionism, except in Soviet Russia, who abandoned her revolutionary agitation to endorse the French system of collective security. Poland drew closer to Hungary, Czechoslovakia to Austria and her other allies. In May of 1935, the Czechoslovak-Russian pact was signed. Russia was hated and feared in Central Europe. Yugoslavia had yet to recognize the Soviet government.

Czechoslovakia's unilateral action was indicative of the fact that the Little Entente was beginning to drift apart. As Germany was growing stronger, the West apparently was growing weaker.

Germany was a valuable market which it would be unwise to offend. The Ethiopian crisis seemed to indicate both the strength of the Totalitarian powers and the dependence of France upon England. In a search for security, the Entente ties were relaxed in September of 1936, so that each member was free to negotiate individually with any other power. The strength of unity which had almost secured great power status for the entente members was allowed to atrophy.

Mention has been made above of the economic nationalism of Eastern European states. Due to their high tariffs and to the Depression, these countries experienced an agrarian crisis of alarming proportions. With a paucity of credit and capital, they needed foreign trade in order to survive. Austria and Czechoslovakia were the only large manufacturing states in the area, and by the end of the depression only Czechoslovakia was economically stable. Austria was kept alive by loans.

Had more liberal trade policies been maintained in the outside world, had emigration been permitted to take its natural course, and had moderate external loans been made available, the price structure would have probably not reached such a critical state. A measure of liberalism on the part of the powerful democracies would have made it more difficult for Germany to increase her economic and political hold over the Southeast European area.⁵

But with the failure of the West to come to the aid of their economies, the nations of Central Europe had nowhere to turn but to Nazi Germany. This was especially true after Italy, financially strained by her Ethiopian venture, was forced to retire from her position as chief rival to France in East Central Europe. By the late 1930's, Germany had cornered most of the Balkan trade.

⁵ Hanc, op. cit., p. 106.

A number of European states created in 1917 did function as buffer states even though the nature of their individual frontiers left much to be desired. They functioned as such as long as the powers which had sponsored their creation chose to maintain them as true buffer states between themselves and the expansionist tendencies of other powers, i.e., regarded these states as in a sense their own frontiers. Unfortunately, the great powers did not do so for very long.⁶

The Cordon Sanitaire was no stronger than all its members individually. It was no barrier to those determined aggressors who envisioned the German Lebensraum.

The only other great nation in Europe besides Germany to stand aloof from the French Alliance system was Italy. Along with France, Italy was Germany's chief rival in Central Europe. She was suspicious of German interest in the Balkans, which she regarded as her sphere, and even toyed with the idea of creating a cordon sanitaire of Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Italy to keep the Nazis in bounds on the East.

England was inclined to be conciliatory because of the danger to her Mediterranean communications with the Empire. France, however, refused to cooperate because Italy was a revisionist power. Consequently Italy's ambition to be a great colonial power remained unsatisfied, and upon obtaining the support of Germany she became more independent of the West. A Franco-British, Italo-German alignment began to emerge. The traditional Italian policy of seeking a few limited aims in conjunction with giving diplomatic support to whichever side was able to offer the most, was thrown over for a policy of wild expansionism; but instead of obtaining the freedom she sought, Italy became lost in power politics and eventually was constrained to bow to Hitler.

⁶ Peter DeMendelssohn, Designs for Aggression, (New York & London: Harper and Brothers, 1946), p. 216.

Germany was quick to recognize Italy's new acquisitions, and the Spanish affair drew them closer. In July, 1936, relations among Berlin, Vienna and Rome were normalized and Italy performed for Germany the service of warding off an Austrian flirtation with the Little Entente. The subsequent treaty organization of Italy, Austria, and Hungary wrecked the last attempt to solidify Central Europe outside great-power domination. Yet Italy was serving what she conceived to be her own interests. She was suspicious of German intentions, and the alliance was more a facade of solidarity than a true partnership. Italy wore herself out in Ethiopia and Spain. Germany became the leader, she the follower.

There is irony in the fact that in September 1939, Fascist Italy with her proudly advertized first-rank-power foreign policy ended up roughly in the same position in which parliamentary Italy had found herself at the beginning of the First World War. Likewise there is irony in the fact that from the summer of 1939 on Ciano developed into a practitioner of the policy of combinazioni--i.e., of trying to reap advantage from maintaining an undecided balancing position in the struggles of stronger powers--a policy which in earlier years Ciano had regarded as characteristic of the weakness of democratic Italy and condemned as undignified and unfitting to the reborn strength of Fascist Italy.

But by the time Italy had returned to her old policy, it was too late. Germany had the field. In November of 1937, Italy had signed the Anti-Comintern Pact; in December she had abandoned the League. In January of 1937, Germany was practically ordered out of Austria; in November Austria was practically given away. In February of 1939, the Italo-Yugoslav front against Germany failed due to

7 G.A. Craig, F. Gilbert, The Diplomats, 1919-1939. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 535.

the fall of Stoyadinovic. By that time Italy was no longer independent. In May, 1939, Italy signed the "Pact of Steel." If Italy had gone with England and France she would have had to have given up her ambitions. So she chose Germany. She gained her glory at the cost of Central Europe and ultimately of her own freedom.

[The following text is extremely faint and largely illegible. It appears to be a continuation of the historical or political analysis, possibly discussing the consequences of the Pact of Steel and the role of Italy in the lead-up to World War II. It mentions various international relations and the impact on Central Europe.]

CHAPTER III

THE RE-EMERGENCE OF GERMANY

The Nazi program for aggression was flexible, well-planned, and deeply rooted in Central European history. The earliest National Socialist platforms called for the reunification of all Germans with the Fatherland, for the recovery of the self-respect lost in World War I, and for land and territory equal to the glory and power of the great German nation. These goals may be called the constants of German aggression.

At first, Hitler was occupied with consolidating his power within Germany and with other internal developments. His foreign policy was cautious and pacific; but it grew more and more open as Germany rearmed. Whereas the means of the Nazi foreign policy were completely opportunistic from the beginning, the end was always in sight, having been formulated even before Hitler came to power. Hitler outlined this end in Mein Kampf. It was world domination. The welfare of the Reich was the summum bonum to which all other considerations were subservient, to which the country's whole resources were to be devoted.

Mein Kampf may be described as the blueprint of the Nazi aggression. Its whole tenor and content demonstrate that the Nazi pursuit of aggressive designs was no mere accident arising out of an immediate political situation in Europe and the world. Mein Kampf establishes unequivocally that the use of aggressive war to serve German aims in foreign policy was part of the very creed of the Nazi party.¹

¹ U.S. Chief of Counsel for the Prosecuting of Axis Criminality, Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression (Washington: U.S. Gov't Printing Office, 1946), Vol. I, p. 644.

One of the strongest influences upon Mein Kampf was geopolitics. The geographical materialism, the struggle--not for class, but for space--the rejection of liberalism, the utilization of a revolutionary dialectic with simple mass appeal, all these are geopolitical cannons as preached by Haushofer and adopted by Hitler. The importance of geopolitics to the development of the theory of Lebensraum has already been mentioned. Also, it is significant that "Hitler found in Geopolitik a coherent explanation as to how world powers had developed in the past and how Germany could assume her place in the historic procession of great states."² It has been said of Mein Kampf that

in a sense this geopolitical "brain trust" for the first time summed up all the German addictions...: the drive for territory, systematic study of regions and races, a "chosen people" complex, a love of war. In so doing, it forged these elements into a weapon of conquest. It is this summing up, this integration of latent forces, that gives geopolitics its effectiveness.³

The influence of geopolitics upon Mein Kampf was direct. After the failure of the Bierhallen-Putsch of 1923, Major General Professor Doktor Karl Haushofer visited the imprisoned Hitler and is said to have inspired Chapter XIV, which "defines the aims of Nazi foreign policy and gives Hitler's own understanding of Lebensraum!"⁴

Mein Kampf investigates the possibilities for Germany of autarky or of an economy dependent upon world trade. Since the one was seen to be impossible and the other spurned as beneath the dignity of

² Whittlesey, op. cit., p. 69.

³ Robert Strausz-Hupe, Geopolitics, the Struggle for Space and Power (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1942), 139.

⁴ Ibid., p. 49.

independent Germany, the answer to which Hitler and the geopoliticians arrived was-- expand. The idea that pure Aryan Germany needed, and was entitled to, a Lebensraum was "the Nazis' most popular apology for aggression."⁵ The Germans were taught to see themselves as the Volk ohne Raum,⁶ the nation without space. "Geopolitik, in its rendering of economics just as in the interpretations of other sciences, functioned as an educational device for conditioning the average German's responses to political leadership."⁷

The Mitteleuropa movement and the Nazi revolution rose from the same general postwar pressures: the desire for economic security, for liberation, to fulfill the historical mission of the German race. But by Hitler's day there were few of the old Mitteleuropa men left. The anti-liberal Nazis envisioned economic domination, not cooperation, and then political conquest of the Central European area. They demanded the economic and national fulfillment upon their own terms. The Lebensraum concept was more than merely, as some would believe, "an attempt to conceal a political and strategic technique for dominating lesser powers."⁸ The concept was the direct ideological impetus behind that desire to dominate, an important idea in the makeup of a regime composed of a weird mixture of ideology and realpolitique. Nazism was the greatly distorted offspring of the movements for Mitteleuropa, for Pan-Germany, and for geopolitics.

⁵ Ibid., p. 99.

⁶ This was the title of a novel by Hans Grimm, an emotional treatment of the geopolitical theories.

⁷ Ibid., p. 99.

⁸ Wertheimer, op. cit., p. 7.

According to Hitler, the prewar German foreign policy was a mistake. Germany should seek power on the continent first, and then the much-desired world power would be added unto her. In the search for this power, German foreign policy was only, in the words of Mein Kampf,

a means to an end, but the end must be exclusively the advancement of our own nationality. No consideration of foreign policy can be guided by any point of view but this: Does it benefit our nation now or in the future, or will it be harmful to it?

This is the sole preconceived opinion permitted in dealing with the question. Partisan, religious, humanitarian, and all other points of view in general are completely beside the point.⁹

Hitler was voicing an old Pan-German tenet. The end justified any means, for the end was glorious. But Hitler saw his aims as a new departure in German history:

We National Socialists consciously draw a line through the foreign policy trend of our pre-War period. We take up at the halting place of 600 years ago. We terminate the endless German drive to the South and West of Europe and direct our gaze toward the lands in the East. We finally terminate the colonial and trade policy of the pre-War period, and proceed to the territorial policy of the future.¹⁰

Hitler further said that

the National Socialist movement must endeavor to eliminate the discrepancy between our population and our area--the latter viewed not only as a source of nourishment, but also as a point of support for power politics--between our historical past and the hopelessness of our impotence today.

For to defend its glorious Aryan race, Germany must not only be able to sustain its people physically, but to protect them; Germany must also be a world power. According to Mein Kampf, "the foreign policy of a

⁹ Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1939), p. 888.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 950.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 940.

folkish State is charged with guaranteeing the existence on this planet of the race embraced by the State, of establishing between the number and growth of the population on the one hand, and the size and value of the soil and territory on the other hand, a viable, natural relationship." The only healthy relationship was the feeding of a great people completely from its own soil. "Only a sufficiently extensive area on this globe guarantees a nation freedom of existence."¹² This is the Nazi theory of Blut und Boden--of race and land.

The ethical and moral justification of German expansion by any means--aside from the Aryan theory and geopolitical dogmas--was the belief, well-founded enough from the German viewpoint, that enemies of the Reich were united to crush the Fatherland and to deny it its rightful place among the nations of the world. The concept of a struggle for existence became the Nazi mandate for aggression: Either exist as a world power or exist not at all. Frontiers were only the reflections of political power. A powerful Germany was a larger Germany, and it was up to the rest of Europe whether the Fatherland was to be allowed to receive its patrimony in peace, or whether blood must be shed. "One must be quite clear," said Mein Kampf, "about the fact that the regaining of the lost regions will not come about through solemn appeals to the dear Lord, or through pious hopes in a League of Nations, but only by force of arms."¹³

¹² Ibid., p. 935.

¹³ Ibid., p. 912.

First the Fatherland must regain its native vitality. Then the ingathering of Deutsche Volk could take place unopposed.

Oppressed countries will not be brought back into the bosom of the common Reich by means of fiery protests, but by a mighty sword. To forge this sword is the task of the domestic political leadership of a people; to guard the work of forging and to seek comrades in arms is the task of the foreign policy leadership.¹⁴

Nazi foreign policy was incalculable and unpredictable. It was a continuation of the Nazi revolutionary techniques in world affairs, and as such it was an erratic crisis policy led mostly by amateurs. As grandiose and frighteningly specific as were the plans of Mein Kampf, their implementation was in many respects almost haphazard. It was definitely not the case that "every military and diplomatic operation undertaken by the Nazis was preceded by a plan of action, and a careful coordination of long prepared plan of aggression."¹⁵ The question to be asked is whether or not the above impressions were created, not so much by the success of prior Nazi planning, as by the Nazis' laying claim to prior successes as the result of the genius of the Führer's plans. Although Lebensraum was planned well enough in broad outline, the methods by which the details were carried out were entirely opportunistic.

In the first place, Hitler suffered from diplomatic schizophrenia. The regular official channels and their personnel were at first preserved almost unchanged; but there existed also a multiplicity of allied agencies outside the control of the foreign minister, and even

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 891.

¹⁵ U.S. Chief of Counsel, op. cit., p. 411.

in addition to these agencies Hitler relied heavily upon personal agents and spies. Business and industrial contacts were utilized by Hitlerian diplomacy. The foreign minister, the officials and career diplomats were kept because they were felt to be useful, although Hitler did not trust them. They often worked in the dark, uncertain of what the official policy was until Hitler himself spoke, often competing with special agents and rival organizations for entirely opposite policies. Frequently several plans were being worked on simultaneously, the adherents of each in ignorance of the others. This state of affairs is especially confusing to observers, for the German diplomatic records reflect neither the full intentions of the Nazi leaders nor the complete story of German diplomatic activity.

There were many agencies outside the Foreign Office concerned with foreign affairs. To name a few of the major ones, the Dienststelle¹⁶ Ribbentrop was Hitler's private intelligence agency and in many ways the real foreign office of the National Socialist Party. The Aussenpolitisches Amt. der NSDAP under Rosenberg never had very much power. The Auslandsorganization der Aussenministerium, or AO,¹⁷ was under Bohle, who froze out several competing agencies. It was also a party device, whose function was to organize all German citizens abroad, to cooperate with sympathizers, and to train teachers and leaders for propaganda work. The object was to hold all Germans together in a united front. Goebbels' propaganda men also had a great deal of

¹⁶ See Appendix for translation and explanation.

¹⁷ e.g.--Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle, Volksbund fuer das Deutschtum im Ausland.

influence. When Ribbentrop succeeded Neurath as foreign minister he put a stop to the diplomatic encroachments of the AO; but before that time Bohle used the Foreign Office, to which he was nominally subservient, as a mere stenographic bureau.

Not even the Nazi Party was dominant in the Foreign Office before about 1940. For awhile it was even advantageous to cultivate an impression of independence from the party. In time, however, the German embassies and legations tended to serve the additional function of local party headquarters for expatriates, for citizens residing abroad, and for sympathizers. But after about 1936, Hitler proceeded without the advice, consent, or even the knowledge of his diplomats. The invasion of Austria was made without consulting the foreign minister.

These various agencies created a great deal of duplication, confusion, and inefficiency. No policy was official until Hitler spoke, either directly ex cathedra or through his cardinal lieutenant, von Ribbentrop.

But to point out the weaknesses of the Nazi diplomatic establishments is not to say that a great deal of highly detailed planning did not take place at the top level of the Nazi leadership. Hitler--and the geopoliticians--realized that certain "control regions" were strategically vital to the domination of East Central Europe. But the methods by which these regions were to be seized upon were extremely flexible and improvised, even at times haphazard. One of these control regions was western Czechoslovakia, whose military value even Bismarck had recognized and commented upon. Another was Austria who commanded the Danube and some important railway connections. The Polish corridor has been mentioned. Czechoslovakia was also dangerous as a major industrial competitor. Austria,

Poland, and Czechoslovakia were Germany's immediate neighbors to the east, and "most of the postwar agitation was therefore concentrated on the 'bleeding frontiers' of these three neighbors."¹⁸ These states were also the ones with the largest number of "racial Germans" living within their borders, although scattered German language groups could almost be said to be the common denominator of the whole East European area.

While the Nazi long-range plan was to organize Eastern Europe into a "colonial area," the immediate, short-range objectives were to extend Germany's borders and thus her power and influence, and to prepare economically for the eventuality of war. The acquisition of Austria, for instance, was a patriotic and emotional goal because of its pure German character; but at the same time such a move would virtually surround Czechoslovakia and outflank her mountain defenses.

As to the matter of economic preparation of war, it was essential that Germany obtain some very essential commodities for which she was currently dependent upon world trade. Vegetable oils, wheat, cotton, fats, coffee and raw meats were needed, as well as industrial raw materials, both to rebuild Germany's strength and to stockpile in case of war. For these things Germany turned to Central Europe, which was to be for Germany roughly what the West once was to the eastern United States. The economic offensive was at first under the direction of a financial genius named Dr. Hjalmar Horace Greeley Schacht, from whose plans there was little deviation, even after his fall from power.

Of all the German short-range objectives, one of the most obvious was to break up the Paris-Prague-Moscow alliance and the Ententes, to

¹⁸ Hanc, op. cit., p. 165.

eliminate French influence in Eastern Europe, and to find allies to support her in her opposition to the French diplomatic system. Italy and England seemed at first to be the most likely allies. Although confident after his/^{first}cautious moves that the West would not interfere in the earlier stages of his plans, Hitler had realized that his campaign to make the world safe for racial Germans would involve probable war; therefore, in addition to his preparatory diplomatic and economic moves, he made rather detailed military plans looking towards the gaining of his immediate objectives. An example of these plans is the Blomberg Directive of 1937, which states that "to parry the imminent attack of a superior enemy coalition, the war in the East may begin with a German surprise operation against Czechoslovakia."¹⁹ The excuse for such an attack must be created beforehand by certain political preparation, which the Directive discusses in detail.

The Hossbach Minutes of a top-level military conference which took place on November 5, 1937, is the most detailed of these military blueprints. It really amounted to a careful analysis of foreign policy by Hitler himself, and as such it is perhaps the single most valuable document for an insight into the actual state of German planning upon the Lebensraum question immediately before the war. The select group to which the speech was made consisted of Field Marshall Von Blomberg, the Minister of war; Baron von Fritsch, the Commander in Chief of the Army; Admiral Raeder, Commander in Chief of the Navy; Göring, the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe; Baron von Neurath the Foreign Minister; and Colonel Hossbach, who took the minutes of the meeting.

¹⁹ Peter De Mendelssohn, Design for Aggression (New York & London: Harper and Brothers, 1954), p. 8.

Hitler began by stating that the aim of German foreign policy was "to make secure and to preserve the racial community Volksmasse²⁰ and to enlarge it." Therefore, the question to be settled was one of space. The rare, tight German racial core had a right to greater Lebensraum, and if it was not secured the inevitable result would be the decline of Deutschum. The whole future of Germany depended upon expansion and Hitler intended that the problem should be solved in the space of one to three generations.

The question of Autarky versus a world economy was then investigated. Autarky would involve the strictest of controls and the closest of planning, but would never work due to the industrial needs for raw materials and to the fact that even in the best of times Germany was unable to feed herself. Conversely, a world economy could not be depended on because of the disturbing effects of rearmament and of Bolshevism upon economic stability, and because England dominated the sea lanes. The only remedy in an age of economic empires was the creation of a Lebensraum. If food could be secured in Eastern Europe instead of faraway colonies, Germany would have a stop-gap to preserve her for another two or three generations.

The main question was where the greatest gain could be made at the lowest cost. Britain and France were "hate inspired antagonists" who would on no account permit German expansion overseas. England was more reasonable than France, but would encounter dominion opposition.

²⁰ Germany, Auswärtiges Amt., Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, I, no. 12 (Washington: U.S. Gov't Printing Office, 1949), p. 29.

THE DIPLOMATIC REVOLUTION 1934 - 1937



GERMANY
 ITALY AND HER ALLIES
 FRANCE AND HER ALLIES
 RUSSIA (HYPOTHETICAL ALLY OF FRANCE)

STATES ALIGNED WITH, OR INFLUENCED BY BOTH GERMANY AND FRANCE
 ITALY AND GERMANY
 ITALY AND FRANCE

Germany might regain her colonies later when her strength relative to England's was more favorable.

The German problems could be solved only by force and with risk; but when and how? There were three cases to be dealt with. The military, for one, was almost ready for action. Delay might result in obsolescence, in loss of monopoly on valuable secret weapons, in the ageing of the movement and its leaders, and in a decrease in relative strength. The current draft age had been picked clean. Foreign exchange might become harder to import. The world was preparing for defense; therefore, Germany must take the offensive. Conditions were doubtful after 1943-45. In the second place, Germany must be prepared to move immediately against Czechoslovakia in case internal strife should render France temporarily impotent. Or, in the third eventuality, France might well become occupied by another war. To improve her politico-military position, Germany must remove the danger of a flank attack from Austria or Czechoslovakia. The neutrality of Poland could then be assumed, but only so long as Germany remained strong.

Assuming that all went well, Hitler went on to surmise the probable attitudes of the Allies by 1943-45. Britain and France had probably already written off Czechoslovakia, for England feared war and imperial complications and France would hardly attack without England. If France did attack, she could not pass through the Lowlands without British acquiescence, and Germany had strong western defenses.

Czechoslovakia and Austria were becoming stronger. If the Reich could conquer them she would win a net gain in her food supply, obtain more easily defensible frontiers, and be able to release a possible twelve divisions for military service elsewhere. If the Spanish war were kept going and the tension kept up, Germany might take Czechoslovakia

with speed. Care must be taken, however, not to put England and France into position as enemies.

The unfolding of the whole Lebensraum plan must be seen against this revelation of Hitler's motives. Hitler, as has been seen, began his drive for expansion by attacking the point of least legal resistance within Germany proper, by rearmament in opposition to the Versailles Diktat. His first move outside Germany met with a rebuff.

In 1934, Italy was the prime influence in Austria. Even though Germany was at that time militarily weak, the bulk of her propaganda and agitation was directed towards her sister nation, who was in a state of domestic confusion verging on civil war. The failure of the Nazi coup of July 25 by Italy's action in sending her troops to the Brenner Pass has been mentioned above, but the irresolution with which France met this somewhat clumsy challenge was lost neither upon Hitler nor Mussolini. French gestures towards Eastern Europe found only Russia and Czechoslovakia interested in stronger defensive alliance, while France's relations with Poland grew more strained through the latter's absolute refusal to accommodate Russian troops.

After 1934, Italy was preoccupied with her ambitious empire-building. She did not oppose, in July, 1936, a vague German-Austrian agreement in which Austria declared herself to be "culturally" German.

In the space of three years, from 1934 to 1937, a diplomatic revolution of major proportion occurred. Germany, the defeated and cowed underdog, became the most powerful nation on the European continent, while mighty France became virtually powerless.

All this was more than just the product of Machivellian maneuverings of the Germans and Italians and the fumbling of the French and British diplomats. All this had been in the air for almost a decade, portended by the apparently decreasing Western influence on central-eastern European life and attitudes, the change in trend went²¹ back to almost a decade before the Diplomatic Revolution.

The year 1934 was in many ways the watershed of the interwar period.

German initiative and Western apathy grew side by side.

In 1935, the Nazis received encouragement from the fact that the Saar voted 90% in favor of returning to Germany. Also during this year Germany reintroduced conscription, receiving for this formal repudiation of Versailles merely an innocuous rebuke from the League. Great Britain recognized this breach of international law by negotiating a naval agreement with the offender. This repudiation of a treaty was very striking, for heretofore treaties had been changed only by negotiation, by tacit understanding, or by silent and unobtrusive evasion. Another staggering blow to the League and to the Versailles Settlement came when Italy embarked upon her Ethiopian venture. Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Albania did not participate in the sanctions imposed by the League. The allies, unwilling to go to war to uphold their system, withdrew the sanctions in July, 1936. The French-inspired Hoare-Laval treaty of 1935 blocked the terms of Italy's readmission to grace. Allied weakness was once again demonstrated, for the British public was as indignant over this act of appeasement as France had been over the English naval agreement with Germany.

²¹ Lukacs, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

The end of the whole French alliance system was at hand, for the Reich had conceived a counter-stroke to the promulgation of the Franco-Russian treaty. Germany considered this military alliance against her contrary to the spirit of Locarno; therefore, the earlier treaties, which had re-guaranteed the demilitarization of the Rhineland were null and void. On March 7, 1936, Germany marched troops into the Rhineland area, at the same time offering to accept a new demilitarized zone on both sides of the Rhine, instead of on the German alone; or a new Locarno omitting the Rhineland, complete with nonaggression pacts in the East, based on the Polish treaty, and a return to the League. France took alarm, but although she had plenty of time to take counter-measures she did nothing but man the Maginot Line. The Spanish question seemed at the time to be the more serious matter. Nothing came of the German offer to negotiate. Hitler refused to sign a pact with Russia and France refused any settlement which did not guarantee the East as well as the West. The German move met with complete success. Locarno was dead in its old form. On October 14, 1936, Belgium declared her complete neutrality and the first crack appeared in the French alliance system. England declared that she would aid France or Belgium if either was the victims of unprovoked attack. France returned the courtesy to England and Belgium, but the declarations were obviously a poor substitute even for Locarno.

Hitler's success was the result of a bluff, a calculated risk. The Rhineland was remilitarized against the advice of the German generals, and its success was also a victory for Hitler over the

army. Only the month before had he conducted a shakeup and assumed personal command. The remilitarization had taken place when the army was still on a peace basis. No mobilization was ordered, and the commanders were told to turn back if opposition were encountered. In order to meet expected hostile reaction, Hitler declared that he had no further territorial claims to make in Europe. But no steps were taken. Hitler was free to fortify his new position by constructing the Siegfried Line.

This development altered fundamentally the Eastern balance of power. Heretofore the Little and Balkan Ententes had calculated that if the Reichswehr struck to the southeast, its right flank would be exposed to a French counterattack across the Rhine and southern Germany. Now, however, the German armies²² could operate with impunity behind the protecting Siegfried Line.

After this success, European war, if not inevitable, was most probable. "The decisive capitulation, dividing the period 1933-39, was agreed to not at Munich in 1938, but at London and Paris in March of 1936."²³ After that, the European status quo disintegrated steadily. The refusal of France and England to take up the gauntlet left French prestige at a low ebb in Eastern Europe. The Poles had offered military assistance, but the offer was not accepted by France, thus throwing Poland permanently back to her policy of balancing both ends against the middle. Italy also was lost after the weak attempt at cooperation which characterized the Stresa front. France was unwilling to use force; yet the remilitarization of the Rhineland was the end of France's carefully planned Eastern European policy. The only basis

²² Stavrianos, L.S., The Balkans since 1453, (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1958). p. 741.

²³ Aron, op. cit., p. 35.

for which had been France's temporary military superiority and her indirect access to her proteges through the Rhineland. The French Foreign Minister, Pierre-Etienne Flandin, said at the time that

the French alliance with the Little Entente is now valueless. In the future France could not hope to give effective assistance to Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, or Rumania, in the event of German aggression...In my opinion, the last chance of saving central and eastern Europe from German domination has been thrown away.²⁴

March 7, 1936, marked the second phase of the diplomatic revolution. France could count now upon neither England nor Italy for support. The League was plainly of limited effectiveness. Mussolini was alienated from Britain and had agreed to pay a visit to the Reich. The danger of conflict in the Mediterranean made England even less willing to become involved in a war on the continent. Italy was in the flush of her Abyssinian triumph, and the German-Austrian rapprochement of July, 1936, had removed a major source of German-Italian contention. Italy was also committed to Franco's position in the Spanish Civil war and the cooperation begun upon this matter was finally to mature in the Rome-Berlin Axis. Italy's position in the Mediterranean and Germany's in Eastern Europe were formally recognized.

France was seething with domestic unrest. The final blow came in October when Belgium declared her absolute neutrality and denounced her French alliance of 1921. Eastern Europe took a long, critical look at the value of its pacts with France. The fact the French had refused to push the prosecution of the assassination of Alexander of

²⁴ Stavrianos, op. cit., p. 741.

Yugoslavia at Marseilles in 1934, had been a blow to Eastern European confidence. Yugoslavia and Rumania had been hurt economically by the League sanctions against Italy. The weakness of the West was now exposed, and the reaction of the nations of Eastern Europe was to make sure that their alliances with the larger powers did not drag them into war. There was movement to limit their obligations to strict League requirements and purely local matters. Titulescu, the Rumanian francophile, was dismissed. There was a new policy of conciliation with Germany and Italy.

The Bratislava Conference of May, 1936, resulted in making the Little Entente more elastic. The members might make their own policy decisions independent of the others. Yugoslavia hastened to make a rapprochement with Italy, whom she feared, and abandoned her traditionally pro-French policy. At the Belgrade Conference of the Little Entente in April, 1937, Czechoslovakia felt herself to be in grave danger; yet her proposal for full military assistance in case of aggression was rejected. Germany began making overtures to Rumania.

As to the Balkan Entente, "only six days after the Rhineland occupation, the Greek Premier Demertzis denied the existence of Greek commitments to the Balkan Entente in regard to Central Europe; in other words, the Balkan Entente became a frail instrument, replete with reservations, a mere eighteen months after its inauguration." ²⁵ Central Europe was once more an amorphous grouping of tiny states. The Leb-

²⁵ Lukacs, op. cit., p. 72.

ensraum came to be a distinct practical possibility, the more so now that Nazi Germany, having secured her western frontier, could now turn her attention once more to the East.

CHAPTER I

THE SCHACHT SYSTEM: THE ECONOMIC OFFENSIVE

From the very initiation of Nazi rule, there was a drive to force Germany to supply Germany with raw materials and to otherwise to the strengthening of the Volkswirtschaft. The collapse of the war economy and of the economic and financial system of Germany was the work largely of the war, 1914-1918. The German economy following the war, it was argued, had been prepared for wars of aggression and for the violation of international treaties.

PART III

THE APPROACH OF WAR: THE
CONCEPT GERMINATES

...and willfully participated in the final stages of the war. The plan, program, initiative, and war itself were largely the work of the financial and economic system of Germany. He played a dominant role in the economic planning of Germany for, wars of aggression, ... He had the idea, ... that the task of this war was a strong desire to see his country and role as defined in the war. It was largely the efforts that the German capital market was completely ... in the expanding state of the Nazi war machine.² His view ... that this machine supplied with raw materials.

Schacht was made head of the Reichsbank in March, 1933; Minister of Economy in August, 1934; and Secret State Treasurer for the War Economy in May, 1935. In November, 1937, Schacht resigned as Minister

² Conspiracy and Aggression, pp. 221-2. P. 227, Vol. 1.

³ Ibid., p. 744.

CHAPTER I

THE SCHACHT SYSTEM: THE ECONOMIC OFFENSIVE

From the very initiation of Nazi rule, steps were taken to force the Lebensraum area to supply Germany with needed raw materials and to contribute otherwise to the strengthening of the Fatherland. The building of a Nazi war economy and of the economic and financial bases of Hitler's power was the work largely of one man, Hjalmar Schacht. When he came to trial at Nuremberg following the war, it was charged that "he planned and prepared for wars of aggression and wars in violation of international treaties, agreements and assurances, and that he knowingly and wilfully participated in the Nazi common plan or conspiracy to plan, prepare, initiate, and wage such wars...that he was the chief architect of the financial plans...which made possible... rearmament; that he played a dominant role in the economic planning of, and preparation for, wars of aggression...."¹ Schacht did indeed help Hitler to power, but back of this help was a strong desire to see his country rearmed and able to defend itself once more. It was largely through his efforts that "the German capital market was completely harnessed to the expanding needs of the Nazi war machine."² His "new plan" kept this machine supplied with raw materials.

Schacht was made head of the Reichsbank in March, 1933; Minister of Economy in August, 1934; and Secret Plenipotentiary for the War Economy in May, 1935. In November, 1937, Schacht resigned as Minister

¹ Conspiracy and Aggression, op. cit., p. 737., Vol. 2.

² Ibid., p. 744.

and as Plenipotentiary due to an argument with G \ddot{e} ring over their respective methods of procedure. He was appointed Minister without portfolio. In January, 1939, he was dismissed as President of the Reichsbank partly due to conflicts with Hitler's methods and rearmament policies, partly because he believed that a severe inflationary crisis was coming and he desired to be out of office. Schacht began to lose influence as early as April, 1936, when G \ddot{e} ring was made Coordinator for Raw Materials and Foreign Exchange. Fearing inflation, he found himself too conservative to support the drastic rearmament policies which the government advocated. He was not included in the group of political policy makers of the Nazi regime, and was ultimately declared innocent by the War Crimes Trials.

Before the war was over, Schacht had been arrested and placed in a concentration camp. Although in effect he was one of the main creators of the Nazi system, placing at its disposal enormous resources, he was critical of the regime. One might go so far as to say that the "new plan" was reluctantly introduced by Schacht (who did not perceive its full possibilities and perhaps would not have welcomed them so far as the program facilitated aggressive war)....³ One of the few ever to speak openly in opposition to Hitler, he opposed the use of force in Mittleuropa, favoring instead the creation of a Central African colony, obtained from the Western Powers in exchange for a pledge to keep the European status quo.

Though Schacht was practically the only one who tried to curb Hitler, it is true also that "in foreign policy Schacht differed from

³ Dr. Frank K. Graham and Lt. Col. J. J. Scanlon, Economic Preparation and Conduct of War under the Nazi Regime (Pamphlet of the Historical Division of the War Department Special Staff, 1946), p. 9.

Hitler in method, not in aim."⁴ He favored territorial expansion, but peacefully, if possible. Schacht's methods would have won Germany secure European hegemony if they had been followed exclusively and without resorting to force. The ultimate praise of the "new plan" is the fact that "Schachtism" is today commonplace.

Wars for balance of power have been common enough in Europe. Perhaps the fact that a man like Schacht was pushed aside and a fanatic like Hitler was able to adopt a policy of force, would go a long way to help explain the total and vicious nature of World War II.

Schacht always omitted feeling and emotion from his political calculations; hence his failure. Dr. Schacht is a very clever man and, in his way, a civilized man, faithful to his banker's code of ethics, even a good member of the Confessional Church. Yet he was helpless against Hitler. It was the story of Tallyrand and Napoleon all over again: the clever, sensible man of ideas could achieve nothing against the genius of action. Hitler, like Napoleon, understood that politics are a matter of power and emotion, not of calculation....Hitler was "without a home, without a family, without friends, without women, without a church, without tradition." For this very reason, he incorporated Germany; he was a genius—a genius of will, of resourcefulness, of organization. He was a titanic demon. Against such, cleverness is not enough.⁵

The essence of the "new plan" was this: Foreign funds inside Germany were to be blocked. The use of foreign exchange was regulated so that German spending on non-essentials was kept to a minimum. The Lebensraum area found itself exporting more and more vital products into Germany and unable to secure payment for them except by buying inferior or unneeded German manufactured goods. Germany was therefore able to supply itself with the raw materials of Central Europe and still conserve its small supply of foreign exchange for use on the world market.

⁴ A. J. P. Taylor, From Napoleon to Stalin (London: Hamis Hamilton, 1950), p. 155.

⁵ Ibid., p. 156.

Under Fascism, foreign trade is controlled almost entirely by the government. Therefore, since foreign trade is the point of greatest contact between countries, the fascist government is in control of a very sensitive instrument of subversion. "The control of foreign trade, primarily through manipulation of foreign exchange, was inaugurated in Germany several years before Hitler came to power and may, to a certain degree, be viewed as the culmination of an economic policy that was coterminous with the development of the German Empire itself."⁶ Nationalism, protectionism, and the desire for autarky seem to be mutually sustaining goals.

The controls imposed upon Nazi economic policy were largely a refinement of the old controls. The German economy was hurt severely by World War I, sustained by loans until the Depression, and wrecked again. In 1931 it was felt to be necessary to place controls on foreign exchange in order to halt the flight of capital from the country. All exchange had to be made at official rates through the Reichsbank. In this way the German mark was held up artificially while the currencies of the other depression-stricken countries were decreasing in value. This monetary condition cut down the German market. In 1932 exchange-clearing agreements were made with various countries. Direct barter was resorted to, for since the mark was depreciating in relation to other currencies, foreign exchange became more and more difficult to acquire.

After the Nazis obtained power, they increased the existing trade controls until they acquired almost complete domination. The extreme nationalism and antisemitism of the new regime caused the flight of still more capital, foreign and Jewish. In September, 1934,

⁶ U. S. Library of Congress Legislative Reference Service, Fascism in Action (Washington: U. S. Govt. Printing Office, 1947), p. 75.

Schacht initiated his "new plan." When the export-producing industries turned to the manufacture of arms, and with the subsequent rise in prices and decrease in available trading goods, it became almost impossible to obtain foreign goods except by using the meager supply of foreign exchange. Schacht turned a necessity into a virtue. His "new plan" created of this very shortage an offensive and defensive weapon. Exports were tightly controlled, as was the release of foreign exchange, and imports were forbidden except by permit. Price and production controls were instituted for the twin purpose of obtaining from German industry maximum military strength and maximum trade advantage.

Germany, as Europe's largest consumer, filled the breach created in Central European trade by the Depression. Germany would naturally have been an attractive market for the countries to the south and east of her, but she deliberately attracted still more of their products by offering much higher prices than the West, operating as it did under the usual profit-making incentives, would have been able to meet. Germany sought not the cheapest market but the one which could supply the most. Complete control of Foreign exchange had totally divorced the Nazi price system from the world price level. Bartering and clearing agreements were made whereby raw materials and foodstuffs were exchanged for non-essential goods, spare parts, or merely promises, for an international trade agreement is unenforceable outside the goodwill of the state itself. Often, entire crops were purchased ahead of time in exchange for unnamed German goods. Although these agreements amounted to German dumping, which damaged the rising Central European industries, small states have small bargaining power; and since they could get needed articles in the Reich at good prices which were settled beforehand, they were inclined to accept what Germany offered them.

The agricultural crisis had produced a desperate need for markets. Good German offers were taken eagerly without much thought as to how these purchases were to be paid for. By simply regulating the exchange rates of the mark, Germany could buy more for less. Even Sweden and Switzerland were caught in this web.

When international purchases are made, the importer deposits payment in his own currency with his country's clearing establishment, which credits that amount to the agency of the exporting country. If the balance of trade is unequal, the exporting country will build up a balance against the importer which can be redressed only through trade. Germany's creditors were paid in blocked marks, good only to purchase German export goods; and due to production control these goods were of a limited and often inferior quality. In order to secure payment for their exports, the Central European countries found themselves compelled to purchase more and more German goods.

Since Central Europe was a poor region, the exporters were unable to wait for payment. There was also the fear that to wait would be to risk a devaluation in the exchange rate. They borrowed from the banks or the governments, and received money which represented the savings or the taxes of the peasantry. The higher prices offered by Germany raised the cost of Central European goods and made them more difficult to sell elsewhere. The exporters, therefore, put great pressure on the banks to continue their loans, and the banks found themselves doing everything to encourage trade with Germany in hopes of eventual payment. Thus the banks constituted a pressure group upon the economic policies of their governments. Germany's creditors demanded the admission of German imports. By making provisional payment for its purchases, the "new plan" transferred from the Germans to the

exporting countries any embarrassment that the Germans might otherwise have felt at their inability to make final settlement on the excess of their imports over the German counter-claims against foreign countries."⁷

The countries of East Central Europe did not seem to know how completely German business was a tool of the Reich.

But what the Balkan, Latin American and other smaller countries did not realize was that the Nazi businessmen were, to all intents and purposes, agents of the Reich. Although technically their arrangements were commercial, they amounted, on the German side, to state-trading. In the long run, as the merchants and governments of Rumania and other smaller countries who unwittingly fell into the economic trap of Nazi Germany found out, individual enterprise cannot stand up against the power of a sovereign state that is determined upon economic exploitation.⁸

German economic and technical missions were often a cover for political and military spying and for propaganda work. By more or less imprisoning the Central European trade, Germany acquired a valuable weapon, for she could always threaten to stop buying; and whereas her trade with the area represented a small part of her total commerce, the blow to the Central European countries would have been unbearable. Although Germany was their debtor, she could dictate exchange rates favorable to herself.

The results were felt by all of Europe. "The expanding and autarchic character of the German total economy not only disturbed competitive cost economy, ruptured the natural price situation, and strengthened latent tendencies towards economic nationalism, but it further aggravated the unbalanced social and economic position of Europe and the world generally."⁹ Schacht's successor Dr. Funk added another refine-

⁷ Antonin Basch, The New Economic Warfare (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), p. 31.

⁸ U. S. Library of Congress Legislative Reference Service, op. cit., p.80.

⁹ Basch, op. cit., p. 21.

ment to the "new plan". Germany also made large bulk purchases from Central Europe and resold the surplus on the open market for gold. The reselling further increased the difference between German prices and the low world markets. The gold thus obtained brought the foreign exchange needed for the financing of rearmament; and the result was that while the prices of non-military manufactures were high, the cost of the arms establishments was kept down. One of the best ways for the Central European countries to liquidate their trade balances was therefore to purchase German arms. They found themselves financing German rearmament in no small way. "Brazilian caoutchouc, African copper, North-American cotton, Australian wool, and Canadian nickel, as well as Swedish steel, which Germany had for years imported for its armaments and for which it had to pay almost exclusively with foreign exchange bills, were paid for with the means of the poorest nations in Europe, namely of the states in the Danube Basin and the Balkans."¹⁰ In case of war they would find themselves dependent upon Germany for further supplies of arms, for spare parts, and for Nazi instructors. But the only alternative to accepting such unwanted goods was being Germany's banker.

Germany's creditors became more and more impoverished; however, their peasantry could see in Germany only a purchaser of their produce. As an exploiter of dependence, Germany was even popular. As the trade structure of Eastern Europe changed, so did the structure of production. More and more acreage was devoted to those things which Germany needed, such as fodder plants or the soya bean, which was of little or no good on the world market. "Not less than 60,000 hectares of land in Roumania,

¹⁰ Dr. Gerhard Schacher, Germany Pushes South-East (London: Hurst and Blackett, Ltd., 1938), p. 156.

and much more than 30,000 hectares in Bulgaria, were given over to German concerns especially, for example, the I. G. Farben-Industries, for the cultivation of soya beans."¹¹ More and better deliveries at better prices were demanded, and the farmers responded to the demand. Thus the dependence of the area upon the German economy was increased. "From 1933 to 1936, Germany more than doubled her imports from Greece, Turkey, Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania, and Yugoslavia; the value of her exports to these countries rose from 155 to 175 million Reichsmarks."¹² And as German trade increased, the influence of the West decreased.

Dr. Funk called for still more German control of Central European property, and heavy pressure was exerted to get interest in the major industries.

Germany continued to strengthen her position and brought still greater pressure to bear. Once a sufficient degree of control was achieved, Germany began to take a hand even in internal policies, giving preference to exporters and importers sympathetic with the Nazi regime. The systematic application of these methods of foreign trade brought impressive results. From 1935 to 1937 Germany's exports to the countries of central and south-eastern Europe increased by 62%, while her total exports increased by only 38%. German imports from these countries increased by 54% while total German imports increased by only 30%. In general, the smaller the country dealing independently with Germany, the less complete was its control over foreign trade; furthermore, the more conflicting the interests among various groups of producers and exporters, the more successfully could Germany gain complete influence.¹³

When one country began trading extensively with Germany, her competitors would be compelled in self-interest to seek German markets also. The German economic policy, of course, did not come under the

¹¹ Ibid., p. 157.

¹² Lukacs, op. cit., 93.

¹³ Basch, op. cit., p. 37.

League's definition of aggression. Yet it was one of the gravest mistakes of the West to permit such a condition to develop. Germany had a fair total war economy, while the West neither stopped her nor prepared for its own defense. If Germany had changed to a peace economy at that time, the entire economy of Eastern Europe would have been upset.

With such a large extent of economic control, one is surprised to find that Nazi Germany did not exploit her system with the cold determination which might be expected.

Germany did not exploit her strangle hold on the Balkan economy. She charged competitive prices and did not restrict the types of goods she sold....In fact Germany's treatment of her Balkan customers was more generous than was necessary in the given circumstances. This suggests that considerations other than purely economic ones were involved. Germany was apparently seeking to develop in the Balkans a source of vegetable and mineral raw materials that was secure from blockade. Whatever the reasons, the fact remains that Germany already dominated the Balkan countries economically before she occupied them militarily during World War II.¹⁴

This state of "generosity" might also point to the fact that the German controls were less effective than they might have been. The advantages Germany derived were to a large extent short-term only, directed towards the immediate creation of strong armament.

In fine it may be said that in the field of economic foreign policy as elsewhere the Nazis were very inept in their conscious preparation for war. They made some effort to tie the foreign suppliers within their military orbit to long-term contracts with Germany, but they showed no consistent concern for the foreign investments or disinvestments appropriate to war and, in general, were blind to their opportunities in the field.¹⁵

One reason for this state of affairs was the fact that the usual bureaucratic multiplicity and confusion obtained.

¹⁴ Stavrianos, op. cit., p. 600.

¹⁵ Graham and Scanlon, op. cit., p. 33.

Policy was determined by technical experts in the Foreign Office (Ritter had almost complete autonomy) in co-operation with their counter-parts in the Ministry of Economics. These experts were apparently never instructed to proceed in other than the ways of presumptive peace and do not in fact appear to have shaped the German economic foreign policy to the requirements of prospective war. It so happens that a good deal of what they did served the Nazi war preparation (such as, for instance, the content of German trade relations in the European zone) but this was the result of accident and of opportunistic action rather than of conscious preparing for war. It can at any rate be said that if the trade negotiators were deliberately preparing for war, their practice, while issuing to the advantage of Germany in some cases, was full of errors of omission and commission.¹⁶

But be that as it may, while the Schacht system would certainly have been more effective if used to a greater extent for political ends rather than for the traditionally economic, the Nazi economic domination of the Lebensraum area was real. After 1935 direct barter was replaced by the ASKI procedure (Auslaender Sonderkonten fuer Inlandszahlungen). Every single foreign trade transaction was negotiated or approved by trade officials. The creditor accepted ASKI marks good only to finance German exports to the country of the creditor's origin, sometimes good only to that particular creditor. The accounts of each country could be kept separate, the exchange value of the ASKI marks credited to one country sometimes being nowhere in relation to that of another's marks. The exchange value might vary from creditor to creditor within one country. By the end of 1935, Germany had negotiated such clearing agreements with every European country except Albania, England, and Soviet Russia.

German hegemony increased greatly after she took control of Austria and Czechoslovakia. Both were important in industry and banking, an importance which accrued to Germany along with their markets. Germany then controlled more than 50% of the Danubian trade and this

¹⁶ U. S. Library of Congress Legislative Reference Service, op. cit., p. 83.

percentage grew steadily.¹⁷ It was only then, when she was so strong that no one could challenge her, that Germany made any definite moves to place the Central European nations in a semicolonial status. The economic treaty with Rumania of March, 1939, is a good example of this new boldness. "The demands which Germany now formulated with more and more insistence in the countries to her south-east amounted to something not far from economic annexation to the Reich--long-term trade agreements involving the monopoly of the small countries' foreign trade together with the virtual linking of their currencies with that of Germany."¹⁸ This new trend was the culmination of Dr. Schacht's method under the direction of his more aggressive successor, Dr. Funk.

Eastern Europe represented under German hegemony a single economic unit, a Grossraumwirtschaft relatively free from the world market. The next step to the creation of such a large unit would have been to use it as a powerful bargainer to repeat the process, probably in South America. The Nazis had perfected a strong new weapon--economic warfare. And all was to the ultimate glory of the Fatherland, the summum bonum of the Nazi movement. As Dr. Funk said,

the peacetime economy which I have prepared in a comprehensive plan must guarantee to the Greater German Reich a maximum of economic security and to the German people maximum consumption directed toward raising the national prosperity. The European economy must be directed toward this end.¹⁹

The West neither recognized the situation fully, let it be repeated, nor did they move to block German economic aggression. It is true that such a strict economic regime would be possible in peacetime only to a totalitarian government, but the West could at least

¹⁷ Basch, op. cit., p. 40.

¹⁸ Wiskemann, op. cit., p. 41.

¹⁹ Joseph C. Harsch, Pattern of conquest (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1941), p. 71.

have defended its political position in Eastern Europe by means of increased purchases. Even moves towards economic cooperation made by the Little Entente, such as the Czechoslovak idea for the collective marketing of cereals, ran headlong into Western economic nationalism. But the fact that such a situation was allowed to develop at all was a sign of Western diplomatic failure. As Henry L. Roberts said,

Germany's economic penetration of Eastern Europe after 1933 was not a primary factor in the breakup of this region. While the reality of the penetration cannot be denied, for it meant much more than foisting aspirin and cameras on the Eastern European states, its importance may be questioned. This penetration did not really impair the political independence of these states until after the diplomatic situation had deteriorated greatly, and some of the German trade agreements which really bound the economies of the area were a result rather than a cause of the shift in the balance of power.²⁰

²⁰ Black, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

CHAPTER II

THE HITLER METHOD: THE BIG BLUFF

The success of Hitler's first bluffs, rearmament and the remilitarization of the Rhineland, converted Germany into a well-defended bastion faced on the east by the small states of Central Europe and on the west by a disunited and confused France and England. Hitler had long since determined upon a policy of aggression. Now the object of German diplomacy was to insinuate Nazi influence into the affairs of neighboring countries with the object of using that influence to the glory of the German nation.

German diplomacy did not consist merely in politeness to crowned heads or prime ministers--although it could rival its opponents in this field when necessary--but used every weapon, open or secret, fair or foul, that was available. It was based on careful study of the history, economy, politics, social structure, and psychology of each nation with which it had to deal, made possible by innumerable contacts of individual Germans with people of every class and origin in every country. The "vulgar champagne-seller" von Ribbentrop outclassed the elegantly languid gentlemen opposed to him from the very start.¹

The actual extent of Ribbentrop's skill might be a moot topic, but a careful study of surrounding nations with an eye to politics and diplomacy had been one of the main contributions of the geopoliticians. Aside from their theories on the heartland and on power geography, much true scholarly work on their part had been devoted to the gathering and analysis of a wealth of factual information. What Hitler added to his geopolitical forebears was the ability to coerce and an understand-

¹ Hugh Seton-Watson, Eastern Europe between the Wars, 1918-1941 (Cambridge University Press, 1946), p. 383.

ing of the mob.

It is a credit to the skill of Hitlerian diplomacy that it achieved results that can be called astounding through the judicious intermingling of force and threats with cajoling and promises based on a shrewd appraisal of the psychology of the German people no less than of others. Psychological understanding has ever been useful in diplomacy, but the modern art of exploitation of the mass was brought by Hitler to a point of perfection that demands no less admiration for its having been diabolical in intent, unprincipled in method, and catastrophic in its final outcome. For good or ill, mostly for ill so far, it may be said that a new dimension was introduced in diplomatic practice.²

Hitler's long-range goal was to prepare for war by extending the power and resources of Germany beyond the borders of the Reich. His methods again were purely opportunistic; nevertheless, they conformed to certain general methods of agitation and infiltration which might be comprehended under the slogan of "divide and conquer." Hitlerian diplomacy turned then to the "soft" central regions to the east, combining with the old eastern orientation of German diplomacy a new, ruthless, systematic technique motivated by an ideology of religious intensity and coordinated by a totalitarian dictatorship. This is the difference which transforms the Lebensraum as conceived by the Nazis into something entirely different from its beginnings. Having started as a visionary dream of private persons or groups, not encouraged by the government or supported by public opinion, Lebensraum became the attainable goal of a government ideologically dedicated to expansion.

It took Hitler quite some time to realize how attainable this goal was. To plan and to implement are two entirely different things, and difficulties and opposition to his plans seemed inevitable; but the flabby paralysis with which the West met his first moves was unex-

² René Albrecht-Carrié, A Diplomatic History of Europe since the Congress of Vienna (New York: Harper, 1958), p. 476.

pected. Only gradually did Hitler realize his good fortune and increase his boldness and audacity. A committee sent from the United States to interrogate the Nazi war criminals came to the conclusion that

whether or not Hitler, from the very beginning of his rule, cherished grandiose schemes of aggression may be an open question. There is in Mein Kampf no lack of the lust for Lebensraum. But, on the other hand, we have on our mission encountered no convincing evidence that, during his first years in power, Hitler expressed even to his closest intimates any specific plans for large-scale territorial plunder.³

Once the realization came to Hitler of the true extent of the West's disinterest—or more properly, of the West's desire to keep out of war even at the expense of fostering an alien ideology and of allowing it to overwhelm its neighbors—his immediate reaction was one of scorn. Weakness to him was despicable, and its very existence was excuse for exploitation; therefore he took increasingly bolder and more open steps. And as the Nazis grew in power and self-assurance, the Hitlerian method was not so much one of bluff but one of tremendous strength ruthlessly wielded.

For these reasons, and due to the quality of his personality, Hitler would have been incapable of sitting back and devouring his Lebensraum by Schacht's system of economic enslavement. In his need for action, Hitler took the road of force. He would hack his empire out of the substance of Europe.

Hitler was obsessed with the idea of Blitzkrieg. This idea completely dominated the German preparation for the impending conflict. The Führer spurned the advice of General Thomas, chief of the economic planning division of the High Command (OKW), who contended that Germany must go in for armament "in depth" which would have meant totalitarian preparation, covering the whole economy, for a war of attrition against opponents with immense economic resources. Hitler plumped, instead, for armament "in width" which meant a concentration on finished munitions for quick campaigns of currently

³ Graham and Scanlon, op. cit., p. 1.

limited objectives, to the relative neglect of the new material and equipment basis of an enormously greater ultimate program.⁴

Hitler was sure that his Lebensraum was there for the taking. His plans were made on what seemed to be a self-evident fact: that if he applied enough pressure he would receive what he desired. "Only very rarely was strategy determined by war-economic ends, and the economic requirements of the strategy that was in fact adopted were not clearly foreseen or met in advance of the need."⁵

Hitler had little use for methods running counter to his own ideas. Just as the Schacht method was rejected, the military advice of the more cautious older generals was overruled. In February, 1938, Hitler appointed Ribbentrop Foreign Minister and General Keitel head of the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht. This step meant that he took the direction of foreign policy and of armed forces into his own hands, and purely military considerations would no longer hinder his political moves. The step also removed opposition to his plans as they were revealed in the Hossbach Minutes of November, 1937. This revelation had a terrible effect in that it had shown the General Staff that goals which they had regarded as only hypothetical eventualities were real and definite, that the Führer wanted war.

Once Ribbentrop took over the Foreign Office, the German diplomatic forces were no longer so splintered, and became a better tool for the preparation of Hitler's plans.⁶ Nevertheless, it is true also that "as Hitler's armies advance, Ribbentrop's diplomats retreated."⁷

⁴ Ibid., p. 4.

⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

⁶ Documents, Ser. D., Vol. II, no. 237.

⁷ Paul Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), p. 111.

The stage was set for some explosive action as Hitler sought to claim the Lebensraum, not by bluff, nor subtly by diplomatic pressure nor economic penetration, but openly and by force.

The Nazi moves in Central Europe, the bids for power and influence which accompanied the "new plan" and preceded actual conquest, were marked by their thoroughness. Roughly coordinated with the economic offensive, the German moves consisted in a combination of bribery, "promises, threats, internal demoralization, 'peaceful' penetration, and the encouragement of national antagonisms--with a powerful military machine on the border to move if 'the strategy of terror' should fail."⁸ The Nazi moves were always ultimately backed up by the trump card of force: "The real trump in Germany's hand was its rearmament and more than that its willingness to go to war."⁹ The Nazi technique included an effort to undermine the morale and unity of its victim and to isolate it internationally, utilizing defeatists, agents, sympathizers, and collaborationist groups of any sort within the country. The results were offered to Europe as faites accomplis. Any means to be had were used. "It is essential to understand that the very principle of Nazism is its radical opportunism."¹⁰

The Nazi ability to utilize mass psychology and emotional appeal was put to good use by means of propaganda. Greater leeway was demanded for German cultural associations abroad, but most of the material circulated among them was Nazi-inspired. German business establishments also worked for the dissemination of propaganda. By far the most

⁸ Joseph Roucek, Balkan Politics (California: Stanford U. Press, 1948), p. 265.

⁹ Conspiracy and Aggression, vol. I, p. 477.

¹⁰ Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1941), p. 220.

profitable subject of this agitation was

fear of revolution, which was a very real and constant danger owing to the corrupt and brutal social and political systems, but which the rulers of Eastern Europe attributed not to their own faults but to the machinations of unknown Muscovite agents and gold, predisposing the Governments to any Great Power which adopted an openly hostile attitude to Russia. Perhaps more than any other single factor, this anti-Russian obsession paralyzed the will to defense of the Eastern European states.¹¹

Within the various countries, Germany made very elaborate use of the "fifth column." The large German minorities were the most obvious objects of Nazi attention, and the easiest to win. But often the interests of the German minority and of other useful groups such as the non-German fascists, ran counter, and in such cases it became convenient to suppress pan-Germanism for awhile. Much difference was made between minorities in a target country and those in a state with which Germany happened to be cultivating good relations.

Much of Hitler's success in dealing with his weaker neighbors was due to his insistence on making his own choice of persons with whom he could "collaborate." The collaborative or "reasonable" elements, as the Nazi press referred to them, were recruited principally from among the anti-liberals, outright fascists, Jew-baiters, disgruntled oppositionists, long-flattered ambitionists or weaklings. Equally helpful to him was the practice of the Byzantine diplomacy of playing off his rival victims against each other and thus making himself constantly useful in squaring their differences.¹²

The Nazi "fifth columnists" also included the radical pacifists who preferred a totalitarian empire to a war, the defeatists, and those who embraced the fascist ideology, although "obviously there could not be many genuine Nazis outside Germany."¹³

Indigenous fascist movements there were, however, sometimes

¹¹ H. Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 414.

¹² Hanc, op. cit., p. 263.

¹³ Aron, op. cit., p. 45.

formed in opposition to the ruling government and sometimes sponsored by the government itself as a device for obtaining support.

It was, of course, impossible to prevent the existence of National Socialist movements by parliamentary or semi-parliamentary methods. According to National Peasant sources [Rumania], 600 million Lei were given to the Iron Guard by the Germans in 1936; in the same year there were no less than six Nazi "parties" existing in Hungary, where they gained among the agricultural proletariat and among the less capable of the university youth. In Bulgaria, Kunčev's National Socialists, Tsankov's group, and another Nazi-type organization, "Rodna Zaštita," carried the Nazi banner; in Greece there was the Fascist EEE; in Poland a segment of the Government bloc played with fire for awhile and in 1937 a Fascist-type NARA and a "Union of Young Poles" existed, their heyday coinciding with a wave of minor anti-semitic demonstrations in Galacia.¹⁴

The Arrow-Cross was one of the main fascist groups in Hungary, and in Rumania there were the Secret Society of the Archangel Michael and the All for the Fatherland Front. There were also fascist groups outside East Central Europe such as the Franco movement, the Mosley group in England, and the Croix de Feu of France. King Carol of Rumania tried to fight the Iron Guard by his own fascist-type Front of National Re-birth, but never succeeded in generating the necessary mass enthusiasm.

Specifically Fascist movements, such as the Polish National Radicals, the Hungarian Arrow Cross Party and Romanian Iron Guard, failed in their purposes. The first two never attained power, while the third made such a mess of its brief period of government that it discredited itself in all classes of the nation.¹⁵

These fascist organizations were indigenous to their countries, and their sources are to be found, not in Nazi subsidization--although this was certainly instrumental in aiding and supporting them--but in the social, economic, and psychological stresses of postwar Europe. The fact that Nazi Germany aided these organizations surreptitiously created a disrupting element within the borders of the target country.

¹⁴ Lukacs, op. cit., p. 90.
¹⁵ H. Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 257.

Hitler's real human dynamite, however, was the Volksdeutsche, the German minorities found scattered all over Central Europe, in the Saarland, Sudetenland, Memelland, Western Poland, and the South Tyrol. Race pride, fear of Bolshevism, and antisemitism were again strong propaganda points. Neighboring Germans were enrolled in cultural, gymnastic, and benevolent societies, in which a sense of distinct, self-conscious minority status was cultivated, taught by agents of the Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Auslande; the minorities were told that they owed allegiance to Hitler as leader of their race, that they were the outposts of world empire, superior to their Slavic fellow-citizens, that they must strive for corporate personality. Cells were formed and the National Socialist Party was built up.

German citizens residing abroad, the Auslandsdeutsche, were organized for purposes of supervision into Gaus, or provinces, under Bohle of the National Socialist Foreign Organization. All members of the Gau were under German law. Unlike the Volksbund, which was technically a private organization, the NSFO was loud in its dissemination of Nazi propaganda.

Other minorities besides the German were exploited. For instance, the anti-Hungarian bias of Rumania was strong, and the mixed Transylvanian border region was a source of bitter contention between the two countries. At the time of the fall of Prague, they were mobilizing against each other; and since Germany was in control of Rumania's main arms sources, she was obliged to sign a treaty virtually surrendering control of her economy.

By 1938, German hegemony in East Central Europe was unmistakable. But it was a hegemony similar to that the United States exercises over Latin America, that of one strong nation among many weak ones. An

empire, a true Lebensraum, would still be far in the future, especially as long as an increasingly suspicious Russia faced it on one side and a West on the other. "To organize the Balkans as a dependable hinterland was a gigantic task....As long as submission did not extend beyond diplomatic concessions wrought by extortion, Germany's hold was to remain insecure."¹⁶

But one might add that the Schacht system was building an increasingly firm network of economic interdependence. Yet Hitler's way was one of action and of force, and it was his method which both brought him his most concrete successes and led to his downfall. His most important triumphs were due to the prestige of his diplomatic victories over the West.

As Hitler scored one success after another--Saar, Conscription, Remilitarization of the Rhineland, Spain, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Memel--the immense capital of good will and esteem for the Western Powers was frittered away. When the creators of the 1919 settlement denounced their own work, and pleasantly shook hands with the robber chiefs, it was not astonishing if the small men crawled into their own holes, and tried to make the best terms with the new victors.¹⁷

There were many reasons for the West's willingness to pacify and appease. For one, the Versailles Treaty was unjust, and therefore made good German propaganda. Since France was obligated to the status quo, tension was fostered between her and her ally Britain, who was willing to follow a policy of appeasement. Communism and the fear of Russia was an important factor in making the West more willing to accept Nazi Germany. "Some have thought that the virulent attacks upon Russia in the Zeitschrift für Geopolitik and elsewhere were instrumental in bringing France and

¹⁶ Roucek, op. cit., p. 259.

¹⁷ H. Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 386.

Britain to accept the annexations that preceded the outbreak of war." 18 Hitler's initial coups were tolerated because fascism was seen as an internal movement stirred up by Germany's humiliations, which would die down as soon as certain reasonable demands were met. The international implications of Nazism were not at first recognized; the Nazi excesses were felt to be merely the froth of revolt or wind for home consumption; and in their own nationalism it seemed reasonable to the Western Powers that Germany should desire her old borders, her national integrity, and the rule of all those who belonged to the German "race". All these beliefs were dependent, of course, upon the assumption that Hitler's demands were limited and that his agreements were to be relied upon.

It was via revisionism that the Nazis first found their way to geopolitics and that Haushofer found his way to Hitler. It was the moving plea for revision of frontiers unjustly and foolishly drawn that early Nazi propaganda wooed public opinion abroad, particularly in England and the United States.¹⁹

Much of the Western apathy must also be attributed to sheer ignorance on her part. The whole geopolitical, pan-German, and Nazi literature was available to anyone who would read it and take it seriously. The Nazi goals, after all, were not secret, but widely and boastfully propagandized. "Much of the most revealing German writing on war and politics was brushed aside by 'informed' quarters abroad as simply 'specialist' literature not representative of German official thought."²⁰ Much of it was never read at all.

The Nazis profited greatly from the international amnesia which blotted out awareness of the geographical issues of world policy. They knew only too well which of the political frontiers of Europe

¹⁸ Whittlesey, op. cit., p.,165.

¹⁹ Strausz-Hupé, op. cit., p. 222.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 132.

they intended to delete. But neither the statesmen of Great Britain nor France, nor for that matter their peoples, could agree as to which of these frontiers were in truth their own.²¹

The problem faced by the West was whether to guarantee Eastern Europe and to make it resist change, even though the status quo was unjust, or to leave it to its own devices and thus encourage the revisionists, or to sponsor change and then attempt to control it when it got out of hand. These problems were never solved. In pacifying Germany, and in allowing Hitler a free hand, the only result was that the strong was bolstered in the face of the weak. "Above everything, the incapacity and apathy of the Western Powers were the greatest asset Germany and her Central-European friends had in their arsenal of propaganda."²²

Central Europe itself must bear part of the blame for the tragedy of its defeat. Poland, standing contemptuously aside from the early attempts at unity and alliance, overrated herself even in moments of crisis. Corrupt government and social tensions, such as the conflicts between peasants and landlords, offered tempting issues for "fifth-column" agitation. No serious attempt was made by the victors to cooperate with the losers; the small revisionists were allied against the small supporters of the status quo and both sides were blind to the aims of the large powers. The Ententes have been called "no more than limited alliances against small states which represented no danger."²³

As France saw the defeat of the Eastern European diplomatic system, she began more and more to turn to England, and to surrender

²¹ Ibid., p. 225.

²² Lukacs, op. cit., p. 37.

²³ H. Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 411.

the initiative for opposing Hitler to her ally, whose diplomatic policy consisted in appeasement. Lord Halifax, in his conversations with Hitler in November, 1937, recognized a British-French, Italo-German power alignment and agreed that Germany was a great power. Great Britain, he said, did not necessarily support the status quo but would recognize change only "upon the basis of reasonable agreements reasonably reached."²⁴ Hitler said that, granted such a reasonable attitude on the part of the West, the Czechoslovakian and Austrian problems could be solved easily. The West must decide if, when, and in what direction Germany's claims should be satisfied. Lord Halifax made it plain that England desired a general settlement, even at the price of finding Germany some overseas colonies. The Halifax conversations were the first step towards a policy of appeasement.

France was also putting out feelers for a settlement. An understanding had been proposed when Dr. Schacht had visited Paris in 1936, but Germany suspected the French advances and did not reciprocate. Instead of talking, she turned to "bloc" politics. France sent Foreign Minister Delbos on a tour of Eastern Europe in 1937 in a vain attempt to recruit enthusiasm for a mutual assistance pact. However, even before he returned, there was a pro-Nazi government in Rumania. In an unsigned, secret German Foreign Office document dated December 20, 1937, which analysed the current European diplomatic situation, the verdict was reached that

what France is afraid of today is a conflict in which she might become involved solely because of her treaties of alliance, without herself being attacked. She cannot, of course, free herself from these alliances, because she herself attaches too much importance to them and in case of need definitely wants to be able to count on them, something which she can only do, however, if she herself

²⁴ Documents, ser. D., vol. I, no. 31, p. 58.

proves a faithful ally. But the prospect of a war in support of Czechoslovakia against Germany, for example, in which only Soviet Russia, obviously much weakened by Stalin's policy of executions, would be obliged to assist, is not very tempting to France. Even so, if things became serious, Paris would of course not simply be resigned to its fate, but on the contrary would go to any lengths to promote what has been the ultimate goal of all French foreign policy in case of failure of the attempts to come to an understanding with Germany: collective action.²⁵

In dealing with Great Britain, it was felt to be the case that

British policy today proceeds on the thesis that it is possible to do complete justice to German grievances by peaceful means. Whether this is possible is to be determined by means of negotiation. If Germany rejects a test of the correctness of this thesis, it is to be expected that England will draw all the closer to France.... Failure to negotiate on this subject would not be detrimental to German policy but, like the failure of the Disarmament Conference, would mean increased freedom of action for Germany, and less risk in the use of this freedom of action.²⁶

Germany saw that whether England or France would intervene in Eastern Europe would depend upon the immediate circumstances.²⁷

The desire for settlement on the part of the Western Powers merely made Hitler more sure of himself. Although warned by his foreign office, he misinterpreted the "soft line" to mean that England would not fight and reasoned that therefore France would not oppose him. From that hour, Munich was inevitable. It has been rightly said that "appeasing the appeasable is a most reasonable endeavor; but whetting the appetite of the insatiable is mere suicidal folly."²⁸ Once the French alliance system became enervated, Britain became the leader, France the follower. The new British ambassador to Germany, Sir Nevile Henderson, greatly favored an Anglo-German settlement; and owing to his enthusiastic

²⁵ Ibid., no. 86, p. 150.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 151.

²⁷ Ibid., no. 493.

²⁸ Albrecht-Carrié, op. cit., p. 514.

application of the appeasement policy there was an apparent international relaxation until November 6, 1937, when the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis was signed. This pact marked a new phase of German policy, the triumph of force.

The year 1937 might be termed the logical starting point of World War II. The Halifax visit embarked the West upon appeasement just when Hitler's plans, which had been in outline as early as 1934, were being completed in detail,²⁹ and when his objectives seemed increasingly clearer and more attainable. The army was ready, its command newly renovated.

In 1937 also, Mussolini came to Berlin. Italy played an ambiguous role in the working out of the Nazi schemes. Although fascist, she was diplomatically speaking neither fish nor fowl, neither allied with the West nor with Germany. Generally she was seeking her own advantage, and when she signed the Anti-Comintern Agreement one of her motives was to force England to seek a settlement with the Axis. The lack of unity of the West was clearly evident in the whole situation:

When London tried mediating between Paris and Berlin, the result was the weakening of French prestige and interests to an extent which drove many otherwise responsible French politicians to take up a bitter and almost negative anti-British attitude; when Paris endeavored to reconcile London and Rome, British suspicions rose, and it became easier for Hitler to win Mussolini. And now, early in 1937, Neville Chamberlain began to favor the Germans.³⁰

Chamberlain underestimated Hitler and Mussolini, not realizing how far the scales of the balance of power were tipping away from France and towards Germany, while Henderson, "the Carlylean, narrow-minded,

²⁹ c.f. Nov. 5 declaration of Hitler's decision to use force on Austria.

³⁰ Lukacs, op. cit., p. 74.

snobbish, and stubbornly Germanophile Ambassador of His Britannic Majesty to Germany³¹ was known to have said privately: "I don't see why we shouldn't say to Germany, 'give us satisfactory assurances that you won't use force to deal with the Austrians and Czechoslovakians, and we will give you similar assurances that we won't use force to prevent the changes you want, if you can get them by peaceful means.'"³² This statement represents the whole British diplomatic policy in little.

The main cause, then, of the German successes in East Central Europe was the almost benevolent neutrality of the West. Hitler believed himself to be entirely justified in thinking that the way was clear, that he could seize his Lebensraum by force.

³¹ Ibid., p. 112.

³² Ibid., p. 80.

CHAPTER III

THE METHODOLOGY OF WORLD CONQUEST: ANSCHLUSS

Anschluss, or the political union of Germany and Austria, had been a dream ever since the movement for the unification of Germany. It was a goal especially desirable to Nazi Germany, the first objective of any plan of expansion, because of the prominence of the Aryan race theory in the official ideology, and also because independent Austria lay directly in the path of the wider Nazi claims to Lebensraum. Speaking of Anschluss, G. S. Messersmith, U. S. Ambassador to Vienna, said that "I can assert that it was fully understood by everyone in Germany who had any knowledge whatever of what was going on that Hitler and the Nazi Germans were irrevocably committed to this end and the only doubt which ever existed in conversations or statements to me was 'how' and 'when'."¹

The First World War had instantaneously converted Austria from a huge empire to a small second-rate state. She was saved economically only by loans which were conditional upon the maintenance of her independence. There had been some Anschluss sentiment, especially among the socialists, which, however, died down after Germany's disastrous experience in the Depression. Meanwhile, Austria was proven to be viable economically after all, and so matters stood until Hitler's coup. The old Austrian pan-Germans adopted the Nazi ideology when it arose.

¹ Conspiracy and Aggression, op. cit., v. I, p. 451.

Austria was forbidden to compromise her independence by Article Eighty of the Versailles Treaty, and also by Article Eighty-eight of the Treaty of Saint Germain, which stated that "the independence of Austria is inalienable otherwise than with the consent of the League of Nations."² Austria reaffirmed this restriction in 1921 when she applied for a League loan. In 1931, an attempted customs union with Germany was thwarted. The Austrian Protocol of 1932, which once more reaffirmed her independence, was negotiated upon the occasion of another loan; and in 1934 the so-called Stresa Front of England, France, and Italy was pledged to preserve Austria's independence from Germany.

The first major move made by Germany towards drawing Austria within its diplomatic orbit, was the signing of the Agreement of July 11, 1936. This "gentlemen's agreement" purported to re-establish normal and friendly relations between the two countries. Associations of the nationals of one country were to be permitted within the borders of the other provided they be law-abiding and refrain from mixing in politics. No restrictions were to be placed upon cultural exchange, including newspaper circulation, and all means were to be used to promote friendship. More important, Austria pledged to conduct her foreign policy "in the light of the peaceful endeavors of the German Government's foreign policy."³ An occasional exchange of views was to be made. The Austrian chancellor was to grant a political amnesty and to appoint members of the opposition to his cabinet. Mussolini, who might have been opposed to this agreement, officially expressed his satisfaction that Austria would now be kept out of foreign politics, which,

² Robert Langer, Seizure of Territory (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947), p. 157.

³ Documents, op. cit., ser. D., vol. I, no. 152, p. 280.

he said, removed the last handicap to good Italo-German relations; while Italy could legally contemplate no change in the Austrian status quo due to the Rome Protocols, she pledged her aid to urge Austria to carry out the July 11 Agreement and promised in case of conflict that she would not resume her "watch on the Brenner" with other countries.⁴ Her Mediterranean policy was forcing Italy to become pro-German.

Germany's motives in negotiating the July 11 Agreement were to exclude the Austrian question from international discussion, to wreck possible efforts to restore the Hapsburgs, and to promote "cultural" infiltration. In a report addressed to Hitler reviewing the success of the Agreement after a year in operation, the Ambassador to Austria von Papen declared that the July 11 policy had worked extremely well. The rough spots in Austro-German relations at the moment were due, he maintained, not to the agreement itself but to the necessity of pushing Germany's legitimate interests. He stated that

the German-Austrian question has always been a psychological problem, particularly with regard to world public opinion. The less it can, perhaps be solved by power politics at the moment, the more we must prepare a psychologically correct solution. The policy of the Reich must be made to utilize every opportunity to make it clear that it not only does not have annexationist intentions, but that it repudiates them even from purely historical considerations because in the Austrian question it desires to exercise a "mandate" granted it by the Austrian race itself.⁵

As Nazi power increased, Austria's chances of diplomatic escape dwindled steadily.

The Nazis conducted a campaign of furious subversion within Austria. All means were used--propaganda; economic pressures such as restrictions on tourist travel; the use of terror such as the aiding of

⁴ Ibid., no. 207.

⁵ Ibid., no. 233, p. 436.

the Austrian Legion, a paramilitary force near the border; and the harboring of Austrian fascist refugees. The attempted putsch of July 25, 1934, if not due to the connivance of the German ambassador, was at least attempted with his foreknowledge and assent.⁶ After the failure of the putsch, the Austrian fascists were forced underground and their "fighters" lost, the remnants being left to their own devices as Germany switched her policy to conciliation and formally recognized the independence of the Austrian state. The party was splintered, however, into several groups, and an illegal armed underground was formed behind certain key "front personalities." While Germany was ostensibly pursuing a "hands off " policy, Schacht earmarked 200,000marks per month for use in Austria.⁷ The opposition parties were given support also in the hopes that the government would be forced to call on the fascists for aid. Meanwhile, the German diplomatic position improved greatly with the remilitarization of the Rhineland and with Italy's involvement in Africa. The July 11 agreement brought an amnesty for the Austrian Nazis and their first penetration into the government. At that time also, active party operation was resumed, still with the use of several organizations, both legal and illegal.⁸

Although the Austrian fascists were instructed to preserve their outward independence, actually "its leaders to a large extent shaped their policy in accordance with instructions from the Reich."⁹ Party members were ordered to come to Germany only when necessary and to avoid the appearance that they had any other source of instruction than their

⁶ Conspiracy and Aggression, op. cit., vol. I, p. 454.

⁷ Ibid., p. 463.

⁸ Documents, op. cit., v. I, nos. 167, 262.

⁹ Ibid., no. 229.

own leadership. Occasionally, however, the Germans were embarrassed, as for instance on the occasion of the discovery of some records concerning the payment of lawyers for accused Austrian Nazis.¹⁰ Schuschnigg, the Austrian chancellor, complained of this German support and declared himself disappointed by the July 11 agreement. He announced his intention of cultivating closer ties with the secession states, although he made it plain that he would not work against the Reich.¹¹ Early in 1938, Germany was further embarrassed by the discovery of the smuggling of inflammatory literature, which Schmidt declared to be "the crassest case so far of interference in Austrian domestic affairs."¹² Earlier,

in November 1937 the Austrian police were on the trail of a secret Nazi plan containing details for a Nazi coup for the eventual coercion of the Austrian government into submission. There was now direct and indisputable evidence of connections between the Nazis and German authorities in Berlin, and on January 25, 1938, the so-called Tavo memorandum advocating the German invasion of Austria was seized.¹³

The Germans, however, were not unduly worried, and even considered their chances for an "evolutionary" solution better since Austria knew how matters stood. Their plan was to get as many men into the Austrian government as possible, and, once in, to rely on popular support.¹⁴

One reason for Germany's self-assurance was the fact that Italy, as she became more involved in her international intrigues, was forced to relinquish her "protectorate" over Austria, who was deprived of her last supporter when the League sanctions drove Italy into Germany's arms. When Mussolini visited Hitler in Sept., 1937, he declared himself to be disgusted with Austria's policies; but Germany agreed that Schuschnigg

¹⁰ Ibid., no. 242.

¹¹ Ibid., no. 264.

¹² Ibid., no. 275, p. 490.

¹³ Lukacs, op. cit., p. 66.

¹⁴ Documents, op. cit., vol. I, ser. D., no. 285.

should not be overthrown without a suitable successor.¹⁵

To Anschluss as to the remilitarization of the Rhineland, the military leaders were strongly opposed, believing that Italy would oppose Germany a second time at the Brenner pass. Again, the High Command purge of February 4, 1938, effectively annulled this defiance of Hitler's will. The opposition of the West was negligible. Although it was recognized that Austria was Hitler's number one target, there was little it could do without the strong diplomatic support of Italy or the Ententes, except to go to war; but here the West was inhibited by the fact that Austria was, after all, a "German" state and that the moral issue of Nazism versus Democracy had not yet been drawn clearly enough to justify war, particularly since many Western Europeans were indulging in utopian dreams of world peace. The "Democracies" were unable to generate enough public support on such short notice.

In February, 1938, Chancellor Schuschnigg agreed to attend a conference in Germany if Hitler invited him, if he knew the whole agenda beforehand, and if it were agreed in advance that the published communique would reaffirm the July 11 agreement. Upon arrival on February 12 at Berchtesgaden, the place of meeting, the Chancellor found himself "confronted by a furious, brutal, yelling Hitler; Schuschnigg, whose personality was anything but dynamic, could not withstand the incredible psychological pressure put upon him."¹⁶ This unexpected violent attack lasted about two hours. Schuschnigg wrote later that Hitler "informed me that he Hitler, had decided to bring the Austrian question to a solution so or so, even if he had to immediately use military force."¹⁷ With

¹⁵ Ibid., no. 256.

¹⁶ Lukacs, op. cit., p. 113.

¹⁷ Conspiracy and Aggression, vol. I, p. 482.

accusations and threats, Austria was given Germany's "final demands", with the warning that if President Miklas did not approve within three days, military action would be taken.

The Berchtesgaden Protocol was designed, as Schuschnigg said, to "cloak the treacherous blow with a thin remnant of so-called legality."¹⁸ It called for consultation on foreign policy of common concern, and stated that National Socialism was compatible to Austria provided that it did not conflict with the constitution. The Austrian fascist leader, Seyss-Inquart, was to be appointed Minister of Interior and Public Safety with power to oversee National Socialist development. Guido Schmidt was to be Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Austrian Nazis were to be granted an amnesty and freely admitted into military service. A Nazi, Dr. Wolf, was to be appointed to the Austrian Press Service to insure good relations, and the signatories pledged "moral, diplomatic, and press support of the desires and actions" of each other.¹⁹ All negotiations concerning the interpretation of the Protocol were to be made through Seyss-Inquart only.

Schuschnigg returned to Vienna, made the required cabinet changes, and granted the amnesty. The people's reaction was mixed.²⁰ There resulted a heavy flight of illegal capital, especially Jewish. On the eighteenth it was reported that

on the basis of a detailed and comprehensive four-day observation, it must be stated that the breakthrough succeeded absolutely and is much deeper than is assumed in many quarters in the Reich. After the powers had left Schuschnigg in the lurch, he immediately saw his former supporters partly fall away, partly quarrel among themselves, and fight furiously over the succession to the chancellor-

¹⁸ Lukacs, op. cit., p. 113.

¹⁹ Documents, op. cit., ser. D., vol. I, no. 295, p. 515.

²⁰ Ibid., no. 306.

ship. In Legitimist circles chaos prevails; all hope has been abandoned.²¹

There was also what was described as a strong and sincere movement towards the Nazi labor organizations. The Berchtesgaden terms were carried out; Nazis flooded the government. "Now, perhaps for the first time, in East Central Europe the classic methodology of modern totalitarian aggression from within could be observed."²² The West, not knowing precisely what was in the Berchtesgaden Agreement, merely adopted a "wait and see" policy. No great reaction was expected from it.²³

By February 20, Hitler had already violated the Berchtesgaden Agreement. Schuschnigg called the Austrian Bundestag for the twenty-fourth. On March 9 he announced a plebiscite on the subject of Anschluss. Hitler had the sudden unpleasant prospect of being hoist on his own petard, for "both in wording of the question and in the manner in which the plebiscite is to be carried out, Dr. Schuschnigg seems to have taken a leaf out of the Nazi book."²⁴ As Ribbentrop reported to the Führer,

the plebiscite planned by Schuschnigg must be called a fraudulent maneuver in violation of the letter and spirit of the Berchtesgaden Agreement. First, the formulation of the question, which left no alternative whatsoever, was meaningless and a confidence game. The main issue, namely, whether Austria should be more closely attached to the German Reich in some manner, was evaded by the way the question was formulated. For Schuschnigg knew very well that in previous plebiscites the overwhelming majority of the Austrian people had voted in favor of a closer union with Germany.²⁵

The voting age was raised to twenty-four. A very short voting time was

²¹ Ibid., no. 313, p. 535.

²² Lukacs, op. cit., p. 114.

²³ Documents, op. cit., ser. D., vol. I, no. 305.

²⁴ Lukacs, op. cit., p. 118.

²⁵ Documents, op. cit., ser. D., vol. I, no. 147, p. 265.

allowed, every minute of which was under the close scrutiny of Schuschnigg's own police. The ballot required a "yes" or "no" answer to the statement:

With Schuschnigg for Austria. We want a free and a German Austria, an independent and a social Austria, a Christian and a united Austria. We desire bread and peace in the country and the equality of all who stand for their people and their nation.²⁶

Only "yes" ballots were distributed. Those who desired to vote "no" would have to furnish their own. At first, "no" ballots would only be acceptable if they bore the voter's full name and address.

Schuschnigg made a speech at Innsbruck in which he pledged adherence to the July 11 and Berchtesgaden Agreements but refused to go further, and appealed to the nation.

Italy advised Schuschnigg against the plebiscite and refused to discuss joint action with England and France.²⁷ After all, the Italian Foreign Minister Ciano stated, "what could I do ...No external guarantee can save Austria....A state whose independence is assured by a third power is virtually finished."²⁸

Germany saw the danger in a vote of confidence in the Austrian government, no matter how fraudulent. On March 11, an ultimatum was submitted demanding that Schuschnigg postpone the plebiscite indefinitely. This was rejected, but a second was sent demanding that Schuschnigg relinquish the chancellorship to Seyss-Inquart. Schuschnigg then yielded to the first ultimatum, whereupon a third was submitted repeating the demands of the second and threatening invasion at 8:00 P.M. that day if not complied with. At 7:50, Schuschnigg yielded, and Seyss-Inquart set up a

²⁶ Ibid., no. 340, p. 563.

²⁷ Ibid., no. 350.

²⁸ Lukacs, op. cit., p. 115.

"provisional government" and requested German troops to help preserve order.

The German General Staff had expected a war with Italy and Czechoslovakia, but Italy had sold out and Czechoslovakia was unwilling to take on such a big task without the aid of England and France. No real military preparation had been made by Germany, such was the confidence of the Nazis.²⁹ Maneuvers were held near the border to create the impression of a large undertaking, and rumors were deliberately planted. General Jodl recorded in his diary that

General Keitel and Admiral Canaris worked out a scheme for shamming military pressure, in order to coerce President Miklas into ratifying the agreement. By Hitler's orders. 14 February--The effect is quick and strong. In Austria the impression is created that Germany is undertaking serious military preparations.³⁰

When the news of the ultimata was out, Lord Halifax excitedly talked of an international police force to insure an impartial plebiscite. Ribbentrop countered with the statement that the Anschluss was demanded by the Austrian people, and that Schuschnigg naturally would resign after attempting a fraudulent plebiscite, which had been imposed arbitrarily without consulting the Austrian cabinet. Schuschnigg had, at any rate freely agreed to the German solution at Berchtesgaden, where he had been swayed by the Führer's clear explanations. Schuschnigg was guilty of a gross breach of faith. A strong attempt was made by the Nazis to deny that there had ever been any ultimata. Hitler stated that "I am now determined to restore law and order to my homeland and enable the people to decide their own fate according to their

²⁹ Conspiracy and Aggression, op. cit., vol. IV, no. 1175-PS, p. 357.

³⁰ Ibid., vol. I, p. 485.

judgment in an unmistakable, clear, and open manner."³¹

The Anschluss was met with only very weak response. There was an unfavorable but quickly suppressed reaction in Italy and some nervous speculation as to what Germany would do next. England submitted a softly-worded protest through Sir Neville Henderson. Only Mexico communicated with Mr. Avenol, the Secretary General of the League, for it was realized that nothing short of war could have changed the German fait accompli, and Europe recoiled from that step. The French reaction was indignant, perplexed, and uncertain, but on the whole fatalistic. Blame was heaped on the lack of domestic cohesion, policy weakness, England's aloofness from Central European problems, and the refusal of Italy, with whom France still desired a rapprochement, to join in a general protest.

On March 14, France renewed her pledge of assistance to Czechoslovakia. If that country considered herself to be the object of an unprovoked attack, then France would consider herself at war with Germany regardless of the action of England. Czechoslovakia tried to call a Little Entente meeting but Rumania declined. England announced a new armament program. Chamberlain stated that "once we had all got past this unpleasant affair (of Austria)...it was to be hoped that we could begin working in earnest towards a German-British understanding."³² The first major step in appeasement had been taken on March 4, when Germany was offered full sovereignty of certain Congo colonies if she would accept certain restrictions. Now these offers were repeated.³³ Prime Minister Eden had resigned a week after Berchtesgaden, and his

³¹ Documents, op. cit., ser. D. vol. I, no. 352, p. 575.

³² Lukacs, op. cit., p. 118.

³³ Documents, op. cit., ser. D., vol. I, no. 400.

successor Chamberlain would not back French resistance. On the whole,

the Western Powers failed to demonstrate any strength or any determination to regain the diplomatic initiative. Only Mr. Churchill spoke anxiously in the House of Commons about the real threat of force. None of the central-eastern European capitals were able to see a rehabilitation of the West's faded diplomatic prestige. The French and British envoys were either silent or non-committal; many of them could but grit diplomatic teeth and hope some kind of miraculous wise new course would be charted in their respective Foreign Ministries.³⁴

To the English overtures, Hitler replied that his prerequisite to cooperation was the absolute abstention of any third power from meddling in Central Europe. He compared this area to the British position relative to the Empire and to Belgium and Holland, and the Austrian question to England's troubles with Ireland. When England spoke of a redistribution of colonies between 50° and the Zambezi River, he blandly asked why Germany's former colonies weren't returned to her.³⁵

The Anschluss was a great victory for the Nazis. Versailles had been attacked in its weakest spot, and was now upon its deathbed, and the European continent had been cut in half by the Nazi bloc. Germany fell heir to Austria's Balkan and Danube trade, together with all the assets and holdings of the Viennese banks. Through the liquidation of foreign and non-Aryan property, Germany obtained some 18,000,000 pounds in gold and foreign exchange;³⁶ and although Austria represented a food liability, Anschluss was a net gain in raw materials, in labor supply, and in communications. In addition to mines and heavy industry, about seven millions more Germans were added to the Reich, but only a few more hundred miles of frontier. Germany was able to draw a much greater proportion of the Central European trade, especially since she obtained control of the port of Trieste which was an outlet from Czecho-

³⁴ Lukacs, op. cit., p. 138.

³⁵ Documents, op. cit., ser., D., vol. I, no. 138.

³⁶ D. Graham Hutton, Survey after Munich (Boston: Little, Brown, 1939), p. 117.

slovakia, South Poland, South Germany and Austria. The absorption of Austrian trade was a heavy blow to Czechoslovakia and also to Italy, who was bound even more closely to Germany through her economic ties with Austria.

Over and above the economic gain, Anschluss was a strategic, political, and moral victory for the Germans. As General Jodl said later in a speech on foreign policy,

the Austrian Anschluss...brought with it not only the fulfillment of an old national aim, but also had the effect both of reinforcing our fighting strength and of materially strengthening our fighting position. Where as up till then the territory of Czechoslovakia had projected in a most menacing way right into Germany—a wasp waist in the direction of France and an air base for the allies, in particular Russia—Czechoslovakia herself was now enclosed by pincers.³⁷

Anschluss greatly altered the strategic situation of East Central Europe. Vienna was a main center for the communications of the Balkans, both as a railway terminal and in her command of the Danube Valley.

Germany now had frontiers with Italy, Hungary, and Yugoslavia, with the alpine passes which were the key to the Hungarian plain. To reassure Italy, Germany proclaimed an immediate guarantee of the Brenner Pass. The German move had caught Italy with her hands full of her own ambitions, and at a time when she was estranged from the West.

In the circumstances Mussolini had no choice but to faire bonne figure au mauvais jour. But in effect the Anschluss meant a shifting of the Axis relations in which Italy was passing from the position of equal partner to that of prisoner. Her influence in Central Europe suffered a severe setback, a condition of which the smaller states of that region showed awareness.³⁸

Central Europe reacted by trying to make peace with Berlin. Their struggles were now no longer local but involved in the Great Power politics of Europe. On March 23, Rumania was forced to sign a treaty subordinating her economy to Germany's. On April 7, Mussolini invaded

³⁸ Albrecht-Carrié, op. cit., p. 519.

³⁷ De Mendelssohn, op. cit., p. 39.

Albania. On the thirteenth, Britain and France extended unilateral guarantees of independence to Greece and Rumania.

On April 10, amid mass frenzy and enthusiasm, Austria voted 99.75% approval of union with the Reich.³⁹ Nothing succeeds like success, and not the small Slavic states alone took notice of this event; the fall of the last free German political unit had a tremendous effect upon Central Europe's scattered German minorities. The Reich could now truly claim to be the fatherland of the race.

The effects of the dynamic German successes were evident: cabinet ministers began dreaming of high, windswept balconies, military parades, and patent leather boots; foreign ministers, imitating the former champagne salesman, Ribbentrop, created military uniforms of their own, with glittering medals and high waists, thus shedding the morning coat together with all other vestiges of the "decadent bourgeois past." Was Europe finished? To many it seemed so.⁴⁰

In five years Germany had thrown off the disgrace of defeat, burst her political frontiers, and achieved a domination undreamed of by the Kaisers. The powers of Europe rushed to preserve the peace, as the Reich worked to secure her Lebensraum.

³⁹ William L. Langer, ed., An Encyclopedia of World History (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1956), p. 1009.

⁴⁰ Lukacs, op. cit., p. 123.

CHAPTER IV

THE METHODOLOGY OF WORLD CONQUEST: THE MUNICH CRISIS

Czechoslovakia, unlike Austria, was a strong state economically and completely independent of Germany. She was also outstanding, from the point of view of the West, because of all the Central European nations she most firmly and consistently espoused the liberal traditions of Western Europe. The fall of this nation was a strategic victory for Nazism as well as a tremendous prestige builder. The British Ambassador in Prague pleaded for the maintenance at all cost of this country's independence, for "the Czechoslovakians, unlike the Austrians, know what they want, and, if sufficiently backed, would probably be prepared to fight for it."¹

Czechoslovakia had within its boundaries a trojan horse, so to speak, in her large Sudeten German minority, a homogeneous and compact unit of three and one-half millions in a total of about fifteen millions, which composed the largest group of Germans outside the Reich.² When the nation was created in 1919, these Sudetens had desired to go to Austria.

It is useless to deny that the new State was created against the will of its German citizens, and indeed it rested upon two conflicting principles—in Bohemia upon the historic "State Rights" of the Crown of Saint Wenceslas, in Slovakia upon nationality and self-determination. In the name of the first the Germans were included in Bohemia, in the name of the second the Slovaks were excluded from Hungary.³

¹ Lukacs, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

² R. W. Seton-Watson, *From Munich to Danzig* (London: Methuen, 1939), p. 24.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

The mountains of Bohemia did form the logical natural boundary for the Czech state, and the Sudetens had traditional and economic ties with their Slavic neighbors. Although there were bad feelings when the Sudetens found themselves incorporated, on the whole their rights were respected and one may even say that they possessed the fullest minority rights in Europe, these rights including proportional representation, schools, use of the German language, and an unobstructed press. The furor tended to die down. The Czechoslovak government was committed to the conciliation of the Sudetens, and whatever friction occurred arose from local recalcitrance and from slow, obstructionist local officials. Such petty discrimination kept Sudeten resentment alive. Their leaders insisted from first to last upon their right to self-determination, which was so much a matter of principle that they rejected even the more generous offers of cooperation with the Czechoslovak government.

The development of fascism among the Sudetens was to a large extent indigenous and paralleled that of Germany. The effects of Hitler's coup of 1933 were profoundly disturbing. The Sudetens felt that they must preserve their cultural ties with Germany at all cost. The Czechoslovakian gendarmérie reacted strongly, and the Sudeten fascists disbanded their organization for a year voluntarily to avoid the use of force. No defense laws could keep out the flood of German wireless propaganda, however, and substitute societies began to form, such as the gymnastic society or Turnverband headed by Konrad Henlein. In 1933, Henlein founded the Sudeten-deutsche Heimatfront which was at first fairly contented and antifascist. By 1935, the party was polling a considerable percentage of Sudeten German votes and was becoming far more radical in outlook and total in administration. In general, the party became more aggressive as the economic crisis extended

itself among the Germans. The rise of nationalist passions was very closely allied to economic distress as Germany restricted her tourist trade in the area and as German autarky deprived Sudeten manufacturers of an important market.

The Sudeten Deutsche Partie, needless to say, was in continuous close contact with Germany. Henlein received heavy German financial aid from 1935 on.⁴ Before Anschluss, however, Henlein worked mainly towards organizing the Sudetens and for the redress of certain specific grievances against the Czechoslovak government. In recruitment of support, Henlein could rely upon the whole gamut of political passions and group pressures.

The Henleinists made the most of...Central European circumstances. They not only announced that everything across the frontier in Germany was excellent, plenty of work with plenty of pay...they also succeeded in surrounding the doubting voter with a sense of shame and fear--shame that he could hesitate to back the rescuers of his people, and fear lest, according to the rumors freely circulated, Hitler should march in any day and activist heads should roll. The effect of whispers such as these was greater, perhaps, than anything actually circulated in print.⁵

On March 28, 1938, Henlein had a personal interview with Hitler in which he was advised to refrain from accepting the concessions of the Czech government and gradually to increase his demands upon it. The legalization of armed military groups was suggested as a good bargaining point to which the Czech government would never agree. Most contact between Germany and the Sudeten Party was carried on through the German legations. Eisenlohr, German Ambassador in Prague, declared German foreign policy to be the "sole determining factor for policy and tactical procedure of the Sudeten German Party."⁶

⁴ Conspiracy and Aggression, vol. I, p. 549.

⁵ Elizabeth Wiskemann, Czechs and Germans (London, Oxford U. P., 1938), p. 205.

⁶ Documents, op. cit., ser. D., vol. II, no. 86, p. 170.

Germany, in her dealings with Czechoslovakia, adopted two main propaganda lines: Czech collaboration with Russia and her mistreatment of her German minority. Plans for an attack upon Czechoslovakia were drafted as early as June, 1937. In November of that year, and in April, 1938, conferences were held upon the subject. Even up to the time of Anschluss, Czechoslovakia might have obtained fairly good terms by re-orienting her foreign policy and submitting to German leadership. What the Nazis feared most of all was the existence of a Western citadel in the heart of the Lebensraum area. "Ever since the middle of the Nineteenth Century the policy of Prussia was directed toward forestalling the rise in Central Europe of an economic system which would consolidate itself outside German control and leadership."⁷ But on April 21, 1938, the German High Command drew up the definite plan for attack on Czechoslovakia, "Case Green." Three possible methods were discussed, that of surprise attack, that of "justified" attack coming after a period of accelerating diplomatic clashes, and that of a lightning attack as reprisal for some incident, such as the assassination of some German diplomat. For success of the plan, close cooperation with the Sudeten "fifth column" was considered vital.⁸ Plans were also made on May 20 for a heavy propaganda campaign to foster defeatism. On June 24, the final directive was issued.

Hitler was sure, and the army not so sure, that the West would not intervene. But Hitler commanded the allegiance of the masses, and the General Staff was committed to secrecy. General Beck particularly protested that Anschluss had made strategic danger from Czechoslovakia negligible, and resigned from the General Staff in protest. It is said

⁷ Hanc, op. cit., p. 111.

⁸ De Mendelssohn, op. cit., p. 45.

that Hitler's success at this time broke up a plot which was forming against him under General Hadler and other military personnel.

The German diplomats, knowing the Western aversion to war, were constantly telling France and England that the Sudetens must be pacified if war were to be avoided. The British suggested an impartial committee of inquiry, a proposal which was rejected by Germany. The Runciman Mission was sent from England, however, to pacify, to stall, to mediate, and to observe. There were rearmament debates in Parliament. Von Dirksen, German Ambassador in Great Britain, reported that there existed a growing public interest, that Germany was becoming the enemy, and that the people were psychologically becoming ready to fight. "To regard the excitement of the last few weeks as a mere bluff," he said, "might turn out to be a fatal error."⁹ Officially, however, the British government was for peace at any price. Chamberlain reflected this feeling when he called Czechoslovakia a "far-away country about which we know so little."¹⁰ Henderson immediately favored federalism as the answer to the Sudeten problem.

In France, the extreme Left desired war, while the extreme Right took the attitude that mort Locarno, mort l'accessoire de Locarno. France was bound to Czechoslovakia by a definite treaty; now she must decide whether to take the initiative in the fulfillment of that agreement or to follow England's lead. Russia declared herself willing to abide by her treaty obligations if France were; but Poland and Rumania separated Czechoslovakia from direct Soviet aid. The French attitude was the key to Russian action, and the new Daladier government favored conceding to Henlein's demands. Furthermore, it was a policy of the

⁹ Documents, op. cit., ser. D., vol. II, no. 244, p. 393.

¹⁰ Albrecht-Carrié, op. cit., p. 523.

Chamberlain government to keep Russia out of European politics. More and more France looked to England, who favored genuine compromise, revision by plebiscite, a four-power understanding, and colonial settlement. The German diplomats warned their Foreign Office that England would fight if force were used in Europe. In a document analyzing the English position, Ribbentrop scribbled a characteristically contemptuous marginal comment: "Secret Service Propaganda!"¹¹

After Anschluss, almost all Sudetens were behind Henlein. Most desired only regional autonomy, but a few had an inkling of the trend of the fascist plans. The party inspired fanatic enthusiasm. Since Anschluss, Henlein had gradually increased his demands to the Czechoslovak government. On April 24, 1938, Henlein made a speech at Karlsbad demanding autonomy for the politically united Sudetens. At the same time Germany began an extensive anti-Czech press campaign. The Karlsbad speech demanded complete equality, recognition of a self-governing settlement area and measures for the protection of the Sudetens living outside that area, removal of and compensation for the wrongs committed by the Czechs, German public servants in the German area, and complete freedom to uphold the fascist ideology.¹² Following the Karlsbad speech, negotiations dragged and tempers rose. Henlein was instructed to reject all settlement until German military measures could be completed. The Sudeten population was reported in a state of high excitement, talking not of autonomy but of Anschluss.¹³ By the middle of May the Henleinist aim was no longer autonomy but a plebiscite.¹⁴ When the leader requested orders as to what he should

¹¹ Documents, op. cit., ser. D., vol. II, no. 270.

¹² Ibid., no. 135.

¹³ Ibid., no. 158.

¹⁴ Ibid., no. 164.

do if Czechoslovakia gave in and consented to all demands, he was told to accept the Czech capitulation and to make the counter-demand that Czechoslovakia reorient her foreign policy to conform with Germany's. It was doubted if such a demand would be accepted.¹⁵ Germany was playing for time. Speed was considered vital, not only to make the world see how weak the Czech state was, but to discourage others, especially Hungary and Poland, who might be tempted to partake of the booty. Henlein negotiated and rejected four separate plans of settlement, even including his own Karlsbad points.

By the second week of September Germany felt strong enough to resort to overt action heralded by a speech delivered by the German Chancellor at the close of the National Socialist Party Congress at Nuremberg on September 12, 1938. He gave a lurid description of the "tortures" to which the Germans living in the Czechoslovak Republic were subjected....¹⁶

Widespread disorders resulted from this speech, forcing the Czech government to declare martial law.

The following day, **Sept. 13**, the Sudeten German Party submitted an ultimatum demanding the withdrawal in six hours of Czech police from all areas containing a majority German population, declaring that unless this demand was acceded to the Party would not be responsible for the ensuing disorders. On the fourteenth, the negotiations were declared ended. On the fifteenth, the party demanded nothing short of return to the Reich. Henlein and the other leaders fled across the border.

On April 28 and 29, shortly after the Karlsbad speech, Daladier and Bonnet flew to London to confer on the Sudeten question. No new commitments, no new obligations were undertaken. Since February France had given Czechoslovakia ten assurances of her support. Some reservists

¹⁵ Ibid., no. 237.

¹⁶ Robert Langer, op. cit., p. 209.

had been called up on September 7, but even after Hitler's Nuremberg speech she did nothing more.

The fact that on September 12 France decided against mobilization indicated that she was climbing down from her previous position, and throwing herself into the arms of the British inner cabinet. This amounted to acceptance by her of the Chamberlain conception of Germanic Mitteleuropa, and incidentally the open surrender of her twenty years' postwar policy.¹⁷

France agreed to England's proposal of a personal conference with Hitler. Therefore, on September 15, Prime Minister Chamberlain met the Führer at Berchtesgaden.

Chamberlain was already an old man and was moved by the conviction that there was no problem in the world that could not be settled by two decent, sensible men in a decent, sensible, heart-to-heart talk. Hitler, of course, was not concerned with the honest solution of any problem at all, or even a compromise. Hitler simply wanted the destruction of Czechoslovakia.¹⁸

At the conference, it was agreed that Czechoslovakia should be pressured into agreeing to a plebiscite and to relinquishing the Sudeten area. On September 19, Daladier and Bonnet flew to London, and the next day a note was submitted by the British and French ambassadors in Prague stating that they were

both convinced that, after recent events, the point has now been reached where the further maintenance of the Czechoslovak State of the districts mainly inhabited by Sudeten Deutsch cannot, in fact, continue any longer without imperiling the interests of Czechoslovakia herself and of European peace. In the light of these considerations both Governments have been compelled to the conclusion that the maintenance of peace and the safety of Czechoslovakia's vital interests cannot effectively be assured unless these areas are now transferred to the Reich.¹⁹

Italy offered troops to police the contested areas before the plebiscite. Hungary, upon German request,²⁰ and Poland, acting independently, demanded plebiscites in areas containing their national minorities,

¹⁷ Hanc, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

¹⁸ Walter Goerlitz, *History of the German General Staff* (New York: Praeger, 1953), p. 337.

¹⁹ *Documents, op. cit.*, ser. D., vol. II, no. 523, p. 832.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 554. If necessary, Hungary was to threaten to leave the League.

claims to which Hitler promised full support. Yugoslavia, a member of the Little Entente, practiced a benevolent neutrality towards the Axis and declared that she would not fight unless Hungary made an unprovoked attack. Also on the nineteenth, the German Foreign Office notified the Prague Embassy: "Please inform Deputy Kundt, at Konrad Henlein's request, to get in touch with the Slovaks at once and induce them to start their demands for autonomy tomorrow."²¹

On the twentieth, the Czech government suggested arbitration and attempted to invoke the Czech-German Arbitration Treaty of October, 1925, part of the Locarno system. She was denied a hearing. The following day,

the Czechoslovak Government, forced by circumstances, yielding to unheard-of pressure and drawing the consequences from the communications of the French and British Governments of September 21, 1938, in which both Governments expressed their point of view as to help for Czechoslovakia in case she should be attacked by Germany, accepts the Anglo-French proposals with feelings of pain....It notes with regret that these proposals were elaborated without previous consultation with the Czechoslovak Government.²²

On the twenty-second, the Hodza government resigned, being replaced by one headed by General Jan Sirovy.

On September 22 and 23, Chamberlain met with Hitler again, this time at Godesberg. Hitler said "it pains me terribly, but this will not work anymore,"²³ and presented to a dismayed Chamberlain further demands for the immediate unconditional cession and total evacuation of all areas containing a 50% German population. A plebiscite was to be held later, but unless these demands were accepted by October 1 there would be war. A boundary should be drawn first, and then the malcontents on either side allowed to move. Czechoslovakia must also give up her un-

²¹ Conspiracy and Aggression, op. cit., vol. I, p. 551.

²² Robert Langer, op. cit., p. 213.

²³ Lukacs, op. cit., p. 155.

friendly alliances and settle her disputes with all her neighbors. Then only would Germany consider negotiating a nonaggression pact or guaranteeing the new frontiers.²⁴

Hitler claimed that in fourteen days 120,000 refugees had poured across the border into Germany. Chamberlain in despair reminded the Führer that the principle of cession had already been granted by Czechoslovakia. Would Germany, for merely the difference of a few days, spoil all her chances of collaboration with England? News of the Czech mobilization came at that point in the conference, and Ribbentrop declared that Chamberlain should not think that his efforts to keep the peace had failed with the Führer. Such an accusation should be laid at the door of Prague. But the German ultimatum was recast in the form of a memorandum.²⁵

The period from September 24-29 was a time of acute international crisis. The semi-military government under Sirovy rejected the Godesberg demands. France, Hungary and Poland were partially mobilized, as was the British fleet. Rumania strengthened her borders and appealed to Italy not to let Hungary do anything which might force Rumanian intervention. Russia blasted the West and called for collective security, but made no appreciable military moves. Neither was there any in Prague. The Western plan as submitted at Berchtesgaden had ignored the Polish and Hungarian minorities but now Western pressure got Prague to agree to cede the Teschen area to Poland. Sir Neville Henderson stated that

if His Majesty's Government do not at this eleventh hour advise Czechoslovakia in the name of humanity and of the Czechoslovakians themselves, since we cannot in practice help them, to make the

²⁴ Documents, op. cit., ser. D., vol. II, no. 562.

²⁵ Ibid., no. 583, 584.

best terms they can with Berlin, we shall be exposing Czechoslovakia to the same fate as Abyssinia. Moreover, if we do not seize this last chance of pinning Herr Hitler down to his public statement yesterday that the Sudetens are the last of his territorial claims in Europe, we shall be exposing Central Europe to even worse things in the future.²⁶

The French premier expressed the sentiments of the Western nations generally when he said "how horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas masks because of a quarrel in a faraway country between people of whom we know nothing."²⁷

If Germany had attacked at that time, nevertheless, England and France would probably have declared war.²⁸ The French officials flew to London again on the twenty-fifth, and only Daladier fought the issue. A note was sent to Czechoslovakia saying that they no longer expected her to remain passive. On the twenty-sixth, Italy cabled asking for a delay and a four-power conference, and on September 28--Saint Wenceslas' Day--Hitler agreed. His acceptance was due partly to some of his advisers, partly to international pressure. It was the last time Hitler listened to Italy.

Hitler, Mussolini, Chamberlain, and Daladier were present at the Munich Conference on September 29, 1939. Neither Czechoslovakia nor Russia was invited.

On the eve of the Munich Conference the situation was no longer uncompromised. It was dominated by the efforts of the British Government which was determined, under Neville Chamberlain's leadership, to keep the empire out of war at any price. It was dominated by Lord Runciman's report which favored the Sudeten Germans and by the decisions made in London and accepted reluctantly in Prague which settled the main points concerning the return to Germany of the contested districts. It was dominated by the false position in which the Czechoslovak Government was unfortunately placed. Finally it was dominated not only by the anxiety to spare England the horrors of war but quite as much by the Franco-British

²⁶ Lukacs, op. cit., p. 159. The speech referred to was the Sportpalast speech of September 26.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 160.

²⁸ Documents, op. cit., ser. D., vol. II, no. 657.

desire to gain time and to profit thereby in order to complete preparations for armaments which were held to be insufficient or faulty.²⁹

The whole conference took place in an atmosphere of half-sincere optimism. It was realized that nothing could keep Germany out of Czechoslovakia, and that, once in, nothing short of an extended war could get her out. All hopes were pinned upon the fact that Hitler would keep his word. By then, however, it was realized that there was more behind the Nazi demands than mere zeal for the ingathering of the Volk.

Thus, to avert war at an inauspicious time, the Czechs were being driven into the abyss, and they were blamed for not moving faster. Possibly Czechoslovakia was doomed either way; but except for M Daladier, no one seems to have given sufficient thought to the worse situation which would arise when Hitler took up the next point in his programme.³⁰

The conference lasted twelve hours in all. Germany was granted the cession of the entire Sudeten German territory, subject to corrections by a later plebiscite. The evacuation was to begin on October 1 and be completed by the tenth. The disputed areas were to be examined by an international commission, which was to draw the final frontiers. There was to be no dismantling of installations. The Polish and Hungarian minority questions were to be settled within three months, pending which a second congress would meet to guarantee the new frontiers against unprovoked attack.³¹

Peace had been saved by the agreement of four Great Powers, an agreement the cost of which was to be borne by a fifth smaller one whom the four had "induced" to acquiesce in the necessary consequences; Munich was the precise implementation of the Four-Power proposal that Mussolini had made in 1933. The directorate of Europe had come into effective existence and others must take notice of its collec-

²⁹ André François-Poncet, The Fateful Years (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1949), p. 268.

³⁰ L. B. Namier, Europe in Decay (London: Macmillan, 1950), p. 178.

³¹ Documents, op. cit., ser. D., vol. II, no. 669.

tive power and will; it had indeed the power to preserve the peace so long as it continued to function. Here was confirmation, if any were still needed, of the demise of the French system and of the Versailles arrangements.³²

Upon the periphery of this "directoriate," observing and ignored, lay the Soviet Union. Germany had plainly stated that her goal was to isolate this enigmatic nation, yet the West had deliberately cut her out of the settlement. The Chamberlain circle had deep personal ill feelings towards the Socialist Fatherland and spurned all Russian offers to confer. It was universally believed that Stalin's purges had greatly weakened the Russian military establishment. Partly due to allied war-time propaganda, partly due to Russian insinuation, it was formerly believed almost universally that Russia alone would have stood faithfully by her obligations to Czechoslovakia, if only she could have been sure of Western support. In all probability, however, Russia would have been as little likely as England or France to intervene in case of an isolated German-Czech war.³³ Even so, Russia was given no chance to prove her intentions. She constantly urged France to greater efforts, but since a war in the West would have been so obviously to her advantage her moves created only suspicion. It is true also that the Russo-Polish Pact of 1926 forbade Russia to cross Polish territory without permission, which she was unable to secure, either from Poland or from Rumania. All Russian aid, therefore, could have been given only conditionally and would have probably been of dubious weight in holding back a Nazi offensive. But it is equally true that Russia, in her statements on the problem, avoided concrete statements of intent during the whole crisis period. The diplomatic corps in Moscow was virtually unanimous in the

³² Albrecht-Carrié, *op. cit.*, p. 526.

³³ C. f. Lukacs, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-189 for an excellent treatment of this subject.

opinion that Russia was unwilling to commit herself. There was little mention of the crisis in the Russian press, and no mobilization. There was the démarche to Poland, the threat to denounce the Russo-Polish Nonaggression Pact if the Czech borders were violated; but such a denunciation did not carry with it any obligation to fight.

Stalin later claimed that Munich had driven him into making a settlement with Hitler. It was justifiable, however, to doubt whether any Russian offer to move into Central Europe could have been regarded as unselfish altruism. The piper would have to be paid by whichever side Russia took. To have acquiesced in a Soviet encampment upon Central Europe would have done as much damage to the pretensions of Western liberal democracy as the Munich Conference did; nevertheless, by refusing to allow the Soviet Union even token participation in the discussions, the West left her with a completely free hand to look to her own advantage, and with an excellent propaganda weapon. Meanwhile, she remained in the eyes of many the only bulwark against Nazism.

There was great joy in the Western camp until it was realized what price had been paid for peace. Sir Samuel Hoare of Hoare-Laval fame, in speaking of the results of the Munich Conference, declared that Britain had made a very great achievement in substituting "for unlimited and uncontrolled military invasion a limited and controlled cession of territory under the supervision of an international body."³⁴ Another, more realistic, observer was able to see that "we have now obtained, by peaceful means, what we have fought four wars to prevent happening, namely, the domination of Europe by a single power."³⁵ In reality, the most concrete result of Munich was the virtual elimination of Western influence upon the European continent and the absolute domination of the whole

³⁴ R. W. Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 124.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 140.

Danube area by Nazi Germany.

Also important was the fact that Hitler was fully and completely confirmed in his contempt of the West and in his conviction that, even if it were to offer resistance to his plans, he would win a resounding victory.

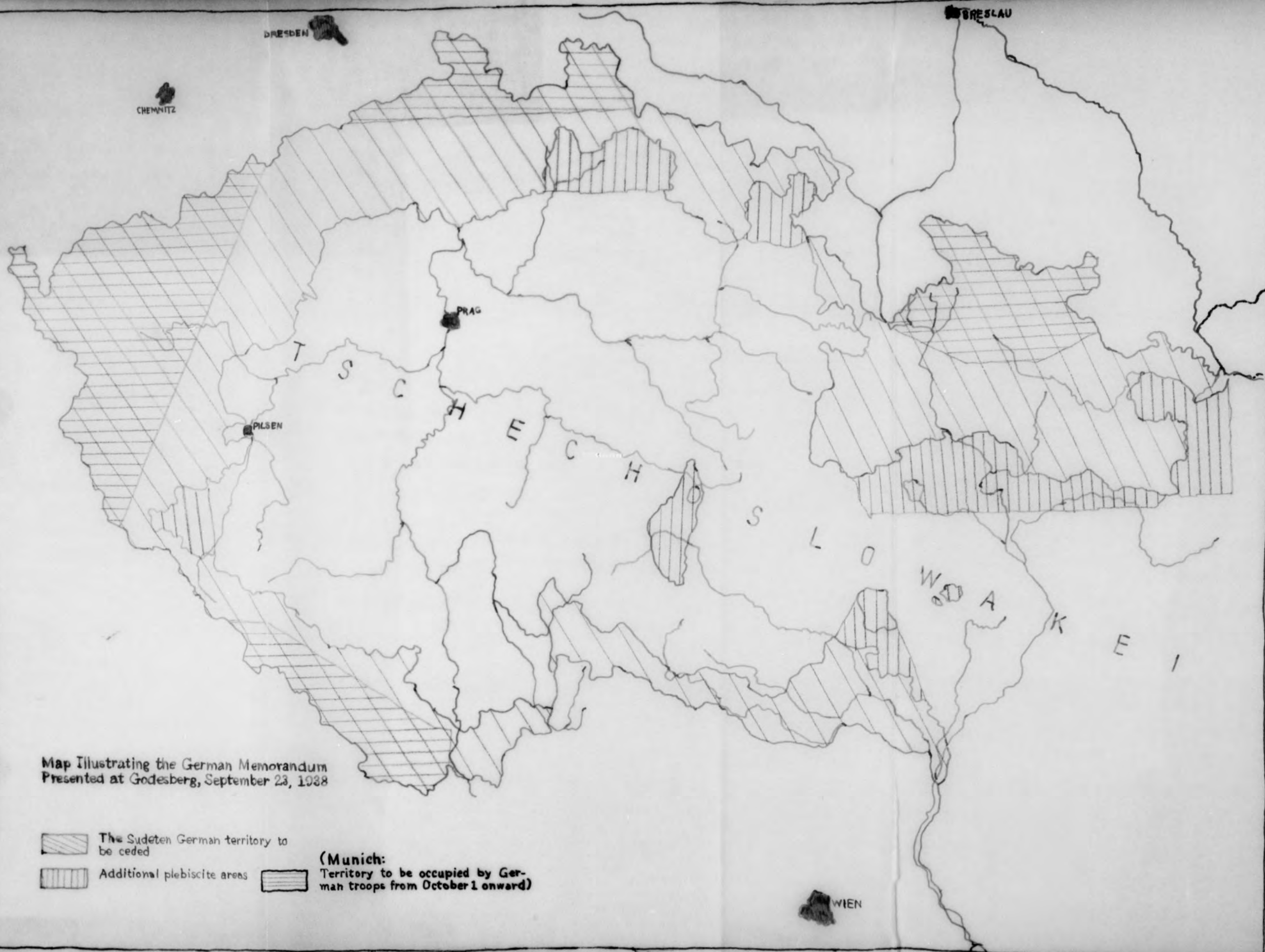
The importance of the difference between democratic and totalitarian systems must be stressed in this connection. In the Nazi book, and purely in terms of power, the Anglo-French consent to the annexation of Sudetenland could well imply their acceptance of the Prague coup, since the former event had effectively destroyed the significance of Czechoslovakia. But, especially in British eyes, there was all the difference between Munich (an implementation of self-determination) and Prague (the denial of it). There could be no justification for the bartering of the independence of the Baltic states other than crude considerations of power. Relevant as these might be, they would have aroused a storm of moral indignation in Britain. Thus, fundamentally divergent ideologies lead to authentic misunderstanding and consequent recriminations.³⁶

Thus also it may be said that "the Munich Conference, which represents the summit of Hitler's political success, begot in him that overweening self-confidence which was to prove his undoing."³⁷ Munich, on the other hand, seemed to have an immensely sobering effect upon the policy of the West. It was as if a dousing with the cold fact of the immensity of Nazi egotism finally snapped it out of its state of almost hypnotic appeasement. "War has been averted, for which the world is immeasurably grateful," said Anthony Eden early in October; "but let it be remembered, it has been averted, not at our expense, not at the expense of any Great Power, but at the cost of grave injustice to a small and friendly nation."³⁸ Suffering innocence has always had a tremendous impact upon the Western world ever since a religion was founded upon such suffering as the salvation of a sinful mankind. It was remembered that Czechoslovakia was not even heard in her own defense.




³⁶ Albrecht-Carré, *op. cit.*, p. 538.

³⁷ Goerlitz, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

³⁸ Robert Langer, *op. cit.*, p. 217.



Map Illustrating the German Memorandum Presented at Godesberg, September 23, 1938

-  The Sudeten German territory to be ceded
-  Additional plebiscite areas
-  (Munich: Territory to be occupied by German troops from October 1 onward)

The Munich decision gave Germany a large increment in manpower, industry, resources, and space, and eliminated a strong potential enemy from her path. The new frontier was in actual fact not ethnic, but strategic. The gain vis á vis Poland was tremendous, completely outflanking that country's main defenses. Nazi propaganda in Central Europe doubled and trebled in weight. Hitler once more triumphed over his own generals, who had become restless. It might be argued that the allies gained relatively more by securing needed time in which to arm themselves; that while Britain and France were divided at Munich, they were united and determined later. The argument for ethnic self-determination was a telling one. The attack upon Czechoslovakia was by no means a clear case of aggression, as were Hitler's later escapades. Munich was true to the spirit of the times, to the sick fear of war on the part of the masses. Yet only a very few of their responsible leaders really believed that Hitler's numerous outspoken protestations of a desire for war, were mere bluff. The West lost the Czech military force, which was not so inconsiderable, while the remainder of the country was left thoroughly indefensible. Although outflanked by Anschluss, Czechoslovakia had still possessed her mountain fortifications which were such a near copy of the Maginot Line. When Czechoslovakia was "removed from the arc of mountain states protecting the southern section of Central Europe, all the three old military routes to the Danube basin would be open: the western, Germanic route, and northern, Mongolian-German route, and the eastern, Mongolian route."³⁹

Thereafter, Hitler renewed the totalitarian offensive throughout the Balkans.

³⁹ Schacher, op. cit., p. 84.

All over central-eastern Europe, the greatest indirect effect of the Czechoslovakian affair was the rise of Nazi prestige, especially among the Nazi-type movements of the central-eastern European states. With the exception of Yugoslavia, where wide indignation against the foreign policy of Stoyadinovič was growing, people cowered while the Nazis crowded. In the economic and financial field, 1938 witnessed the peak of German penetration both in the Baltics and in the Balkans. After Munich, many of the disillusioned were to turn to the Communists: as the prestige of the West fell to great depths, the glorious image of the "Eastern Defender" rose again on the horizon. In Greece, Bulgaria, and in Yugoslavia, the underground Communist party was rapidly increasing in strength.⁴⁰

For the West, Munich was moral suicide.

The major objective of Chamberlain's diplomacy had been rapprochement with Germany. The Anglo-German declaration eschewing war in the relations of the two countries seemed to be the culmination of this policy. But just as Munich was, in effect, the end of appeasement, so it might also be called the point of no return for Hitler's method of bluff and force. "Munich...forced his hand. The suspicions of the world were aroused, and he had to act quickly if he was to preserve and exploit his superiority."⁴¹

Before the defeat of the West, reliance upon French support was one of the most stable and unquestioned facts in Eastern European politics.

Except for continuing and accelerating Britain's progress of rearmament, neither Britain nor the French Government did anything to counteract the dangers which so sudden a change in the balance of power in Central Europe was certain to create. Germany's success was so sweeping that it acted as an almost irresistible stimulus to further demands and further action. The precedent which one case of territorial revision had established was in itself a new incentive to push the change of other boundaries which from the point of view of self-determination had equally good justification. Instead of balancing these unsettling factors by immediate and unmistakable diplomatic counter-moves, the British Government rejoiced over the establishment of "peace in our time," with such satisfaction and optimism as to create the impression that further "Munichs" would be acceptable if they were presented as the necessary price for continued peace.⁴²

⁴⁰ Lukacs, op. cit., p. 165.

⁴¹ De Mendelssohn, op. cit., p. 217.

⁴² Wolfers, op. cit., p. 290.

A huge fortified fascist citadel was being formed in Central Europe. Lebensraum seemed to be closer than ever before in the whole history of the idea. Yet "in proportion as Central Europe is organized on a basis of racial unity, political and religious intolerance, and super-centralized civil and military administration, and therefore becomes a standing menace to the liberties of the rest of the world, in exactly the same proportion will that ancient tendency of European balance acquire fresh momentum."⁴³ Western Europe had been pushed against the wall by the fascist advance. Now it must fight or be crushed.

⁴³ R. W. Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 139.

CHAPTER 1

THE CONCEPT OF LEBENSRAUM

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PART IV

THE LEBENSRAUM CONCEPT

IMPLEMENTED

Journal, IV, no. 38, p. 201.

CHAPTER I

THE LIQUIDATION OF PRAGUE: THE END OF APPEASEMENT

After the Munich terms were carried out, Czechoslovakia was completely paralyzed. All her railroad lines running from west to east crossed Nazi-dominated territory several times. Also in the German area were the Northern Bohemian coal fields, upon which the Czech industries had relied and for which they were now forced to pay stiff German prices. There was no tariff between Sudetenland and the rump state, but Czechoslovakia was to allow no industrial expansion without the permission of Germany.

All the Czech currency in the Sudeten area was called in and exchanged for German marks, and the old money was thereupon presented to the Czech government with a demand for payment in gold and foreign exchange, delivery of which was made early in March, 1939.¹ Part of the Czech currency was used to make strategic purchases; very valuable properties were acquired without the use of a bit of Nazi foreign exchange or gold—without, in fact, Germany's spending anything of her own. The liquidation of the Sudeten branch banks placed the financial system of Czechoslovakia under heavy strain. Along with gold and foreign exchange, Germany commandeered all usable supplies and as many key economic positions as could be obtained. Czech state property in the Sudeten area became Reich property, and steps were taken to integrate

¹ Documents, IV, no. 38., p. 201.

Czechoslovakia's economy with Germany's. This same technique of financial "Aryanization" was used in all German-occupied territories. "Financial Aryanization" was a new method of international spoliation against which there was neither economic nor military defense.

Czechoslovakia was larger and more populous than Austria, and a creditor nation which was able to export both foodstuffs and manufactured goods. Her arms, steel and fuel output accounted for more than half of the war power of East Central Europe, excluding Germany, and Czechoslovakia was the chief source of supply in that area.² At Munich, Czechoslovakia lost not only her expensive system of mountain defenses but also almost every advantage given her in 1918 to make her economically viable. Complete economic cooperation with the Reich was imperative. It was so impossible for the rump state to exist of itself, Germany had her so completely by the throat, that Hitler could very well consider Munich to have been a mandate to rule the rest of the country. The use of force was absolutely unnecessary. The whole situation fitted in with Hitler's schemes.

In March of 1939, Hitler claimed that "Central Europe was a definite compact economic unit which could live only if it were completely at peace."³ As a result of Munich, Germany's drain on the resources of East Central Europe and Italy greatly increased, as did her control over the area's vital communications. Germany alone was the

² D. Graham Hutton, Survey after Munich, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1939), p. 125.

³ Documents, IV, no. 202, p. 244. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford U. Press,

Field, pp. 61.

"The aim is the speedy occupation of Bohemia and Moravia and the cutting off of Slovakia." Documents, op. cit., ser. 5, vol. IV, no. 61, p. 100.

no. 61.

dominant economic power of the region, and furthermore her assault upon the economic sovereignty of the Central European nations continued to go unopposed. Weeks after Munich, King Carol of Rumania was in London making a futile attempt to obtain aid. Carol's abdication was forced in September of 1940 and thus

the last potential major enemy of the Axis disappeared down the chute of history, and the situation appeared more and more promising to Hitler's advisers. Hungary and Bulgaria were meek followers of Hitler, and Yugoslavia was expected to succumb sweetly to German pressure and Greece to Italian coercion.⁴

By October of 1940, German troops were in Rumania, and by November she had joined the Axis. Lebensraum, from the time of Munich, seemed almost a fait accompli. As a result of Munich,

the remnant of Czechoslovakia became a semi-feudal state under the control of the Third Reich. The French alliance, the Russian alliance, the Little Entente died. After Munich, even Italy was forced to play a subordinate role in Europe and seek her territorial expansion in Africa and the Mediterranean.⁵

Detailed plans were made almost at once for the forcible incorporation of the rest of Czechoslovakia. The directive for its liquidation was issued on October 21, 1938.⁶ These steps were taken solely on the basis of the will-to-power of the Aryan "superman," for formal sovereignty of the area could make but little practical difference in the extent of German control. On October 14, the new Czech Foreign Minister Chvalkovsky admitted his country's past mistakes, promised a complete volte-face in his country's foreign policy, and asked for a German guarantee of her new frontiers and a probationary period in which to accomplish the new orientation.⁷

⁴ Joseph S. Roucek, Balkan Politics (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford U. Press, 1948), p. 264.

⁵ Fifield, op. cit., p. 61.

⁶ "The aim is the speedy occupation of Bohemia and Moravia and the cutting off of Slovakia." Documents, op. cit., ser. D, vol. IV, no. 81, p. 100.

⁷ Ibid., no. 61.

Czechoslovakia realized that her only conceivable path lay in cooperation with Germany and her best hope of safety lay in getting Germany to make a definite settlement. In December, Hencke, the chargé d'affaires in Prague, wrote that

leading men in Prague realize that future far-reaching demands will be made by Germany in the field of foreign policy, military affairs, and economics. They hope, however, that their country can retain her outward independence and that some form may be found for the vassal-relationship which they can justify to their own people. The Czech public will prefer any clear solution which leaves the country in possession of formal sovereignty to the present state of uncertainty.

Hencke believed that discretion and fear would prevent disloyalty, especially among the higher officials. But this guarantee which Chvalkovsky desired was refused again and again upon the pretext that Czechoslovakia must settle all her differences first, "clarify her internal developments" and improve her relations. Chvalkovsky protested in vain that he could not consolidate the new policy internally until he was guaranteed externally.

It was felt to be desirable to avoid creating the impression that Germany was interfering in Czech internal affairs, and the policy was to take as many matters as possible out of the hands of the international commission which was created at Munich to supervise the drawing of the new frontier. Since Czechoslovakia could still hold back an estimated 25 German divisions in case of war, it was considered vital to insure her neutrality.

8 Ibid., p. 182, No. 150.

9 Ibid., p. 175.

10 Ibid., p. 176.

Germany had been fostering Slovak separatism from the very start, because "an independent Slovakia would be weak constitutionally and would therefore best further the German need for penetration and settlement in the east."¹¹ Self-determination was to be exploited to the full, and Hungary and Poland had to be kept at bay but not opposed outright. At first, Hitler considered using the Carpatho-Ukraine as a propaganda base against the Ukrainian minorities located in Poland, Russia, and Rumania; but after Ukrainian nationalist leaders had set up a government in the expectation of German support he allowed Hungary to march in and take over the region, establishing a common frontier with Poland. On March 13, 1939 the German government invited Sidor Tiso, Premier of the Slovakian department of Czechoslovakia whom Prague had just deposed for insubordination, to Berlin to speak with Hitler. On the fourteenth, Tiso issued the following:

In the name of the legal Slovak government I have the honor to inform Your Excellency that the sovereign Slovak nation has today thrown off the intolerable Czechoslovakian yoke and, in accordance with the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the population, the independence of our state has been proclaimed. Independent Slovakia is determined to live in peace and friendship with all her neighbors. In the early stages of her development, however, the young state requires strong protection. In the name of the people and of the Government of the new Slovakia, I request Your Excellency, as the Führer of the great German Reich, which under your rule has always supported freedom and the self-determination of peoples, to take over the guarantee for the existence of our state and to take immediately all necessary measures for the protection of its frontiers.¹²

¹¹ Ibid., IV, No. 45, p. 46.

¹² Ibid., IV, No. 209, p. 250.

The same day Ribbentrop was able to say to the Italian ambassador that

the Czechoslovakian state is breaking up. Slovakia has declared her independence. The rump territories of Bohemia and Moravia are in a desperate state. Chaotic conditions prevail in the German-language enclaves. Incidents have also been reported from the north. There German troops are about to occupy certain areas. The fate of our fellow-Germans in Bohemia and Moravia is causing us great concern.¹³

On the same day also, President Hacha and Foreign Minister Chvalkovsky went to Berlin to talk to the Führer. On March 15, at 6:00 A.M., the invasion of Czechoslovakia began. Great Britain, disliking to interfere but concerned with the general state of peace, deplored "any action in Central Europe which would cause a setback in the growth of this general confidence on which all improvement in the economic situation depends...."¹⁴ Weizsäcker of the German Foreign Office "spoke rather sharply" to the French Ambassador and

told him not to mention the Munich Agreement, which he alleged had been violated, and not to give us any lectures. Munich had contained two elements, namely, the maintenance of peace and French disinterest in the Eastern European question. France should at least turn her eyes westward to her empire and not talk of matters where, as experience had shown, her participation had not served the cause of peace.¹⁵

German troops were then flooding across what was left of Czechoslovakia. Hitler issued the following proclamation:

In the name of the Führer and Chancellor the decree of March 16, 1939, regarding the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia is hereby proclaimed.

For a thousand years the provinces of Bohemia and Moravia formed a part of the Lebensraum of the German people; they were arbitrarily torn from their ancient historical setting by force and

¹³ Ibid., no. 224, p. 261.

¹⁴ Ibid., no. 234, p. 275.

¹⁵ Ibid., no. 233, p. 273.

folly and, by their ultimate fusion into the artificial structure of Czechoslovakia, became a center of constant unrest. ..It showed its inherent inability to survive and has therefore now fallen a victim to actual dissolution....It is therefore in keeping with the law of self-preservation that the German Reich is now resolved to intervene decisively to rebuild the foundations of a reasonable order in Europe and to take the necessary steps for this purpose. For in the thousand years of history it has already proved that, thanks to the greatness and the qualities of the German people, it alone is called up to undertake this task. Inspired by the solemn desire to serve the real interests of the nationalities living in this area, to insure an individual national life to the German and Czech peoples, and to promote the social welfare of all, I, therefore, in the name of the German Reich decree...a basis for the future coexistence of the inhabitants of these areas.¹⁶

Bohemia and Moravia became part of the Greater German Reich, giving up control of their German citizens, their foreign affairs, transportation, post, telegraph, and customs to Germany. They were autonomous and self-governing under a supreme head which had to have the confidence of Hitler, and "in conformity with the political, military, and economic requirements of the Reich."¹⁷

The march into Prague took place while President Hacha was in Berlin, where he signed his country away under threat of the bombing of his capital.¹⁸ Even for Mussolini, the move came as a surprising unilateral fait accompli. Many of the career experts of the Foreign Office were completely caught off guard, and most informed Germans were stunned.¹⁹ The move was a tour de force, a gratuitous piece of brazen

¹⁶ Ibid., no. 246, p. 283.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 283.

¹⁸ The Communiqué released at the time states that "both sides gave expression to their mutual conviction that the aim of all efforts in this part of Central Europe should be the safeguarding of calm, order and peace. The Czechoslovak President declared that in order to serve this purpose, and in order to secure final pacification, he placed the destiny of the Czech people and country with confidence in the hands of the Führer and the German Reich." Robert Langer, Seizure of Territory (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1947), p. 219.

¹⁹ U. S. Library of Congress, op. cit., p. 50.

assault. Germany's control over truncated Czechoslovakia was to all practical purposes, virtually the occupation of Prague, was a mere footnote to Munich. But it marked a definite transition in Nazi foreign policy, the abandonment of the well-exploited desire for German ethnic unity and the first bold adoption of Lebensraum as an apology for expansion.

On March 21 the territory of Memel was demanded of Lithuania. The West was merely perplexed, and did nothing. Nothing at all would ever have been done, if Hitler had been able to restrain himself at that point and to consolidate his far-flung but ill-digested gains. England had, in January, declared voluntary military service, and had drawn closer to France. But the fall of Prague completely changed the whole scene. The eyes of the most backward diplomat in the British and French Foreign Offices were opened now to the danger of an actual Lebensraum, for here at last was an act of aggression open to all the world. There began to be something approximating Western unity of opinion. Coulondre said, "Germany is still the nation of scraps of paper."²⁰ Appeasement was dead. The German move this time resulted in an immediate Western reaction. England took the lead in a new policy of action and definite commitments the like of which, paradoxically enough, France had advocated from the very signing of Versailles; and to this paradox was added the ironical fact that, when the West demonstrated its first determination to stop Hitler, the nations of Eastern Europe were extremely sceptical.

²⁰ Lukacs, op. cit., p. 204.

CHAPTER II

Hitler was also sceptical. Allowing time not even for a token breathing space to give the Western Powers a chance to calm their newly-ruffled feathers, the Führer turned the weight of German pressure upon his next target:--Poland. On the very day of the Memel ultimatum, the Polish ambassador was given certain proposals for the return of Danzig to the Reich.

CHAPTER II

THE LIQUIDATION OF WARSAW: THE BEGINNING OF WAR

Poland had meanwhile continued to pursue its old ambivalent foreign policy, veering now towards Germany, now towards the West, unable to get along with Czechoslovakia and refusing to cooperate with her hereditary enemy Russia. Poland had always spurned the League except in the very earliest days before the rise of Hitler, yet her safety lay with the League powers. Poland had been resurrected at a time when both her neighbors, Germany and Russia, were paralyzed; her temporizing policy made sense, or was possibly more understandable, at that time. But Poland's history showed dramatically that when her neighbors were strong and could agree among themselves, she was in very grave danger.

A week after Anschluss Poland had seemingly rushed to ape the Nazi success by presenting an ultimatum to Lithuania which very nearly resulted in war. The rationale behind this move was in part to get rid of as many enemies as possible in the face of growing German power, but it was a harsh ultimatum and resulted in the loss of much Western sympathy. The ultimatum was accepted on March 19, and the affair blew over.

Poland was always plagued by the nightmare of a German-Russian war over her territory. France's nonaggression pact of 1932 with Russia and the Four-Power Pact of 1933 had made Poland, who was ebullient in her newly-released nationalism, suspicious of the intentions of the West. She was self-confident, yet feared an international settlement in which she would be left out. Hitler was looking for a way

out of his isolation, and the result was the ten-year nonaggression pact of June 26, 1934. After the signing of the pact, a sort of unofficial collaboration existed between the two countries. Their interests were in many cases parallel.

Poland never opposed Hitler. When Czechoslovakia was beaten to her knees by Germany, Poland was quick enough to step in and demand the hotly-contested Teschen mining area. Again, part of her motive was to keep Germany from obtaining control of that important road and rail center and of the Moravian Gap. Yet if the West had stood firm at Munich the chances are that the pressure of Polish public opinion would have forced the government to take its stand with the West against Germany.

The German Foreign Office recognized this cynical element in Polish policy, and counted on it. In case of an isolated German-Czechoslovakian war, it was agreed among German observers that Poland would probably wait and join the winner.¹ One diplomat stated that "Poland will not obstruct in any way the efforts of the German districts in Czechoslovakia toward a rapprochement, or even for complete unity with Germany, if the present frontiers between Germany and Poland are declared inviolable and if all plans for mutual collaboration and for political security are reconciled."²

On Poland's part, the basis of her policy was not love of Germany but

a combination of territorial greed, fear of Revolution on the part of the landowners and colonels, mistrust of the strength

¹ Documents, ser. D.I, vol. VII, no. 277.

² Ibid., no. 271.

and will to resistance of the Western Powers, and the supreme confidence of Colonel Beck in his own Machiavellian genius. This policy played an extremely important part in the German plan for Eastern Europe.³

Between Anschluss and Munich, however, Poland did make a few efforts to weld the Baltic States together under her leadership. She had always enjoyed extremely good relations with Hungary, and saw in the liquidation of Czechoslovakia an excellent chance to obtain a common boundary with her ally. Hitler at first opposed such an attempt, desiring to use the Carpatho-Ukraine, which separated the two countries, as a "Piedmont" with which to foster separatism among the various Ukrainian minorities. Later, however, he allowed Hungary to take the territory, realizing the futility of the opposition against him:

There were people in both capitals [Warsaw and Budapest], of strong anti-German feelings, whom hatred of Czechoslovakia had so blinded that they genuinely believed that the destruction of the Republic and the erection over its corpse of a Hungaro-Polish frontier would form a strong barrier to German expansionism towards the East. Now that the modern forts of the Bohemian mountain fastnesses and the Skoda armament works were in German hands, an impregnable line of defense was to be created from nothing across the plains of Pannonia and Galicia.⁴

In reality, Poland was the most immediate sufferer from the Munich crisis. The German-Polish frontier was greatly lengthened and the Poles were outflanked. The gigantic propaganda efforts expended by the Reich in the Carpatho-Ukraine had stirred up the Polish Ukrainians. Furthermore, the alliance between Poland and Hungary went no deeper than the community of interest felt by the agricultural aristocracy of each, and Hungary was more and more under the influence of Berlin.

³ Seton-Watson, H., op. cit., p. 389.

⁴ Ibid., p. 395.

Hitler never had any intention of stopping at Prague. The question of Danzig, of course, and of the Polish Corridor ranked high on the Nazi list of objectives. They had been taken away as a result of the hated Versailles Diktat, and contained a considerable German minority. The Free City of Danzig, autonomous within the customs area of Poland, commanded the mouth of the Vistula and Polish Pomorze and Poznania; and until the port of Gdynia was built up it was virtually Poland's only good outlet to the Sea. The population of Danzig was almost pure German, and as such it had long since been wooed and won by Nazi propaganda. Its relations with Poland were tense and often to the boiling point.

Hitler began baiting Poland over the Danzig question as early as September, 1938. The discussions then were fairly friendly and the Polish government refused to make concessions. On October 24, 1938, Ribbentrop proposed the return of Danzig to the Reich and the construction of an extraterritorial highway and railroad across the Corridor which would link East and West Prussia and Danzig. From October, 1938 to March, 1939, both sides engaged in a series of diplomatic moves and counter-moves. Germany proposed a solid Central European diplomatic bloc consisting of Poland, Germany, Hungary, and Italy, which the West would not dare oppose. The Hungarian minister Csáky was impressed; but Beck was not, and strangely enough veered towards Russia. Moscow was anxious for the Ukraine at that time, and the Polish-Soviet nonaggression pact of 1932 was reaffirmed.

Up to March 15, 1939, relations with Germany were on the surface cordial. On January 30, there had been a goodwill speech by Hitler. On March 15, Poland was invited to join the Anti-Comintern Pact

and the question of Danzig was raised again. Almost immediately after the occupation of Prague, the German screws began to tighten. On March 21, the day of the Memel ultimatum, Ribbentrop offered the Polish ambassador Lipski a guarantee of the Corridor and again suggested an extraterritorial railroad and highway and the return of Danzig. On March 26, the Polish reserve was called, and Lipski rejected the German proposals.

On March 31, Chamberlain made a speech to the British House of Commons in which he pledged every support within the power of the country, if Poland were forced to defend herself militarily from an attack by the Reich. Fourteen days after the fall of Prague, Britain gave her guarantee to the country which lay next in the path of a greatly strengthened and arrogant Germany. France gave a similar guarantee on the sixth of April.

This suddenly removed that which ever since the days of the Ruhr had been the one insuperable obstacle to a "politique de force" on the part of France, and a main reason for the spread of a spirit of resignation. Even though some French statesmen might still have preferred to remain passive, France could hardly do so when Britain entered upon a course for which the French had pleaded for over twenty years. It was not without irony that Britain turned to the one-time French point of view just at the moment when some prominent French statesmen were recommending its abandonment and the French had lost most of the defences which she had sought to build up for the purpose of pressing this policy effectively.

But Germany protested to Poland that these guarantees were in substance an unfriendly alliance and incompatible with the nonaggression pact of 1934, which was thereby null and void.

The guarantees did nothing to stop the Reich, for even at that moment plans were being made for the invasion of Poland, which bore the

5 Wolfers, op. cit., p. 68.

code name of "Case White." Hitler's directive of April 11, 1939, stated that "our policy aims at confining the war to Poland, and this is considered possible in view of the internal crisis in France and British restraint as a result of this."⁶ The international situation of 1939 was extremely unsettled: The Anglo-Franco-Italian Mediterranean rivalry, tensions in the Near and Middle East, French unrest, Imperial weakness and the Irish conflict, all seemed to be greatly in Germany's favor. Therefore, Hitler pressed on confidently, seemingly unaware of the new spirit of opposition forming in the West. Admiral Canaris, chief of the German counter-intelligence, had warned that Britain would open hostilities if Poland were attacked. It seems unsure exactly to what extent Hitler believed that he could continue his method of bluff and threat and remain unscathed. Some authorities think that he seemed to discount all danger of military opposition from the West.⁷ On the other hand, when Hitler first informed his General Staff of his intention to attack, he added, "we cannot expect that the Czech affair will be repeated. It will be war."⁸ At least, by the end of March or the beginning of April, Hitler knew that Poland was not going to submit to his demands and that therefore he ran a definite risk of war with England and France. One thing is sure, however: Hitler, whatever he thought the chances were of Western resistance, pressed ahead his plans with fanatical singleness of mind: "We shall hold our position in the West until we have conquered Poland;" he said. "Our enemies are little men. I saw with them at Munich."⁹

⁶ DeMendelssohn, op. cit., p. 82.

⁷ c.f. Ibid., and Namier, op. cit.

⁸ Angelo Rossii, The Russo-German Alliance, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1951), p. 44.

⁹ DeMendelssohn, op. cit., p. 104.

On May 23, 1939, Hitler informed his General Staff that Poland must be attacked at the first favorable moment. The Pole, he maintained, would always place himself on the side of Germany's adversaries. But there was, he said, more than the question of safety: "Danzig is not the subject of the dispute at all. It is a question of expanding our living space in the East and of securing our food supplies, of the settlement of the Baltic problem."¹⁰ It was vital to secure a good food supply because of the danger of blockade. Poland would be a good source for the recruitment of labor; but if she were allowed to maintain her independence, she would be a permanent source of weakness against Russia, and would be a constant danger if Germany were engaged in a war in the West, where a quick outcome was doubtful. There was therefore no question of sparing Poland.

Success in Poland depended on keeping the West out. And after this victory¹¹ to come the Low Countries and after that, England; "The aim will always be to force England to her knees."¹¹ As far as Hitler was concerned, there was no turning back.

One cannot eternally stand opposite one another with cocked rifle. A suggested compromise would have demanded that we change our convictions and make agreeable gestures. They talked to us again in the language of Versailles. There was danger of losing prestige. Now the probability is still great that the West will not interfere. We must accept the risk with reckless resolution.¹²

At last, the Lebensraum was within reach, and this was an hour of triumph. In the same speech, Hitler declared that Germany

¹⁰ Documents, Vol. I, p. 931.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 936.

¹² Ibid., p. 399.

need not be afraid of a blockade. The East will supply us with grain, cattle, coal, lead, and zinc. It is a big arm, which demands great efforts. I am only afraid that at the last minute some Schweinhund will make a proposal for mediation.¹³

By the middle of August, when all preparations were virtually completed, Italy was informed of her ally's intentions, which were to attack immediately if Poland offered another provocation, or if she did not make her political position clear by the last of August. Ciano asked Ribbentrop what was wanted, Danzig or the Corridor. "Not any longer..."¹⁴ was the reply. "We want war."

It was an hour of triumph for Germany also because, dizzy with success beyond all expectation, she was presented with the sudden possibility of an alliance so tremendous that the West would be crushed beneath its weight: an alliance with Russia. This possibility was all the more surprising since Hitler had been consistently and loudly anti-Communist, utilizing the crusade against "Jewish Bolshevism" as a major propaganda weapon. The Anti-Comintern alliances were the fruit of this policy. Russia, for her part, had been ^{the} ally of France and Czechoslovakia and by her United Front policy had been the only consistent opponent of Fascism.

Since World War I, the two nations had signed the Rapallo Treaty of April 16, 1922, which had enabled Germany to evade the military restrictions of Versailles. When Hitler had come to power, he had not repudiated this treaty; but relations had chilled until the Munich Conference, from which Russia had been deliberately excluded.

¹³ Ibid., p. 400.

¹⁴ DeMendelssohn, op. cit., p. 146.

Angelo Del Boca, The Russo-German Alliance (Boston, Boston, 1951), p. 6.
Encyclopedia, op. cit., vol. 1, no. 627.

After the Munich triumph, Hitler had hesitated, but not from any feeling of diffidence: He was uncertain where to turn next. If Poland could be neutralized, he could turn West, where he was convinced that his major battle lay. "Until March 1939 his principal aim was to solve the problem of Danzig and the Corridor in agreement with the Poles by offering them a share in the coming struggle to partition the Ukraine. The offer was made and renewed to Poland in October 1938, and in January and March, 1939."¹⁵ Russia, on the other hand, was hesitating also. Her policy of collective security and cooperation with the West had failed. In a speech made in June, 1938, Litvinov washed his hands of European developments from which the U. S. S. R. had been excluded and reserved freedom of action, although it was stressed that Russia was prepared for collective cooperation.¹⁶ This was a striking attempt on the part of Russia to be objective towards German policy.

So matters stood. In a speech on March 12, 1939, before the Eighteenth Party Congress, Stalin gave the first public hint of sentiment for a Russo-German rapprochement. Although Hitler had recalled an economic mission on its way to Russia not two months before, Russia almost immediately put out feelers for an economic settlement. They were well received. The mutual vituperations of the two totalitarian states began to become more moderate. On the seventeenth of April, the first important contact was made and the economic talks began to take on a political tone.

The West had been negotiating for some sort of alliance with Russia ever since March. Stalin, who was sure that war was inevitable, found himself in the enviable position of being courted by both sides,

¹⁵ Angelo Rossi, The Russo-German Alliance (Boston: Beacon, 1951), p. 6.

¹⁶ Documents, op. cit., ser. D., vol. I, no. 627.

and knew that it was well worth his while to bargain for the best advantage. National Socialism was an enemy from the start, but Russia also feared that the West would attempt to play tertius gaudens, to sit back while two alien ideologies defeated each other in desperate warfare. The Russian method, therefore, was to dangle the prospect of her favors before the eyes of both sides, and to await the highest bidder. On the nineteenth of April, the Soviet Union put the Western negotiators off by insisting upon a guarantee of Finland and the Baltic States, whether these nations would or no, and also upon the right to send troops into Poland, which suggestion Poland fought bitterly to the very beginning of the war. The West was much disconcerted, for while they were seeking peace and the status quo in Europe they suspected that Russia also was seeking territorial gains.

The Western Powers had a choice between a Four-Power Pact with the Dictators, and a new Triple Entente with the U. S. S. R.; either entailed the sacrifice of at least some of the smaller states in East-Central Europe which, in 1919-1920, they themselves had helped to create or aggrandize at the expense of Germany and Russia, and on which the French "system" of the 'twenties was based. An agreement with the Dictators was bound greatly to increase their military power and resources; and agreement with the U. S. S. R., to favor the spread of Bolshevism. The one alliance was unpleasant and unsafe, and the other even more abhorrent--but nothing was gained by a refusal to acknowledge and face the dilemma. The Western Powers swayed uneasily between the two alternatives and even when the pendulum swung away from the Dictators they would hardly admit, pace the Franco-Soviet Pact of 1935, that it was swinging towards the Bolsheviks.¹⁷

When the West began to court the Soviet Union in earnest, both the Fascists and the Democracies were compromised, each firmly settled as to his own line of action and each unwilling or unable to turn back, whereas the Communists were free agents. When the West gave its unilateral guarantee to Poland and Rumania, it unwittingly deprived itself of its bargaining power vis à vis the Soviet Union; but not even well-

¹⁷ Namier, op. cit., p. 240.

informed Western statesmen knew of the secret Russo-German talks.

Russia was evasive in her dealings with both suitors during April and May. But on May 3 Litvinov, genial champion of collective security, was dismissed and the hard-boiled Molotov was appointed Commissar of Foreign Affairs in his stead. By the last of May, under Ribbentrop's urging, Hitler decided to approach Stalin in earnest.

Russia used the Bulgarian ambassador to Germany as a go-between to communicate the Soviet interest in a non-aggression pact, hinting on June 15 that "if Germany would declare that she would not attack the Soviet Union or that she would conclude a nonaggression pact with her, the Soviet Union would probably refrain from concluding a treaty with England."¹⁸ On June 29, England gave in to Russia's demands that she be the guarantor of the Baltic States, but Russia promptly brought up another point concerning indirect aggression. All during July, there were nervous negotiations being carried on. England and France sent military missions to Moscow. The early weeks of August were apparently decisive. On the fourteenth, Germany was to send a negotiator. On that day, Hitler said that "there exist no real conflicts of interest between Germany and the U. S. S. R. The living spaces of Germany and the U. S. S. R. touch each other, but in their natural requirements they do not conflict. Thus, there is lacking all cause for an aggressive attitude on the part of one country against the other."¹⁹ The German sense of urgency was apparent, for by July the plans for the invasion of Poland had been completed. The date was set for the latter part of August, and Hitler was impatient. Ribbentrop was sent to Moscow with full power to negotiate. By August 21 the last details

¹⁸ R. Sontag, ed., and J. S. Beddie, Nazi-Soviet relations, 1939-41 (Washington: Department of State, 1948), p. 210.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 50.

had been decided including a definition of spheres of interest in East Central Europe; on the following day, the German General Staff was told of the impending attack upon Poland, and on the twenty-third Ribbentrop flew to Moscow to sign the pact.

The text of the treaty pledged nonaggression, consultation, and the arbitration of differences. Neither country would harbor groups hostile to the other. This treaty was to run for ten years, renewable for another five years if neither party denounced it. But to this nonaggression treaty was added a secret protocol defining both countries' "respective spheres of influence in Eastern Europe." The German sphere was to extend to the northern boundary of Lithuania, and through Poland along the Narew, Vistula and San Rivers. The exact nature of the partition, and the question of whether or not an independent Poland was to be allowed to stand, were to be decided later. Russian interests in Bessarabia were recognized, and Germany declared herself disinterested in the area of south-eastern Europe. Germany had gained, by this treaty, a militarily secure eastern boundary and a benevolently neutral neighbor which could supply an embattled Reich with many urgently-needed raw materials. In a trade agreement which was signed on August 29, Russia received 200 million Reichsmarks credit for the purchase of German machinery and industrial installments; and she was to pay for these purchases by means of deliveries of such raw materials as lumber, cotton, feed grain, oil cake, phosphate, and petroleum.²⁰ This treaty "limited to Poland's own resources the opposition which Germany might meet in the East."²¹ Russia, for her part, received considerable booty without any obligation to fight.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 84.

²¹ Carr, op. cit., p. 277.

England had by then gotten wind of the pending German-Russian agreement. On August 22 Chamberlain had warned that England would use all her forces in the defense of Poland. On the following day, the same day on which Ribbentrop flew to Moscow, Poland yielded upon the point of passage of Soviet troops over her territory. It was too late, of course. The news of a rapprochement between two supposedly implacable enemies hit upon the West with great force, and everyone recognized that a diplomatic revolution of major proportion had taken place. Nevertheless, the die was cast as far as Western policy was concerned. On August 26 the Anglo-Polish mutual assistance treaty was signed. After these events, "only the complete surrender of the Western Powers could have prevented the outbreak of war."²²

In speaking of his handiwork, Hitler said that "the conclusion of the nonaggression pact marked the turning point of the whole German foreign policy, and the two governments will now together deprive the the most dangerous part of Europe of its menace."²³ He also remarked that "a beginning has been made for the destruction of Britain's hegemony. I have made the political preparations. The way is now open for the soldier."²⁴

The British Prime Minister said that "whatever may prove to be the nature of the German-Soviet agreement, it can not alter Great Britain's obligations to Poland, which His Majesty's Government have stated in public repeatedly and plainly and which they are determined to fulfill." Hitler replied that Germany, "like every other State, possesses certain definite interests which it is impossible to renounce."²⁵

²² Rossi, op. cit., p. 43.

²³ Hanc, op. cit., p. 227.

²⁴ De Mendelssohn, op. cit., p. 104.

²⁵ Conspiracy and Aggression, op. cit., vol. I, p. 705.

Hitler had gone as far as he could go in his method of bluff; but he was fully prepared to rely entirely upon sheer physical force to obtain his desires; in fact, he welcomed its use. "Nothing could inconvenience him more than complete Polish acquiescence in all his demands."²⁶ On August 24, Hitler told Sir Neville Henderson that the Polish question was closed, that if England would stay out then Germany would guarantee the British Empire. He denied all intention of molesting his western borders. Britain countered on the twenty-eighth with a proposal for direct talks under her mediation, and offered to guarantee the settlement reached. Poland agreed to negotiate on this basis. The Reich was then in somewhat of a quandary, for to refuse all negotiation would be bad propaganda; yet if discussion took place in which Poland agreed to the German demands, the Reich would thereby be deprived of all excuse to attack. Therefore, Hitler accepted the British proposal but repeated that the cession of Danzig and the Corridor and a rectification of the Silesian frontier were his minimum, and demanded that a Polish delegate with full powers of negotiation be sent him by the following day. This demand was virtually impossible of fulfillment, for

if the Hitler-Ribbentrop proposal had been accepted there would have arrived in Berlin the following day an unfortunate Polish official with no idea of what he was going to be asked to sign, no knowledge of how far he could go without breaking faith with his own government, and only the certainty that he would be bullied and bludgeoned--as Dr. Hacha of Czechoslovakia had been bullied and bludgeoned six months before--till he signed what was put before him. The German proposal was, in fact, an ultimatum to Poland to accept the German terms by August 30 or accept the consequences.²⁷

In spite of heavy pressure from the West, the proposal was not accepted. When the Polish plenipotentiary failed to appear, Ribbentrop read quickly

²⁶ De Mendelssohn, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

²⁷ Lindley M. Fraser, Germany between Two Wars (New York; Oxford U. Press, 1945), p. 129.

to Henderson--who did not understand German extremely well--a list of rather generous German terms which Poland might have had had she fulfilled the German request, but refused to give a copy either to Henderson or to Poland. The German invasion took place on the first of September.

When Ribbentrop told Ciano that war was certain, the Italians were dismayed. They were not ready for a European war, and they had signed the Pact of Steel on the twenty-second of May with the understanding that war would not come for at least three more years. She offered all her aid, both political and economic, in localizing the conflict, but Mussolini notified his ally on August 25 that if Germany were to attack, "I want to let you know in advance that it would be better if I did not take the initiative in military activities in view of the present situation in Italian war preparations...."²⁸ From August 31 to September 3, fearing to be drawn into battle, Italy made an attempt to mediate the dispute, an all-out effort to organize a second "Munich!" On August 31 Mussolini sent notes to Great Britain and France proposing that he invite Germany to a conference to discuss the troublesome clauses of the Versailles Treaty. The answer came back that the conference must be an effort to solve not just one, but all outstanding problems.

The proposal was then relayed to Berlin, who accepted on the second, but demanded to know whether the Allied notes of September 1 were to be considered as ultimata. The allies replied negatively, but added that before the negotiations began the German troops must be withdrawn. This demand, of course, had no chance of being accepted. Mussolini informed Hitler that his attempt at mediation was a failure.

²⁸ Sontag and Beddie, op. cit., p. 82.

But, he added,

Danzig is already German and Germany is holding already securities which guarantee most of her demands. Besides, Germany has had already its "moral satisfaction." If it would accept the plan for a conference, it will achieve all her aims and at the same time prevent a war which already today has the aspect of being universal and of extremely long duration.²⁹

Hitler replied that he would be glad to negotiate, if he could be sure of success, but that he could not jeopardize brilliant military work by "diplomatic intrigues."

I am aware, Duce, that the fight which I enter is one of life and death. My own fate does not play any role in it at all. But I am also aware that one cannot avoid such a struggle permanently and that one has to choose after cold deliberation the moment for resistance in such a way that the probability of success is guaranteed and I believe in this success, Duce, with the firmness of a rock.³⁰

The conditions of the fourth partition of Poland resembled the first three in many ways. Austria had been subdued, France was in a weakened condition, and the active collaboration of Russia had been obtained. The only element lacking was British acquiescence. On September 3, Britain and France presented the German Government with an ultimatum: withdraw from Poland immediately or war would be declared. In the words of Winston S. Churchill,

now, when every one of (the previous) advantages had been squandered and thrown away, Great Britain advances, leading France by the hand, to guarantee the integrity of Poland--of that very Poland which with hyena appetite had only six months before joined in the pillage and corruption of the Czechoslovakian State. There was sense in fighting for Czechoslovakia in 1938....But this has been judged unreasonable, rash, below the level of modern intellectual thought and morality. Yet now at last the two Western Democracies declared themselves ready to stake their lives upon the territorial integrity of Poland.³¹

On September 3, at 11:00 A. M., sixty hours after the German invasion, Great Britain declared war.

²⁹ U.S. Chief of Counsel for the Prosecuting of Axis Criminality, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office 1946), p. 722.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 723.

³¹ Lukacs, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

The aggressiveness of Adolph Hitler forced the military contest. The realization of the concept now depended, not upon financial systems nor upon skillful 'fifth column' activity nor upon diplomatic pressure, but upon the armed strength of the Reich. As Hitler said,

for three hundred years it was the aim of the English and French rulers to prevent any real consolidation of Europe and, above all, to hold Germany in weakness and impotency.... Germany shall be dashed to pieces and reduced to small States. With that the Reich will lose its political power and with it the possibility of securing for the German people their living rights on this earth....The fighting beginning today decides the fate of the German nation for the next thousand years.³²

³² Fifield, op. cit., p. 65.

PART V

THE DEFEAT OF THE

PART V

THE DEFEAT OF THE
LEBENSRAUM CONCEPT?

1 International Military Tribunal, East Germany and Aggression,
Defence and Judgment, (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1947),
p.16.

PART V

THE DEFEAT OF THE LEBENSRAUM CONCEPT?

With the military defeat of the Hitler regime and with the subsequent disgrace of the Nazi ideology, the concept of Lebensraum seemed to sink also into oblivion, for the prerequisite to its realization was a strong and aggressive Germany. Having been so much a part of German political speculation for so long a time, and having played so large a part in fascist dogma, it is doubtful whether the concept will ever be forgotten, especially as long as biased nationalistic histories are served to German schoolchildren, as they are to every other school child who by the accident of birth happens to be born subject to a national state. But it is also extremely unlikely that the Lebensraum concept will ever again be galvanized into the goal and ideal it was under Hitler's rule, unless it can once more draw unto itself all the fervor and fanaticism of a totalitarian ideology; for "the aggressive designs of the Nazi Germans were not accidents arising out of the immediate political situation in Europe and the world. They were a deliberate and essential part of the Nazi foreign policy." ¹ If one doubts this point, one may look at the abundant evidence of Mein Kampf.

One other reason why the Lebensraum concept is probably as dead as Manifest Destiny or as the White Man's Burden is the fact that East Central Europe is no longer the weak and divided area it was following the First World War. If the region has been made the

¹ International Military Tribunal, Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, Opinion and Judgement, (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1947), p.16.

Lebensraum of any power, that power is Soviet Russia, under whose economic, political, and ideological hegemony the area now largely rests. East Central Europe is now united in the power struggle of the Communist bloc.

Germany itself has been split in two by this same struggle. And along with this enforced impotence there is another reason for the demise of the Lebensraum vision: Germany has lost its tactile communication with East Central Europe; she no longer infiltrates it physically as she once did. Migrations which took place during and after the Nazi era have broken down the minority groups and drawn them to Germany proper. As a race they are no longer the "common denominator" of the Lebensraum area.

Granted that historians and others will keep alive the traditions and memories of the mittel-European past, and recognizing that suffering and a sense of martyrdom can fuse a more vigorous effect into such history than it might normally enjoy, the fact remains that the Germans have lost their physical contact with that wide area of Mittel Europa wherein they had lived in scattered groups. The memory lives on, but the reality of returning to those remote areas of the Baltic, the Carpathians, eastern Poland, the Hungarian Plain, or Yugoslavia grows dimmer by the year. And it was precisely that reality, of Germans scattered through the area, that gave major substance to the claim that the Germans were the indispensable, unifying factor of a Mitteleuropa.²

No one can deny the tremendous strides taken towards the realization of Lebensraum under National Socialism. The Treaty of Versailles had left Germany an area of 181,500 square miles from a former 208,780, and reduced its population from 67,812,000 to 60,000,000. Before the outbreak of the war Hitler had increased the population to 88,000,000 and the area to 258,863³ square miles.

² Meyer, op.cit., p. 324.

³ Pifield, op. cit., p. 58.

By the end of the war, the Reich had been in control not only of Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, but also of Holland, Norway, Belgium, France, Yugoslavia, Greece, Italy, Denmark, Luxemburg, Rumania, Hungary, and Bulgaria, as well as of large parts of Russia--an hegemony covering the entire Lebensraum area and stretching far beyond it.

It may properly be argued that it was not any theory of Lebensraum nor any superior technique of aggression which gave Hitler his most astounding successes, and which instilled in him an increasingly and ever-more-arrogant lust for domination, but that he conquered by sheer good fortune, that it was easy victory which drove him on to war. All this is certainly true, but one must not overlook the power of an ideal to give focus and scope to aggressive energy, nor the power of an ideal to lift men above themselves, to give them a vision beyond the every day, and to follow the leader which seems to promise a realization of this vision. And no one can deny that Hitler was the master of mob psychology. The fact that an intelligent and educated Western European nation was able gladly to aggrandize its own race as master, to worship power as its god, and to follow after a new messiah, is a phenomenon the explanation for which must be sought, not in the ideas of the Grossdeutsche supporters of the 1870's nor in the ideas of the early geopoliticians, but in the conditions of Western society itself, of which this nation was a part.

It may properly be argued that German expansionism was morally no worse than that of other European nations who happened to attain national unity earlier, in an age when the world was not quite so

crowded, that the only difference was the quantitative one of the Reich's more effective totalitarian organization coupled with the fact that the national individualism of the early modern era is no longer possible today. All this is certainly true, but one must not overlook the fact that to explain is not to excuse. The fact that no man is ever completely normal does not prevent society from restraining the madman. "To initiate a war of aggression, therefore, is not only an international crime; it is the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole."⁴

But if one is to attempt to find a reason for insanity, and to fix the blame for it, one must direct his accusations not only to the madman for his moral weakness--and Hitlerian Germany was mad by anyone's definition--but also towards the society which the madman kept and which did so much to determine his development. By this criterion, "there is no great power inside or outside Europe that did not add to the troubles with which the Continent was beset; the Soviet Union by its efforts to undermine the social order of Western Europe, Japan by starting a new era of imperialistic expansion, the United States by a sudden reversal of policy from active participation in the World War and in the treaty-making of Versailles to political isolation, and finally each of the European states in countless fashion!"⁵ Europe had been slowly moving towards a cataclysm long before the rise of fascism; yet the unnecessary harshness of Versailles rising out of

⁴ International Military Tribunal, op. cit., p. 16.

⁵ Wolfers, op. cit., p. 3.

a desire for revenge, and the interwar economic policies--the unfeeling administration of debts and reparations coupled with high protectionist tariffs and a haughty refusal of the richer countries to trade with the poorer and newer ones--all these manifestations of the new religion of nationalism greatly aggravated a bad situation and impelled Europe into its crisis.

Each European nation, enwrapped in the constricting garment of its own nationalism, gazing at the world myopically through a haze of self-interest, was as much to blame for the fascist revolution as were the totalitarian states themselves. The fact that a scheme such as Naumann's cooperative, federal Mittleuropa could become the Lebensraum of Hitler, is due to a social madness by the name of integral nationalism. Lebensraum, therefore, is a European moral problem. Europe had lost its backbone. The main beneficiaries and builders of the past-World-War I policy, England and France, were unable to prevent disaster. The nations of the world, whose collective will might have been a strong force, were unable to cooperate in the League of Nations.

The issue of a crisis depends not so much on its magnitude as on the courage and resolution with which it is met. The second German bid for domination found Europe weak and divided. At several junctures it could have been stopped without excessive effort or sacrifice, but was not; a failure of European statemanship. Behind the German drive were passionate forces, sustained by obsessionist, sadistic hatreds and by a crude ideology; to these the Germans, whom defeat had deprived of their routine of life, showed even more than their normal receptivity, while the rest of Europe had neither the faith, nor the will, nor even sufficient repugnance, to offer timely, objective resistance. Some imitated Hitler and hyena-like followed in his track; some tolerated him, hoping that his advance would reach its term--by saturation, exhaustion, the resistance of others, or the

mere chapter of accidents--before it attained them; and some, while beholding his handiwork, would praise him for having "restored the self-respect of the Germans." Janissaries and appeasers aided Hitler's work: a failure of European morality. 6

6 Namier, op. cit., p. ix.

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APPENDIX

GLOSSARY OF GERMAN TERMS

Administrative.

DEUTSCHER AUSWAERTENDELSVERBAND, a semi-official
association of foreign trade firms.

DEUTSCHEN ARBEITERSAMMENSCHAF, ethnic German living outside Germany, esp. in
the U.S.A.

DEUTSCHEN AUSWAERTENDELSVERBAND, foreign association of firms
connected with German outside living abroad.

DEUTSCHEN ARBEITERSAMMENSCHAF, German Foreign Ministry

A P P E N D I X

DEUTSCHEN ARBEITERSAMMENSCHAF, a term used embracing various
groups according to context, e.g., Germanism, German racial
idea, German racial elements, etc.

DEUTSCHEN ARBEITERSAMMENSCHAF, office of Hitler in his capacity
foreign affairs advisor to Hitler of German Foreign Ministry
in his appointment as Foreign Minister.

DEUTSCHEN ARBEITERSAMMENSCHAF, leadership principle of the N.S.D.A.P. ("Responsi-
bility of the subordinates in the executive authority flows from
order to the subordinate" - Goering).

One of the 13 regional divisions of the N.S.D.A.P.

DEUTSCHEN ARBEITERSAMMENSCHAF, a united Germany including Austria.

DEUTSCHEN ARBEITERSAMMENSCHAF, an economic system including a large extra-
territorial sphere of influence.

DEUTSCHEN ARBEITERSAMMENSCHAF, a united Germany excluding Austria.

NATIONALSOZIALISTISCHE DEUTSCHE ARBEITERSAMMENSCHAF (N.S.D.A.P.),
National Socialist German Workers' Party.

APPENDIX

GLOSSARY OF GERMAN TERMS

AO, Auslandsorganisation.

AUSLAENDER SONDERKONTEN FUER INLANDSZAHLUNGEN, a separate account system for payment of foreign trade debts.

AUSLANDSDEUTSCHER, ethnic German living outside Germany, regardless of citizenship.

AUSLANDSORGANISATION, foreign organization of the N.S.D.A.P. concerned with German nationals living abroad; the 43d Gau.

AUSWARTIGES AMT (A.A.), German Foreign Ministry.

BUNDESTAG, the Federal Diet.

DEUTSCHES VOLKSTUM, DEUTSCHTUM, a vague word embracing various meanings according to context, e.g., Germanism, German racial feeling, German racial element, etc.

DIENSTSTELLE RIBBENTROP, office of Ribbentrop in his capacity as foreign affairs adviser to Hitler; of decreasing importance after his appointment as Foreign Minister.

FUHRERPRINZIP, leadership principle of the N.S.D.A.P. ("Responsibility of the subordinate to the superior; authority from the superior to the subordinate"--Göring).

GAU, one of the 43 regional divisions of the N.S.D.A.P.

GROSSDEUTSCHLAND, a united Germany including Austria.

GROSSRAUMWIRTSCHAFT, an economic system including a large extra-territorial sphere of influence.

KLIENDEUTSCHLAND, a united Germany excluding Austria.

NATIONALSOZIALISTISCHE DEUTSCHE ARBEITERPARTEI (N.S.D.A.P.), National Socialist German Workers' Party.

OBERKOMMANDO DER WEHRMACHT, Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht; Supreme Headquarters of the Wehrmacht.

PUTSCH, uprising, e.g., the July 25, 1934, uprising of the Austrian Nazis in which Chancellor Dollfuss was killed.

REICH, empire; Germany.

REICHSMARK, German mark; official rate of exchange about 40 cents in 1936-38.

SUDETEN DEUTSCHE HEIMATFRONT, Sudeten German Homeland Front Party.

TURNVERBÄNDE, gymnastic or athletic associations.

VOLK, vague word meaning Germandom, the German people.

VOLKSBUND FÜR DAS DEUTSCHTUM IM AUSLAND, "League for Germandom Abroad", a pre-1933 Pan-German organization which became allied with the N.S.D.A.P. and was used by the Auslandsorganisation to unite Germans everywhere; called "Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland" until 1933.

VOLKSDEUTSCHE MITTELSTELLE, central agency for problems concerning Volksdeutsche, ethnic Germans of non-German citizenship; formed as the Büro von Kursell in 1936, renamed and placed under SS-Obergruppenführer Lorenz in 1937.

WEHRMACHT, German armed forces.

WELTPOLITIK, world-policy, global politics.

ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR GEOPOLITIK, an outstanding geopolitical periodical.