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THE WILHELMSTRASSE AND THE NAZI CONSPIRACY TO WAGE WARS OF AGGRESSION: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CONTINUITY OF GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE INFLUENCE ON THE FORMULATION OF FOREIGN POLICY, 1871-1945

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

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for the degree of

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This thesis, submitted by William A. Young in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

Playford V. Thorson
(Chairperson)

This thesis meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

Harvey Knull
Dean of the Graduate School
Mar 8-93

PERMISSION

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In memory of my grandparents

Lillian Agnes Wekwejt (1913-91)

and

William Walter Wekwejt (1907-75)

ABSTRACT

In the late forties, military tribunals held at Nuremberg tried several surviving key German diplomats, including Constantin von Neurath, Joachim von Ribbentrop, Ernst von Weizsaecker, and Ernst Woermann, for their part in the so-called Nazi conspiracy to wage wars of aggression. All of the diplomats on trial claimed that the German Foreign Office was innocent since it had no influence on the formulation of foreign policy: Hitler had acted as his own Foreign Minister. This thesis investigates to what extent these individuals and other diplomats influenced the making of foreign policy during the Third Reich, as well as examines the Foreign Office's role in formulating policy from 1871 to 1945 in order to determine if there exists any continuity in its activities. The author uses the unpublished Nuremberg trial papers in the University of North Dakota's Chester Fritz Library as well as numerous published diplomatic documents and memoirs. The study shows that there is a strong case for the continuity argument that the Foreign Office had little, if any, influence in policy making under Bismarck, Wilhelm II, and Hitler. All three men practiced, to varying degrees, their desire to be their own Foreign Minister. The Foreign Office existed to carry out foreign affairs, not formulate policy. Only during the Weimar era, especially under Stresemann, did the Foreign Office exert a strong influence in policy making. With the

emergence of Hitler, the diplomats returned to their established pattern of serving a strong German leader. Thus, when the diplomats on trial at Nuremberg stated that Hitler was his own Foreign Minister and the Foreign Office had no influence on his decisions, they were arguing a viewpoint that holds true for much of the time during 1871 to 1945.

INTRODUCTION

The International Military Tribunal, and later, the American Military Tribunal held key representatives from the German Foreign Office as defendants against charges of conspiracy to wage wars of aggression, the actual waging of wars, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. This thesis concentrates on the first charge, that of conspiracy. The International Military Tribunal found German Foreign Ministers Constantin von Neurath (1932-38) and Joachim von Ribbentrop (1938-45) both guilty of conspiracy in spite of pleas of innocence due to their minimal influence over Hitler's foreign policy: Ribbentrop argued that Hitler was actually his own Foreign Minister and he only carried out orders as a technical specialist. Other members of the Foreign Office, including the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs,[1] Ernst von Weizsaecker, were also found guilty of this charge after lengthy trials by the American Military Tribunal. In the first place, this paper will reexamine to what extent the Foreign Office was actually involved in a Nazi conspiracy to wage wars of aggression. Secondly, in order to place this study in its proper historical context, this paper will also investigate the continuity,[2] if any, of Foreign Office influence on the formulation of foreign policy as pertaining to international political relations during 1871 to 1945.

Since its creation in 1870, the German Foreign Office has had a history of strict obedience to the head of German affairs, whether it be

Imperial Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, who was also Prussian Foreign Minister, or Kaiser Wilhelm II, carrying out, not formulating foreign policy. Only after the First World War, under Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann, did the Foreign Office manage to become the prime formulator of German foreign policy. Stresemann, who served a short time as Chancellor, became a focal point in European politics because of Germany's postwar situation, as well as the combined German civilian and military leaders quest to revise the Versailles Diktat. Under the autocratic rule of Adolf Hitler, as Ribbentrop argued at Nuremberg, the Foreign Office was again forced into its traditional subservient role as a mere technical apparatus which carried out foreign policy decisions, but did not formulate them.

An examination of the history of the Foreign Office reveals the continuity of the ministry's function as an organization designed to carry out the instructions of German leaders. Bismarck, Wilhelm II, and Hitler all practiced, to varying degrees, their desire to be their own Foreign Minister. In Bismarck's case, as the Imperial Chancellor and Prussian Foreign Minister, he had absolute control of foreign policy. He appointed civil servants and diplomats, who carried out his instructions without question, to key positions in the Foreign Office. In 1890, Kaiser Wilhelm dismissed the Iron Chancellor and initially replaced him with men who knew little of world affairs so that he, himself, could greatly influence the direction of German foreign policy. Eventually Wilhelm appointed the diplomat Bernhard von Buelow as Foreign Secretary (1897-1900), and later as

Imperial Chancellor and Prussian Foreign Minister (1900-9), to carry out his Weltpolitik. Although influenced by the military, especially Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, Wilhelm took foreign policy initiatives on his own, sometimes contrary to the advice of Buelow and Holstein, who held much influence inside the Foreign Office, as well as a long succession of foreign secretaries. The Kaiser strongly disliked professional diplomats. Ridding himself of foreign affairs experts, the Kaiser approached the First World War under the military leadership's influence with little expert diplomatic advice, since the Imperial Chancellor and Prussian Foreign Minister, Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, knew little of foreign affairs, and Foreign Secretary Gottlieb von Jagow took a back seat in the Kaiser's circle of influential advisers.

Coming to power in 1933, Hitler kept Neurath, a conservative elite, as Foreign Minister while he consolidated his control over Germany. The Foreign Office, traditionally consisting primarily of aristocrats, under Neurath shared common aims, to a certain degree, with Hitler: they both wanted Germany to be rid of the Versailles restrictions and regain its status as a Great Power. For a while both the Chancellor and Foreign Minister worked together, especially since Hitler valued the need of maintaining German respectability in the diplomatic world. Hitler, however, had an additional agenda, eastward expansionism, and thus sought ultimate control over German foreign policy. The Fuhrer, who greatly disliked professional diplomats, employed the ambitious and loyal champagne

dealer, Ribbentrop, who knew little of world affairs beyond his travels, as a personal diplomat to not only challenge the authority of the Foreign Office, but to carry out his foreign policy initiatives. Neurath and the Foreign Office opposed Hitler's meddling in diplomatic affairs, but found the situation impossible. They swiftly lost the influence in the formulation of foreign policy that the ministry had acquired during the Weimar Republic. In early 1938, Hitler became his own Foreign Minister, dismissing Neurath, and replacing him with Ribbentrop as the token head of the Foreign Office. Thus, under the autocratic rule of Hitler, the Foreign Office came full circle and clearly resumed its traditional position as an agency meant to carry out the instructions of the German leadership with strict obedience as during the times of Bismarck and Wilhelm II.

If the above thesis proves true, then the defense arguments of Ribbentrop and other diplomats at the Nuremberg trials had a ring of truth to them. Ribbentrop, although officially Reich Foreign Minister, professed that he had little influence in the formulation of foreign policy. He, in fear of his life during the Nuremberg proceedings, argued that Hitler, acting as his own Foreign Minister, and Hermann Goering were the conspirators planning wars of aggression.[3] Ernst von Weizsaecker, Ribbentrop's Foreign Secretary, insisted that the Foreign Office had no influence on policy.[4] Could these statements be mere arguments made by men in the shadow of the gallows? Bradley Smith has shown that the Allies were out to try and convict the much disliked Ribbentrop months before the end

of the war. Evidence, no matter how circumstantial, pointing toward Ribbentrop's involvement in a Nazi conspiracy to wage wars of aggression was gathered during the course of the war.[5] Norman Rich has pointed out that these documents, in their abundance, were overwhelming to any defense that Ribbentrop could manage.[6] These same documents that convicted the Foreign Minister, as Allied logic would have it, implicated other leading members of the Foreign Office and were used to try individual diplomats, who survived the war, at Nuremberg. Ribbentrop realized his own predicament. He wrote in his uncompleted memoirs, "Adolf Hitler is dead, and others must therefore be found responsible."[7] On 5 October 1946, shortly before his execution, Ribbentrop wrote to his wife:

> Everyone knows that the verdict is quite untenable, but I happen to have been Adolf Hitler's Foreign Minister and political considerations therefore call for my conviction. Fate willed that my principal witness, Adolf Hitler, is dead. Were he able to give evidence, the whole verdict would collapse. As it is, I must bear the fate of the followers of such a mighty and perhaps demoniac personality . . . .[8]

Much has been written on German foreign policy during 1871 to 1945. However, there exist few studies of the German Foreign Office during this period.[9] In regards to the Foreign Ministers of the Third Reich, Neurath has received some recent attention,[10] but Ribbentrop has been largely ignored by historians.[11] This study of the Foreign Office adds to the already published research by including findings from the unpublished American Military Tribunal papers located in the Chester Fritz Library at the University of North Dakota.

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. The German title of State Secretary for Foreign Affairs is more commonly referred to as Foreign Secretary in most countries. I will use these titles interchangeably throughout this thesis. It is important to note that before 1919 the Imperial Chancellor, under the authority of the Emperor and German constitution, was responsible for foreign affairs. The Chancellor also held the position of Prussian Foreign Minister. There was no Imperial Foreign Minister, but the Secretary of State served the Chancellor as the chief administrator of the Foreign Office. After 1919, the Weimar Republic created the position of Foreign Minister and promoted the previous post of Foreign Secretary to fill this position. At the same time the Under State Secretary became the new State Secretary.

2. Ian Kershaw defines the term continuity as "the historian's abbreviation for the persistence, survival, or retention of the 'dominant' strains and features of a social and political system." See Ian Kershaw, "1933: Continuity or Break in German History?" History Today, 33 (January 1983), 13-14.

3. Joachim von Ribbentrop, The Ribbentrop Memoirs, ed. A. von Ribbentrop, trans. Oliver Watson, introd. Allan Bullock (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1954), 31, 79; International Military Tribunal, Trials of the Major War Criminals Before The International Military Tribunal, Nuremberg 14 November 1945 - 1 October 1946 [hereafter cited as TMWC], 42 vols. (Nuremberg: International Military Tribunal, 1947), 9:401, 10:416, 10:321; U.S. Chief of Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality, Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression [hereafter cited as NCA], 8 vols. and 2 sups. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946-48), L-74, 7:841; DeWitt C. Poole, "Light on Nazi Foreign Policy," Foreign Affairs, 25, (October 1946), 130.

4. Ernst von Weizsaecker, Memoirs of Ernst von Weizsaecker, trans. John Andrews (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1951), 106.

5. Bradley Smith, Reaching Judgment at Nuremberg (London: Andre Deutsch, 1977), 183-84. Even among the Nazi elite, as Alan Bullock pointed out, Ribbentrop was much disliked (Ribbentrop, xi).

6. Norman Rich, "Hitler's Foreign Policy," chap. in The Origins of the Second World War Reconsidered: The A.J.P. Taylor Debate After Twenty-Five Years, ed. Gordon Martel (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1986), 120.

7. Ribbentrop, 180.

8. Ibid., 199.

9. There are only two detailed studies that examine the German Foreign Office during this period. See Lamar Cecil, The German Diplomatic Service, 1871-1914 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976) and Paul Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse: A Study of German Diplomats under the Nazi Regime (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954). Unfortunately there does not exist any studies regarding the Weimar Republic.

10. See John L. Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister: Constantin Freiherr von Neurath, Diplomat and Statesman (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1979).

11. H.W. Koch wrote, "one of the gaps still existing in the historiography of National Socialist foreign policy is a biography of Joachim von Ribbentrop . . . (H.W. Koch, ed., Apects of the Third Reich (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 194. The only full-length biography of Ribbentrop was written by an internationally famous fashion designer and former racing car driver (John Weitz, Hitler's Diplomat: The Life and Times of Joachim von Ribbentrop (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1992).

CHAPTER I

BISMARCK AND THE CREATION OF THE GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE

Although most of the European Great Powers possessed some form of foreign ministry as early as the seventeenth century, the relatively late rise of Prussia and its autocratic nature resulted in the late establishment of a Prussian Foreign Ministry. Prussian rulers, especially Frederick William I (1713-40) and Frederick the Great (1740-86), preferred to manage their own diplomatic affairs with the assistance of a small staff. It was not until the reform movement of 1806 and 1807 that Frederick William III (1797-1840) established the Prussian Foreign Ministry in Berlin to handle his diplomatic affairs.[1] The ministry, under the direction of Count Christian Bernstorff (1818-32), acquired a headquarters on the Wilhelmstrasse after the Kaiser purchased the residence at Number 76 from the Russian government in 1819. Tsar Alexander I had used it to house his ambassador to Prussia.[2] Requiring additional space to house an expanded staff after the establishment of the German Empire in 1871, Otto von Bismarck, the Imperial Chancellor and Prussian Foreign Minister, acquired Number 77 in 1874 and Number 75 three years later.[3] Like its French equivalent, the Quai d' Orsay, the Austrian known as the Ballhausplatz, and the British referred to as Whitehall, the newly created German Foreign

Office became known by the name of "the Wilhelmstrasse" because of its physical presence on that particular street.[4]

From its early beginnings the Prussian Foreign Ministry had to compete against the Prussian military tradition to recruit qualified aristocrats for service as civil servants and diplomats. Prussia's militaristic history, especially under Frederick the Great, meant that most talented Prussians preferred to serve the Kaiser in his prestigious military.[5] In fact, the Foreign Ministry became staffed by incompetent diplomats both in Berlin and serving abroad. Many of these diplomats acquired their positions "simply on account of their proficiency in French [the language of diplomats], without any knowledge of politics . . . ."[6] The ministry became known for its corrupt practices and inadequate proficiency in handling foreign affairs.[7]

In 1862, Kaiser Wilhelm I (1861-88) appointed Otto von Bismarck as Minister President and Foreign Minister of Prussia. As head of the Foreign Ministry, Bismarck found himself in complete charge of diplomatic affairs since the Kaiser had little interest in managing such matters. Taking charge of the ministry, Bismarck discovered his diplomatic staff and representatives consisted of mediocre personnel who were "disorganized, undisciplined, and destitute of either uniform method or clear channels of communication."[8] Bismarck set out to correct this situation by establishing and insisting upon strict discipline within the foreign service: he demanded complete subordination of his staff and diplomats to

himself. Moreover, the Foreign Minister educated the Wilhelmstrasse and Prussia's representatives abroad concerning his specific way of handling foreign affairs. With Bismarck in firm control, the Wilhelmstrasse gradually became more efficient, which resulted in raising the ministry's prestige, and acted as a catalyst for drawing a higher calibre of applicants wanting to enter the foreign service. Such efficiency, as well as Bismarck's successful foreign policy which led to the creation of Germany, made the Foreign Ministry an important part of the Prussian, and later, German government.[9]

Bismarck's success in war and diplomacy resulted in unifying the German states as the North German Federation in 1867. As the newly appointed Chancellor, Bismarck needed the services of his by now well-established, professionally-trained Prussian Foreign Ministry to administer the much expanded scope of German relations with the other European Great and Minor Powers. For several years Bismarck urged Kaiser Wilhelm I and the Reichstag to allow the ministry to become the supreme federal office for foreign affairs.[10] The Chancellor finally succeeded in this task by way of his great influence and status within the North German Federation. Thus, on 4 January 1870, Wilhelm I gave the Prussian Foreign Ministry the official title of Foreign Office of the North German Federation.[11] It became the Foreign Office (Auswaertiges Amt), with the function of assisting the Chancellor in diplomatic matters, instead of gaining status as a ministry. This new organization was almost totally created from the

old Prussian Foreign Ministry. It took over the ministry's buildings and staff at the Wilhelmstrasse.[12] Bismarck, who was not only Chancellor, but still held the position of Prussian Foreign Minister, ensured that the new Foreign Office was totally subordinate to him.[13] With the creation of Germany in 1871, the Foreign Office was transferred to the new empire simply by omitting the words "of the North German Federation."[14] Thus, as Norman Rich has written, the Foreign Office "was simply an expansion of the Prussian Foreign Ministry. There was no organic division between them."[15]

Article 11 of the Imperial Constitution of 1871 declared that the Emperor would represent Germany in foreign relations, conclude international treaties, and accredit and receive envoys. Moreover, the constitution extended to the Kaiser the same general appointive power that he enjoyed in Prussia (Article 18).[16] As German Emperor, Kaiser Wilhelm I appointed the Imperial Chancellor, Bismarck, who was responsible only to him, to direct German foreign and domestic policies. Wilhelm I solved the problem of the relationship between Prussia and the German Empire by uniting the positions of Imperial Chancellor and that of the Prussian Foreign Minister with the appointment of Bismarck to both. This gave Bismarck control over the whole German Empire and its foreign affairs, since Wilhelm I, and later, Frederick III, preferred to leave much of the diplomatic affairs of Germany to the Iron Chancellor.[17] The role of the Foreign Office was to serve the Chancellor and his handling of foreign affairs without question. The Foreign Office served Bismarck as a

bureaucratic technical apparatus: it was not allowed to contribute in the formulation of foreign policy.

The autocratic Bismarck ruled over the new German Foreign Office with complete authority. He continued to demand strict discipline and complete subordination of his diplomats in Berlin and abroad.[18] Bismarck operated under the belief that he was the only one who could effectively formulate and exercise German foreign policy. He had a very low opinion of his diplomats.[19] He often complained that "German diplomats were mostly enthusiasts for some other country . . . ."[20] One historian has stated, "to Bismarck, many diplomats were no more than liveried letter carriers who consumed stately dinners and purveyed malicious gossip."[21] Friedrich von Holstein, a Foreign Office official under the Iron Chancellor, heard Bismarck once state: "Provided an Ambassador can obey that's all he needs."[22] Other than the Foreign Secretary, diplomats at the Wilhelmstrasse had no access to Bismarck.[23] Lamar Cecil has analyzed the situation:

> Bismarck was self-confident, overbearing, and hypercritical by nature, and he was therefore inclined to manage the Wilhelmstrasse dictatorially, both because his estimation of his own talents was boundless and because he had scant regard for a great many of his diplomatic servants.[24]

Bernhard Ernst von Buelow, the Foreign Secretary (1873-79), admitted that Bismarck "did not consider the Foreign Office an arena for discussion [on foreign policy] but rather the instrument for carrying out Bismarck's instructions to the letter."[25] In fact, in spite of his insistence upon

diplomatic reports being accurate and concise, the Chancellor demanded that these documents contain only the facts and include no speculation since he distinctly wanted to make his own analysis.[26]

Bismarck demanded complete subordination of his diplomats and Foreign Office officials to his foreign policy. He would not put up with any challenges to his authority, declaring "I . . . am His Majesty's sole adviser on Foreign Affairs."[27] Few had the nerve to oppose his diplomatic instructions. As Kurt Doss stated, "those who ignored his warnings had the implacable fury of the Chancellor to fear."[28] Count Harry von Arnim, the German Ambassador to Paris, was one exception. He opposed Bismarck's anti-Bourbon policy with France and worked to restore the Bourbons to the French throne. Bismarck made an example out of Arnim by having him charged with treason and convicted in court for disregarding his diplomatic instructions.[29] This lesson was remembered by diplomats in the Foreign Office for many years. The Arnim case gave proof how severe the Chancellor could act even against the highly privileged members of the Wilhelmstrasse should they put up any resistance to his policies. The Chancellor brought fear to even his most experienced counsellors in the Political Department. Johann Maria von Radowitz, one of Bismarck's most talented subordinates, realized that "to oppose Bismarck of the 1870's and the 1880's in any matter would have been unthinkable to me!"[30] Gordon Craig described the situation as such, "it is not too much to say that the atmosphere in the

Foreign Ministry came to resemble that of an oriental court ruled by a cruel and capricious tyrant . . . ."[31]

In firm control of foreign policy, Bismarck dominated the operations of the Wilhelmstrasse. From 1862 to 1890, he presided over the daily business of the foreign service, putting his own personal stamp, one rooted in a thorough and professional knowledge of diplomacy, on its administration. Commenting on Bismarck's management of the Wilhelmstrasse, one historian of the Foreign Office has written:

> He would provide them [Foreign Office personnel] with orders and their role would be to carry out his directives to the letter. The result was a system in which both the design of policy and the discipline of the diplomatic service depended on a single indispensable figure. Bismarck encountered no opposition from his subalterns in the Foreign Office, for German diplomats understood that their role was implemental, not consultive.[32]

The Chancellor tended to be an extremely overbearing manager of the Foreign Office. This was evident in the thirty-two volumes of instructions he issued to his staff covering such matters as the size of blotting paper, the use of abbreviations, the color of ink, the pagination of lengthy reports, and the use of covers.[33] He allowed no one, with the exception of the State Secretary, access to him.[34] From 1886 to 1890 this Foreign Secretary was Bismarck's own son, Herbert, who the Chancellor groomed through rapid promotions with the hope making him his successor.[35] The autocratic operations of the Foreign Office made a lasting impression on the young grandson of Wilhelm I, the future Kaiser Wilhelm II, who worked in the Wilhelmstrasse under Herbert Bismarck in 1886 and 1887, as

particularly different than that of the German General Staff.[36] He wrote in his memoirs:

> The Foreign Office was conducted with the strictest discipline by Count Herbert, whose rudeness toward his employees particularly struck me. The gentlemen there simply flew when they were summoned or dismissed by the Count, so much so that a joking saying arose at the time that "their coat tails stood straight out behind them." The foreign policy was conducted by Prince Bismarck alone, after consultation with Count Herbert, who passed on the commands of the Chancellor and had them transformed into instructions. Hence the Foreign Office was nothing but an office of the great Chancellor, where work was done according to his directions. Able men, with independent ideas, were not schooled and trained there.[37]

The young diplomat, Bernhard von Buelow, the son of one of Bismarck's previous State Secretaries, and later to become not only a Foreign Secretary himself, but Imperial Chancellor, also noted the strict discipline of the Foreign Office under the two Bismarcks. He made the following observation of Herbert's operation of the Wilhelmstrasse:

> He trained his messengers to jump in . . . . He kept them in such a permanent state of tension and fear that when he rang the bell they would dash into his room like a trout when it leaps over an obstruction.[38]

With this intense effort, nevertheless, the Chancellor eventually turned his foreign service into one of the most orderly and efficient in existence by improving its quality of personnel, technical expertise, and performance.[39] Even Harold Nicolson has admitted that from the standpoint of talent and efficiency Bismarck's foreign service compared favorably with any in Europe.[40]

In spite of Bismarck's autocratic rule of the Wilhelmstrasse, German aristocrats, especially Prussians, highly desired acquiring a position at

the Foreign Office or serving as a diplomat abroad. Taking their tradition from the Prussian Foreign Ministry, German aristocrats sought to serve the Empire in the highly rationalized, professionally-trained bureaucracy of the Foreign Office. Under Bismarck, as Paul Seabury has commented, "the prestige of this bureaucracy as a whole was enormous."[41] But to acquire a post and experience career advancement one needed to come from noble lineage.[42] The Wilhelmstrasse, as Albert Ballin, one of Germany's leading bourgeois businessmen in the late nineteenth century, observed, was a "club into which one had to be admitted by and through birth."[43] In fact, as one historian has noted, sixty-eight percent of the diplomats working in the Foreign Office bore titles of nobility, while eighty-seven percent of the diplomats abroad were of noble lineage.[44] The Kaiser and Chancellor favored nobles since it was highly likely that these individuals would be conservatives and support the German monarchy.[45] It was true, however, that bourgeois applicants, especially those with considerable wealth, could acquire a position in the Foreign Office. Candidates for the Foreign Office were more likely, however, to be accepted if they held the patronage of the Kaiser, Chancellor, or important Wilhelmstrasse officials; came from Prussian military families; or possessed law degrees and had belonged to certain university fraternities.[46] Nevertheless, to gain advancement, an individual normally had to have noble birth, wealth, sociability, a well-born German wife which was acceptable to the Foreign Office leadership, as well as some ability for negotiation.[47] Conceit and back stabbing were

prevalent. Moreover, some diplomats from old aristocratic families were intolerant of their colleagues whose titles were recent, considering them in all respects, except nomenclature, to be indistinguishable from the bourgeoise.[48] On top of all this, the German government paid very low wages to officials and diplomats who worked in the foreign service.[49]

As already alluded to, the Chancellor appointed a Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to manage the everyday routine administrative affairs of the Foreign Office. Bismarck created this Imperial position with the intention that it should be held by a civil servant.[50] With the exception of Herbert Bismarck, no Foreign Secretary exerted much influence on formulating German foreign policy. Lamar Cecil, in his study of the German diplomatic service from 1871 to 1914, wrote:

> Of all posts, none was so scrupulously avoided as the state secretaryship, and a long file of Foreign Office dignitaries--among them Alvensleben, Hatzfeldt, Hohenlohe, Holstein, Jagow, Monts, Radowitz, and Werthern--at one time or another declined the post or resisted its being thrust upon them. Bismarck himself admitted that it was a thankless job. The state secretary was allowed considerable latitude in administration, but in diplomatic matters he was only the chancellor's spokesman.[51]

In 1871, when the Foreign Office assumed responsibility for the foreign affairs of the German Empire, it consisted of only two departments left over from its days as the Prussian Ministry for Foreign Affairs: the Political and the Legal-Commercial Departments.[52] As diplomatic work increased because of the extensive growth in its responsibilities, especially in response to Germany's overseas expansion and industrial growth, the Foreign Office expanded in size and separated into additional

departments. The Personnel Department split away from the Legal-Commercial Department and was made independent in 1879.[53] Six years later, in 1885, the Foreign Office separated legal affairs from the Legal-Commercial Department.[54] Colonial affairs was made independent from the Political Department in 1890.[55] Moreover, in 1881, Bismarck established the post of Undersecretary of State to provide a regular deputy for the State Secretary and relieve him of all his non-political responsibilities.[56] The Undersecretary of State was chosen on the basis of his administrative skill or his competence in non-political fields.[57] Nevertheless, the Foreign Office still found it necessary for the State Secretary to make all important decisions in non-political matters, while the Undersecretary's work tended to become almost totally centered on the activities of the Political Department.[58] Craig, however, reminds us that "the heart of the Foreign Ministry was the Political Division . . . ."[59] This department was in charge of the general problems of foreign policy, of press affairs (until 1915), of colonial affairs (until 1890), and, after 1895, of the Personnel Section of the Diplomatic Service. Heads of all the other Foreign Office departments were required to submit all matters regarding foreign policy to the Political Department for coordination. Therefore, the Political Department sometimes became involved in questions of foreign loans or railroad construction which normally would have been handled by other departments.[60]

The German Foreign Office, because of Bismarck's influence and its constitutional position, was incapable of formulating its own foreign policies. Even so, from 1886 onwards, Friedrich von Holstein, Director of the Political Department, who had supported Bismarck during the Arnim crisis,[61] quietly challenged the Chancellor with presenting his own foreign policy initiatives. Unaware of the entire scheme of Bismarck's diplomatic system, especially since the Chancellor did not confide in him, Holstein believed that Bismarck's diplomatic system, which was based upon the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy) as well as the Reinsurance Treaty with Russia, was too complex and "governed by emotion and therefore unsound."[62] Thus, in the late 1880s, when Bismarck was experiencing political difficulties in his office as Chancellor, Holstein used the opportunity to lead a movement within the Foreign Office against his master.[63] Bismarck fought back, reproaching Holstein for corresponding directly with the Kaiser on diplomatic matters: the Chancellor had always forbidden any Foreign Office official other than himself from direct contact with the Kaiser.[64] According to the Kaiser, Bismarck warned him away from Holstein, calling the young diplomat "dangerous."[65] Holstein, however, remained at his post, outlasting the Bismarck era.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. William J. Roosen, The Age of Louis XIV: The Rise of Modern Diplomacy (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1976), 33; Walther Hubatsch, Frederick the Great of Prussia: Absolutism and Administration (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), 43; H.W. Koch, A History of Prussia (New York: Dorset, 1978), 104, 156, 226-28; Hajo Holborn, A History of Modern Germany, 3 vols. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1959-69), 2:376, 2:398-99; Robert Ergang, The Potsdam Fuhrer: Frederick William I, Father of Prussian Militarism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), 59.

2. Bernhard, Prince von Buelow, Memoirs of Prince von Buelow, trans. F.A. Voight and Geoffrey Dunlap, 4 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1931-32), 4:304-5; Cecil, The German Diplomatic Service, 3.

3. Cecil, The German Diplomatic Service, 3-4; Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse, 3.

4. Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse, 1.

5. Gordon A. Craig, From Bismarck to Adenauer: Aspects of German Statecraft [hereafter cited as Aspects of German Statecraft] (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1958), 4.

6. Otto, Prince von Bismarck, The Memoirs, trans. A.J. Butler, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1899; reprint, New York: Howard Fertig, 1966), 1:5.

7. Ibid., 1:237.

8. Gordon A. Craig, "Bismarck and His Ambassadors: The Problem of Discipline," chap. in War, Politics, and Diplomacy: Selected Essays, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), 181.

9. Ibid.

10. Kurt Doss, "The History of the German Foreign Office," in The Times Survey of Foreign Ministries of the World, ed. Zara Steiner, (London: Times Books, 1982), 226-27; Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse, 5.

11. Doss, 227.

12. Despite the domination of Prussian foreign policy and diplomats in the newly created Imperial Foreign Office, the Wilhelmstrasse maintained a Prussian section in the office solely for the purpose of managing the foreign affairs of Prussia.

13. Friedrich von Holstein, The Holstein Papers, ed. Norman Rich and M.H. Fisher, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955-63), 1:200.

14. Doss, 227.

15. Holstein, 1:200.

16. Cecil, The German Diplomatic Service, 190.

17. Ibid.

18. Cecil, The German Diplomatic Service, 226-56; Craig, "Bismarck and His Ambassadors," 187.

19. Cecil, The German Diplomatic Service, 235.

20. Buelow, 2:128.

21. Cecil, The German Diplomatic Service, 235.

22. Holstein, 11 Feb 84 diary entry, 2:78.

23. Cecil, The German Diplomatic Service, 227.

24. Ibid., 226.

25. As quoted in Paul M. Kennedy, The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914 (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1980), 140.

26. Craig, "Bismarck and His Ambassadors," 184-85.

27. Buelow, 2:197.

28. Doss, 228.

29. Gordon A. Craig, Germany 1866-1945 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 105-6. See also George O. Kent, Arnim and Bismarck (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968).

30. As quoted in Craig, "Bismarck and His Ambassadors," 190.

31. Craig, *Germany 1866-1945*, 138.

32. Cecil, *The German Diplomatic Service*, 321.

33. J.C.G. Roehl, *Germany without Bismarck: The Crisis of Government in the Second Reich, 1890-1900* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1967), 22; Holstein, 7 March 1885 diary entry, 2:172.

34. William II, *My Early Life* (New York: George H. Doran, 1926; reprint, New York: AMS, 1971), 210.

35. Louis L. Snyder, *Diplomacy in Iron: The Life of Herbert von Bismarck* (Malabar, Florida: Krieger, 1985), 71-72. Holstein once made the comment to another diplomat: "Bismarck is a Wallenstein. His ambition is to found a Bismarck dynasty" (Karl Friedrich Nowak, *Germany's Road to Ruin.* trans. E.W. Dickes, [London: Longmans, 1932], 23).

36. William II, *My Early Life*, 210.

37. William II, *The Kaiser's Memoirs: Wilhelm II, Emperor of Germany 1888-1918*, trans. Thomas R. Ybarra, (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1922; reprint, New York: Howard Fertig, 1976), 6.

38. Buelow, 1:8.

39. Craig, *Aspects of German Statecraft*, 5.

40. Harold Nicolson, *Diplomacy*, 2d ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), 148-49.

41. Seabury, *The Wilhelmstrasse*, 5.

42. Cecil, *The German Diplomatic Service*, 328.

43. Lamar Cecil, *Albert Ballin: Business and Politics in Imperial Germany, 1888-1918* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 123.

44. Cecil, *The German Diplomatic Service*, 66.

45. Ibid., 72.

46. Ibid., 23, 27. For instance, Foreign Secretary Bernhard Ernst von Buelow was the nephew of former Prussian Foreign Minister Count Bernstorff. Buelow's own son climbed up the career ladder to not only become Foreign Secretary, but Imperial Chancellor (Buelow, 4:304-6).

47. Cecil, The German Diplomatic Service, 188.

49. Ibid., 44.

50. Holstein, 1:200.

51. Cecil, The German Diplomatic Service, 154-55.

52. Holstein, 1:201.

53. Ibid.

54. Doss, 229.

55. Ibid.

56. Holstein, 1:200.

57. Craig, Germany 1866-1945, 135.

58. Holstein, 1:200.

59. Craig, Germany 1866-1945, 135.

60. Holstein, 1:201.

61. Ibid., 1:95-96. Many in the Foreign Office viewed Holstein with respect. In 1876, State Secretary Buelow told his son, the future Chancellor, that, "Holstein really possesses a first-class political head, a very strong political intellect" (Buelow, 4:394).

62. Holstein, 1:116.

63. Buelow, 2:126; Norman Rich, Friedrich von Holstein, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 1:280-83.

64. Holstein, Bismarck to Holstein memorandum, 3:296; Doss, 231.

65. William II, The Kaiser's Memoirs, 5.

CHAPTER II

KAISER WILHELM II AND THE FOREIGN OFFICE, 1888-1918

Kaiser Wilhelm II became German Emperor in 1888. Wilhelm possessed a keen interest in foreign relations, which was aroused by the fact that he was related to most of the monarchs in Europe, with Queen Victoria of Britain as his grandmother. He also had been employed in the Foreign Office under the Foreign Secretary, Herbert Bismarck, and had witnessed the absolute control that the Imperial Chancellor had exercised over foreign policy. Having grown up during the era of Otto von Bismarck, Wilhelm, who "revered and idolized the Chancellor," could not but help become deeply interested and involved in matters of the German Empire.[1] Coming into his own as Emperor, Wilhelm desired to gradually assume control over the German Empire.[2]

Working in the Foreign Office during 1886 and 1887, Wilhelm had developed a good relationship with the Chancellor and had also become a close friend of his son Herbert.[3] In his memoirs, the Kaiser wrote of his relationship with the young Bismarck: "Herbert Bismarck was my instructor with regard to diplomatic events of former times, the general questions of the day in foreign politics, as well as foreign statesmen and diplomats, particularly the Ambassadors in Berlin."[4] Wilhelm noted "Count Herbert's passion for work, his inexhaustible energy, and his political knowledge

were amazing; while he did not possess his father's genius, he was undoubtedly his most gifted and important pupil."[5] Nevertheless, after the short reign of his father, Frederick III in 1888,[6] Wilhelm gradually confronted his Chancellor's policies and eventually dismissed Bismarck in 1890. Even so, the Kaiser asked Herbert Bismarck to stay on as his State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, but the Chancellor's son refused the position out of loyalty to his father.[7]

With the dismissal of Chancellor Bismarck, the German government experienced a crisis in government because there was no single person who could manage the Empire. During the early nineties Berlin's complex constitutional government was ruled by an oligarchy composed of the Kaiser, Chancellor, cabinet chiefs, Prussian ministers, state secretaries, Friedrich von Holstein, and the Kaiser's close friend, Philip von Eulenburg.[8] Wilhelm II, however, wanted to assume full control of the government, including the direction of German foreign policy.[9] For several years, nonetheless, there was much confusion and disunity in the German government.[10] During this time Wilhelm worked to assert his constitutional rights on controlling foreign relations.

Since Herbert Bismarck declined the offer to remain as Foreign Secretary, Wilhelm II lacked a leading diplomatic advisor of high quality to assist him in directing German foreign policy. The Iron Chancellor had had complete control over foreign relations and failed to train anyone, other than Herbert, in his complex system of alliances to follow in his foot-

steps.[11] With both Bismarcks gone, Germany lacked a Chancellor or State Secretary capable of providing the Kaiser with sound diplomatic advice.

From the beginning of his reign, the Kaiser believed he could be his own Foreign Minister. He thought he could manage diplomatic affairs through his own personal relations with other monarchs.[12] To lessen the chance of any ministerial challenge to his authority, Wilhelm appointed men to high positions who lacked experience in diplomacy. In most respects this made the Foreign Office the direct servant of the Kaiser. Meanwhile, Wilhelm maneuvered to acquire and consolidate his political power in the early nineties.

In 1890, Wilhelm II appointed Leo von Caprivi, a soldier by profession, as the new Imperial Chancellor. Caprivi possessed an inadequate background in foreign affairs. Fully aware of his own shortcoming, Caprivi became dependent upon diplomatic experts.[13] While accomplishing one of his first foreign policy tasks the Chancellor met Holstein, the Director of the Political Department, who was acting as temporary head of the Foreign Office since the position of State Secretary was still vacant after the resignation of Herbert Bismarck. This diplomat had built up much personal power and influence within the Foreign Office during the last half of the Bismarck era.[14] One diplomat, Bernhard von Buelow, described him as a man with "extensive personal connections, wide experience, quickness of perception and . . . whose decision, cunning, and ruthlessness had set him in a position of high authority,"[15] while

Eulenburg found Holstein possessed "infinite craftiness" and a "subtle intelligence".[16] During their conversation Holstein impressed Caprivi with his knowledge of the Foreign Office's filing system and understanding of world affairs. Caprivi, knowing his own inexperience in foreign affairs, came to realize that he could use this expert to assist him in matters of foreign policy. Thus, Holstein was able to gain much influence over the formulation of German foreign policy during the Caprivi period.[17] The German leadership accepted Holstein's advice and refused to renew Bismarck's Reinsurance Treaty (1887) with Russia,[18] an agreement that Wilhelm II only found out about when he became Emperor.[19] This unsound advice pushed Russia into an alliance with France, which was hostile to Germany, in 1894.

The Kaiser sought to direct German foreign policy himself. His appointment of Caprivi as Imperial Chancellor and Prussian Foreign Minister gave Wilhelm additional power in the conduct of foreign affairs. To further increase this power, he appointed Adolf Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, a lawyer who had served as the Minister of Baden and lacked training as a diplomat, as his Foreign Secretary.[20] Thus, the Kaiser had the greatest importance in the formulation and conduct of German foreign relations. Lamar Cecil has commented on this situation, "the young monarch, in his own opinion, had the training for diplomacy that both Caprivi and Marschall lacked and he therefore was determined to manage Germany's relations with the other powers himself."[21] He listened to

advice coming from Holstein and the Foreign Office, but the Kaiser believed that they were incompetent in matters of foreign relations. Holstein, himself, admitted the difficulty that the Foreign Office had in continuing Bismarck's foreign policy: "the more tangled the mesh, the more difficult it was to find one's way about it without Prince Bismarck."[22] The Kaiser sincerely believed he did not need the Wilhelmstrasse. From his experience in the Foreign Office Wilhelm had developed the opinion that:

> In the Foreign Office . . . they were only the executive organs of a single will: they could offer no independent assistance because they were taught nothing, or not enough, of the great interrelationships of the questions with which it fell to them to deal.[23]

On another occasion he wrote:

> The Foreign Office . . . had not really been trained under Prince Bismarck; and therefore when, after the retirement of the Prince and Count Herbert, the all dominating will and spirit were lacking, it was not up to the task of conducting foreign affairs on its own independent initiative.[24]

On top of his low opinion of the work accomplished by the Foreign Office, Wilhelm greatly disliked most diplomats, with the exception of Eulenburg, Buelow, Henrich Leopold von Tschirschky und Boegendorff, and Alfred von Kiderlen-Waechter.[25] Holstein heard him once exclaim: "After the French, the people I hate most are diplomats and deputies."[26] Holstein wrote in his memoirs that "the Kaiser's dislike of the Foreign Ministry is almost pathological and recognized as such by the people concerned."[27] Commenting on the Kaiser's opinion of the Foreign Office, Lamar Cecil stated:

> William's language respecting the Foreign Office was often abusive. Its officials were "swine"; it lacked both keenness and confidence; it was the department of the government for which he had the least respect; it did nothing but raise objections. "I will tell you something," he declared in 1912 to Wilhelm von Stumm, the director of the Political Division, "You diplomats are full of shit and the whole Wilhelmstrasse stinks."[28]

Under Holstein, who acquired firm control of the Foreign Office management during 1890 to 1906, the Wilhelmstrasse gained some independence from the Chancellor in its operations. Within the Foreign Office Holstein's authority was virtually uncontested. The Director of the Political Department controlled the formulation of foreign policy inputs as well as the administration of the diplomatic service.[29] His importance to the Wilhelmstrasse as an administrator and foreign relations advisor was greatly respected by diplomats because he was the only one in the inner circle of the Foreign Office who had been in the foreign service under Bismarck.[30] As Bernhard von Buelow commented on Holstein's influence with the Chancellor and Foreign Secretary: "Caprivi and Marschall, who lacked all knowledge of diplomatic routine and all insight into the international game, even as far as languages went, clung to Holstein like drowning men."[31]

But, in 1894, Wilhelm II dismissed Caprivi and replaced him with an experienced diplomat, Prince Chlodwig Hohenlohe-Schillingsfuerst, as Imperial Chancellor and Prussian Foreign Minister. The new Chancellor allowed Holstein to continue his rule over the Foreign Office, but treated the powerful Political Department leader with extreme caution.[32] Even so,

Hohenlohe's confidence in Holstein was not as high as the foreign relations advisor desired.[33] In fact, in 1897, Hohenlohe warned his new Foreign Secretary, Bernhard von Buelow, that "all doubtful and bad advice emanates in the main from Holstein."[34]

During the Hohenlohe chancellorship, the Kaiser's political power increased to a point where he was able to end the ministerial rule of Germany and create his own authoritarian government. Many leading Germans looked to Wilhelm to restore unity to the Berlin government and German Empire. The Kaiser overcame ministerial opposition to his autocratic rule by controlling the appointments of ministers as well as rewarding those in his favor, including Hohenlohe.[35] Wilhelm appointed Buelow as his new Foreign Secretary in order to turn his ideas of _Weltpolitik_ (the quest for World Power status) into action, while at the same time he fell under the influence of Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz and his schemes for an expansion of the Imperial Navy.[36] These men adopted _Weltpolitik_ to gain popularity for the Kaiser through colonial expansion and success in foreign adventures as a strategy to ensure the survival of the monarchy.[37] Hohenlohe, in his late seventies, was reluctant to oppose Wilhelm on the issue of _Weltpolitik_.[38] Thus, Wilhelm by taking control of the government and appointing loyal men to key positions essentially became his own Chancellor and Foreign Minister during this period. Imanuel Geiss, a leading German historian, has argued that at this point, the Kaiser, without parliamentary interference, exercised a considerable amount of influence on the

formulation and execution of German foreign policy because of his strong will to rule besides the cringing subservience of many German ministers, ambassadors, generals, and politicians.[39] Another historian, Paul Kennedy, wrote:

> Wilhelm . . . was . . . at the centre of the governmental decision-making process, and all chains of authority terminated with him. Ministers were his men, and not senior politicians from the party or parties which had acquired the largest number of seats in the Reichstag; indeed, ministers could not be members of that institution. The entire conduct of foreign policy was in the hands of the Kaiser, and by delegation in those of the Chancellor and the Auswaertiges Amt [Foreign Office] . . . .[40]

In 1900, the Kaiser picked Foreign Secretary Buelow to become the new Imperial Chancellor and Prussian Foreign Minister. Buelow had experienced a rapid advancement in the foreign service because of the patronage of Bismarck and Holstein.[41] Philip von Eulenburg, a close friend of the Kaiser's, was responsible for Buelow's appointment as Chancellor.[42] The Kaiser declared that Buelow would become "my Bismarck."[43] One diplomatic historian has pointed out, "no Chancellor except Bismarck, had as varied and thorough a training in foreign affairs . . . ."[44] However, although he was Chancellor, Buelow found himself not in control of German foreign policy. In his memoirs, Buelow complained that the Kaiser had:

> A manifest tendency . . . to handle personally and sou modo, in accordance with his own whims and impressions, our future relationships . . . [and demonstrated] the wish to be his own Foreign Minister and attempt to shoulder a burden for which he was in no way equal.[45]

Philip von Eulenburg, wrote of the situation:

> The Emperor often messed up our difficult foreign relations by his interference. In that respect I grant he was a football--but the

> football of his own character, his sudden "inspirations," his conviction that he must instantly realize some "brilliant idea, before it loses all its grit in that confounded Foreign Office melting-pot." That the unfortunate Foreign Office had to toil for months at mending his broken crockery was what never occurred to him.[46]

Nonetheless, Chancellor Buelow along with the diplomats at the Wilhelmstrasse knew that if they wanted to remain in their positions they had to carry out the Kaiser's policy. The Kaiser controlled the careers of Buelow and the diplomats, and he expected them to align their views with his own as best as they could.[47] In fact, Buelow avoided arguing with Wilhelm over foreign policy issues, including the naval buildup, in spite of Foreign Office objections to the Kaiser's actions, because he realized that his position as Chancellor depended upon the continued support of his master. Buelow remembered that it was Wilhelm who had dismissed Bismarck.[48]

Operating from the background, Holstein served the Kaiser as an important diplomatic advisor in the Foreign Office. But, as the publication of The Holstein Papers have revealed, much of Holstein's advice to the Kaiser went unheeded.[49] Historians have traditionally given Holstein credit for being the "evil genius" behind German foreign policy during 1890 to 1906.[50] He, according to his most recent biographer, Norman Rich, was nothing more than a hard working civil servant who created a powerful hold over the administration of the Foreign Office.[51] Foreign Secretary Tschirschky, who served in that capacity from 1906 to 1909, remarked of Holstein that:

> [He] was unquestionably a marvelous worker. You could bring a pile of files in the morning, which any other man would require a week to work through. Holstein would have them finished by night, and, with it all, his work was excellent and minutely exact.[52]

In spite of his importance in the Foreign Office Holstein refused to accept a higher position, such as State Secretary.[53] As the Director of the Political Department he lacked direct access to the Kaiser. The Kaiser, who disliked Holstein, met him only once, in November 1904.[54] Wilhelm, nonetheless, recognized Holstein for his "great shrewdness, seconded by a phenomenal memory and a certain talent for political combinations . . . ."[55] But, did Wilhelm take Holstein seriously? Since he served as an intermediary between the Kaiser and Holstein, what Eulenburg stated about the influence of Holstein on German policy is of vital importance:

> Neither Caprivi nor Hohenlohe nor Buelow ever promulgated an edict on even the most insignificant political matter without Holstein's putting in his oar; in some instances he drew up the document with his own hand. All these edicts, however, . . . were modified by reason of the Emperor's very frequent interference in foreign policy. And this because of His Majesty's direct telegraphic communication in cipher with the Royal colleagues, or the despatch of A.D.C.s with private letters to a sovereign, or brusque marginalia and commands on the reports from the German Ambassadors and Ministers, etc. This caused perpetual changes in the political temper of the Foreign Office.
>
> In such circumstances there could be no such thing as independent action on the part of Holstein, or the Imperial Chancellor, or the Secretary of State . . . . For the Imperial interventions would soon be made to chime in with the policy of the [Foreign] Office--that is to say, would be re-modelled, brought into conformity so far as might be, and then receive official countenance . . . .[56]

With little influence over the actual conduct of foreign policy, Holstein and the once highly disciplined diplomats in the Foreign Office

became difficult to manage. Diplomats, including Holstein, would not cooperate with Buelow or his Foreign Secretary, Oswald Baron von Richthofen (1900-6), which resulted in the ineffectiveness of the Foreign Office as an organization. The Chancellor complained: "the political department of the Foreign Office became afflicted with petty jealousies and disputes. Most of them arose from Privy Councillor von Holstein's inability to work with anybody else."[57] One historian of the German diplomatic service, Edward Willis, has commented:

> It was a strange group, composed of men who had little in common except a driving ambition, unbridled by the discipline of tradition or by the restraint of decency. Everywhere the Nietzschean lust for power was apparent. Nor did Buelow have a sufficiently strong hand to control them. His was the subtle, scintillating mind, the smooth tongue, and the suave personality, but he was no Bismarck. He had the artistry without the art, the form without the substance, of greatness.[58]

Holstein, himself, opposed the Kaiser's aggressive actions in foreign relations which increased the tension between Germany and other states. He wrote in his memoirs, "the Foreign Ministry, year in year out, had to resist the Kaiser's sudden inspirations, and I was chiefly responsible for this censorship."[59] Such opposition did not make Holstein popular with either the Kaiser or Chancellor.[60] After the death of Richthofen, the new Foreign Secretary, Tschirschky, found it especially difficult to get along with his unruly subordinate.[61] Thus, Holstein became dispensable, and was used as a scapegoat and held responsible for the Kaiser's foreign policy disaster during the First Moroccan Crisis in 1906.[62] Shortly before his death in 1909, Holstein stated in his memoirs:

> Future historians will compile a long list of the Kaiser's sudden impulses in conversation, in writing, in telegrams, which collectively and singly have had the effect of gradually diminishing the prestige of the Kaiser and the Reich, of wrecking diplomatic negotiations and even of provoking immediate danger of war.[63]

Eventually losing confidence in Buelow, the Kaiser replaced him with Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg as the new Imperial Chancellor in 1909. Bethmann, who had previously headed both the Imperial and Prussian Interior Ministries, "knew nothing of foreign affairs."[64] G.P. Gooch believed that Wilhelm chose Bethmann as his Chancellor because "the Kaiser was less anxious for another trained diplomatist than for a trustworthy official with who he could work."[65]

Bethmann selected the experienced diplomat, Alfred von Kiderlen-Waechter, as his Foreign Secretary. The Kaiser, however, only agreed to Kiderlen's appointment after informing Bethmann of his objection.[66] Diplomats at the Wilhelmstrasse held a high opinion of Kiderlen and considered him "a man of superior ability . . . , a second Bismarck."[67] Bethmann considered Kiderlen as "perhaps the ablest diplomat that Germany had had of late."[68] His exceptional diplomatic experience and ability, however, made him arrogant and difficult to get along with. He possessed a ruthless and dominating manner, which he picked up from Bismarck and Holstein, thinking that "he could accomplish everything by beating his fist on the table."[69] He quickly restored strict discipline to the Foreign Office and maintained the support of most diplomats.[70] One exception to this support came from Prince Karl Max von Lichnowsky, the German

Ambassador to Britain, who greatly disliked Kiderlen and described him as "a disciple and intimate friend of Holstein's . . . was underhand, artful, sly and crafty, not without common sense and not without humour, but unmannerly, untidy, spiteful, malevolent and malicious."[71]

As the diplomatic expert within Bethmann's cabinet, Kiderlen exerted a great deal of influence and independence. Kiderlen managed the affairs of the Foreign Office with great secretiveness and refused to coordinate diplomatic issues with the Chancellor because he did not trust Bethmann. The Wilhelmstrasse supported Kiderlen against the efforts of Bethmann to discover what diplomatic efforts were under way in the foreign service.[72] The previous Chancellor, Buelow, now a diplomat serving the Wilhelmstrasse abroad and a close friend of Kiderlen's believed that the Foreign Secretary was given too free a reign because the Chancellor was afraid of him.[73] In fact, the relationship between the two men became so distant that Gordon Craig described the situation:

> His [Kiderlen] self-confidence and arrogance blinded him to the necessity of keeping Bethmann fully informed of his intentions so that the unfortunate Chancellor was reduced to on one occasion to the extremity of getting his Foreign Secretary intoxicated in order to find out what was on his mind.[74]

For obvious reasons Bethmann regretted his choice of Kiderlen as State Secretary because of such extreme insubordination.[75] Nonetheless, the Kaiser, who remembered his objection to Kiderlen's appointment, refused to assist Bethmann in the power struggle against his Foreign Secretary.[76] The Kaiser placed little importance on the activities within the Foreign

Office,[77] despite Kiderlen being an out-spoken critic of Tirpitz's naval buildup.[78] He declared, "I am an opponent of Tirpitz because I am afraid his policies will bring us to war with England."[79] But, before his sudden death in 1912, Kiderlen realized that Tirpitz was too influential with Wilhelm to redirect German policy.[80]

From the beginning of his reign the Kaiser held a low opinion of the Wilhelmstrasse. Wilhelm directed his own foreign policy and put more stock in the advice of military and naval leaders than he did diplomats. Admiral Tirpitz possessed a high degree of influence over Wilhelm for over a decade. As the leading diplomat in the Empire, albeit without experience, Bethmann was responsible for advising the Kaiser on foreign relations. The Imperial Chancellor, nonetheless, "lacked the personality" to challenge the naval program supported by Wilhelm and Tirpitz.[81] Bethmann and Tirpitz competed over the conduct of German foreign policy.[82] The Kaiser, himself, was known to have said that "one Tirpitz is worth ten Bethmanns."[83] The weakness of Bethmann, combined with the insubordination of Kiderlen, further decreased the influence of the Foreign Office with the Kaiser. Eulenburg complained about the situation that the military "acquired more and more influence [with the Kaiser] as time went on. These men, with the everlasting Berlin ribaldry, systematically derided the Foreign Office."[84] Kurt Zeizler, the assistant to the Chancellor, noted that Bethmann had "absolutely no talent for getting along with the military, for impressing them and for getting information from them."[85] This situation especially

became acute when, in 1912, German Army leaders acquired more influence when the Kaiser recognized the failure of Weltpolitik and switched to a Mitteleuropa foreign policy, which increased the importance of land warfare, to protect Germany's Great Power status.[86] Thus, Bethmann and the Foreign Office held little influence with the German Emperor. One diplomat commented that, "as Bethmann was filled with a burning desire to stay in office--no Minister clung to office as he did--he yielded to the Kaiser in everything from the beginning."[87] The Kaiser kept Bethmann as his Chancellor for this reason.[88]

The sudden death of Kiderlen left the Foreign Office without a strong leader. After the experience of Kiderlen, the Kaiser and Bethmann wanted to avoid filling the position of State Secretary with another strong-willed diplomat. Arthur Zimmermann, the Undersecretary of State, who was more of an administrator than a diplomat,[89] declined the offer of promotion.[90] They finally settled on a diplomat with twenty years of experience, Gottlieb von Jagow, the former German Ambassador to Italy.[91] He, too, was unwilling, but Jagow accepted the position after being persuaded by Bethmann in January 1913.[92] Jagow has been described by Barbara Tuchman as "a puny rodent of a man whose Charlie Chaplin mustache and un-Teutonic look of an anxious rabbit caused him to be regarded by everybody, including himself, as inadequate for his post."[93] But, Foreign Secretary Jagow worked closely with Bethmann and the Kaiser, supported the army,[94] and became a "most loyal associate and unflagging counselor."[95] As early as

January 1913, however, Sir Edward Goschen, the British Ambassador to Germany, warned the British Foreign Office that "Jagow for his part was not made of reinforced concrete: he feared that, should a sudden crisis occur, Bethmann Hollweg and Jagow would be swept away."[96] Commenting on Jagow's relationship with Bethmann, Wilhelm wrote in his memoirs, "the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs was, under him [Bethmann], a mere helper, so much so that the Foreign Office was almost affiliated with the office of the Chancellor . . . ."[97]

The influence of the military was too strong even for a Chancellor and Foreign Secretary who worked together. Bethmann and Jagow came to the conclusion that Germany must limit the expansion of its navy or risk war with Britain. In vain they attempted to influence the Kaiser to change his program.[98] Both men discovered that they were not allowed to participate in any discussions of military planning,[99] since the Kaiser believed Bethmann to be a "pacifist."[100] Even Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, realized that the Chancellor and German Foreign Office had no influence over German policy. He wrote in his memoirs:

> [N]ow something that had always been an uncomfortable suspicion in the background came to the front and took more definite and ugly shape. There were forces other than Bethmann-Hollweg in the seat of authority in Germany. He was not master of the situation; in negotiating with him we were not negotiating with a principal. Yet he was the only authority with who we could negotiate at all.[101]

The Kaiser under the influence of military leaders was the central figure concerning German foreign policy. He had acted as his own Foreign Minister more or less throughout his reign. On numerous occasions,

especially involving Morocco and the Balkans, he had backed down when confronted with the possibility of war.[102] However, by 1913, Wilhelm came to the realization that Germany needed to support the weakened Austrian monarchy against the Serbian military threat and South Slav movement in order for Austria to maintain its Great Power status. He knew that it was of vital interest to Germany to support its ally since the Serbian threat, backed by the Tsar, could drastically change the balance of power in southeastern Europe.[103] As early as 1913, the Kaiser, who believed the other Great Powers would not act, had told the Austrian Chief of Staff, General Conrad von Hoetzendorf, that Germany would support Austria in a localized war against Serbia.[104] Wilhelm feared the disintegration of his one faithful ally, Austria, and perceived Germany "cornered and desperate" facing the decline of the Triple Alliance against the Triple Entente.[105] Any decision for action to defend the alliance was up to him.

The incident that prompted the Kaiser to take action was the assassination of his close associate, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austria throne, on 28 June 1914. He favored an immediate Austrian action against Serbia.[106] On 5 July, the Kaiser met with Count Ladislaus Szogyeny-Marich, the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador to Germany. Wilhelm informed the ambassador that he "expected some serious step . . . towards Serbia" and, without consulting with Bethman, told Szogyeny that Austria could "rely upon Germany's full support."[107] The Kaiser was under the assumption that any Austrian action could be localized in the Balkans since

"Russia at the present time was in no way prepared for war, and would think twice before it appealed to arms."[108]

Later that same day, on 5 July, the Kaiser summoned those of his highest military and political advisers who were available at a moment's notice to a meeting in Potsdam. The army was represented by General Eric von Falkenhayn, the Prussian Minister of War, and General Moritz von Lyncker, the Chief of the Kaiser's Military Cabinet, while Captain Zenker of the German Naval Staff represented his branch of the service.[109] Bethmann and Zimmermann, both with little knowledge of foreign relations, represented the diplomats at the meeting since Jagow was on leave away from Berlin.[110] At the Potsdam Conference, the Kaiser insisted upon Germany supporting Austria because its preservation was vital to German security.[111] He questioned his advisers about Germany's readiness for war, and discovered that they all believed the Empire to be prepared.[112] They, however, agreed that any war between Austria and Serbia could be limited to the Balkan region.[113] As for any Austrian action, the Kaiser told Bethmann:

> It was not our business . . . to advise our ally what it must do in respect of the bloody deed at Serajevo. Austria-Hungary must settle that for itself. We must abstain from any direct action or advice, as we must labour with every means to prevent the Austro-Serbian dispute developing into an international conflict. But the Emperor Francis Joseph must also be given to know that we would not desert Austria-Hungary in its hour of peril.[114]

The next day, 6 July, the Imperial Chancellor relayed the Kaiser's decision to the Austrian government. He informed Szoegyeny that Germany

would support Austria, and that the Kaiser considered "immediate action on our [Austria] part as the best solution of our difficulties in the Balkans."[115]

Upon returning to Berlin, Foreign Secretary Jagow was informed of the Potsdam Conference and subsequent communications with Vienna.[116] He also found out that the Kaiser was permitting the Austrians to formulate an ultimatum to Serbia without German collaboration. Jagow believed this to be folly, but by the time he was consulted and drawn into the situation, the Kaiser "had so committed himself that it was too late for any action on customary diplomatic lines, and there was nothing more to be done."[117]

The diplomats at the Ballhausplatz in Vienna were reluctant to collaborate with the Wilhelmstrasse concerning any plans for Austrian military action against Serbia. The Austrian Foreign Minister, Count Leopold Berchtold, feared a leak of Austrian intentions.[118] Meanwhile, both Bethmann and Jagow, under the direction of the Kaiser, pushed the Austrians to take military action soon in hope of localizing the conflict and achieving a fait accompli.[119] The Chancellor and Foreign Secretary did not expect the conflict to break out into a European war, however.[120] Jagow communicated to Lichnowsky, the German Ambassador to London, the thinking of the leadership in Berlin:

> Russia was not ready; there would probably be some fuss and noise, but the more firmly we took sides with Austria the more would Russia give way. As it was, Austria was accusing us of weakness, and therefore we dare not leave her in a lurch. Public opinion in Russia, on the other hand, was becoming more and more anti-German, so we must just risk it.[121]

On 9 July, Zimmermann told a fellow diplomat that he believed "the present moment very opportune for Austria to undertake a revenge campaign against its southern neighbor," and that "war could successfully be localized."[122] On 18 July, Jagow informed Lichnowsky:

> [I]n the interest of localization we abstained from any influence on the preparation of the Austrian step toward Serbia. We hoped to be able to prevent the Serbian conflict from becoming a European question.[123]

The Foreign Secretary, on 19 July, placed a statement in a German newspaper in which he expressed his desire to localize any Austro-Serbian conflict. He wrote:

> In the utterances of the European press in regard to the existing tension between Austria-Hungary and Serbia it is increasingly recognised that Austria-Hungary's desire to clear up her relations with Serbia is justified. In this connection we share the hope expressed in more than one quarter that a serious crisis will be avoided by the Serbian Government giving way in time. In any event the solidarity of Europe, which made itself felt during the long Balkan crisis in maintaining peace among the great Powers, demands and requires that the settlement of differences which may arise between Austria-Hungary and Serbia should remain localised.[124]

In his own analysis of the situation, Buelow described the Chancellor and Jagow as "a pair of wilful little urchins playing with what seems an empty shell case, which is liable to explode at any minute."[125]

On 22 July, Foreign Minister Berchtold forwarded a copy of Austria's ultimatum to Serbia to the German Foreign Office. The ultimatum was to be delivered to the Serbian government the following day.[126] Jagow found the terms of the document excessively severe,[127] and told Bethmann so when he gave the Chancellor the copy of the ultimatum.[128] Bethmann, too, believed

"the ultimatum, after I saw it, to be too sharp . . . ."[129] Both Bethmann and Jagow realized, nonetheless, that such a short notice before the ultimatum would be served to Belgrade left the German diplomats no time express their opinions to the Ballhausplatz.[130] Both the Chancellor and State Secretary hoped for serious negotiations between Belgrade and Vienna to begin after the sharp ultimatum.[131]

But, two days after the delivery of the forty-eight hour ultimatum, the Serbian government began the process of mobilization that eventually engulfed the whole of Europe in war. The Austrians began partial mobilization, declared war on Serbia, and began shelling Serbian territory on 28 July. The Russian government took note of this threat to its ally, and prepared to come to its defense. On 29 July, the Russian Ambassador to Vienna, N.N. Shebeko, informed S.D. Sazonov, the Russian Foreign Minister, that a European conflict could not be avoided since the Austrians and Germans "had gone too far to retreat without serious damage to their prestige and to the stability of their alliance."[132] The very next day, on 30 July, the Russians began general mobilization. While the German government warned Moscow about such action, the Austrians initiated general mobilization on 31 July.

Within Germany, the military leadership pressured the Kaiser to act by mobilizing and initiating the Schlieffen Plan.[133] The Kaiser and his advisers had miscalculated the Russian reaction to a war in the Balkans.[134] They had believed that Russia would not intervene. Russian mobilization

made it a necessity for Germany to mobilize and carry out its plans for fighting a war on two fronts, against Russia and France.[135] General Helmuth von Moltke, the German Army Chief of Staff, was anxious and hasty to force Germany into war against Russia because the Schlieffen Plan required a rapid German mobilization to counter any Russian and French military moves.[136] The historian L.C.F. Turner believed that "Russian and Austrian general mobilization made a great war inevitable . . . ."[137] On 1 August, the Germans began mobilizing and declared war on Russia.

Bethmann and Jagow had had no influence on the sequence of events because of the powerful influence that the milituary held over the Kaiser. A few days later Buelow visited Bethmann in Berlin. He described his reception:

> Bethmann stood in the centre of the room. Shall I ever forget his face. There is a picture by some celebrated English painter, which shows the wretched scapegoat with a look of ineffable anguish in its eyes--such pain as I now saw in Bethmann's. For an instant we neither of us spoke. At last I said to him: "Well, tell me, at least, how it all happened." He raised his long, thin arms to heaven and answered in a dull, exhausted voice: "Oh--if I only knew!"[138]

Speaking to the British Ambassador to Berlin, Jagow blamed the outbreak of war on "this d----d system of alliances."[139] Reflecting upon the crisis, Sir Edward Grey wrote in his memoirs:

> It is of no use to look to the action of Bethmann-Hollweg and Jagow [to discover who directed German foreign policy]--the men who, having nominal direction of German policy, folded their hands after the murder of the Archduke, and . . . never asked to see the terms of their Austrian Ally's ultimatum to Serbia before it was sent; the men who, after that ultimatum was sent and the Serbian reply received,

> expressed some criticism of the former and thought that the latter went further in the direction of conciliation than could have been expected; and who yet let things drift or spoke only in whispers at Vienna, when a decisive word was wanted. I believe that neither the Emperor or Bethmann-Hollweg nor Jagow planned or desired war. But the Emperor, in the critical moment after the Serbian reply, apparently withheld his influence, when it might have been decisive for peace . . . . Bethmann-Hollweg and Jagow had no influence. They were powerless, and they were the only Germans with whom other Governments, including our own, could deal.[140]

At the outbreak of conflict, the German Foreign Office strongly supported the Kaiser's war effort. The Kaiser, Bethmann, and Jagow left Berlin to direct their affairs from the headquarters of the Army High Command. Meanwhile, Zimmermann, the Undersecretary of State, managed the activities of the Foreign Office in Berlin.[141] At the battle front, Jagow, who was sickly, retiring, and unimpressive, found it impossible to hold his own in discussions with the Army High Command, but, along with Bethmann, kept opposing the High Command's proposal of unrestricted submarine warfare.[142] The military wanted to get rid of Jagow, and have him replaced by Zimmermann, who supported unrestricted submarine warfare.[143] Zimmermann ambitiously worked behind Jagow's back, urging the Wilhelm II to appoint General Paul von Hindenburg and General Erich von Ludendorff as supreme commanders.[144] In 1916, the Kaiser took this step to support Hindenburg and Ludendorff in an offensive designed to achieve a decisive victory. In reality, the Kaiser permitted the establishment of a military dictatorship that made all the major political decisions until the end of the war.[145] The Kaiser had lost control of policy. In fact, at one point, "the supreme warlord went down on his knees before the generals and begged them to

accept his suggestions."[146] On 24 November 1916, Zimmermann was appointed Foreign Secretary, and shortly thereafter, in December, the decision was made for Germany to pursue unrestricted submarine warfare.[147] During the course of the First World War, the Foreign Office had little influence over events and merely served the military in its attempt to achieve a decisive victory. Under the military dictatorship of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, the Wilhelmstrasse quickly disintegrated into an ineffective organization used to support the war effort.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

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3. William II, My Early Life, 212.

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6. See J. Alden Nichols, The Year of the Three Kaisers: Bismarck and the German Succession, 1887-88 (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

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8. Roehl, 271.

9. Cecil, The German Diplomatic Service, 261.

10. Roehl, 185.

11. William II, The Kaiser's Memoirs, 6, 75-76.

12. Cecil, The German Diplomatic Service, 211; Buelow, 1:80, 2:62, 2:397.

13. William II, The Kaiser's Memoirs, 51; Craig, Germany 1866-1945, 230-31; Craig, Aspects of German Statecraft, 32.

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16. As quoted in Johannes Haller, Philip Eulenburg: The Kaiser's Friend, trans. Ethel Colburn Mayne, 2 vols. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930), 2:294.

17. Craig, Germany 1866-1945, 231-33.

18. Holstein, 1:129-30.

19. William II, The Kaiser's Memoirs, 28-29.

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21. Cecil, The German Diplomatic Service, 211.

22. Holstein, 1:127.

23. William II, My Early Life, 210.

24. William II, The Kaiser's Memoirs, 75-76.

25. Cecil, The German Diplomatic Service, 213. See also Holstein, 4:289-96.

26. Holstein, 11 November 1888 diary entry, 2:382.

27. Ibid., 1:173.

28. As quoted in Cecil, The German Diplomatic Service, 212.

29. Koppel S. Pinson, Modern Germany: Its History and Civilization, 2d ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 303.

30. Geiss, 64.

31. Buelow, 2:126.

32. Cecil, The German Diplomatic Service, 273, 275.

33. Buelow, 2:126.

34. Ibid., 2:126-27.

35. Roehl, 147, 259, 273, 276.

36. July 1914: The Outbreak of the First World War, Selected Documents, ed. Imanuel Geiss (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), 21-25; Roehl, 277.

37. Roehl, 252; V.R. Berghahn, Germany and the Approach of War in 1914 (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1973), 43.

38. Roehl, 178.

39. Geiss, 63.

40. Kennedy, 403.

41. Holborn, A History of Modern Germany, 3:325.

42. July 1914, 23-24.

43. Ibid.

44. Craig, Aspects of German Statecraft, 46.

45. Buelow, 2:320.

46. As quoted in Haller, 2:301.

47. Cecil, The German Diplomatic Service, 214, 220.

48. Holborn, A History of Modern Germany, 3:326; Doss, 232; Ernest R. May, Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America as a Great Power (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1961), 197-98.

49. See Holstein.

50. For example, see Edward F. Willis, Prince Lichnowsky Ambassador of Peace: A Study of Prewar Diplomacy 1912-1914 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1942) and Eugene N. Anderson, The First Moroccan Crisis 1904-1906 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930; reprint, New York: Archon, 1966).

51. See Rich's two volume biography of Holstein.

52. As quoted in Willis, 28.

53. Holstein, 1:150.

54. William II, The Kaiser's Memoirs, 99-101; Cecil, The German Diplomatic Service, 294; Alan Palmer, The Chancelleries of Europe, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983), 179.

55. William II, The Kaiser's Memoirs, 98.

56. As quoted in Haller, 2:297-98.

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62. Buelow, 2:237; Holstein, 1:194-95; Cecil, *The German Diplomatic Service*, 299.

63. Holstein, 1:190.

64. Buelow, 1:15. See also Buelow, 1:497-98, 3:176 and Cecil, *The German Diplomatic Service*, 308.

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68. Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, *Reflections on the World War*, trans. George Young (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1920), 32; *July 1914*, 37.

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70. Jarausch, 111; Cecil, *The German Diplomatic Service*, 314.

71. Prince Lichnowsky, *Heading for the Abyss: Reminiscences*, trans. Sefton Delmer (New York: Payson and Clarke, 1928), xxi. See also Willis, 30.

72. Cecil, *The German Diplomatic Service*, 312-13.

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74. Craig, *Germany 1866-1945*, 327-28.

75. William II, *The Kaiser's Memoirs*, 132.

76. Cecil, The German Diplomatic Service, 313.

77. Ibid., 212.

78. Pinson, 304; Harold Nicolson, Sir Arthur Nicolson, Bart., First Lord Carnock: A Study in the Old Diplomacy (London: Constable, 1930), 395.

79. As quoted in Pinson, 304.

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81. Willis, 156.

82. Jarausch, 111, 162, 455.

83. Buelow, 1:132.

84. As quoted in Haller, 2:300.

85. As quoted in Jarausch, 151.

86. Berghahn, 112, 115.

87. Buelow, 1:697-98.

88. William II, The Kaiser's Memoirs, 132.

89. Buelow, 3:178.

90. Z.A.B. Zeman, A Diplomatic History of the First World War (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), 84.

91. Buelow, 3:176.

92. Cecil, The German Diplomatic Service, 318.

93. Barbara W. Tuchman, The Zimmermann Telegram (New York: Macmillan, 1958), 111. Harold Nicolson described Jagow "as the very soul of gentleness" (Nicolson, Sir Arthur Nicolson, 395).

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95. Gerhard Ritter, The Sword and The Scepter: The Problem of Militarism in Germany, trans. Heinz Norden, 4 vols. (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1970), 3:213.

96. Nicolson, Sir Arthur Nicolson, 395-96.

97. William II, The Kaiser's Memoirs, 138.

98. Berghahn, 130-31.

99. Craig, Germany, 317.

100. William II, The Kaiser's Memoirs, 132-33.

101. Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Twenty-Five Years 1892-1916, 2 vols. (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1925), 1:312-13.

102. See L.C.F. Turner, Origins of the First World War (London: Edward Arnold, 1970).

103. Ibid., 81, 85; Berghahn, 139-40.

104. July 1914, 44-45.

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106. Tschirschky report to Bethmann Hollweg, 30 June 1914, July 1914, No. 2, 64-65.

107. Szogyeny telegram to Berchtold, 5 July 1914, July 1914, No. 6, 76-77.

108. Ibid.; See also Gooch, 2:270.

109. July 1914, 71.

110. Official German Documents Relating to the World War [hereafter cited as GD], trans. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of Law, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923), 1:28; The Disclosures from Germany: The Lichnowsky Memorandum and the Reply of Herr von Jagow [hereafter cited as Disclosures], ed. and trans. Munroe Smith, (New York: American Association for International Conciliation, 1918), 175-77; Bethmann, 119.

111. GD, 1:32-33; Gooch, 2:270.

112. Disclosures, 175-76; July 1914, 71.

113. Jarausch, 161, 471; July 1914, 71.

114. Bethmann, 119.

115. Szogyeny telegram to Berchtold, 6 July 1914, July 1914, No. 8, 79. See also Bethmann telegram to Tschirschky, 6 July 1914, in Outbreak of the World War: German Documents Collected by Karl Kautsky, ed. Max Montgelas and Walther Schucking, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1924), No. 15, 78-79.

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117. Ibid., 199.

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119. GD, 1:22; Berghahn, 189, 193; Buelow, 3:173.

120. Turner, 85. Buelow, 3:176; Jarausch, 160.

121. As quoted in Lichnowsky, 73.

122. As quoted in Jarausch, 470.

123. As quoted in Jarausch, 471.

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125. Buelow, 3:176.

126. Williamson, 201.

127. GD, 1:33.

128. Bethmann, 122.

129. As quoted in Jarausch, 162.

130. Bethmann, 122; Gooch, 2:271.

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137. Turner, Origins of the First World War, 109.

138. Buelow, 3:145.

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140. Grey, 2:26-27.

141. Zeman, 83.

142. Ibid., 111, 115; Doss, 233; Ritter, 3:166, 3:175, 3:265, 3:268; Tuchman, 110-11, 114, 137-43.

143. Tuchman, 111-12.

144. Zeman, 115; Craig, Germany, 373.

145. Craig, Aspects of German Statecraft, xv. See also Martin Kitchen, The Silent Dictatorship: The Politics of the German High Command under Hindenburg and Ludendorff, 1916-1918 (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1976).

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147. Zeman, 115.

CHAPTER III

THE FOREIGN OFFICE DURING THE WEIMAR ERA

The Wilhelmstrasse lost what little prestige and influence over the formulation of foreign policy it possessed during the course of the First World War. In spite of its limited influence, many officials used the diplomats as scapegoats and held them responsible for the conflict.[1] With an end to the war, however, Germany experienced many political changes. The Kaiser abdicated and fled to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. A revolution, followed by the establishment of the Weimar Republic, as well as the Allies dictating the Versailles settlement created a whole new political framework in which the Foreign Office needed to operate.[2] Before the war, the Wilhelmstrasse, largely manned by aristocrats, had functioned as a tight-knit organization under the control of the Kaiser. As Friedrich Payer, the Vice Chancellor, commented in 1918:

> Over the AA [Foreign Office] prevailed a spirit of exclusiveness; for outsiders it had the aura of a mystery, impenetrable to laymen. It was an enclosed organism inside the government, into which only selected people were allowed glimpses, and even these reluctantly and not more than was absolutely necessary.[3]

But, by 1918, the traditional Foreign Office had suffered an almost complete collapse because of its complete subordination to the Army High Command, as well as the disasterous end to the war. From the ashes of what remained, however, gradually emerged a revitalized foreign service.

For several years numerous Chancellors and Foreign Secretaries had recognized the need to reform the Wilhelmstrasse. They realized the necessity of appointing qualified personnel, other than aristocrats, to important diplomatic positions, as well as reorganizing the Foreign Office for more efficient operations. Nonetheless, the leadership failed to reform the Foreign Office because of their reluctance to dismiss the highly valued technical expertise of aristocratic diplomats. As the Kaiser explained in his memoirs:

> Every new Chancellor, especially if he himself did not come from the ranks of the foreign service, needed the Foreign Office in order to work himself into foreign affairs, and this took time. But once he had worked himself in he was under obligation to the officials, and he was reluctant to make extensive changes, burdened as he was by other matters and lacking detailed knowledge regarding the Foreign Office personnel, particularly as he still believed that he needed the advice of those who were "orientated."[4]

In 1918, during the demise of the Wilhelmstrasse, Foreign Secretary Richard von Kuehlmann began the reforming process. He asked Edmund Schueler, the Director of the Consular Department, to outline changes for the Foreign Office. Schueler, only three years short of retirement, worked toward the reorganziation of the foreign service, which included both its personnel and organizational structures. In the meantime, nonetheless, Germany had become a republic, transforming all imperial offices into constitutional ministries under Reich Ministers who were responsible to the Reichstag. The Foreign Office became a ministry, but the leading officials at the Wilhelmstrasse decided to keep the name "Foreign Office" instead of "Foreign Ministry" because of their respect for tradition.[5] Even so, the

Reichstag gave the former imperial position of State Secretary for Foreign Affairs (Foreign Secretary) the status of Foreign Minister. Moreover, the previous Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs was now renamed the State Secretary (Foreign Secretary).[6]

On 10 April 1919, the Weimar Republic's first Foreign Minister, Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau, announced the so-called Schueler Reforms. These changes regarded four major areas within the Foreign Office. They included the combining of consular and diplomatic careers which gave consular personnel diplomatic status. Moreover, the Foreign Office would accept men of influence who were not of noble lineage to fill key diplomatic positions at the Wilhelmstrasse and embassies. Organizationally, the reforms included adding a foreign trade department to the Foreign Office besides creating a regional grouping system of organization within the central office, which replaced the Political Department, and consisted of departments to manage affairs for West, South, and South-East Europe (Department II); England, America, and the Orient (Department III); and East Europe, Scandinavia, and East Asia (Department IV).[7]

For the next three years, in spite of numerous changes within the leadership of the Wilhelmstrasse, including seven Foreign Ministers, these reforms found varying degrees of political backing within the Foreign Office.[8] Meanwhile, the size of the Wilhelmstrasse increased. A janitor at the Wilhelmstrasse made the comment, "I don't know what is going on. The German Reich is growing smaller and smaller but the Foreign Office

bigger and bigger."[9] Herbert von Dirksen, a diplomat in the Baltic Affairs Division, stated about Schueler's program, "he shattered the old historical structure dating from Bismarck and built up a new organization big enough to be the political brain of a victorious World Power."[10] By mid-1920, however, the older career diplomats began to reverse some of the reforms. Few outsiders were appointed to important diplomatic posts.[11] The few outsiders who had found positions in the foreign service had made no signficant impact. In fact, as Christoph Kimmich has pointed out:

> Some had found the atmosphere not to their liking and had left; some had been sent abroad to serve in legations and embassies. Those who attained influential positions soon adapted themselves to the reigning outlook and the traditional procedures. By mid-1920 the professionals felt secure once again, and within the next three or four years the ministry returned to old hands.[12]

During the twenties, the Wilhelmstrasse, which operated without the benefit of an autocratic leader in control of Germany, gradually asserted its independence under influential Foreign Ministers, State Secretaries, and other personalities with the result that it gained recognition as the prime formulator of German foreign policy in the Weimar government. Although foreign policy decisions were made by the parliamentary cabinet, including the Foreign Minister, the advice of the Wilhelmstrasse was most influential. Moreover, the Weimar constitution backed the diplomats by designating the Foreign Office as the sole agency for the administration of foreign policy.[13] With such authority, the diplomats set the long-range goals of reestablishing full sovereignty and Great Power status for Germany. "Standing between defeated Germany and its restoration to

sovereign and Great Power status," according to Gaines Post, Jr., "was the Treaty of Versailles, and the Foreign Office in Berlin's Wilhelmstrasse considered revision of that treaty an article of faith."[14]

In February 1922, Walther Rathenau, a leading Jewish industrialist from Berlin, became Foreign Minister under the leadership of Chancellor Joseph Wirth. He had previously served Germany as the Minister for Reconstruction, a new post created just for him in 1921, with the responsibility of administering compensation to the Allies. Wirth appointed Rathenau, a financial expert, to head German foreign policy because of the importance of the reparations issue during the early twenties.[15] Viscount D'Abernon, the British Ambassador to Berlin, admired the talent of the Foreign Minister. He wrote in his memoirs: "Rathenau enjoyed immense prestige abroad; . . . he was eloquent in three languages, he was subtle. His arguments were ingenious, even when unsound . . . ."[16] As head of the Wilhelmstrasse, Rathenau, who Hajo Holborn has called, "a man of large vision and great diplomatic ability," practiced his policy of fulfillment.[17] This program called for Germany to accept Allied demands for reductions in German military arms and reparation payments. However, the Foreign Minister, at the same time, negotiated with the Allies for a reduction of their unrealistic demands concerning reparations so as not to bankrupt Germany. Rathenau and Wirth worked as a team to evade paying reparations as much as possible.[18]

While Rathenau worked for better relations with Britain and France some members of the Foreign Office preferred Germany to seek rapproachement with the Soviet Union. Baron Ago von Maltzan, the Director of the Eastern Department in the Foreign Office, and previously the German Ambassador to Moscow, was a strong and influential advocate of closer German-Soviet ties.[19] D'Abernon found Maltzan as "perhaps the cleverest man who has worked in the Wilhelmstrasse since the war. In diplomacy and politics a pupil of Kiderlen-Waechter, who in turn was a pupil of Bismarck . . . ."[20] Maltzan and his followers, including Brockdorff-Rantzau and Dirksen, believed that:

> Rapproachement with the Soviet Union might, at the very least, provide a counterweight to the power of the West, and, at best, might open possibilities of treaty revision, especially along the eastern frontiers.[21]

Negotiations between the German Foreign Office and Moscow that led to the Rapallo Treaty with the Soviet Union began as early as December 1921.[22] As a strong leader within the Foreign Office Maltzan maneuvered to achieve an agreement with Moscow.[23] During the Genoa Conference, in April 1922, Maltzan met with Soviet delegates at Rapallo and acquired an agreement, which included secret military collaboration between the German and Soviet armies.[24] Although opposed to such an eastern policy, Rathenau and Wirth were persuaded to accept the agreement by the determined and forceful Maltzan.[25] Dirksen, at the time Chief of the Polish Affairs Division in the Foreign Office, decribed the situation:

> That the German delegation resolved to conclude the treaty was solely due to Maltzan's energy and skill. He was not only the author of the political combination involved in this treaty, he was also the pilot who steered this frail boat through the shallow waters of his own delegation. First, he succeeded in winning over Chancellor Wirth, who was unprejudiced and politically minded. The main obstacle was, of course, Rathenau. He was a Westerner to the very core of his being, a refined and cultivated man who abhorred the Russian Method of ruling and terrorizing. He was at last persuaded . . . to give way.[26]

In spite of the fact that many in the Foreign Office believed that an agreement with the Soviet Union to be a significant step towards improving Germany's standing in the international system, the actual signing of the Rapallo Treaty was controversial. Brockdorff-Rantzau, the German Ambassador to Moscow (1922-28) told Gustav Hilger, an official at the embassy, that:

> [T]he Foreign Ministry had shown unnecessary haste; . . . he believed that they might have obtained even greater advantages by stalling. Even so, he acknowledged the great benefits Germany derived from the treaty not only by eliminating Russia as a claimant of reparations but also by securing most-favored-nation treatment for Germany in her relations with Soviet Russia. More generally, Rapallo meant that Germany had begun her slow road away from her position as a mere object of international poltics. As such, it met with fairly broad approval throughout Germany.[27]

With the signing of Rapallo, not only were the French and British upset at such a turn in policy, but the majority of the Wilhelmstrasse officials were "dumbfounded."[28] Dirksen, himself, despite being the chief of the Foreign Office's Polish Division, professed that the Wilhelmstrasse "was hardly informed about what was going on."[29] One historian, Gordon Craig, has called the signing of Rapallo "an act of weakness and a denial of everything he [Rathenau] had accomplished so far . . . ."[30] The treaty

resulted in the failure of the Genoa Conference, and put a stop to the progress made toward better Allied-German relations.[31]

After the assassination of Rathenau in June 1922, the Wilhelmstrasse fell under the powerful influence of Maltzan, who was appointed Foreign Secretary in December 1922. He kept the Foreign Office stable despite the political instability of Germany under the Cuno and Stresemann governments in 1922 and 1923. Becoming Chancellor in November 1923, Wilhelm Marx appointed Gustav Stresemann as his Foreign Minister. Stresemann was to become not only the dominant force within the Foreign Office, but in the Weimar government until his death in 1929. One of his first acts was to shakeup the Foreign Office and replace Maltzan with Carl von Schubert as Foreign Secretary (1924-30) mainly because Stresemann wanted an "official who would be easier to handle than the autocratic initiator of the Rapallo-policy."[32] Maltzan was sent away to become the German Ambassador to the United States.[33] Those diplomats who remained in Berlin and abroad quickly became loyal to the Foreign Minister.[34] Dirksen, who served as the Director of the Eastern Department (1925-28), made the following observation:

> Stresemann, a member of the lower middle-class in the eastern suburbs of Berlin, was, when he took office, not altogether free from suspicion and a sense of inferiority towards the nobility and the diplomats. But soon he became convinced of the loyalty and the devotion of the Foreign Office staff. A feeling of mutual trust, amounting to friendship, developed between him and his colleagues.[35]

During the Stresemann era, the Wilhelmstrasse emerged as the primary formulator of German foreign policy. Its newly found influence was a

result of Stresemann's influence in the Reichstag, as well as the Weimar Republic's obvious need for an effective foreign policy formulated and carried out by an efficient, centralized agency with the aim of ridding Germany of the Versailles Diktat and restoring its Great Power status. Stresemann served as the head of this organization, the Foreign Office, and directed its foreign policy. Nonetheless, the Foreign Minister was too busy with his duties in the Reichstag to closely manage the administrative affairs of the Foreign Office.[36] However, "a mutual trust and respect," according to Gaines Post, Jr., "grew between Stresemann and the officials in the Wilhelmstrasse . . . ."[37] Ernst von Weizsaecker, a young diplomat in the foreign service, noted that the Foreign Minister only spent mornings at the Foreign Office. In fact, Weizsaecker claimed that, "in the Foreign Office he knew only a few of the officials; he was a stranger to the rank and file. He was ignorant of a great deal that went on there."[38] In addition to this, Dirksen added:

> The routine work of a complicated bureaucratic machine bored him, and he would have tried to evade it even if he could have spared the time for it. He was thoroughly unbureaucratic, and he could drive his subordinates to despair by his failure to keep appointments or draw up minutes of his conversations.[39]

Left alone much of the time, the Foreign Office, under the careful management of Foreign Secretary Schubert, once again became a close-knit, elite organization. Schubert, "a strange and very complicated man" has been portrayed by a fellow diplomat:

> [He had] an outspoken gift for foreign politics . . . combined with very painstaking and conscientious routine work. He was suspicious,

> secretive, and lacked the gift of taking things easily and confining himself to the really important matters. He made life a burden to his collaborators, but still more to himself. He was passionately devoted to his task and believed that everything would be on the rocks if he were out of his office. A Westerner by birth and career, he was a convinced advocate of the pro-British school in the German foreign service. But he was sufficiently far-sighted and politically minded to take into consideration the duty incumbent on the conduct of German foreign policy: to counter-balance the Western influences by a good understanding with Russia.[40]

Schubert reorganized the leadership of the departments within the Foreign Office. He placed career diplomats, instead of civil servants, to serve as directors of key positions. These new directors became vital to Foreign Office operations. As Dirksen explained:

> The newly appointed 'Directors' were entrusted with important political negotiations. They accompanied the [Foreign] Minister to conferences, they drafted the notes, negotiated with the Embassies, and had direct access to the Secretary of State and the [Foreign] Minister. They were often party to the most secret affairs . . . . Schubert set up a so-called 'Bureau of Ministers' in which these highly confidential matters were concentrated, but he shrank from the decisive step of forming a new political department.[41]

The leading officials within the Foreign Office formed an inner circle that worked closely together over issues. Although staying away from much of the Wilhelmstrasse's bureaucratic activities, Stresemann was a close friend of this inner circle.[42] It was under his leadership that the Foreign Office became a very important asset to the Weimar Republic.

Stresemann and the Foreign Office were the prime formulators of German foreign policy.[43] At first, however, the Foreign Minister experienced problems with General Hans von Seeckt, the Chief of the Army Command. Stresemann had inherited the two-faced policies concerning the West and the

Soviet Union. Stresemann favored the pursuit of both policies and planned to steer a middle course between the West and Moscow, playing one off against the other, to gradually regain sovereignty and security for Germany.[44] He also insisted upon the Army subordinating itself to the goals of German foreign policy.[45] Seeckt, on the other hand, disliked Stresemann's leanings towards the West, especially France, and objected to the Locarno Treaty (1925) and plans for Germany to join the League of Nations.[46]

In working for good relations with the West and the Soviet Union, Stresemann sought to revise the Versailles Diktat and gradually regain Great Power status for Germany. He sought improved relations with the West, including the Allied evacuation of the Ruhr, Saar, and Rhinelands, as well as the termination of Allied military inspections inside Germany.[47] To reassure the French of Germany's peaceful intentions, the Foreign Minister, as part of his reconciliation policy with the West, acquired an agreement, the Locarno Treaty of 1925, on Franco-German border issues. This treaty included the French promise for eventual withdrawal of military forces from the Ruhr and Rhinelands. However, Stresemann could only achieve this treaty by agreeing, at the insistence of the French government, to Germany joining the League of Nations as a permanent member.[48] In 1926, the Foreign Minister acquired Germany's membership in the League despite strong protests from Seeckt, Maltzan, and the young Buelow, who feared that membership would imprison Germany in the

international system created at Versailles and block revisionist plans.[49] But, Stresemann was willing to take a chance in order for Germany to meet its long-range goal of territorial revision in the east. As one historian put it, the Foreign Minister played for "conciliation and a relaxation of tension in the west, resulting in the willingness of London and Paris to cooperate or acquiesce in revision in the east."[50]

Cooperation with Moscow had the two-edged purpose of providing Stresemann the possibility for diplomatically maneuvering Germany between the international positions of the West and the Soviet Union in an attempt to regain Great Power status, besides serving as a way to pressure Poland into returning lost German lands to the Weimar Republic. In spite of the loss of territory in eastern Europe after the war, the Weimar government refused to accept the forfeiture of Danzig, the Polish Corridor, Upper Silesia, and Posen. The Weimar government sought to regain these lost territories. The German Army viewed Poland as its avowed enemy and its main military threat to Germany since the Poles, with French backing, would not peacefully return the lost German lands. According to Gaines Post, Jr., "the Army considered the Corridor vital to German security, regaining it, legitimate grounds for war."[51] The Army therefore strongly supported close German-Soviet cooperation in eastern Europe to pressure the Poles into returning the lost territories. Stresemann and the Foreign Office also recognized the need for Germany to weaken Poland's position in the east through close relations with the Soviet Union.[52] The Rapallo policy,

and later the Treaty of Berlin (1926), put pressure on the Poles to return territory to Germany by threatening the possibility of a German-Soviet alliance against Poland. However, in spite of German-Soviet cooperation becoming an important part of German foreign policy and military planning, Stresemann continued to pursue relations with both Moscow and the West. This two-faced diplomacy of Stresemann's disturbed the Soviet leadership and resulted in a deterioration of German relations with the Soviet Union. Dirksen, who was German Ambassador to Moscow (1928-33), noted this change in relations and blamed Stresemann's Locarno policy with the West for ruining the close German-Soviet friendship that began at Rapallo.[53]

Besides political pressure, Stresemann recognized the need for Germany to rearm and regain a powerful military to make its foreign policy more effective. In the belief that the Poles would not peacefully return German territory, Wilhelmstrasse officials realized that Germany had to increase its military power since "Germany must ultimately use military force to resolve the Polish question."[54] Thus, the Foreign Office and Army shared not only the common objectives of ridding Germany of the Versailles military restrictions, but territorial revision in the east, the evacuation of Allied forces from Germany, and an end to Allied Military inspections of German military activities. Therefore, as a matter of policy, Stresemann and the Wilhelmstrasse both supported the secret rearmament of the German army and military collaboration with Soviet Russia. In fact, Stresemann

promoted such activity while "denying, explaining away, or screening German disarmament violations" to Western leaders.[55]

In 1926, General Wilhelm Heye replaced Seeckt as Chief of the German Army Command. Under new leadership, the Defense Ministry cooperated with Stresemann in the mutual aim of restoring German military power and Great Power status. The Defense Ministry changed its own independent policy after recognizing the need to work closely with the diplomats in pursuing a rapproachement with France to provide Germany security against a possible Franco-Polish attack, especially since the military lacked sufficient resources to fight a two-front war.[56] In fact, the Army subordinated and integrated its military planning with Stresemann's foreign policy to avoid discrediting Germany in the European diplomatic system. This allowed the Foreign Minister to play the middle between the Soviet Union and the West in an attempt to achieve his policy goals of the reacquistion of full German sovereignty and security, as well as the revision of the Versailles Treaty. Close cooperation between the Foreign Office and Defense Ministry was evident in their joint planning, use of military attaches in diplomatic roles, use of diplomats in military operations, and campaign for revision of the military clauses in the Treaty of Versailles.[57]

Despite serving the Weimar Republic as the primary formulator of foreign policy, Gustav Stresemann had achieved limited success in foreign affairs before his untimely death in October 1929. The French were slow to accept any revision of the Versailles Treaty, and German-Soviet relations

were deteriorating. By 1929, the Foreign Minister came under much criticism from the impatient German leadership, including some diplomats in the Foreign Office, for his failed policy with the West.[58] However, at the Hague Conference, Stresemann, shortly before his death, had obtained, in exchange for Germany's acceptance of the Young Plan, French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand's promise that France would evacuate all of its military forces from the Rhineland by 30 June 1930.[59] Summing up the diplomatic career of Stresemann, the British Ambassador to Berlin stated:

> Stresemann may claim to have raised Germany from the position of a stricken and disarmed foe into that of a diplomatic equal, entitled to full consideration as a Great Power and enjoying international guarantee for the protection of her frontiers. To have accomplished this in a few years of power without the support of armed force is a feat worthy of those who have written their names most memorably on the scroll of fame. Stresemann left Germany infinitely stronger than when he took the helm in 1923, and Europe incomparably more peaceful. This achievement is the more remarkable in that Stresemann was not, by temperament, a pacifist . . . .[60]

The death of Stresemann left the Foreign Office without a strong leader who would continue a policy of reconciliation with the West. Constantin Baron von Neurath, German Ambassador to Rome, turned down President Paul von Hindenburg's offer to become Foreign Minister in 1929.[61] Instead, Julius Curtius assumed the position. The new minister, according to one Foreign Office member, "lacked the authority and vision which had elevated Stresemann to the rank of a European statesman."[62] The following year, in 1930, Heinrich Bruening became Chancellor and teamed up with Curtius to conduct German foreign policy.

For the next two years, Chancellor Bruening, with the strong support of the Foreign Office, directed German foreign policy. Staff within the Wilhelmstrasse praised his revisionist policy. In his memoirs, Weizsaecker stated that Bruening was "the one who moved with the greatest assurance along the narrow path between German needs and foreign resistance. With his tough and yet courteous, ascetic yet generous, nature, he won confidence in international circles."[63] Some historians, however, have criticized the Chancellor because he was a "headstrong and willful statesman who believed that action was always better than inaction, even if it was taken without reflection, and whose tactics in foreign affairs did not bring advantage to his country."[64] Why did Bruening's policy receive such different judgements?

With the avid support of the Foreign Office, Bruening continued Stresemann's revisionist policy. But, instead of working toward gradual change to the Versailles restrictions, Bruening became impatient and, with the advice of Bernhard Wilhelm von Buelow, the new Foreign Secretary (1930-36), who was a nephew of the prewar Chancellor, hastily pursued a quicker path to reestablishing Germany as a Great Power.[65] The decision for this change in strategy was the outcome of Stresemann's success at the Hague Conference, which resulted in a new reparations settlement for Germany as well as the promised withdrawal of French troops from the Rhineland in June 1930. Buelow, who one historian has described as a diplomat with "excellent qualifications . . . a good grasp of the legal dimension of

diplomacy, and experience and expertise"[66] believed the accomplishment of such feats signalled the moment for Germany "to embark on a greater activity," and push for an end to the Versailles restrictions.[67]

Although Bruening and his supporters believed the time was right for making new "demands," the British government warned Germany against forcing France into considering more concessions too soon. In July 1930, the British Ambassador to France commented:

> If the Germans create the impression here that they do not appreciate the spirit of [the French withdrawal from the Rhineland] and merely use it as a peg on which to hang fresh demands, they will play into the hands of M. Briand's critics . . . . The advice, therefore, to Germany is that in her own interest she had better go slow now and rest content for the present with what Stresemann's enlightened policy has already achieved for her.[68]

Bruening and the Foreign Office ignored this advice. Since Bruening, himself, was too busy with domestic problems, and Foreign Minister Curtius was too "inexperienced," the Chancellor relied upon the expertise of Buelow and the Foreign Office for formulating and conducting foreign affairs. The Foreign Secretary worked close with Chancellor Bruening on foreign policy issues.[69] But, as one observer has noted about the highly intelligent Buelow:

> His wide knowledge of international affairs in their most varied aspects were somewhat handicapped by a critical and analytical mind which prevented a positive and creative approach to political problems. His analysis of every situation was so thorough that he always found weighty reasons for a policy of "wait and see."[70]

Even so, following Buelow's advice, the Chancellor and Foreign Minister sought more concessions from the French. They wanted the French to

evacuate the Saarland, a revision of Germany's eastern borders, the abolition of demilitarization restrictions in the Rhineland, as well as the right to build naval cruisers. Bruening especially wanted the return of Danzig, the Corridor, western Posen, and Upper Silesia.[71] On 3 July 1930, Curtius informed the British Ambassador to Berlin that "Germany could not rest content with her present frontier in the east."[72] Such "demands" irritated the British and infuriated the French governments. Since German leadership followed Foreign Office advice, the Wilhelmstrasse support for Bruening's foreign policy came natural. Nonetheless, as already mentioned, some historians have called the Chancellor's foreign policy as awkward and self-defeating. Gordon Craig wrote:

> His condoning of menacing speeches about the Corridor and the Rhineland, his demand for a reopening of the Saar question, his stubborn insistence on the right to build Panzekreuzer, alarmed Germany's neighbors without improving his domestic situation. The net result of all these frantic maneuvers was to make the French reluctant to grant concessions of any kind to Germany.[73]

Meanwhile, as the Bruening government made strong utterances about the demand for revisions to the Versailles Diktat, Foreign Minister Curtius and State Secretary Buelow conspired towards taking the first step in the gradual annexation of Austria. Realizing the seriousness of Austria's economic plight, the Foreign Office made plans to negotiate an Austro-German customs union. In February 1931, the Wilhelmstrasse convinced Bruening of this possibility, which resulted in an agreement with the Austrian government during the following month.[74] The unexpected joint announcement by the German and Austrian governments led to strong

international protests, especially by France, "alarmed by what it considered the spectre of a reawakening German hegemony in Central Europe."[75] Andre Francois-Poncet, the French Ambassador to Berlin, wrote in his memoirs:

> The result proved catastrophic. Both the great and smaller powers rose in a storm of unanimous reprobation. France reacted with particular force. Germany and Austria were compelled to stand as culprits in the dock before the Council of the League of Nations at Geneva, whence their case was referred for arbitration by the International Court at The Hague.[76]

Germany was forced to back down to international pressure. Both Bruening and Curtius suffered a serious defeat, although Buelow and the Foreign Office lost little prestige over the incident. In the aftermath of this incident Curtius was forced to resign in October 1931,[77] leaving Bruening to act as his own Foreign Minister.[78]

The early thirties were politically very turbulent. Bruening's aggressive foreign policy made it more difficult for Germany to revise the Versailles Diktat. The French were more reluctant to give concessions to Germany after the customs union crisis. The depression combined with the internal political struggles within Germany occupied much of the Chancellor's time. The political situation became so troubled that Bruening had little time to "give more than perfunctory attention to foreign affairs."[79] Thus, operating with little interference from the Chancellor, and without a Foreign Minister, State Secretary Buelow was able to achieve a more independent role for the Wilhelmstrasse in the conduct of foreign affairs.[80]

Buelow, however, continued to work close with Bruening on foreign affairs. Francois-Poncet described the State Secretary as "filled with zeal and devotion to duty as he was silent and discreet, a statesman worthy of the traditions of a Prussian family which has given Germany numerous and honorable servants."[81] But, these were troubled times in Germany. The internal political confusion in Germany combined with the renewed French suspicion of German ambitions stagnated German foreign policy. In May 1932, the political crisis resulted in President von Hindenburg dismissing Bruening and replacing him with Franz von Papen.[82] Although, according to Weizsaecker, the Wilhelmstrasse regretted the departure of Bruening,[83] the change meant the appointment of one of their own, Constantin Baron von Neurath, as the new Foreign Minister.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. Gordon A. Craig, "The Revolution in War and Diplomacy, 1914-39," chap. in War, Politics, and Diplomacy: Selected Essays (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), 204.

2. In 1919, the German socialists heading the Weimar Republic were not trained or ready to take on the responsibilities of the Foreign Office. There were few leading socialists who could speak foreign languages, draft a diplomatic note, or were familiar with diplomatic protocol. The new Weimar government relied upon Foreign Minister Ulrich von Brockdorff Rantzau and the diplomats of the Foreign Office (Richard M. Watt, The King's Depart: The Tragedy of Germany: Versailles and the German Revolution [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968], 393-95).

3. As quoted in Doss, 232-33.

4. William II, The Kaiser's Memoirs, 77.

5. Doss, 237.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., 237, 240; Herbert von Dirksen, Moscow, Tokyo, London: Twenty Years of German Foreign Policy (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), 12.

8. Graham Ross, The Great Powers and the Decline of the European States System 1914-1945 (London and New York: Longman, 1983), 147; Doss, 237.

9. As quoted in Dirksen, 12.

10. Ibid.

11. Doss, 239.

12. Christoph M. Kimmich, Germany and the League of Nations (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 30.

13. Ernst von Weizsaecker testimony, 10 June 1948, American Military Tribunal transcript, Nuremberg, Germany, Transcript in Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, OGL 17 [hereafter cited as AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17], Box 137, Folder 2, 8085; Gaines Post, Jr., The Civil-Military Fabric of Weimar Foreign Policy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 16.

14. Post, 7.

15. Viscount (Edgar) D'Abernon, The Diary of an Ambassador, 3 vols. (New York: Doubleday and Doran, 1929-31), 1:42.

16. Ibid.

17. Holborn, A History of Modern Germany, 3:594.

18. David Felix, Walther Rathenau and the Weimar Republic: The Politics of Reparations (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins Press, 1971), 80.

19. Craig, Aspects of German Statecraft, 68; Holborn, A History of Modern Germany, 3:605. During the Weimar era, the Foreign Office was split in its support towards the West and Soviet Russia. Diplomats such as Maltzan, Dirksen, and Brockdroff-Rantzau favored an eastern policy while Rathenau, Stresemann, Schubert, and others desired a western program (Post, 78).

20. D'Abernon, 2:42.

21. Kimmich, 32.

22. Gustav Hilger and Alfred G. Meyer, The Incompatible Allies: A Memoir-History of German-Soviet Relations 1918-1941 (New York: Macmillan, 1953), 76.

23. Hajo Holborn, "Diplomats and Diplomacy in the Early Weimar Republic," in The Diplomats 1919-1939, ed. Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 168.

24. See Gerald Freund, Unholy Alliance: Russian-German Relations from the Treaty of Brest Litovsk to the Treaty of Berlin (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1957).

25. Dirksen, 32; D'Abernon, 1:333-34.

26. Dirksen, 32.

27. Hilger and Meyer, 80.

28. Dirksen, 31.

29. Ibid.

30. Craig, Apects of German Statecraft, 69.

31. Holborn, A History of Modern Germany, 3:606. See also Carole Fink, The Genoa Conference: European Diplomacy, 1921-1922 (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

32. Dirksen, 41.

33. D'Abernon, 2:42.

34. Robert P. Grathwol, Stresemann and the DNVP: Reconciliation or Revenge in German Foreign Policy 1924-1928 (Lawrence, Kans.: Regents Press of Kansas, 1980), 6.

35. Dirksen, 45-46.

36. Ibid, 42, 46.

37. Post, 18.

38. Weizsaecker, 68.

39. Dirksen, 46.

40. Ibid., 43. For further descriptions of Schubert, see also D'Abernon, 3:27 and Jon Jacobson, Locarno Diplomacy: Germany and the West, 1925-1929 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 176-77.

41. Dirksen, 42.

42. Ibid., 45.

43. Post, 14, 23.

44. Craig, Aspects of German Statecraft, 82; Dirksen, 41; Grathwol, 5.

45. Hans W. Gatzke, Stresemann and the Rearmament of Germany (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins Press, 1954), 25; Post, 136.

46. Gatzke, 38.

47. Ibid., 24.

48. Kimmich, 66. See also Jacobson.

49. Kimmich, 43-44.

50. Post, 59.

51. Ibid., 100, 132.

52. Ibid., 42.

53. Dirksen, 83. See also Harvey Leonard Dyck, Weimar Germany and Soviet Russia: A Study in Diplomatic Instability (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966).

54. Post, 72, 83. See also Gatzke, 110.

55. Gatzke, 61.

56. Post, 157-58.

57. Ibid., 345-54.

58. Kimmich, 124-25.

59. Ibid., 129-30; Sally Marks, The Illusion of Peace: International Relations in Europe 1918-1933 (London: Macmillan, 1986), 104.

60. D'Abernon, 3:20.

61. Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 38.

62. Dirksen, 86.

63. Weizsaecker, 76.

64. Craig, Aspects of German Statecraft, 85.

65. Post, 268. For an assessment of Bruening's foreign policy, see Wolfgang J. Helbrich, "Between Stresemann and Hitler: The Foreign Policy of the Bruening Government," World Politics, 12 (1959).

66. Kimmich, 42.

67. As quoted in F.G. Stambrook, "The German-Austrian Customs Project of 1931: A Study of German Methods and Motives," Journal of Central European Affairs, 21 (1961), 20.

68. Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939 [hereafter cited as DBFP], second series, 21 vols. (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Of8fice, 1947-84) 1:479.

69. Dirksen, 101; Marks, 105.

70. Dirksen, 102. See also Franz von Papen, Memoirs, trans. Brian Connell (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1953), 175.

71. Post, 268.

72. DBFP, second series, 1:490.

73. Craig, Aspects of German Statecraft, 89.

74. Ibid., 91; Post, 280-82; Edward W. Bennett, Germany and the Diplomacy of the Financial Crisis, 1931 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), 46, 49-50.

75. Papen, 137.

76. Andre Francois-Poncet, The Fateful Years: Memoirs of a French Ambassador in Berlin, 1931-1938, trans. Jacquges LeClercq (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949), 5.

77. Papen, 143; Marks, 121.

78. Dirksen, 101; Post, 266.

79. Dirksen, 101.

80. Erich Eyck, A History of the Weimar Republic, trans. H.P. Hanson and R.G.L. Waite, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962-63), 2:331-32.

81. Francois-Poncet, 30.

82. Marks, 128.

83. Weizsaecker, 76.

CHAPTER IV

NEURATH, THE FOREIGN OFFICE, AND THE RISE OF HITLER

Constantin Baron von Neurath was born in Wuerttemberg in 1873. As the member of an aristocratic Swabian family with a long history of service to the kings of Wuerttemberg, he broke with family tradition and entered Kaiser Wilhelm II's consulate service in Berlin in 1901. He served abroad in London from 1903 to 1908 in the German Consulate before transferring to the German diplomatic service in 1913. In 1919, the Weimar government appointed Neurath as Minister to Denmark. He later served as Ambassador to Italy and managed German-Italian relations with the Fascist government of Benito Mussolini from 1922 to 1930. President Paul von Hindenburg, a close friend, was instrumental in acquiring Neurath's appointment as Ambassador to Britain in 1930 to 1932.[1] Hindenburg, however, preferred Neurath to become Foreign Minister. Both the President and Chancellor Heinrich Bruening asked him several times during 1931 and 1932 to accept such an appointment,[2] but Neurath, who enjoyed living in London, declined because of his conservative based distaste for serving in a parliamentary government cabinet. Neurath, who was not affiliated with any political parties, strongly disliked all political parties and parliaments, preferring a more autocratic type of government like that which existed

under the Kaiser.[3] As Neurath, himself, told the International Military Tribunal in 1946 why he refused an appointment to Foreign Minister:

> [I]n view of the party conditions in the Reichstag in those days, I saw no possibility for a stable foreign policy. I was not a member of any of the thirty or so parties, so that I would not have been able to [find] . . . support in the Reichstag of those days.[4]

Neurath insisted that he would only become Foreign Minister under a party-free presidential cabinet that showed the promise of restoring leadership and stability to Germany.[5]

In May 1932, while still in London, Neurath received another offer from Hindenburg to become Foreign Minister. Hindenburg, who saw Neurath as a prudent, moderate, and reliable diplomat,[6] appealed to his close friend to travel to Berlin and discuss the matter.[7] In Berlin, Neurath told the President that he would only serve as Foreign Minister under a strong presidential cabinet that allowed him to formulate and conduct foreign policy without any interference.[8] Hindenburg agreed to these terms and got Neurath appointed as Foreign Minister in the newly formed cabinet, despite Franz von Papen and General Kurt von Schleichers' support for the diplomats Rudolf Nadolny or Ulrich von Hassell, on 2 June 1932.[9]

The State Secretary, Bernhard Wilhelm von Buelow, and the leading members of the Foreign Office supported the appointment of Neurath over the other candidates.[10] They desired a Foreign Minister who would continue the moderate foreign policy of Stresemann and Bruening. Neurath, as Ambassador to Britain, had represented Bruening's policy with the British and believed in continuing the former Chancellor's program.[11] Hans Dieckhoff, the

Director of the British-American Department in the Foreign Office, believed Neurath to be a "man of high standards and an experienced diplomat."[12] Buelow, who many have viewed as "the most influential figure" in the Foreign Office during the early thirties,[13] believed Neurath's closeness and access to Hindenburg would strongly support the Foreign Office and its policy of gradual revision to the Versailles Treaty.[14] Buelow represented the peaceful policy of restoring Germany as a Great Power in central Europe (Mitteleuropa), including territorial revision in eastern Europe and the annexation of Austria.[15]

Neurath and Buelow held similar views concerning foreign relations. Buelow, however, served his superior not only as the administrator of the Foreign Office, but as the "intellectual father" of Neurath's foreign policy.[16] Both Buelow and Neurath advocated the continuation of Bruening's revisionist policy aimed at acquiring from the Versailles Powers the acknowledgement of equal rights for Germany, an end of reparations, and territorial boundary changes in eastern Europe.[17] Neurath, who had been German Ambassador to Britain and Italy, and Buelow together desired improved German relations with Britain and Italy to gain leverage against France in negotiating revisions to the Versailles Treaty.[18] They, along with Dirksen and Nadolny, also promoted closer German relations with Soviet Russia to counterbalance any influence that France held in eastern Europe.[19] Describing Neurath's foreign policy to the Nuremberg court, Hans Dieckhoff stated:

> It was the aim of Herr Von Neurath to maintain good relations with all states and thereby to re-establish gradually Germany's status of equal rights which we had lost in 1919. This was the same policy that had been pursued by Stresemann and Bruening. Herr Von Neurath was aware of the difficulties of Germany's position. His tendency was to exercise moderation.[20]

In his own words, Neurath told the International Military Tribunal:

> It was my view that the solution of the various political problems could be achieved only by peaceful means and step by step. Complete equality for Germany in all fields, in the military field therefore as well, and also the restoration of sovereignty in the entire territory of the Reich and the elimination of any discrimination were prerequisite conditions. But to achieve this was primarily the first task of German foreign policy.[21]

Nevertheless, in the case of lost German territories, Neurath strongly believed that Germany needed to rearm and threaten to use force in order to reacquire these lands if diplomacy ultimately failed.[22]

Shortly after assuming office as Foreign Minister, Neurath had his first diplomatic success. On 9 July 1932, the Western Powers agreed to end German reparations at the Lausanne Conference.[23] During the Disarmament Conference in Geneva, the Foreign Minister called for the other Great Powers to disarm as specified in the Versailles agreement. On 6 September, Neurath also demanded the recognition of equal rights for Germany.[24] Two weeks later, Germany withdrew from the conference.[25] This tactic resulted in the Versailles Powers recognizing equality of rights on security matters for Germany on 3 December 1932: a major triumph for the Foreign Office.[26] Germany was in the future to be treated on the same level as the other Great Powers since the declaration implied the elimination of all discrimitory provisions of the Versailles Treaty against Germany.[27]

Commenting on this event, Hans Dieckhoff told the Nuremberg court that the Foreign Office took the view that Germany now had "the indisputable right to rearm after all disarmament efforts had failed."[28] And yet, Neurath believed that rearmament would have to be slow so as not to disturb the security of its immediate neighbors.[29]

Hindenburg appointed Adolf Hitler as Chancellor on 30 January 1933. Neurath admitted that this action took him by surprise.[30] The President made Hitler's appointment on the conditions that Neurath was kept as Foreign Minister and there would be no changes in the Foreign Office, or in the course of foreign policy.[31] Although Neurath at first refused to remain in office,[32] Hindenburg convinced the Foreign Minister to continue his work in guiding foreign affairs, and act as a counterbalance against any policy initiated by Hitler.[33] Hindenburg told his close friend that he wanted him to "secure the continuation of a peaceful foreign policy, and to prevent Hitler from taking the rash steps which were so possible in view of his impulsive nature, in one word, to act as a brake."[34] Neurath became convinced that he could, with Hindenburg's support, control foreign policy under the National Socialists and thus accepted the challenge.[35] Hermann Rauschning, a close friend and admirer of Hitler's political skill, wrote about Neurath's intentions:

> I am perfectly sure that he [Neurath] acted from the highest of motives: he was trying to train the Nazis and turn them into really serviceable partners in a moderate nationalist regime . . . . He felt that it was his duty to make the best of the Nazis, and this could not mean getting rid of them quickly as possible. He regarded himself as

> the protector of a young and undisciplined element of which he flattered himself that he could form a politically serviceable one.[36]

The rise of Hitler, however, meant the introduction of new ideas into German foreign policy. Hitler had written manuscripts, including Mein Kampf, about his outlook on international relations as well as professed his ideas in numerous speeches. Like the Foreign Office, Hitler wanted to be rid of the Versailles Treaty and regain Great Power status for Germany. Hitler's ideas on the reacquisition of lost German territory, however, went beyond the position of the Wilhelmstrasse and advocated German expansion into eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union.[37] Moreover, he held strong anti-Bolshevik and anti-Semitic sentiments. In the mid-twenties, Hitler had written in Mein Kampf:

> Never forget that the rulers of present-day Russia are common blood-stained criminals; that they are the scum of humanity which, favored by circumstances, overran a great state in a tragic hour, slaughtered and wiped out thousands of her leading intelligentsia in wild blood lust, and now for almost ten years have been carrying on the most cruel and tyrannical regime of all time. Furthermore, do not forget that these rulers belong to a race [Jewish] which combines, in a rare mixture, bestial cruelty and an inconceivable gift for lying, and which today more than ever is conscious of a mission to impose its bloody oppression on the whole world. Do not forget that the international Jew who completely dominates Russia today regards Germany, not as an ally, but as a state destined to the same fate.[38]

Realizing that France would oppose any revision of the status quo, Hitler, who saw France as a "menace", wanted a German alliance with Britain and Italy to counter any French obstruction to a German attempt to regain Great Power status, as well as to minimize the risk of war during this process.[39] He stated in Mein Kampf:

> England desires no Germany as a world power, but France wishes no power at all called Germany: quite an essential difference, after all! Today we are not fighting for a position as a world power: today we must struggle for the existence of our fatherland . . . . If we look about us for European allies from this standpoint, there remain only two states: England and Italy.[40]

In his second book, which was written in 1928, but was never published in his lifetime, Hitler made further comments in his ideas concerning foreign policy:

> Germany decides to go over to [her future aim] a clear, far-sighted territorial policy. Thereby she abandons all attempts at world-industry and world-trade and instead concentrates all her strength in order, through the allotment of sufficient living space for the next hundred years to our people, also to prescribe a path of life. Since this territory can be only in the East, the obligation to be a naval power also recedes into the background. Germany tries anew to champion her interests through the formulation of a decisive power on land.
>
> This aim is equally in keeping with the highest national as well as folkish requirements. It likewise presupposes great military power means for its execution, but does not necessarily bring Germany into conflict with all European great powers. As surely as France here will remain Germany's enemy, just as little does the nature of such a political aim contain a reason for England, and especially for Italy, to maintain the enmity of the World War.[41]

Just as Neurath hesitated to serve under a Hitler, the diplomats of the Foreign Office questioned the course of their careers and foreign policy in early 1933. Former Chancellor Bruening, nonetheless, influenced the members of the Wilhelmstrasse to stay at their posts. In his own words Bruening admitted:

> I advised Herr von Buelow strongly to remain in office, and to urge these others to do likewise, for they . . . together with moderate leaders in the Reichswehr, alone would be in a position to frustrate any aggressive foreign of military policies of Hitler.[42]

Thus, Neurath and Buelow both stayed to manage the Foreign Office under Hitler's chancellorship and continue the moderate policy associated with Stresemann and Bruening. Writing in his memoirs, Herbert von Dirksen, the German Ambassador to Moscow, summed up the position of the diplomats stating:

> [W]e felt it to be our duty to assist in this process of normalization. We had been successful so far in our endeavors to train the newcomers in political leadership and to keep the ship of state on a straight course in spite of the storms which it had encountered. Thus, almost all the career diplomats as well as the other permanent officials remained in office. As to the constitutional and jurisdical implications of the new situation, the permanent officials were perfectly justified in placing their services at the disposal of the party which had gained power by constitutional and democratic elections.[43]

Besides, Neurath and Buelow were convinced that Hitler and the Nazi Party would not last long.[44]

Diplomats in the Foreign Office quickly came to believe that Hitler had intentions to peacefully pursue revisions to the Versailles Treaty.[45] In reply to the Soviet government's concern over the rise of the anti-Bolshevik Hitler, Foreign Secretary Buelow told Ambassador Dirksen on 6 February 1933:

> I believe that they overestimate there [Moscow] the importance in terms of foreign policy of the change of government. When they have the responsibility the National Socialists are naturally different people and pursue a different policy than they proclaimed before. It was always like this, and it is the same with all parties. The persons of Neurath and also of Blomberg [the German War Minister] guarantee the continuity of the previous political relations.[46]

While diplomats believed that Hitler would follow their lead in foreign affairs, Hitler continued to quietly profess his own policy

intentions to close friends such as Joachim von Ribbentrop, a fairly new member of the Nazi Party who had impressed him with his knowledge of world affairs.[47] Ribbentrop was a champagne salesman who had lived in Britain, France, Canada, and the United States.[48] He was a strong advocate of close relations with Britain and France while being anti-Bolshevik.[49] In February 1933, Hitler related to Ribbentrop over dinner his inner most thoughts on policy:

> At this first discussion [on foreign affairs] Adolf Hitler told me that he wanted peace at all costs. One world war had been enough for Germany; it must not happen again. But he must achieve Germany's equality. The German nation was too strong to tolerate permanent discrimination. A revision of certain Versailles terms had to be brought about. Nor was it possible for Germany, surrounded as she was by States armed to the teeth, to remain undefended. Yet there was time for him to do all this gradually.
>
> What he wanted beyond all else, said Hitler, was a permanent and clear settlement with Britain. He also wanted friendship with Italy, and thought that the kinship of the National Socialist and fascist philosophies would provide the basis for this.
>
> Hitler's attitude to Soviet Russia was sharply antagonistic . . . . When discussing this subject his face became stern and his expression inexorable. It was clear to me even then that Hitler was fanatically resolved to destroy communism for good.[50]

On 7 April 1933, with the belief that the Wilhelmstrasse had complete control over the formulation and conduct of German foreign policy, Neurath briefed Hitler at the Reich Chancellery concerning Germany's situation in the international system.[51] The Foreign Minister stressed that the "demand for revision [of the Versailles Treaty] requires the employment of all possible energies." Neurath outlined the Foreign Office's main goal of reacquiring lost German territories in eastern Europe, and declared that

"border revisions can be broached only when Germany has become strong militarily, politically, and financially." He emphasized that closer relations with Britain, Italy, and the Soviet Union were essential to revise territorial borders in face of strong opposition from Poland and France. The Foreign Minister declared that "an understanding between Germany and France is as good as impossible," and "an understanding with Poland is neither possible nor desirable." Additionally, Neurath briefed the Chancellor that "the Anschluss [annexation] of Austria can not be actively promoted for the time being owing to Italy's opposition."[52]

The following month, on 17 May 1933, the Chancellor spoke to the Reichstag and addressed foreign policy issues.[53] Ernst Woermann, Head Counselor for International Law at the Wilhelmstrasse, and his colleagues were "deeply impressed" by Hitler's speech, and came to the conclusion that the Chancellor would follow the policy formulated by the Foreign Office.[54] In this speech Hitler stated:

> Germany does not want war. She has demonstrated her good will by disarming; let the other powers now demonstrate theirs by doing likewise . . . . France invokes her anxiety as to her security, yet France it is who remains armed whereas Germany has disarmed . . . . It has been declared desirable that Germany's military status be modified; Germany is willing. She has concurred in the proposed MacDonald Plan, but on condition that it establish a strict parallelism and true equality among the powers involved . . . . If a decision were to be imposed on Germany under pretext that it was a majority decision, then Germany would refuse to yield, preferring rather to resign from both the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations . . . .[55]

Despite agreeing to Hindenburg's terms in January 1933, Adolf Hitler greatly disliked career diplomats and the thought of allowing the

Wilhelmstrasse to formulate and conduct foreign policy. Paul Otto Schmidt, who became Hitler's chief interpreter, stressed in his memoirs that "Hitler disliked the German Foreign Office and everyone connected with it."[56] But, the Chancellor realized that he needed to use the Wilhelmstrasse to pursue a "policy of concealment" in order to convince foreign governments that Germany's foreign policy would remain peaceful and not undergo any fundamental changes.[57] Besides, Hitler fully agreed with the Foreign Office's revisionist policy.[58] Until he consolidated his power base in the government, the Chancellor was therefore forced by circumstances to accept the influence of Neurath and the Wilhelmstrasse in foreign relations.[59] In his analysis of the situation, Gordon Craig has stated:

> He [Hitler] recognized his vulnerability and his need for time [to consolidate his power base] and therefore encouraged the democratic governments in their illusions lest they undertake to baulk his plans before he could do anything to prevent that. Indeed, he strengthened the impression that no fundamental change in German policy need be expected by retaining the Foreign Ministry staff and diplomatic personnel that had served his predecessors, keeping Baron von Neurath and Bernhard von Buelow in the posts of Foreign Minister and Secretary of State respectively and leaving the ambassadorial posts untouched . . . .[60]

In fact, the Wilhelmstrasse experienced no major changes in leadership until a major reorganization in 1935 and 1936. Hitler kept the senior members of the Foreign Office, including the seven department directors, until he had taken full control of Germany.[61] In early 1936, when he arrived in Berlin on leave from his mission as Ambassador to Tokyo, Herbert von Dirksen discovered:

> In the Foreign Office . . . there were no signs of any radical changes. It was staffed by the same officials who had been in office before 1933, with Neurath as Minister and Buelow as Secretary of State. The thinly veiled anti-Nazi sentiments of the latter were common knowledge. There was not a single party "bigwig" among the higher ranks of officials. Membership in the party was a minor issue.[62]

Even so, the Chancellor had his diplomats closely watched by his party members.[63] The Nazi leadership distrusted the activities of the Wilhelmstrasse to the point of bugging their headquarters.[64]

Hitler's continued use of the Wilhelmstrasse reflected his need for putting forward a respectable image toward the other Great Powers. Hitler, himself, had never travelled outside of Germany or his native Austria, and had no knowledge of foreign languages.[65] Moreover, the National Socialists lacked party members with diplomatic experience and language skills to seriously challenge the authority of the Foreign Office.[66] Joachim von Ribbentrop, with the support of Hitler, wanted to become Foreign Secretary, but Vice Chancellor Franz von Papen refused to entertain any such notion since the champagne salesman lacked diplomatic credentials.[67] Alfred Rosenberg, the Head of the Foreign Policy Office of the Nazi Party, intended to replace Neurath as Foreign Minister. However, Rosenberg embarassed Hitler, who never forgave him, with his inappropriate actions while representing Germany in London in 1933.[68] But, in spite of such a handicap, Hitler refused to become dependent upon the Foreign Office, and gradually began using not only Ribbentrop, but Hermann Goering, Rudolf Hess, and other amateur diplomats to bypass the control of the

Wilhelmstrasse in conducting foreign relations.[69] Such practices, however, as Gordon Craig pointed out, were not uncommon among the leadership of the other Great Powers, including Britain and France, in the conduct of international affairs.[70] The Weimar government, nonetheless, had refrained from such methods and left international relations in the hands of the professional diplomats. In his analyzation of Hitler's extensive use of amateur diplomacy after 1933, Ernst von Weizsaecker, who became Director of the newly reestablished Political Department in 1936, and later Foreign Secretary in 1938, commented:

> Amateurish and irregular reports were often preferred to the official ones. Decisions were taken without the Foreign Minister or the Foreign Office having had a say in the framing of them. The carrying out of the decisions was entrusted to the most various quarters . . . . The foreign service had been delegated to the level of a mere technical apparatus.[71]

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1. John Louis Heineman, "Constantin Freiherr von Neurath as Foreign Minister, 1932-1935: A Study of a Conservative Civil Servant and Germany's Foreign Policy [hereafter cited as 'Neurath as Foreign Minister']" (Ph.D. thesis, Cornell University, 1965), 50-76; Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 7-32; Constantin von Neurath testimony, 22 June 1946, TMWC, 16:593-4.

2. Neurath testimony, 22 June 1946, TMWC, 16:599; Heineman, "Neurath as Foreign Minister," 81-83.

3. Kurt Pruefer affidavit, 16 April 1946, TMWC, 16:600-1, 40:450-60; Heineman, "Neurath as Foreign Minister," 50-52, 85.

4. Neurath testimony, 22 June 1946, TMWC, 16:599.

5. Heineman, "Neurath as Foreign Minister," 85; Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 40.

6. Gerhard Koepke testimony, 26 June 1946, TMWC, 17:108.

7. Hindenburg to Neurath, 31 May 1932, TMWC, 40:460.

8. Neurath testimony, 22 June 1946, TMWC, 16:600; Heineman, "Neurath as Foreign Minister," 91; Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 40, 45.

9. Papen, 159; Neurath testimony, 22 June 1946, TMWC, 16:600; Koepke to Ruemelin, 2 June 1932, TMWC, 40:461; Heineman, "Neurath as Foreign Minister," 90; Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 45; Gerhard L. Weinberg, The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1970-80), 1:35-36.

10. Koepke to Ruemelin, 2 June 1932, TMWC, 40:461-65; Heineman, "Neurath as Foreign Minister," 89; Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 46.

11. Hans Dieckhoff testimony, 26 June 1946, TMWC, 17:121; Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 57.

12. Ibid.

13. Marshall M. Lee and Wolfgang Michalka, German Foreign Policy 1917-1933, Continuity or Break? (Leaming Spa, Hamburg, New York: Berg Publishers, 1987), 143; Hermann Rauschning, Men of Chaos (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1942), 172-76. For a character description of Buelow, see Francois-Poncet, 182.

14. Rauschning, Men of Chaos, 179; Rumbold to Simon, 28 September 1932, DBFP, second series, 4:201; Heineman, "Neurath as Foreign Minister," 102.

15. Lee and Michalka, 145-46.

16. Ibid., 143.

17. Ibid., 136, 145; John Hiden, Germany and Europe 1919-1939 (London and New York: Longman, 1977), 32; Klaus Hildebrand, The Third Reich, trans. P.S. Falla (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1984), 15; Heineman, "Neurath as Foreign Minister," 136-42; Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 57, 86.

18. Lee and Michalka, 136, 138.

19. Ibid., 146-47. Although Neurath and Buelow were for maintaining friendly relations with Soviet Russia, according to one source, Buelow "sought to keep German-Soviet dealings on a cool and noncomittal level", and Neurath held a "cool, self-assured reserve" regarding Russo-German relations (Hilger and Meyer, 250, 265).

20. Dieckhoff testimony, 26 June 1946, TMWC, 17:122.

21. Neurath testimony, [illegible] June 1946, TMWC, 16:604.

22. Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 87.

23. Lee and Michalka, 131.

24. Neurath interview, 6 September 1932, TMWC, 40:481; Kimmich, 151.

25. Lee and Michalka, 132.

26. Editor's note, Auswaertiges Amt, Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945, Series C (1933-1937) [hereafter cited as DGFP(C)], 6 vols. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957-83), 1:19-20; Kimmich, 169-72; Edward W. Bennett, German Rearmament and the West, 1932-1933 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 267.

27. Neurath testimony, 22 June 1946, TMWC, 16:606-7.

28. Dieckhoff testimony, 26 June 1946, TMWC, 17:123-24. See also Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 90.

29. Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 57.

30. Ibid., 66.

31. Ibid., 42; Rumbold to Simon, 4 February 1933, DBFP, second series, 4:406-8; Rauschning, Men of Chaos, 189; Neurath testimony, 22 June 1946, TMWC, 16:608; Pruefer affidavit, 16 April 1946, TMWC, 40:450-60.

32. Heineman, "Neurath as Foreign Minister," 221-22.

33. Papen, 240; Simon to Newton, 6 June 1932 DBFP, second series, 3:152-54; Karl Ritter affidavit, 28 May 1946, TMWC, 40:444; Manfred Zimmermann affidavit, 1 May 1946, TMWC, 40:437; Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 65-66.

34. Neurath testimony, 22 June 1946, TMWC, 16:608.

35. Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 67.

36. Rauschning, Men of Chaos, 164.

37. Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943), 612; Adolf Hitler, Hitler's Secret Book, trans. Salvator Attanasio, introd. Telford Taylor (New York: Grove Press; reprint, New York: Bramhall House, 1986), 44-52.

38. Hitler, Mein Kampf, 660-61.

39. Ibid., 612, 620, 624; Eberhard Jaeckel, Hitler's Weltanschauung: A Blueprint for Power, trans. Herbert Arnold (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1972), 44; Geoffrey Stoakes, Hitler and the Quest for World Domination: Nazi Ideology and Foreign Policy in the 1920s, (Leamington Spa, Hamburg, and New York: Berg, 1986), 226.

40. Hitler, Mein Kampf, 620.

41. Hitler, Hitler's Secret Book, 145.

42. As quoted in Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse, 28. See also John P. Fox, Germany and the Far Eastern Crisis 1931-1938: A Study in Diplomacy and Ideology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 25.

43. Dirksen, 107.

44. Ibid., 170; Rauschning, Men of Chaos, 165.

45. Neurath testimony, 25 June 1946, TMWC, 17:20; Dieckhoff testimony, 26 June 1946, TMWC, 17:123.

46. Buelow to Dirksen, 6 February 1933, DGFP(C), 1:21. See also Buelow circular, 30 January 1933, DGFP(C), 1:1.

47. Ribbentrop testimony, 29 March 1946, TMWC, 10:232; Poole, 133.

48. Ribbentrop, 1-20; Paul Schwarz, This Man Ribbentrop, His Life and Times (New York: Julian Messner, 1943), 79.

49. Ribbentrop, 28, 42; Schwarz, 75.

50. Ribbentrop, 26-27.

51. Buelow was the primary formulator of the policy presented by Neurath to Hitler on 7 April 1933.

52. Conference of Ministers minutes, 7 April 1933, DGFP(C), 1:256-60.

53. Adolf Hitler, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April 1922-August 1939, 2 vols. trans. and ed. Norman H. Baynes (London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1942), 2:1041-58.

54. Ernst Woermann testimony, 2 July 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 140, Folder 2, 10855-56.

55. As quoted in Francois-Poncet, 102.

56. Dr. Paul Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter, ed. R.H.C. Steed (New York: Macmillan, 1951), 13. See also Adolf Hitler, Hitler's Secret Conversations 1941-1944, trans. Norman Cameron and R.H. Stevens (New York: Octagon, 1972), 226; Dirksen, 109-10; Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse, 31; Craig, Germany, 698; William Carr, Arms, Autarky and Aggression: A Study in German Foreign Policy, 1933-1939 (London: Edward Arnold, 1972), 29-30; Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 134.

57. Gordon A. Craig and Alexander L. George, Force and Statecraft: Diplomatic Problems of Our Time (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 96-99; Kimmich, 174; Weinberg, The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany, 1:35; Lee and Michalka, 140-41; Craig, Germany, 698.

58. Hiden, 43; Hildebrand, The Third Reich, 15; Bennett, German Rearmament and the West, 508; A.J.P. Taylor, The Origins of the Second World War (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1961), 68.

59. Weizsaecker, 109; Kimmich, 174; Weinberg, The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany, 1:25-26; Gordon A. Craig, "The German Foreign Office from Neurath to Ribbentrop," chap. in The Diplomats 1919-1939, ed. Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 409; Rumbold to Simon, 4 February 1933, DBFP, second series, 4:406-7.

60. Craig, Germany, 677. See also Rumbold to Simon, 15 February 1933, DBFP, second series, 4:421; Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 68.

61. Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse, 26; Dirksen, 108.

62. Dirksen, 169.

63. Weizsaecker, 89, 104.

64. Sumner Welles, The Time for Decision (New York: Harper, 1944), 99.

65. Francois-Poncet, 237; Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 88.

66. Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse, 26, 31; Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 89.

67. Papen, 373; Dirksen, 108. For details to Ribbentrop's challenge to the Foreign Office, see Chapter V.

68. Neurath interrogation testimony, 3 October 1945, NCA, Sup. B, 1491; John P. Fox, "Alfred Rosenberg in London," Contemporary Review 213 (July 1968), 6-11; Leonidas E. Hill, "The Wilhelmstrasse in the Nazi Era," Political Science Quarterly 83 (December 1967), 553-54; Paul Seabury, "Ribbentrop and the German Foreign Office," Political Science Quarterly 66 (December 1951), 535; Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse, 33-37; Rauschning, Men of Chaos, 190-91; Neurath memorandum, 11 May 1933, DGFP(C), 1:404-6; Hoesch to Foreign Office, 15 May 1933, DGFP(C), 1:432-34.

69. Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse, 31-32; Craig, Germany, 698; Graham to Vansittart, 26 July 1933, DBFP, second series, 5:448.

70. See Gordon A. Craig, "The Professional Diplomat and His Problems, 1919-1939," chap. in War, Politics, and Diplomacy: Selected Essays, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), 207-19; Keith Feiling, The Life of Neville Chamberlain (London: Lowe and Brydone, 1946; reprint, Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1970), 207. Craig called the use of amateur diplomats as "new diplomacy" which was "the practice of bypassing the Foreign Office, of failing to consult it or keep it informed in important matters . . . (Craig, "The Professional Diplomat and His Problems," 217).

71. Weizsaecker, 106.

CHAPTER V

HITLER, RIBBENTROP, AND THE DECLINE OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE

Becoming Chancellor in January 1933, Adolf Hitler agreed to leave the formulation and conduct of foreign affairs in the hands of the Foreign Office. He declared that Germany would continue the peaceful policy pursued by Stresemann and Bruening. However, Hitler only acquiesced to the desires of President Hindenburg in order to buy himself time to consolidate his own power base in Germany. The Chancellor's behavior, according to William Carr, was calculated to lull both his own diplomats as well as Germany's foreign neighbors into a false sense of security.[1] Gordon Craig has written that Hitler thought that foreign relations "was too important to be left in the hands of professional diplomats."[2] Agreeing with this judgement, Klaus Hildebrand has professed that Hitler quietly took control of foreign policy in 1933.[3] In his study on German policy, Hildebrand has written:

> Already in the first few days after the "seizure of power", it became clear that Hitler was adhering to the aims drawn up in his Programme. In an address to the most senior officers of the Reichswehr, he expounded views thoroughly in line with his Programme set down in _Mein Kampf_.[4]

During the first few months of the new government, the struggle for control of foreign affairs between Hitler and Foreign Minister Constantin von Neurath gradually became evident. Ernst von Weizsaecker, who was

temporarily in Berlin during early 1933, witnessed the difficult time that Neurath had with Hitler's use of amateur diplomats as well as the transfer of responsibility for propaganda intended for foreign distribution from the Wilhelmstrasse to the newly established Propaganda Ministry, directed by the Nazi Joseph Goebbels.[5] During this period the Foreign Minister threatened to resign three times.[6] Hitler appeased Neurath for a short time because he knew that he had to treat Neurath, as Gerhard Koepke testified at Nuremberg, "carefully and politely" while he consolidated his power base.[7] It was of the utmost importance that during this consolidation of power that Hitler, while his own political strength was still weak, kept the support of Hindenburg as well as presented a non-threatening, favorable image of the Nazi regime to the outside world.[8] Nonetheless, as Weizsaecker told the Nuremberg court, when Hitler came to power "foreign policy was very soon split into the policy of the Foreign Office and the policy of the [Nazi] Party."[9]

Although Adolf Hitler gradually began to dominate German foreign policy this was not readily apparent since the objectives of Hitler and the Wilhelmstrasse were very similar. The success of Hitler's struggle with Neurath over policy was made much easier because of the Foreign Minister's "weak leadership" characteristics.[10] Neurath, a conservative civil servant who was "fascinated by authority" and preferred Germany to be in the hands of a strong leader without parliamentary interference in foreign affairs, found it easy to fall under the influence of Hitler's style of

government.[11] The French Ambassador to Germany, Andre Francois-Poncet, found the Foreign Minister to be timid.[12] In his overall impression of Neurath, Francois-Poncet stated:

> He . . . was almost always good humored and simple, but with dignity. . . . [H]e was extremely polite, which made all relations with him easy and agreeable. His intelligence was in no way arresting, but he possessed intelligence, common sense and composure.[13]

Sir Eric Phipps, the British Ambassador to Berlin, saw Neurath as lazy in managing foreign affairs, leaving the administration of the Wilhelmstrasse in the hands of Bernhard Wilhelm von Buelow, the Foreign Secretary.[14] Unfortunately, Buelow, who was strongly anti-Nazi,[15] had become so ill that Neurath had to consider replacing him with Weizsaecker in April 1933.[16] Neurath's personal characteristics of timidness and laziness, combined with his failure to build a personal relationship and join the inner circle of the Chancellor's advisors,[17] doomed the influence of the Foreign Office in any of Hitler's cabinet meetings. Hitler dominated the discussion of foreign policy issues. The diplomats at the Wilhelmstrasse realized that these traits, combined with Neurath's well-known lack of speaking skills, made the task of controlling the direction of foreign policy difficult. Weizsaecker wrote in his memoirs:

> His [Neurath's] chief failing was his inability to express himself in a conversation, particularly in a large circle of people. We in the Foreign Office found it difficult to imagine how he could possibly manage to get a word in edgeways when subject to Hitler's outpourings.[18]

Franz von Papen agreed with this judgement of Neurath. He commented:

> What he [Neurath] lacked was the ability to break into Hitler's long monologues and . . . get a word in. Neurath's standards of diplomatic politeness made him think it rather ill-mannered . . . [to interrupt].[19]

Nevertheless, Neurath stayed in office and faithfully served Germany as Hitler's Foreign Minister in spite of his objections to the National Socialists and their methods in politics. Neurath firmly believed that he could control Hitler's involvement in foreign affairs with strong support from President Hindenburg.[20]

The question of disarmament was the first major diplomatic issue that arose after Hitler took power. Neurath had broke off talks at the Disarmament Conference in Geneva in 1932. The Versailles Powers recognition of German equality prompted Germany, under the advice of Foreign Secretary Buelow, to return to the disarmament talks in January 1933.[21] The Foreign Office negotiated with Britain, France, and Italy for the adherence to the Versailles Treaty that called for general disarmament.[22] After several months of talks, France would not agree to disarmament, fearing future German aggression, especially after Hitler took office.[23] In addition to general disarmament, the negotiators also discussed arms limitations with an increase of German arms to a level approximately equivalent to the other Great Powers, but they could not come to a mutual agreement, thus resulting in a deadlock in the talks.[24] During the Disarmament Conference, Hitler allowed Neurath to manage the negotiations since both men had the like goals of German equality in

political rights and military issues.[25] After returning from Geneva in September 1933, Neurath told Hitler of the deadlock. During interrogation by Allied authorities at Nuremberg in 1945, Neurath recounted this discussion with the Chancellor stating that:

> I pointed out to him [Hitler] how things were going [in Geneva], and that no agreement could be reached there. Then he decided to leave the conference. He said it was of no use in Geneva anymore.[26]

Hitler made the decision to abandon the Disarmament Conference. Frustrated with the whole process, and considering that he viewed the organization as "worthless",[27] Hitler also made the decision for German withdrawal from the League of Nations.[28] He wanted no part of an agreement with a League that would not recognize Germany's equality on military matters. The Chancellor's decisions, however, were strongly influenced by General Blomberg, the War Minister, and Neurath, with the support of President Hindenburg, who strongly wanted German rearmament and the return of Germany to Great Power status.[29] On 13 October 1933, Hitler briefed a gathering of the Reich ministers that he had decided that Germany would "leave both the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations, since the condition that we be recognized as a nation with equal rights is not fulfilled."[30] It was left to the Foreign Minister to communicate Hitler's decisions to the world shortly thereafter.[31] During the following months Germany began to rearm, according to Neurath, to meet defensive requirements.[32] In analyzing this cooperation between Hitler and Neurath, Gordon Craig has stated:

> [I]n this first marked sally of Nazi foreign policy, the Foreign Office and the Fuehrer were at one. The diplomats had, indeed, every reason for satisfaction. They had, for the most part, been left free to follow to its logical end the line they had laid down in 1932; the cooperation between the Reichskanzlei [Chancellery] and the Wilhelmstrasse had at all times been amicable and effective; . . . and the result of the joint effort had been a diplomatic success, or at least a diplomatic sensation.[33]

While involved in disarmament talks with the West, the German government engaged in secret communications with Poland regarding Danzig and the Corridor. As early as April 1933, Marshal Joseph Pilsudski, the head of the Polish government, sought talks with Hitler to acquire a relaxation of tension between the two states over the lost German territories.[34] He feared Hitler's intentions and that "growing uneasiness" between Poland and Germany over the status of Danzig might erupt into a conflict.[35]

Pilsudski sent a request to Hitler for the German Chancellor to meet personally with the Polish Ambassador to Berlin, Alfred Wysocki. The Marshal of Poland realized that the German Foreign Office, whose foreign policy was hostile to Poland, would object to any attempts by his government to improve relations with Germany.[36] Hitler was interested in such talks because former Chancellor Bruening as well as diplomats in Prague and Warsaw warned him, in April 1933, of the possibility of France, Poland, and Czechoslovakia launching a preventive war against Germany.[37] The German Chancellor was interested in blocking any foreign intervention into German affairs, breaching France's system of alliances in eastern Europe, as well as seeking improved relations with France.[38] Moreover,

itler wanted to negotiate the return of lost German territory and seek olish adherence to a later anti-Bolshevik alliance against the Soviet nion.[39] The Chancellor therefore met with Ambassador Wysocki in Berlin on May 1933. At this meeting, in the presence of Neurath, Wysocki presented 'ilsudski's request for closer German-Polish relations. He also pressed litler and acquired an understanding over the status of Danzig and a romise that Germany would not take any aggressive measures against 'oland.[40] Wysocki, however, discovered later that Neurath, who had kept quiet during the meeting, had "serious misgivings" about the agreement.[41] Neurath, under the influence of Foreign Secretary Buelow and other diplomats, still supported a policy, centered on close German-Soviet relations, aimed against Poland.[42] Hitler's agreement with Wysocki, nevertheless, resulted in much improved relations between Germany and Poland.[43]

In late September 1933, while at the Disarmament Conference, the Polish Foreign Minister, Joesph Beck, approached Neurath in Geneva about German-Polish relations. Beck told his counterpart that Pilsudski was willing to discuss with Hitler a settlement of outstanding issues between their respective countries.[44] Shortly thereafter, Marshal Pilsudski replaced Wysocki in Berlin with Joesph Lipski as the new Polish Ambassador in order to negotiate a more substantial agreement.[45] Adding incentive for obtaining better relations with Germany was the Polish government's fear of

German intentions after it withdrew from the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations.

Despite Hitler's interest in closer relations with Poland and opposition to improved German-Soviet ties, Foreign Minister Neurath and the Wilhelmstrasse continued to support the latter policy. The Foreign Office replaced Herbert von Dirksen, who was reassigned to Tokyo, with Rudolf Nadolny, who had previously headed the German delegation at the Geneva disarmament talks, as the new Ambassador to Moscow. On 13 November 1933, Neurath provided the following diplomatic instructions to Nadolny concerning his new assignment:

> Good German-Soviet relations are of essential importance to Germany. In Germany's relations with Poland they are of extreme importance. What must naturally be prevented . . . is the incorporation of the Soviet Union in any political front directed against Germany.[46]

Hitler secretly met with Lipski in direct opposition to the advice of the Wilhelmstrasse on 15 November 1933. Both the Chancellor and Polish Ambassador wished to avoid the interference and hostility of the Foreign Office.[47] Both men discussed the possibility of a nonaggression pact. Hitler was willing to declare that Germany had no intention of aggression against the Poles to settle their territorial differences, but he declined the opportunity to discuss a boundary settlement.[48] Faced with Hitler's decision to sign a nonaggression pact, which would seriously affect German-Soviet relations, the foreign service divided into the traditional east-west factions. Foreign Minister Neurath, who found it difficult to

contradict the opinion of Hitler, Gerhard Koepke, the Director of Department II (West, South, and South-East Europe), and Hans Adolf von Moltke, the German Ambassador to Warsaw, accepted the Polish card as a way to improve not only German-Polish, but Franco-German relations. State Secretary Buelow and Ambassador Nadolny, on the other hand, argued against a rapproachement with Poland, preferring the Rapallo policy of closer German-Soviet ties.[49]

Because of the split in opinion at the Wilhelmstrasse, the subsequent negotiations between Germany and Poland were held in strict secrecy and bypassed many of the diplomats who would have normally been involved in the conduct of foreign relations.[50] For two months German and Polish diplomats passed each other draft nonaggression agreements until both sides were finally agreeable to the wording of the treaty.[51] In the process Neurath had managed to influence the Chancellor to accept a weaker version of the draft treaty to appease those diplomats in the Foreign Office who objected to close German-Polish relations.[52] Even so, Ambassador Nadolny continuously warned Neurath that the Soviet leadership was leaning toward a rapproachement with France if Germany failed to pursue closer German-Soviet relations.[53] The negotiations came to an end when Neurath and Lipski signed a nonaggression pact in Berlin on 26 January 1934, which was ratified in Warsaw a month later.[54] The agreement surprised the Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin, and brought a complete change in German-Soviet relations. George Kennan, a diplomat and historian, wrote that the pact

"suddenly brought home to him [Stalin] how completely the Germans had cut loose from the old Rapallo concept."[55] The treaty also had the effect of greatly weakening the influence of Neurath and the Foreign Office with Hitler. The Chancellor found that the professional diplomats had represented an obstacle in his conduct of foreign relations. He had gained the upper advantage over the Foreign Minister and the now factionous diplomatic corps. In the future he would avoid the use of the foreign service as much as possible by employing the services of amateur diplomats. Gordon Craig viewed the German-Polish agreement as the turning point in who controlled the formulation and conduct of German foreign policy.[56] Such control was noted by the foreign diplomats in Berlin. On 27 December 1933, Andre Francois-Poncent, the French Ambassador, reported to Paris:

> Adolf Hitler, today, is truly in control of his people. He exercises a complete hold over them . . . . He maintains the balance between competing rivals; he judges over their quarrels; his authority is not in question.[57]

After the interrogation of those involved in diplomatic affairs, including Neurath, Ribbentrop, Papen, and Goering, before the Nuremberg trials, DeWitt C. Poole, the Chief Interrogator and Special Representative of the U.S. Secretary of State, came to the conclusion that:

> Hitler dominated every situation. Every decision setting the course of German external relations from 1933 on was made by Hitler personally, and it was he who set the exact timing of every important action.[58]

In control of foreign policy, Hitler now turned his efforts towards the issues of closer German-Italian relations and the Austrian Question.

Hitler sought Italian support of German rearmament as well as an alliance.[59] However, the Chancellor realized that the acquisition of an alliance with Benito Mussolini would have to wait until the two leaders agreed upon the status of Austria.[60] Hitler, of course, sought the ultimate annexation of his homeland.[61] Mussolini, on the other hand, feared German intentions towards the South Tyrol, largely populated by Germans. The Fascist leader preferred for Austria to remain independent and serve as a buffer state between Germany and Italy.[62]

Conscious of the value of closer German-Italian relations, Foreign Minister Neurath and the Wilhelmstrasse advised the Chancellor not to take any aggressive action against Austria aimed at annexation. Foreign Secretary Buelow cautioned against pursuing a policy of pressuring Austria,[63] and Gerhard Koepke, the Director of Department II believed the international climate was not right for a German attempt to annex Austria.[64] Neurath, himself, preferred closer Austro-German economic ties, not political union. Remembering the crisis over the Austro-German Customs Union in 1931, Neurath, nonetheless, was "resolved [not to] touch this hot iron again."[65]

Hitler largely ignored the Foreign Office concerning the Austrian Question. He viewed Austro-German relations as an internal German problem, not as an international issue.[66] He therefore bypassed the Wilhelmstrasse to a large extent, relying upon Hermann Goering and Franz von Papen to conduct much of his policy aimed towards the overthrow of the Austrian

government,[67] headed by Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss. Hitler pressured the Austrian government, despite the protests of Neurath, with German economic sanctions as well as support for the Austrian National Socialist Party's illegal activities against the Dollfuss regime.[68] With the aid of the Austrian Nazis, Hitler hoped to gain influence over Austria, and thus force a settlement in Germany's favor.[69]

Although he supported the Nazi Party's actions in Austria, Hitler was cautious in his diplomatic maneuvering so as not to offend, but to woo Mussolini. At a meeting with the Italian leader in Venice, which was arranged by Papen, not the Foreign Office, Hitler avoided any mention of his desire to annex Austria.[70] Instead, the Chancellor sought improved German-Italian relations as well as an understanding over Austria.[71]

In spite of such caution with Mussolini, Hitler conspired to take full charge of the German government. Shortly after returning from Venice Hitler gave the orders to eliminate his political opposition. On the night of 30 June, Hitler had Ernst Roehm and other _Sturmabteilung_ leaders murdered.[72] The purge made a deep impression upon Neurath, and placed him in fear of Hitler. On 11 July, during a meeting with Hitler, Hermann Rauschning noticed that the Foreign Minister was "anxiously servile" in his "manner towards the Reich Chancellor. This was something very different from the once much-contumned fawning of the former monarch. This was abject fear of the hangman."[73] On 19 July, fearing for his own life and the safety of his family, Neurath asked President Hindenburg for permission to

resign as Foreign Minister.[74] Hindenburg, however, convinced Neurath to remain at his post.[75] As long as Hindenburg was alive Neurath would have the President's strong support.[76]

Such violence that existed in Germany was also evident in Austria. On 25 July 1934, the Austrian National Socialists attempted a putsch against the Dollfuss government. Although it failed, Dollfuss was murdered in the attempt. The international community believed that Hitler was responsible for the incident. Hitler had supported the Austrian Nazis despite the advice of the Wilhelmstrasse. German diplomats were naturally upset at the turn of events. Paul Otto Schmidt told the Nuremberg Court that "the attempted Putsch in Austria and the murder of Dollfuss on 25 July 1934 seriously disturbed the career personnel of the Foreign Office because these events discredited Germany in the eyes of the world."[77] On 26 July, Hitler completely bypassed Neurath's control of relations with Austria by appointing Papen as German Ambassador to Vienna. Papen was to report directly to the Chancellor instead of Neurath on Austrian issues.[78] Within weeks, Hitler decided to back off from interference in Austria's internal affairs because of international pressure.[79] The international community saw Germany as an aggressive force about to upset the status quo. German diplomats recognized that Germany's aggressiveness during the summer of 1934 and quest to rearm had resulted in increased suspiciousness towards German intentions, and served as the catalyst that encouraged France to seek a rapproachement with both Italy and the Soviet Union.[80]

The death of President Hindenburg, on 2 August 1934, had a tremendous
act on the internal political situation of Germany. Hitler assumed sole
dership of Germany as Fuehrer and Chancellor. The result was that
ler, according to Norman Rich, held the "ultimate control of power and
hority" in Germany.[81] The death of Hindenburg meant that Neurath had no
port in the battle with Hitler for influence over the formulation and
duct of foreign policy. Neurath and the Foreign Office diplomats,
ring the consequences of opposing Hitler as well as still hoping to
luence international relations, thus agreed to the Chancellor's demand
t they swear allegiance to him.[82] The American Ambassador to Berlin,
liam Dodd, immediately noticed the change in the Foreign Minister. He
te in his diary, "Neurath heiled Hitler . . . when supreme powers were
en on. I have never seen evidence that . . . [Neurath] ever resists the
itrary conduct of the Fuehrer."[83] With firm control over the German
ernment, Hitler became his own Foreign Minister. Ernst Woermann, who
Head Counsellor for International Law in the Foreign Office in 1934,
ted at his trial at Nuremberg:

> In 1934, after Reich President von Hindenburg had died, Hitler decided foreign policy exclusively by himself, although it's a fact that there were many, and far too many, who did bother about foreign policy, too.[84]

fact, Hitler wanted to rid himself of Neurath and the Wilhelmstrasse.
Fuehrer became impatient with his professional diplomats. He commented
Hermann Rauschning:

> I told these Father Christmases at the Foreign Ministry that what they were up to was good enough for quiet times, when they can all go their sleepy way; but not good enough for creating a new Reich. They must take the trouble to learn more modern methods. Neurath is unimaginative. Shrewd as a peasant, but with no ideas.[85]

Hitler, nevertheless, retained Neurath and the professional diplomats of the Foreign Office. Even so, the Fuehrer largely ignored the Wilhelmstrasse. He "practically stopped" cabinet meetings that included Neurath.[86] Instead, he preferred to employ his own amateur diplomats in the conduct of policy formulated by himself.[87] The rise of Hitler's personal diplomats, especially Joachim von Ribbentrop, eclipsed any influence that the Wilhelmstrasse had concerning the formulation of foreign policy.[88]

Ribbentrop was born in the Rhineland city of Wesel in 1893. His family had a long tradition of serving in the military. Growing up the son of a German Army officer, the young Ribbentrop lived in Alsace-Lorraine, and later, Switzerland. He studied and became fluent in the French and English languages. As a young man Ribbentrop travelled to England, Canada, and the United States. He returned to Germany to join the German Army in 1914, and served in Berlin, and later, Turkey. After the war, Ribbentrop married into the wealthy Henkell family, which specialized in the wine and spirits trade, in 1920. He prospered in this trade himself, making high society contacts not only in Germany, but throughout Britain and France. A vain and ambitious man, Ribbentrop turned to politics in the early thirties.[89]

Ribbentrop first met Hitler at Berchtesgaden in August 1932. Count Helldorf, a Sturmabteilung leader in Berlin, introduced Ribbentrop to the rising Nazi leader because Hitler needed someone who could read foreign newspapers to him.[90] Hitler quickly took a liking to Ribbentrop, who happened to hold similar views with the Nazi leader on world affairs. Besides being a well-known anti-Bolshevik, Ribbentrop believed that Germany should seek closer ties with Britain and France. Ribbentrop's ties with the higher circles of Berlin society, as well as his accumulated knowledge of foreign affairs by way of his business trips also impressed Hitler.[91] Thus, Hitler began to use Ribbentrop as an advisor on international relations. At the same time, the ambitious Ribbentrop made the conscientious decision to attach himself to the rising Nazi leader, and played a key role in Hitler's rise to power in January 1933.[92]

Once Hitler became Chancellor, Ribbentrop believed the Nazi leader owed him an appointment to an official diplomatic position. Vice-Chancellor Papen objected to Ribbentrop replacing Buelow as Foreign Secretary, however.[93] Ribbentrop bided his time waiting for Hitler to utilize him. It was during this interim period that Ribbentrop discovered a tactic that he would successfully employ with Hitler throughout his service to the Third Reich. As Gordon Craig has written:

> He [Ribbentrop] became the most constant attendant in the Chancellor's anteroom, where, by the simple expedient of making a fine art of hanging around, he managed to have frequent talks with Germany's new ruler. In the conversations . . . , he stumbled on the technique that was to be the foundation stone of his career. This was the gift of storing away in his memory pet ideas of the Fuehrer and then

> introducing them on later occasions as ideas of his own--a procedure which could not help but persuade Hitler that Ribbentrop was a man of discernment and judgment.[94]

As already discussed, Hitler disliked professional diplomats and sought to bypass the Wilhelmstrasse in the formulation and conduct of foreign policy. Hitler and Goering, nonetheless, were highly impressed with Ribbentrop's credentials that included his knowledge of foreign languages and world affairs, personal connections abroad, party membership, and the fact that he was not a professional diplomat. Goering declared that Ribbentrop "seemed made to order."[95] In 1933, the Chancellor provided Ribbentrop money from the Nazi Party's treasury to establish an organization--the Bureau Ribbentrop--that would challenge the German Foreign Office for control over the conduct of foreign relations.[96] The Bureau Ribbentrop served as the personal foreign service of Hitler, falling under the direction of Hitler and Rudolf Hess.[97] Ribbentrop set up the Bureau across the street from the Foreign Office at Number 64 on the Wilhelmstrasse.[98] Initially it began with a small staff,[99] but the Bureau gradually increased to over 300 personnel,[100] a figure much larger than the number of staff at the Foreign Office.[101] It was staffed by men without diplomatic qualifications who sought a short cut to a career in foreign relations.[102] Nonetheless, according to Eric Kordt, a professional diplomat at the Wilhelmstrasse, the Bureau became an "exact replica of the Foreign Office" in organizational structure.[103]

Hitler began using Ribbentrop as a personal diplomat by sending him on unofficial visits to France in late 1933. Both men sought a better understanding between Germany and France concerning armament issues.[104] Ribbentrop had impressed upon Hitler that Germany needed closer relations with France, Britain, and Italy to acquire their acceptance of equal rights, rearmament, and a return to Great Power status for Germany.[105] With increasing control over foreign policy, Hitler made a direct challenge against the authority of the Foreign Office by appointing Ribbentrop as Special Commissioner for Disarmament Questions on 27 April 1934.[106] Despite Neurath's protests,[107] Hitler sent Ribbentrop on several trips to London, Paris, and Rome during April to November 1934,[108] hoping that his envoy could make use of his special contacts and make some headway regarding the acceptance of German military equality.[109] Although his talks with British Foreign Secretary Sir John Simon and French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou failed to achieve any positive results,[110] this fact did not affect Ribbentrop's standing with Hitler.[111] This affair, nevertheless, was of utmost importance concerning Neurath and the Foreign Office since it seriously curtailed their influence over the major foreign policy issue of rearmament.[112]

German rearmament and aggressiveness created instability in Europe in 1934. Fearing German intentions, the French government reacted by seeking rapproachement with Italy and the Soviet Union. Talks culminated in the Laval-Mussolini Accord on 7 January 1935. The French and Italians agreed

to oppose any unilateral rearmament by Germany, as well as to support the continuation of Austrian independence.[113] Hitler had no immediate reaction to this challenge since the Saar Plebiscite was scheduled for 13 January. He wanted the return of the Saarland from French control.[114] After a successful reacquisition of this territory, Hitler planned for his next move. Meanwhile, the Fuehrer appointed Ribbentrop as the Commissioner for Foreign Policy Questions, and attached him to Rudolf Hess' staff on 25 February.[115] Such an appointment as the top Nazi diplomat illustrated Ribbentrop's favor with Hitler.[116] Having made no advancement in gaining acceptance of German military equality, Hitler was becoming frustrated. When, during the first week of March, the British government criticized German rearmament efforts and urged for British rearmament,[117] Hitler quickly reacted by taking steps in the unilateral rearmament of Germany. On 8 March 1935, the Fuehrer made the establishment of the German Air Force public knowledge.[118] One week later, on 15 March, the Fuehrer declared the reintroduction of universal military conscription as well as declaring that Germany would not respect the Versailles military clauses limiting it to 100,000 troops in the future.[119] Both of these March announcements were planned by Hitler without the advice of the Foreign Office.[120] International tension heightened and representatives from Britain, France, and Italy met at Stresa, Switzerland, and agreed to create a common front against German unilateral rearmament on 11 April.[121] Several weeks later, in May, French Foreign Minister Pierre Laval gained a mutual defensive

arrangement with the Soviet Union in case of German aggression.[122] The Great Powers of Europe were uniting in a common front against German designs to destroy the Versailles agreement. Hitler, however, broke this front by negotiating and concluding a naval arms pact with Britain in 1935.[123]

From his earlier writings on foreign relations, Hitler had always believed that Germany should seek an arrangement with Britain over spheres of influence. He strongly desired close ties with Britain.[124] During the mid-thirties Hitler came to realize that he could only reach an accommodation with Britain if Germany recognized British supremacy on the high seas.[125] Thus, the Fuehrer was willing to offer an arms limitation agreement to Britain that would place the German Navy in a much inferior status than the Royal Navy.[126] He thought that such an arrangement would encourage the British to support German military rearmament.[127] In April 1935, shortly after Germany's declaration to rearm, Hitler received indications from Sir John Simon that the British government was willing to negotiate a naval arms limitation agreement in order to avoid a naval arms race.[128] The following month, Sir Eric Phipps, the British Ambassador to Berlin, pressed Hitler for the initiation of naval arms talks in London.[129] Hitler decided to participate, and therefore appointed Ribbentrop as German Ambassador at Large to travel to London and negotiate an agreement.[130] Beginning the talks on 4 June, Ribbentrop submitted Hitler's proposal that Germany would build a fleet only 35 percent the size of the Royal Navy's.

According to Paul Otto Schmidt, the German Foreign Office interpreter who accompanied him to London, Ribbentrop declared to Simon, "if the British Government does not immediately accept this condition, there is no point at all in continuing these negotiations. We must insist upon an immediate answer."[131] Such a tactic was shocking to the British Foreign Office, and even to the highly experienced Schmidt, but within a few days the British agreed to Hitler's demand, and Ribbentrop acquired his Anglo-German Naval Agreement on 18 June 1935.[132] Such success convinced Hitler that Ribbentrop was the obvious person to employ for implementing his ideas of a "general accommodation" with Britain.[133] Hitler hailed Ribbentrop as "greater than Bismarck" for his success in acquiring an agreement with Britain.[134]

In spite of diplomatic success in Britain, Hitler discovered that the rearmament of Germany continued to bring together states that viewed the Third Reich as a threat to European political stability. France and the Soviet Union worked to create alliances against Germany and protect the status quo. As for Germany's return to Great Power status, there was only one more Versailles military restriction still in enforcement, the demilitarization of the Rhineland, which was reinforced by the Treaty of Locarno.[135] Hitler, as well as the Wilhelmstrasse, realized they would have to negotiate against French opposition to rid themselves of the Versailles and Locarno agreements in order to reacquire full sovereignty over the Rhineland, and thus regain Great Power status. France,

nevertheless, was moving closer to ratifying the Franco-Soviet Mutual Assistance Pact. This pact, along with these two states' alliances with other European states, such as Czechoslovakia, threatened German security.[136] Hitler's attempt to dissuade France from ratifying the Franco-Soviet agreement by reassuring the French government about Germany's peaceful intentions failed, however.[137] In February 1936, Hitler confided to Ulrich von Hassell, the German Ambassador to Italy, his thoughts about using the possible ratification of the Franco-Soviet Pact as grounds for denouncing the Locarno Treaty and reoccupying the Rhineland zone with German forces.[138] He believed that the time was right for such action since the international community was busy protesting the Italian invasion of Abyssinia. Hitler had determined, and Ribbentrop encouraged such thought, that neither Britain or France would act militarily to oppose German reoccupation of the Rhineland.[139]

The French Chamber of Deputies ratified the Franco-Soviet agreement on 27 February 1936. Hitler quickly made the decision to send German troops into the Rhineland.[140] On 2 March, General Blomberg ordered a division of German forces to move into the Rhineland on 7 March 1936.[141] Hitler informed Neurath of his decision on 5 March, stating that he took the view that the Franco-Soviet Pact was incompatible with the Locarno Treaty and made it obsolete.[142] The threat of the French and Soviet alliance systems to Germany made it imperative that Hitler reoccupy the Rhineland with troops for defensive reasons.[143] Understanding Hitler's reasoning and the

desirability for the reoccupation of the Rhineland, the Foreign Minister advised Hitler against taking such a move because of the possible international reaction. Even so, Neurath had also advised Hitler that Britain and France would not intervene militarily.[144] He, however, failed to contest Hitler's decision because of his fear of the Fuehrer.[145] On the other hand, Goering, Ribbentrop, and Goebbels encouraged Hitler to remilitarize the Rhineland, and therefore, when German troops successfully reoccupied the west bank of the Rhine without any military reaction from the Versailles Powers on 7 March, their stock with the Fuehrer dramatically increased while the Wilhelmstrasse only received his contempt.[146] In fact, Hitler sent Ribbentrop, instead of a diplomat from the Foreign Office, to defend the German action to the League of Nations Council in London on 10 March 1936.[147]

In regards to the decision to reoccupy the Rhineland, both Nazi Party members and professional diplomats of the Foreign Office agreed that Hitler made the decision himself on the spur of the moment. According to witnesses, this pattern of decision-making continued throughout the Third Reich. In 1945, Hermann Goering told his Nuremberg interrogators:

> Hitler's arbitrary decisions . . . were as unquestionable as a turn in the weather. We would talk one day about something . . . and Hitler would agree with us; then suddenly a day or so later Hitler would announce that he had decided something altogether different.[148]

Ernst von Weizsaecker, the German Ambassador to Sweden (1933-36), and later Director of the Political Department (1936-38) and Foreign Secretary (1938-43),[149] declared that "Hitler was not logical. He would pull his ideas out

of the air, just like that, just as the moment inspired him."[150] As for Neurath's influence with Hitler, Weizsaecker stated during his Nuremberg trial, "Neurath saw little of Hitler--much too little, in view of Hitler's tendency to act on the spur of the moment. With Hitler, anyone who was not on the spot did not count."[151] "Decisions were made," so stated Weizsaecker, "without the Foreign Minister . . . . Sometimes they didn't even listen to him . . . ."[152] Goering even admitted that the Foreign Office had no influence over the formulation of policy. He told the Nuremberg judges:

> As far as foreign policy was concerned, Hitler only consulted his colleagues more on the . . . purely technical side. The most important and far-reaching political decisions were taken by himself, and he then announced them to his collaborato ; and colleagues as ready-made conceptions. Only very few people were allowed to discuss them, myself for instance; and the technical execution of his decisions in the field of foreign policy, when it came to the framing the diplomatic notes, was done by the Foreign Office and its minister.[153]

After the highly successful reoccupation of the Rhineland, the Fuehrer sought to complete his plans for reforming the Wilhelmstrasse. He strongly disliked professional diplomats and wanted to replace the Foreign Office leadership with Nazi Party members. Hitler planned to take control of the foreign service by integrating Ribbentrop and members of the Bureau Ribbentrop into the Wilhelmstrasse. According to one observer:

> The Fuehrer saw in the Foreign Office a body of ossified red-tape civil servants, more or less untouched by National Socialism. [H]e often made fun of the Foreign Office. He considered it to be the home of reaction and defeatism.[154]

Many foreign diplomats, including Ambassador Dodd, believed that Ribbentrop would soon become either the new Foreign Minister or State Secretary in 1935.[155] In October 1935, the Fuehrer had proposed to Neurath that Ribbentrop should replace Buelow as Foreign Secretary. But, the Foreign Minister strongly objected to the appointment of an unqualified person, such as Ribbentrop, and threatened to resign.[156] After this refusal to bend to his wishes, Hitler demanded the reform of the Wilhelmstrasse, calling for the dismissal of such "scoundrels and traitors" as Buelow.[157] On 4 November 1935, Hitler told the Neurath that, "the [Foreign Office] has refused to cooperate. It stands outside the party, refuses to understand the policies of the Fuehrer, and continued to make difficulties everywhere."[158]

Fearing Hitler's wrath, Neurath and Buelow made extensive plans to reorganize the Wilhelmstrasse. They had already started this process by disbanding Department IV (East Europe, Scandinavia, and East Asia) and transferring its responsibilities to Departments II (West, South, and South-East Europe) and III (Britain, American, and the Orient) in September 1935.[159] Such action was driven by Hitler's threat to the Jewish Director of Department IV, Richard Meyer, who was granted a leave of absence by Neurath in response to the Nuremberg Laws of September 1935 that deprived Jews of their German citizenship.[160] When Gerhard Koepke, the Director of Department II, became seriously ill, Neurath temporarily combined this department with Department III, headed by Hans Dieckhoff, in December

1935.[161] Thus, with the functions of the three main departments falling under the direction of Dieckhoff, the Foreign Minister and Buelow planned to reorganize the foreign service by reestablishing the Political Department, under the leadership of Dieckhoff, to replace Departments II and III.[162] This reorganization became effective on 15 May 1936.[163]

During this period of reorganization Neurath and the Foreign Office suffered considerable losses in diplomatic expertise. Not only did Richard Meyer retire, but Roland Koester, the German Ambassador to France died in December 1935.[164] Gerhard Koepke resigned because of his illness in early January 1936.[165] Three months later, in April, the Director of Personnel, Werner von Gruenau, also became ill and resigned while the German Ambassador to Britain, Leopold von Hoesch, unexpectedly died in London.[166] Within several months Neurath had lost his top two advisers (Meyer and Koepke), his personnel director, and the two most influential ambassadors in the foreign service. As if such losses were not enough, Foreign Secretary Bernhard Wilhelm von Buelow died of pneumonia on 21 June 1936.[167] The blows of fate had destroyed what little resistance to Hitler's policies that was left in the Foreign Office. Hans Dieckhoff was made temporary Foreign Secretary and Ernst von Weizsaecker assumed control of the Political Department.[168] Arriving in Berlin from his post in Stockholm, Weizsaecker noted the changes at the Wilhelmstrasse:

> On this occasion I found that in the Foreign Office the reins of government had slipped. Hitler had no great opinion of this office. Even then . . . he already called us a club of defeatists. He preferred information from laymen to that obtained from us. Decisions

> were taken without the Foreign Office or even the Foreign Minister being heard on the subject. Under normal conditions, an opinion is formed by the expert and is passed on to the top levels for decision. Instead of this, orders came to us out of a clear sky, from top to bottom, as an accomplished fact. Our Foreign Service had sunk to the level of a technical apparatus. It was really only a facade, the facade of a firm which had undergone considerable internal arrangements.[169]

While the Wilhelmstrasse was undergoing drastic personnel and organizational changes, the Fuehrer continued to employ Nazi diplomats in the conduct of his foreign policy. Hitler's primary focus was upon closer relations with Britain, Italy, and Japan. He sought to not only gain a free hand for German expansion into eastern Europe, but a bloc against the Soviet Union. He recognized the value of an understanding with Britain and Italy to protect any territorial acquisitions, while noting the benefit of closer German-Japanese relations aimed against the common enemy of the Soviet Union. Thus, the Fuehrer's diplomacy was aimed at securing closer relations with all three countries during 1935 to 1937.[170] He used Joachim von Ribbentrop and his Bureau to negotiate in Berlin and Tokyo, without the knowledge of the Wilhelmstrasse, closer ties with Japan as early as the spring of 1935.[171] He also employed Franz von Papen, the German Ambassador to Austria, to secretly negotiate the "Gentlemen's Agreement" with Kurt von Schuschnigg, the Austrian Chancellor, during May to July 1936, which recognized Austrian independence, in order to improve German-Italian relations, especially considering Mussolini's fears of German intentions to expand southwards.[172] Moreover, on 25 July 1936, Hitler, despite the advice of the Foreign Office,[173] began to openly back the Italian effort in

support of the forces led by General Francisco Franco against the Popular Front government during the Spanish Civil War.[174]

With the death of Buelow in June 1936, Joachim von Ribbentrop made another bid to become Foreign Secretary. Although Hitler favored this appointment, Neurath, in a rare moment of defiance, objected to Ribbentrop's appointment by threatening to resign.[175] Realizing that Hitler could not be controlled, Neurath as well as Franz von Papen, who both had much to gain with the champagne salesman out of Berlin, quickly suggested that the Fuehrer appoint Ribbentrop as the new Ambassador to Britain.[176] They reminded Hitler of Ribbentrop's connections with Britain and his success with the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, as well as pointed out that Ribbentrop was the best possible choice as an Ambassador who could acquire Hitler's long sought after Anglo-German understanding.[176] Agreeing with such logic, Hitler appointed Ribbentrop as Ambassador to Britain on 24 July 1936.[177] Neurath and Papen, however, really believed that this diplomatic assignment would destroy Ribbentrop's creditability. Papen remarked that Ribbentrop would "make a fool of himself" in London,[178] while Neurath told Galeazzo Ciano that "Ribbentrop will soon discover in London it is easier to have compliments paid to one as a representative of a brand of champagne than as a representative of the Government of the Reich."[179] Hitler, however, greatly upset Neurath by making Ribbentrop as Ambassador to Britain responsible directly to him in Anglo-German affairs, thus bypassing the control of the Wilhelmstrasse.[180]

Hitler simultaneously worked for closer relations with Britain, Italy, and Japan during 1936 and 1937. His foreign policy centered on uniting Germany with these Great Powers in an anti-communist bloc that would help secure eastern expansion for the Third Reich.[181] To carry out such policy, the Fuehrer primarily relied upon the services of Ribbentrop and his Bureau. But, Hitler also employed the traditional offices of the Wilhelmstrasse, without informing Neurath of the full extent of his plans or taking the Foreign Office's diplomatic advice, in seeking arrangements with Britain and Italy.[182] At the Nuremberg trial, Hans Dieckhoff told the court that Neurath and the Wilhelmstrasse, despite their lack of influence on the formulation of policy, continued to carry out the Fuehrer's instructions believing that Germany would peacefully pursue its goals.[183]

Hitler kept Ribbentrop in Berlin following his personal diplomat's appointment to the ambassadorship to Britain. The Fuehrer needed Ribbentrop to conclude talks for closer relations with Japan. Ribbentrop and his Bureau had been secretly negotiating for an understanding with Japan without Neurath's involvement since 1935.[184] These talks, nonetheless, had turned from the prospect of a military alliance toward an ideological agreement at the insistence of General Blomberg, the German War Minister.[185] The idea of a German-Japanese pact against the common threat of the Communist International was introduced by Hans von Raumer, a key staff member of the Bureau Ribbentrop.[186] With the full support of Hitler, Ribbentrop sought an Anti-Comintern Pact with Japan, aimed, of course,

against the Soviet Union.[187] Hitler sought closer relations with Japan to counter the Franco-Soviet threat to Germany.[188] Ribbentrop and Kintomo Mushakoji, the Japanese Ambassador to Germany, agreed to the initial terms of such a pact at the Bureau Ribbentrop on 23 October 1936.[189]

While using Ribbentrop for negotiations with Japan, the Fuehrer employed his Foreign Minister and Hermann Goering in seeking a rapproachement with Italy.[190] In pursuing closer ties with Mussolini, Hitler had already recognized Austrian independence, provided military assistance to Franco's struggle in Spain, and had recognized Italy's annexation of Abyssinia.[191] In September 1936, the German leader sent his personal legal advisor, Hans Frank, as an unofficial envoy to Rome with an invitation for Ciano, the Italian Foreign Minister and son-in-law of the Duce, to visit Germany to form an agreement for closer relations.[192] Ciano, a Germanophile,[193] travelled to Germany under Mussolini's directions in October 1936.[194] After a meeting with the Fuehrer, where Hitler professed his strong desire for closer German-Italian relations and a common front against the communist threat, Ciano and Neurath signed a protocol at the Wilhelmstrasse, drawn up by the Foreign Office, that created the Rome-Berlin Axis on 23 October 1936, the same day that across the street Ribbentrop and Mushakoji were agreeing to the Anti-Comintern Pact.[195]

Having secured initial agreements with Japan and Italy, Hitler sent Ribbentrop to London. Upon his ambassador's departure, Hitler told Ribbentrop to "bring me back the British alliance."[196] Ribbentrop arrived

in London with several members of his Bureau to present his diplomatic credentials on 30 October 1936.[197] The German ambassador immediately sensed hostility from the British Foreign Office towards any suggestion of closer relations between the two countries.[198] Sir Robert Vansittart, the Permanent Undersecretary of State at the Foreign Office, who was a Germanophobe, was at the center of British abhorence of Ribbentrop's diplomatic mission.[199] From the start, the German ambassador knew it would be "very difficult" to conclude a pact with Britain.[200] The British Foreign Office was committed to Austrian independence and the status quo in central and eastern Europe.[201] Nevertheless, Ribbentrop spoke to British politicians of Hitler's desire for closer relations with Britain and the need to join together in the common struggle against communism.[202] Despite British diplomatic advice, King Edward VIII, Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, Lord Londonderry, and Lord Halifax told Ribbentrop of their sympathy for German concerns.[203] Shortly after his arrival in London, Hitler recalled Ribbentrop to Berlin to officially sign the Anti-Comintern Pact with Japan on 25 November 1936.[204] Ribbentrop spent the next thirteen months travelling back and forth between Britain and Germany to attend to Hitler's diplomatic needs. His unprofessional diplomatic behavior in London as well as his frequent absences offended many of the leading British politicians.[205] Wilhelmstrasse diplomats, however, recognized that Ribbentrop's motive for these frequent trips was to maintain his influence with Hitler.[206] Ernst Woermann, who Neurath had appointed the German

Embassy Counsellor in London, not only spied upon, but handled Ribbentrop's diplomatic affairs during these absences.[207]

Fearing that the political instability of Europe might lead to war, the Baldwin government, despite the advice of the British Foreign Office, sought closer relations with Germany in order to obtain a security arrangement in western Europe to replace the Locarno Treaty.[208] Ribbentrop found Lord Halifax, who was serving as the Acting Foreign Secretary during Sir Anthony Eden's illness, and Lord Derby, a leading British Conservative politician, desiring a "friendly understanding" between Britain and Germany to avoid any possibility of war.[209] In April 1937, the Baldwin government replaced the pessimistic Sir Eric Phipps with Sir Nevile Henderson, a Germanophile, as the British Ambassador to Berlin, with hopes of achieving an understanding with Hitler.[210] Now, beginning in May 1937, the actions of certain British statesmen began to give Hitler the impression that Britain's desire to avoid war would include allowing Germany a free hand in central and eastern Europe. The British government bypassed its Foreign Office and sent an unofficial envoy to Berlin to sound out Hitler's intentions. On 4 May, Lord Lothian told Hitler during their conversation that "Britain had no primary interests in Eastern Europe."[211] At the same time, Henderson, after conversations with the Fuehrer, began urging the British government to acquiesce to peaceful German expansion in central and eastern Europe.[212] Shortly before becoming Prime Minister, Sir Neville Chamberlain, as well as Baldwin and Eden pressed their desires for an

Anglo-German rapproachement to General Blomberg during his London visit on 13 and 14 May 1937.[213] Ribbentrop noted, however, that these politicians would not discuss as to how an understanding could be achieved.[214]

From Berlin, Henderson continued to appeal to the British Foreign Office for a rapproachement with Germany. Reporting Hitler's position on international affairs, the British Ambassador suggested that the Chamberlain government support the German annexation of Austria and other Germanic peoples, eastward expansion, and the return of Germany's lost overseas colonies.[215] He argued that "Germany is now too powerful to be persuaded or compelled to enter into an Eastern Pact, that a certain German predominance eastward is inevitable . . . ."[216] The British government carefully considered such arguments, but placed its major diplomatic efforts towards acquiring a Western European security pact to replace the Locarno agreement.[217] By November 1937, however, Foreign Secretary Eden began to regret his appointment of Henderson to Berlin, and directed him not to encourage Hitler into believing that Britain "would contemplate any settlement at the expense of the political independence of the nations of Eastern and Central Europe."[218]

By this time Hitler had made up his mind that it was highly unlikely that Britain would militarily intervene in any German attempts to incorporate German populated areas in central or eastern Europe. He perceived Britain's failure to pressure Germany into a Western European security pact as proof of the Chamberlain government's lack of interest in

European affairs.[219] But, in an effort to gain an understanding between the two countries that favored Germany, Hitler had Ribbentrop inform the British Foreign Secretary of German-Italian negotiations for the Italian admission into the Anti-Comintern Pact as a way to pressure Britain into making a decision to join the pact in October 1937. The Fuehrer believed that Britain's admission into the pact would guarantee Germany a free hand in eastern Europe.[220]

The Nazi hierarchy was well aware of Hitler's foreign policy plans for the annexation of Austria and the reacquisition of German territory lost in the Versailles agreement. Eastward expansion to provide living space for the German race was a theme of Hitler's for over a decade. Goering had informed Ambassador Henderson on numerous occasions during the summer and fall of 1937 that Germany had designs on regaining Danzig, Memel, and the Polish Corridor.[221] Thus, on 5 November 1937, when Hitler assembled his key staff in the Reich Chancellery to discuss his policy plans at the so-called Hossbach meeting, party members, such as Goering, were not surprised to hear the Fuehrer's plans for aggressive action to conquer Austria and Czechoslovakia.[222] Nevertheless, Foreign Minister Neurath, as well as General Blomberg, were surprised by the unfolding of such plans. Neurath had been out of contact with Hitler for many months since the German leader had favored the counsel of Ribbentrop and his Bureau over the Wilhelmstrasse.[223] During the meeting Hitler, who was obviously confident of his own strength and the military weakness of the other Great Powers,

insisted that Britain and France would not intervene during a German move against Austria and Czechoslovakia because of the German-Italian bloc.[224]

Having obtained the Axis agreement in 1936, the Fuehrer had immediately started diplomatic talks towards acquiring a stronger bond with Italy in order to strengthen his control over affairs in central Europe. Hitler understood that a German-Italian agreement would suffice as the necessary diplomatic tool to use in pursuit of his ambitions in central and eastern Europe in case Ribbentrop could not achieve an Anglo-German understanding.[225] For his own reasons, Mussolini also sought closer Italo-German relations, to include the coordination of defense matters in the event of war against Britain and France.[226] Hitler therefore employed the diplomatic services of Goering, Ribbentrop, Raumer, as well as the Wilhelmstrasse to negotiate the Italian admission to the German-Japanese Anti-Comintern Pact.[227] In September 1937, Mussolini visited Berlin and displayed visible signs to the diplomatic community of Italian submission to Hitler's desires.[228] Shortly thereafter, in October, the German leader sent Ribbentrop to Rome to conclude the Anti-Comintern Pact with Italy.[229] The agreement was formally signed, without any German Foreign Office involvement, by Ribbentrop and Ciano in Berlin on 6 November 1937, the day after the Hossbach meeting.[230] On the significance of this agreement, Andre Francois-Poncet, the French Ambassador to Berlin, stated, "Britain and France, separated from Central Europe by a solid barrier, were now powerless directly to succor Austria or Czechoslovakia."[231] The Italian

Foreign Minister, Ciano, viewed the pact with Germany as "ostensibly anti-Communist but in reality anti-British."[232]

Even so, Adolf Hitler still had hopes of an Anglo-German understanding. He continued to meet with important British statesmen, including the Duke of Windsor, the former King Edward VIII, to discuss the possibility of an arrangement in eastern Europe.[233] The Chamberlain government, in spite of the British Foreign Office, wanted a settlement. The Prime Minister thus sent Lord Halifax, the Lord President of the Council, who had a keen interest in foreign policy, to Germany in an effort to gain an Anglo-German understanding so as to avoid the possibility of a European war.[234] Foreign Secretary Eden and Permanent Undersecretary Vansittart were highly against the visit, but Chamberlain insisted.[235]

The Halifax diplomatic mission had the effect of confirming Hitler's notions that Germany could eventually expand eastwards without British intervention. At Berchtesgaden, on 19 November 1937, he Fuehrer told Lord Halifax of his aims for "a close union between Austria and the Reich" as well as security for the Sudeten Germans.[236] Paul Otto Schmidt, the Wilhelmstrasse interpreter, recorded the conversation between Hitler and Halifax. According to Schmidt:

> Halifax admitted of his own accord that certain changes in the European system could probably not be avoided in the long run. The British did not believe that the status quo had to be maintained under all circumstances. Among the questions in which changes would probably be made sooner or later were Danzig, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. England was only interested in seeing that such changes were brought about by peaceful development.[237]

Lord Halifax made such comments, as he later explained to the British government, with the view that Hitler had no immediate plans to expand into central or eastern Europe.[238]

While the British government was warming up, albeit slowly, to an Anglo-German understanding, Joachim von Ribbentrop was becoming frustrated in his seemingly lack of success in quickly achieving Hitler's much wanted alliance. He had suffered the coldness of Sir Anthony Eden, Sir Robert Vansittart, and the diplomats of the British Foreign Office.[239] He had no breakthrough in convincing Sir Winston Churchill of the mutual benefits of an Anglo-German agreement.[240] The German Ambassador thus came to the conclusion that his diplomatic mission was a failure.[241] He blamed his dismal performance on Hitler's ties with Mussolini and Franco as well as the German demand for the return of lost overseas colonies.[242] Most importantly, Ribbentrop believed that "there was a very strong tendency of very important Englishmen who . . . in their internal policy, if not outwardly, [took] a very firm stand against Germany, thinking that one day . . . Germany would get too strong."[243]

Towards the end of 1937, Joachim von Ribbentrop prepared a report that included his estimation of Anglo-German relations. The Ambassador admitted his failed diplomatic mission. He informed Hitler that since Germany planned to expand into central and eastern Europe the hope of an understanding with Britain was at an end. The future, and the likelihood of war between them, depended upon whether Britain would follow France in

defense of her Eastern allies. Britain, according to Ribbentrop, would not consent to be dragged into a conflict if conditions were unfavorable for the Empire. He told the Fuehrer that "over a local problem in central Europe, even if it were to add considerably to Germany's strength, England would, in my opinion, not risk a struggle for the survival of her Empire."[244] Ribbentrop strongly suggested that Germany solidify its alliance with Italy and Japan so as to deter any British prospect of intervention against German designs in central and eastern Europe. He summed up his analyzation by stating that:

> The special problem as to whether France and thereby England would intervene if Germany should become involved in a conflict in Central Europe depends upon circumstances and the time when such a conflict were to break out and end upon military considerations . . . .[245]

Many contemporaries blamed Ribbentrop for Hitler's firm belief that Britain would not intervene in a local European conflict because of his advice. After all, Ribbentrop was considered by Hitler the expert on Britain, and, therefore, his opinions were of utmost significance.[246] Franz von Papen wrote in his memoirs, "Ribbentrop's opinion that the British Empire had passed its peak, and would no longer take military steps to restore the balance of power in Europe, formed the basis for Hitler's aggressive plans against Czechoslovakia and Poland."[247] But, Papen and others, such as Hermann Goering, Ernst von Weizsaecker, Eric Kordt, and Ernst Woermann, who have stated similar arguments, were unfair to Ribbentrop, whom they despised.[248] Hitler had formed his own evaluation

based upon contacts with British statesmen that Britain was unlikely to intervene in German expansion towards the east. Ribbentrop knew Hitler's beliefs, since the two had had numerous chats on international affairs since the early thirties, and in his own typical way of endearing himself to the Fuehrer, had adopted and repeated Hitler's viewpoint. Ribbentrop's only influence during the late thirties concerning the question of whether the British would intervene in the event of German expansion was to reinforce the Fuehrer's already formed opinion. The relationship between Hitler and Ribbentrop was best stated by Paul Otto Schmidt, who spent long hours with both men:

> His [Ribbentrop] relationship to Hitler was one of extreme dependency. If Hitler was displeased with him, Ribbentrop went sick and took to his bed like a hysterical woman. He was indeed nothing but his master's voice . . . ."[249]

Hitler, himself, found Ribbentrop a "sturdy and obstinate man", despite his companion's disagreeable personality.[250] Andre Francois-Poncet, the French Ambassador to Berlin during 1931 to 1938, nonetheless, best described the Hitler-Ribbentrop relationship in his memoirs:

> Typical of the perfect courtier, he [Ribbentrop] would hurl thunderbolts of flattery at Hitler without turning a hair. His method of keeping in favor was very simple. It consisted in listening religiously to his master's endless monologues and in committing to memory the ideas developed by Hitler. Also, more importantly, Ribbentrop noted the intentions to be divined behind these ideas. Then, after Hitler had forgotten ever discussing them with Ribbentrop, the courtier passed them off as his own, unfolding them with great warmth. Struck by this concordance, Hitler attributed to his collaborator a sureness of judgment and a trenchant foresight singularly in agreement with his own deepest thought. He [Ribbentrop] not only never contradicted his master or offered the slightest objection, he also systematically piled argument upon argument in

> agreement. He was more Hitlerian than Hitler. By clearing up the Fuehrer's doubts and by dissipating the Fuehrer's occasional hesitancies Ribbentrop excited the Fuehrer's supreme audacity; he pushed and pulled him into ways toward which Hitler was all too dangerously inclined.[251]

Even Weizsaecker admitted to the Nuremberg court that "Ribbentrop had a special gift for approaching Hitler in an intuitive manner, listening for his opinion and then exceeding, and outdoing him in his own opinions."[252] Ribbentrop, however, was the favorite target among the Nazi Party elite as well as the Foreign Office for blame to all German foreign policy failures. Ribbentrop was considered an outsider by the Party elite because of his late involvement with Hitler, and the Wilhelmstrasse viewed him as an usurper of its traditional responsibilites for international affairs.[253]

The rise of Ribbentrop had completely eclipsed the little control over foreign affairs held by Constantin von Neurath. For some time Neurath had lived in fear of Hitler's wrath towards the Wilhelmstrasse.[254] He had lost in the struggle for influence with Ribbentrop and his Bureau.[255] Hitler had sent Hans Dieckhoff, the Foreign Secretary, away from Berlin to an unimportant post in the United States.[256] With the loss of many key diplomats at the top positions within the Wilhelmstrasse in less than a year, the Foreign Minister, despite the appointment of his son-in-law, Hans-Georg von Mackensen, a Nazi Party member, to the post of Foreign Secretary, admitted defeat to Hitler's absolute control over foreign policy.[257] After the Hossbach conference, Neurath "was so deeply shaken that he decided once and for all," according to Harold Deutsch, "that he

would have no truck with such a policy."[258] Commenting on the Hossbach meeting, Neurath told the Nuremberg court:

> Although the plans set forth by Hitler in that long speech had no concrete form, and various possibilities were envisaged, it was quite obvious to me that the whole tendency of his plans was of an aggressive nature. I was extremely upset at Hitler's speech, because it knocked the bottom out of the whole foreign policy which I had consistently pursued--the policy of employing only peaceful means.[259]

He thus sought an audience with the Fuehrer to hand in his resignation. But, Hitler, who left for Berchtesgaden, refused to see his Foreign Minister.[260] Neurath, mentally and physically upset about the Hossbach meeting, and ordered to remain silent about Hitler's plans, suffered a heart attack while waiting for the Fuehrer to return to Berlin.[261] Hitler, finally, after over two months, agreed to see Neurath in order to allow him the opportunity to submit his retirement papers on 14 January 1938.[262] But, the Fuehrer refused to allow Neurath to retire on his sixty-fifth birthday at the end of January 1938.[263]

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

1. Carr, Arms, Autarky and Aggression, 29-30.

2. Craig, "The Professional Diplomat and His Problems, 1919-1939," 207.

3. Hildebrand, The Third Reich, 15-16.

4. Klaus Hildebrand, The Foreign Policy of the Third Reich, trans. Anthony Fothergill (Berkeley and London: The University of California Press, 1973), 28.

5. Ernst von Weizsaecker testimony, 10 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 137, Folder 2, 8086-87; Weizsaecker testimony, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 10, 7605; Minutes of the Conference of the Heads of Departments, 24 May 1933, DGFP(C), 1:483-85. As early as July 1933, Mussolini had complained that "there seemed to be six if not seven members of the German Government who acted from time to time as Foreign Minister. Hitler, . . . Neurath, Goering . . . , von Papen, Goebbels, and Rosenberg not to mention General Blomberg who was brought into all discussions of foreign affairs. This rendered dealing with the German Government a matter of considerable difficulty" (Graham to Vansittart, 26 July 1933, DBFP, second series, 5:448).

6. Weizsaecker, 86, 88.

7. Gerhard Koepke testimony, 26 June 1946, TMWC, 17:108.

8. Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 71.

9. Weizsaecker testimony, 7 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 10, 7599.

10. Fox, Germany and the Far Eastern Crisis 1931-1938, 3, 6.

11. Lee and Michalka, 142; Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 72.

12. Francois-Poncet, 232.

13. Ibid., 29.

14. Rauschning, _Men of Chaos_, 175-76; Fox, _Germany and the Far Eastern Crisis 1931-1938_, 25.

15. Francois-Poncet, 182-83; Heineman, _Hitler's First Foreign Minister_, 131.

16. Weizsaecker, 88.

17. Koepke testimony, 26 June 1946, _TMWC_, 17:108; Constantin von Neurath testimony, 24 June 1946, _TMWC_, 16:638; Heineman, _Hitler's First Foreign Minister_, 73.

18. Weizsaecker, 110.

19. Papen, 332.

20. Heineman, "Neurath as Foreign Minister," 255.

21. Editorial note, _DGFP(C)_, 1:18-20; Kimmich, 163-64.

22. Heineman, _Hitler's First Foreign Minister_, 90.

23. Neurath interrogation testimony, 3 October and 12 November 1945, _NCA_, Sup. B, 1488-89, 1503; Kimmich, 150.

24. Neurath testimony, 22 June 1946, _TMWC_, 16:616; Neurath to Hitler, 19 June 1933, _TMWC_, 40:469; Kimmich, 184; Weinberg, _The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany_, 1:160.

25. Weinberg, _The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany_, 1:160; Kimmich, 175.

26. Neurath interrogation testimony, 12 November 1945, _NCA_, Sup. B, 1504. See also Weinberg, _The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany_, 1:164, 166.

27. Hitler, _Hitler's Secret Book_, 112.

28. Neurath interrogation testimony, 12 November 1945, _NCA_, Sup. B, 1504.

29. Bernhard Wilhelm von Buelow memorandum, 4 October 1933, _DGFP(C)_, 1:887; Kimmich, 175, 178, 186, 207.

30. Conference of Ministers minutes, 13 October 1933, DGFP(C), 1:922-26.

31. Neurath announced Germany's withdrawal from the Disarmament Conference on 14 October and from the League of Nations on 21 October 1933. NCA, 2:1018; Kimmich, 190.

32. Neurath testimony, 24 June 1946, TMWC, 16:621.

33. Craig, "The German Foreign Office from Neurath to Ribbentrop," 415.

34. Jozef Lipski, Diplomat in Berlin, 1933-1939: Papers and Memoirs of Jozef Lipski, Ambassador of Poland, ed. Waclaw Jedrzejewicz (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1968), 71.

35. Neurath memorandum, 2 May 1933, DGFP(C), 1:365-67; Lipski to Beck, The Polish White Book: Official Documents Concerning Polish-German and Polish-Soviet Relations, 1933-1939, ed. Polish Government-in-Exile (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1940), 16.

36. Lipski, 71.

37. Ibid., 75; Moltke to Neurath, 23 April 1933, DGFP(C), 1:328-33; Koch to Neurath, 25 April 1933, DGFP(C), 1:343.

38. Lipski to Debicki, 3 December 1933, Diplomat in Berlin, 1933-1939, 107; William Carr, Hitler: A Study in Personality and Politics (London: Edward Arnold, 1978), 49; Klaus Hildebrand, "Hitler's Policy Towards France until 1936," chap. in German Foreign Policy from Bismarck to Adenauer: The Limits of Statecraft, trans. Louise Willmot (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 133-34.

39. Lipski to Beck, 25 January 1934, Diplomat in Berlin, 1933-1939, 124.

40. Neurath memorandum, 2 May 1933, DGFP(C), 1:365-67; Wysocki to Beck, 2 May 1933, Diplomat in Berlin, 1933-1939, 79.

41. Wysocki to Beck, 2 May 1933, Diplomat in Berlin, 1933-1939, 79.

42. Conference of Minister minutes, 7 April 1933, DGFP(C), 1:256-60; Lee and Michalka, 147; Neurath to Nadolny, 13 November 1933, DGFP(C), 2:123; Craig, "The German Foreign Office from Neurath to Ribbentrop," 417.

43. Moltke to Neurath, 20 May 1933, DGFP(C), 1:470-71.

44. Neurath memorandum, 25 September 1933, DGFP(C), 1:840; Neurath memorandum, 26 September 1933, DGFP(C), 1:842.

45. Ambassador Lipski arrived in Berlin in October 1933. The ambassadorship had been vacant since July. Lipski, 94; Francois-Poncet, 110.

46. Neurath to Nadolny, 13 November 1933, DGFP(C), 2:123.

47. Lipski, 98-99.

48. Meyer to Moltke, 15 November 1933, DGFP(C), 2:128-29; Lipski, 97; Lipski to Beck, 30 November 1933, Diplomat in Berlin, 1933-1939, 101.

49. Meyer memorandum, 23 November 1933, DGFP(C), 2:146; Lipski, 97, 103; Craig, "The German Foreign Office from Neurath to Ribbentrop," 417-18; Lipski to Debicki, 3 December 1933, Diplomat in Berlin, 1933-1939, 107.

50. Lipski to Beck, 5 February 1934, Diplomat in Berlin: 1933-1939, 126.

51. Meyer memorandum, 23 November 1933, DGFP(C), 2:146; Neurath to Moltke, 24 November 1933, DGFP(C), 2:148-49; Moltke to Neurath, 28 November 1933, DGFP(C), 2:156-57; Neurath memorandum, 9 January 1934, DGFP(C), 2:312-14; Gaus memorandum, 22 January 1934, DGFP(C), 2:393-95.

52. Zygmunt J. Gasiorowski, "The German-Polish Nonaggression Pact of 1934," Journal of Central European Affairs 15 (April 1955), 14.

53. Nadolny to Neurath, 5 January 1934, DGFP(C), 2:301-4; Nadolny to Neurath, 9 January 1934, DGFP(C), 2:318-22; Nadolny to Buelow, 23 January 1934, DGFP(C), 2:408-10. After the German-Polish Nonaggression Pact, Nadolny continued his warnings of Soviet intentions to seek rapproachement with France until his resignation in April 1934 (Nadolny to Neurath, 12 April 1934, DGFP(C), 2:739-40. See also Lee and Michalka, 147-48).

54. Lipski to Beck, 5 February 1934, Diplomat in Berlin, 1933-1939, 126.

55. George F. Kennan, Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown, and Company, 1960), 300.

56. Craig, "The German Foreign Office from Neurath to Ribbentrop," 415, 418.

57. As quoted in Hildebrand, "Hitler's Policy Towards France until 1936," 125.

58. Poole, 130.

59. Francois-Poncet, 121-22. Hitler also counted on British support for German rearmament.

60. Jaeckel, 44.

61. Papen, 298-99.

62. Denis Mack Smith, Mussolini (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), 96.

63. Buelow to Neurath, 1 August 1933, DGFP(C), 1:708-12.

64. Koepke to Rieth, 22 March 1933, DGFP(C), 1:193-95.

65. Gerhard Koepke testimony, 26 June 1946, TMWC, 17:112. See also Hans Dieckhoff testimony, 26 June 1946, TMWC, 17:123; Papen 300.

66. Eric Kordt testimony, 4 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 7, 7364; Papen, 299; Juergen Gehl, Austria, Germany, and the Anschluss 1931-1938 (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1963), 59.

67. Hassell to Neurath, 29 March 1934, DGFP(C), 2:690-91; Hitler to Papen, 26 July 1933, DGFP(C), 2:252; Neurath to Buelow, 31 July 1933, DGFP(C), 1:708; Conference of Ministers minutes, 26 May 1933, DGFP(C), 1:487-90; Carr, Hitler, 49; Gehl, 59; Heineman, "Neurath as Foreign Minister," 378; Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel, Goering (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962), 143.

68. Papen, 300; Neurath testimony, 24 June 1946, TMWC, 16:630; Gehl, 96-97.

69. Gehl, 96-97.

70. Hassell to Neurath, 29 March 1934, DGFP(C), 2:691; Neurath memorandum, 15 June 1934, DGFP(C), 3:13-14. This was Hitler's first visit abroad other than Austria and the time served on the western front during the First World War (Poole, 132).

71. Neurath memorandum, 15 June 1934, DGFP(C), 3:10-11.

72. William L. Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany (London: Secker and Warburg, 1959), 213-226.

73. Hermann Rauschning, Voice of Destruction (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1940), 167.

74. Heineman, "Neurath as Foreign Minister," 257; Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 80.

75. Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 80.

76. Heineman, "Neurath as Foreign Minister," 255.

77. Paul Otto Schmidt affidavit, 28 November 1945, NCA, 5:1101-102.

78. Hitler to Papen, 26 July 1934, DGFP(C), 3:252-53.

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130. Ribbentrop testimony, 1 April 1946, TMWC, 10:235; Ribbentrop biographical data, D-472, NCA, 7:60.

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132. Anglo-German Naval Talks memorandum, 6 June 1935, DGFP(C), 4:277-81; Dodd, 257; Carr, Hitler, 50; Ribbentrop biographical data, D-472, NCA, 7:60.

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154. Fraulein Blank testimony, 23 March 1946, TMWC, 10:189.

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160. Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 139; Editor's note, DGFP(C), 4:941.

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164. Dirksen to Ermannsdorff, 1 January 1936, DGFP(C), 4:952; DGFP(C), 4:941; Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 141.

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CHAPTER VI

HITLER, RIBBENTROP, AND THE ROAD TO WAR

Since 1933 Adolf Hitler had acted as the prime formulator of German foreign policy. He had pursued closer relations with Britain, France, Austria, Italy, Japan, and Poland with the aim of reestablishing Germany as a Great Power in central Europe as well as creating an anti-Soviet bloc. He accomplished a rapproachement with Poland and Austria, a pact with Italy and Japan, and continued talks with Britain concerning a general understanding. His main goals were a close union between Germany and his homeland of Austria, the reacquisition of lost German territory, an understanding with Britain concerning spheres of influence, and eastward expansion for the German race. In developing a bloc that challenged the status quo, Hitler employed his anti-communist sentiments to unite Germany with Italy and Japan. Such diplomacy successfully placed Germany in a dominant position in central and eastern Europe. The Berlin-Rome Axis, along with Hitler's perception of British and French unwillingness to intervene militarily against German actions, only encouraged Hitler to pursue his foreign policy goals. To carry out his foreign policy the Fuehrer had relied mainly upon amateur diplomats, such as Joachim von Ribbentrop, while bypassing the German Foreign Office. Having regained Great Power status and a strong diplomatic position for Germany, Hitler

decided to take control of the Wilhelmstrasse. He would be his own Foreign Minister. The Fuehrer, however, decided not to officially appoint himself to the office, but to appoint the loyal and subservient Ribbentrop to this top position. Ribbentrop, fully reliant upon the Fuehrer's wishes, would serve his master not as a Foreign Minister, but as Hitler's top diplomat. Hitler, himself, would remain the primary formulator of German foreign policy.[1]

In early 1938 Hitler decided to take direct control over the Foreign Office and the German Army. He dismissed General Werner von Blomberg, the War Minister, and General Werner von Fritsch, the Commander-in-Chief of the German Army, because of scandals, and took command of the German military.[2] At the same time, on 4 February 1938, Hitler informed Constantin von Neurath of his dismissal as Foreign Minister.[3] Ribbentrop would take his place.[4] The news surprised both Neurath and Ribbentrop, who happened to be in Berlin, absent from his diplomatic post in London.[5] Simultaneous with these actions, Hitler shook up the foreign service by announcing the termination of the diplomatic assignments of Franz von Papen, Ulrich von Hassell, and Herbert von Dirksen to their ambassadorial posts in Vienna, Rome, and Tokyo.[6] Neurath was told of his appointment to the newly created Secret Cabinet Council.[7] Dirksen was to be transferred to London as a replacement for Ribbentrop,[8] while Papen was to find further use as an expert on Austro-German affairs,[9] and Hassell was retired because of his opposition to the anti-Comintern pacts.[10] Hans-Georg von Mackensen, the

Foreign Secretary, was relieved of his post and transferred to the embassy in Rome.[11] The decision to appoint Ribbentrop as Foreign Minister was not easy for Hitler, since Hermann Goering, his close personal friend, showed interest in the post. But, the Fuehrer obviously wanted no one of intellect and influence to be in a central position to interfere with his foreign policy.[12] Goering, according to Leonidas Hill, was more influential with Hitler over matters of foreign affairs than Ribbentrop during this period.[13]

The sudden appointment of Ribbentrop as Foreign Minister astonished the Wilhelmstrasse and foreign diplomats in Berlin. The professional diplomats viewed the champagne salesman as unqualified to hold such a highly esteemed position. Ribbentrop lacked adequate diplomatic training and had very little experience in the foreign service. As Andre Francois-Poncet, the French Ambassador to Berlin, summed up Ribbentrop: "The new Minister for Foreign Affairs was neither prepared nor fitted for his office. Culturally and intellectually he was mediocre. His ignorance of historical and diplomatic questions was prodigious."[14] One major diplomatic shortcoming was Ribbentrop's lack of communicative skills. He, according to Ernst von Weizsaecker, the Director of the Political Department, "had no feeling for the most important means of diplomacy; that is, for diplomatic conversation."[15] Most importantly, Weizsaecker noted that the new Foreign Minister "did not possess the art of listening, certainly not with regard to German professional diplomats anyway, nor with

regard to foreign diplomats either."[16] Confirming this view of Ribbentrop, Francois-Poncet declared:

> It was difficult to conduct a genuine conversation with him [Ribbentrop]. Like the Fuehrer he copied, he indulged in lengthy monologues; he never caught, let alone retained, the arguments of his interlocator; he listened only to himself, repeating the lesson he had learned.[17]

Despite disliking the new Foreign Minister, there were members of the Wilhelmstrasse who viewed the appointment of Ribbentrop as an opportunity for the Foreign Office to regain influence over the formulation and conduct of policy.[18] Weizsaecker told the American Military Tribunal that "some of my colleagues thought it was a good thing [the appointment of Ribbentrop] because in this way the actual advisor of Hitler in foreign affairs would now also have the official responsibility."[19] They believed that Ribbentrop could be manipulated into following their advice.[20] These diplomats, however, misjudged Ribbentrop's influence over Hitler's foreign policy. The new mininster had no clout with Hitler, at least compared to the significance of Hermann Goering, Rudolf Hess, and Heinrich Himmler.[21] In February 1938, Goering told Nevile Henderson, the British Ambassador to Berlin, that Ribbentrop had no influence in the formulation of German foreign policy, adding that "there is only one person dictating foreign policy in Germany, and that is Hitler himself."[22] Herbert von Dirksen saw Ribbentrop as "nothing but the Dictator's message boy . . . ."[23] Even Ribbentrop, himself, realized his own personal shortcomings and told the

French Ambassador, "the policy I follow is not mine but the Fuehrers."[24] During his trial at Nuremberg, Ribbentrop told the court:

> It was clear to me from the very beginning, after I took over the ministry, that I would be working, so to speak, in the shadow of a titan and that I would have to impose on myself certain limitations, that is to say, that I would not be in a position, one might almost say, to conduct the foreign policy as it is done by other foreign ministers, who are responsible to a parliamentary system or a parliament. The commanding personality of the Fuehrer naturally dominated the foreign policy . . . . He [Hitler] occupied himself with all details. It went like this more or less: I reported to him and forwarded to him important foreign policy reports through a liaison man, and Hitler in turn gave me definitive orders as to what views I should take in regard to problems of foreign policy . . . .[25]

Having appointed his top Nazi diplomat as Foreign Mininster during the first week of February 1938, Hitler quickly utilized Ribbentrop to assist him in the conduct of German policy towards Austria. The Austrian Chancellor, Kurt von Schuschnigg, had informed the Wilhelmstrasse about fears that Hitler's purge of his top generals and diplomats might represent a change in German policy towards Austria.[26] Wilhelm Keppler, a Nazi who Hitler used as an envoy to Austria after Papen's dismissal,[27] forwarded Schuschnigg's request for a meeting with Hitler to discuss the future of Austro-German relations.[28] Thus the two leaders with their respective foreign ministers met at Berchtesgaden on 12 February 1938. Franz von Papen, who was temporarily reinstated as Ambassador to Austria, accompanied Hitler and Ribbentrop to provide them diplomatic advice, especially since the Foreign Minister was uninformed about Austro-German relations as well as being unsure of himself.[29] At this meeting Hitler browbeat Schuschnigg to accept his demands for a closer union between the two states. The

Fuehrer had Ribbentrop hand over his list of demands to the Austrian Foreign Minister, Guido Schmidt.[30] Ribbentrop, in his arrogant style of diplomacy, told Schmidt that "these demands that I now offer you are the final demands of the Fuehrer and that he, Hitler, is not prepared to further discuss them."[31] Ribbentrop strongly advised the Austrians to accept Hitler's demands. Meanwhile, Hitler pressured Schuschnigg by declaring: "You will sign it [the protocol] and fulfill my demands in three days, or I will march into Austria."[32] These demands, actually drafted by Hitler and Ribbentrop earlier that day, on the basis of Keppler's advice, called for Schuschnigg to appoint Nazis to key Austrian posts, including Arthur Seyss-Inquart to the post of Austrian Minister of Security and the Interior; meetings between the general staffs; an exchange of military officers; and the assimilation of the Austro-German economic system within a matter of days.[33] The pressure by both Hitler and Ribbentrop resulted in Schuschnigg and Schmidt agreeing to the demands.[34]

Throughout the following weeks Hitler pressured the Austrian government to meet the provisions of the Berchtesgaden Protocol. Although they found Ribbentrop useful at Berchtesgaden, Hitler and Goering kept Austro-German relations to themselves and limited the involvement of the Wilhelmstrasse.[35] Meanwhile, the British government, which was troubled by the Berchtesgaden Protocol, sought an understanding with Hitler.[36] Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain dismissed Sir Anthony Eden and Sir Robert Vansittart, and replaced the leadership of the British Foreign Office with

men, such as Lord Halifax and Sir Alexander Cadogan, who were advocates of an Anglo-German understanding.[37] With no immediate plans for action,[38] Hitler, as well as his Foreign Office, began to perceive that Britain understood the Fuehrer's desire to expand into central and eastern Europe.[39] On 4 March 1938, in a conversation with the British Ambassador, Hitler acquired the perception that Sir Nevile Henderson supported the German annexation of Austria.[40]

On 8 March 1938, Ribbentrop travelled to London to finish his business there as ambassador. The following day, on 9 March, the Austrian Chancellor announced a plebiscite to be held on the thirteenth in order to gain support for continued Austrian independence. This compelled Hitler to take action. He immediately sent Keppler to Vienna to delay or prevent the plebiscite.[41] For the next twenty-four hours the Fuehrer was indecisive about what action to take.[42] Goering urged Hitler to mobilize the German Army and invade Austria.[43] The Fuehrer weighed the diplomatic and military possibilities and made the sudden decision, about midnight on the ninth, in favor of military action, with the firm belief that neither Britain or France would militarily intervene.[44]

The following day, on 10 March, Hitler gave Goering authority to conduct German operations during the Austrian crisis.[45] Goering, who held a high opinion of the former Foreign Minister,[46] recalled Neurath, who had happened to stay in Berlin, to the Chancellery.[47] Acting independent of the Foreign Office, Neurath, advised the German leadership to oppose the

plebiscite which might result in an international guarantee of Austrian independence. He favored mobilization to threaten Austria, but opposed an actual invasion.[48] Hitler and Goering, nonetheless, informed Neurath that they had already decided on the military option.[49] Meanwhile, the German leadership had drafted orders for Austrian Nazis to take to the streets and demonstrate against the Schuschnigg government, as well as an ultimatum to Schuschnigg to call off the plebiscite and resign in favor of Seyss-Inquart.[50] At the same time, they requested the opinions of the German Ambassadors in London and Paris as to the expected reaction from Britain and France.[51] Goering, who did not want the new Foreign Minister to interfere with the Austrian Question, demanded that Ribbentrop stay in London during the crisis to handle the reaction of the Chamberlain government.[52] Ribbentrop, after meeting with the Prime Minister, reported back to Hitler that Britain strongly desired to avoid war. He stated:

> What now will England do if the Austrian question cannot be settled peacefully? Basically, I am convinced that England . . . will do nothing in regard to it at present, but that she would exert a moderating influence upon the other powers. I believe that the French would not go to war now over a German solution of the Austrian question, and neither would the allies of France . . . .[53]

Curt Braeuer, the Counselor at the German Embassy in Paris, informed his government that, in his opinion, France would not intervene in Austria.[54] Thus, the international situation looked favorable for Hitler's invasion of Austria.

Receiving the ultimatum from Hitler, Schuschnigg bowed to German pressure and called off the plebiscite before resigning on 11 March 1938.

Hitler had completely bypassed the Foreign Office during the entire affair. Ribbentrop had been kept in London unaware of Hitler's intentions,[55] while Weizsaecker, who was asked by the new Foreign Minister to become his State Secretary on 5 March,[56] was not informed of the impending military action until the eleventh.[57] During the afternoon of 11 March, while Ribbentrop was meeting with Chamberlain and Halifax at Downing Street, telegrams from the British Embassy in Vienna arrived informing the British Cabinet of Hitler's ultimatum. News of Hitler's actions came as a complete surprise to the German Foreign Minister.[58] Ribbentrop had received no instructions and was therefore in the embarrassing position of not being able to give a prepared statement.[59]

Despite Schuschnigg's adherence to his demands, Hitler gave the final order to invade Austria on the evening of 11 March.[60] Without prior coordination with Mussolini, the Fuehrer presented the Fascist leader with a fait accompli concerning the status of Austria, which, according to Paul Otto Schmidt, was accepted in "good grace".[61] As German forces easily moved into Austria on the twelfth, both Goering and Neurath handled diplomatic matters with the foreign diplomats in Berlin, reassuring the British and French governments that Hitler had no intentions towards Czechoslovakia.[62] It was not until the next day that Goering called Ribbentrop in London and informed him of the week's events.[63] The Foreign Minister, with a wounded ego, since he realized that Hitler had not counted on him during the crisis, at once left London for Austria.[64] He arrived in

Vienna, after Hitler and Goering had already departed,[65] to sign the formal law making Austria a province of Germany.[66] Meanwhile, the only actions taken by Britain and France were Henderson and Francois-Poncet submitting their respective governments' formal protests to the takeover of Austria.[67]

After the Austrian crisis, Ribbentrop returned to Berlin to take the reigns of the Foreign Office. Despite his dislike of professional diplomats, the new Foreign Minister avoided a mass reorganization of the Wilhelmstrasse and tried to gain the assistance of the foreign service in the conduct of Hitler's diplomacy by retaining most of the diplomatic staff.[68] Ribbentrop realized that he needed to maintain and trust the professional diplomatic corps to fill in for his own lack of diplomatic training and experience.[69] In the small reshuffle of personnel, Ribbentrop appointed Eric Kordt, who had acted as a Foreign Office liaison between the Bureau Ribbentrop and the Wilhelmstrasse (1933-36) and Ribbentrop's First Secretary at the German Embassy in London (1936-38), as the Head of the Foreign Office Secretariat.[70] At Kordt's suggestion, Ribbentrop selected Ernst von Weizsaecker, the former Director of the Political Department (1936-38), to become his Foreign Secretary.[71] The Foreign Minister replaced Weizsaecker with Ernst Woermann, Ribbentrop's former Counsellor at the London Embassy (1936-38), as Director of the Political Department.[72] Moreover, Ribbentrop appointed the Nazi Wilhelm Keppler as a State Secretary for Special Duties while maintaining the Nazi Ernst Wilhelm Bohle as State Secretary for the <u>Auslandorganisation</u>.[73] The new Foreign Minister

brought only a select few members of the Bureau Ribbentrop across the street to work at the Foreign Office: the Bureau was not disbanded until 1940.[74] To replace himself in London, Ribbentrop appointed Herbert von Dirksen as German Ambassador to Britain.[75]

Trusting them to conduct the affairs of the Foreign Office in accordance to Hitler's policy, Ribbentrop was slow to discover that Kordt, Weizsaecker, and Woermann worked against the Nazi program. These men tried to keep Ribbentrop out of the management of the Foreign Office.[76] In fact, according to Kordt, Ribbentrop "had little help or unwilling help from the normal departments of the Foreign Office" in managing the ministry.[77] As for administering the Wilhelmstrasse, Weizsaecker stated at his trial that "at first Ribbentrop was in Berlin a great deal and came to the Office fairly often. But his office hours were irregular. Like Hitler, he got up late in the morning and did not adapt himself readily to office routine."[78] John Weitz, the author of the first full-length biography on Ribbentrop, noted, however, that the Foreign Minister spent most of his time attending Hitler's cabinet meetings, thus missing the daily diplomatic meetings at the Wilhelmstrasse, in order to guard his position within the Fuehrer's retinue as well as the Foreign Office's responsibility for the conduct of foreign policy versus the interference of Goering, Goebbels, Rosenberg, and Hess.[79] Slowly realizing the lack of assistance from Weizsaecker and the Wilhelmstrasse, Ribbentrop opted to rely upon his Bureau to assist him with foreign affairs.[80] Because of the difficulty with the Foreign Office,

Ribbentrop engaged in heated arguments with his subordinates and began to treat the professional diplomats with total distrust.[81] Commenting on the Foreign Minister, Keppler told the Nuremberg court:

> Ribbentrop's character changed completely when he became Foreign Minister. Within a very short time he got bossy; he showed a great need to demonstrate his prestige. He got into competency quarrels with almost all his colleagues, and its was characteristic of him that he treated his associates in a pretty inconsistent manner.[82]

Andre Francois-Poncet, the French Ambassador to Berlin, added:

> In the Wilhelmstrasse administration, which he [Ribbentrop] claimed to domineer as a subaltern dominates his platoon, he was cordially detested. He retorted by bullying his subordinates and inflicting upon his department all sorts of pretentious and worthless fellow Nazis. In his contacts with chiefs of diplomatic missions he behaved in arrogant, brutal, and peremptory fashion, fancying that language of this nature was best calculated to inspire foreigners with a lofty idea of the new Germany.[83]

For his position as Foreign Minister, Ribbentrop totally relied upon the patronage of Hitler. To keep this standing, Ribbentrop, who more than anything wanted high status in the Third Reich, understood that it was necessary to cater to the Fuehrer's every whim in order to maintain his ministerial position. He had no leverage with the other top Nazis like Goering. He was viewed by his Nazi associates as an interloper, by the Army as "Hitler's puppet", and by professional diplomats as a parvenu.[84] Without friends in the Nazi Party or at the Wilhelmstrasse, Ribbentrop would have to rely upon the qualities of complete loyalty and subservience to Hitler to not only maintain his status as Foreign Minister, but to aid him in the battle for influence with the Fuehrer. Although Hitler controlled foreign policy, Ribbentrop sought to be his master's main

foreign relations advisor. He would use any tactic available to achieve this goal against his rivals. The method Ribbentrop practiced was to completely agree with Hitler's policy ideas and support these designs against any opposing arguments from the Nazi elite or the Wilhelmstrasse. Such a tactic not only demonstrated Ribbentrop's complete loyalty to his master, but displayed total faith in Hitler's foreign policy program which could only gain Hitler's confidence in his Foreign Minister. Commenting on Ribbentrop's total compliance towards the Fuehrer's management of foreign affairs, Ernst Woermann told the American Military Tribunal that Hitler formulated foreign policy while Ribbentrop "followed in his wake."[85] In fact, Woermann went as far to state, "Ribbentrop knew, or at least he had an idea of Hitler's intentions and policies, and very often, though he may have had a better point of view, he yielded his own point of view in favor of Hitler's . . . ."[86] During the trials of his former colleagues in 1948, Eric Kordt told the Nuremberg court:

> Hitler was in absolute control of the whole state machinery. Ribbentrop followed in the most slavish way Hitler's instructions. He [Ribbentrop] submitted the drafts of telegrams and instructions to him [Hitler] to have them corrected, even their wording. Any instruction or telegram which he expected to be put again before the eyes of Hitler he wanted more or less to have his blessing for it.[87]

Such dependency upon Hitler prompted Joachim Fest to call Ribbentrop "the despised shadow of Hitler."[88]

Within weeks of the annexation of Austria, Hitler was applying pressure on Czechoslovakia to resolve the Sudetenland Question. The Sudeten Germans were pressing for either autonomy from Czechoslovakia or

reunification with Germany.[89] Hitler's annexation of Austria resulted in increased tension between the Sudeten Germans and the Czech government. Konrad Henlein, the leader of the Sudeten German Party, had met with Hitler and Ribbentrop in March 1938, and received the promise of the Fuehrer's support for all Sudeten German political demands against the Czech government.[90] On 28 March, Hitler told Henlein that he was determined "to solve the Czechoslovak question in the near future."[91]

Hitler, however, began to develop plans for taking over all of Czechoslovakia. In order to safeguard such an action from British and French interference, the Fuehrer saw the necessity of closer military relations with Italy. Thus, on 19 April 1938, Hitler had Ribbentrop propose to Galeazzo Ciano, the Italian Foreign Minister, the creation of a dual alliance against Britain.[92] Although the Italians did not jump on the suggestion, Hitler informed his key military leaders to begin planning Operation Green, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, on 21 April.[93]

Meanwhile, the tension between the Sudeten Germans and Czech government was quickly amounting to a crisis situation. Mutual acts of violence between Czechs and German Sudetens failed to overshadow the obvious threat of German military action against Czechoslovakia. As the crisis continued into May, Hitler sent Ribbentrop to Rome to acquire the much desired military alliance.[94] The German Foreign Minister, nonetheless, continued to encounter Ciano's opposition to such an arrangement.[95] Within days it became known that Prime Minister Chamberlain

had declared that Britain would not militarily support Czechoslovakia in a crisis situation.[96] Fearing a possible German military action, Eduard Benes, the Czech President, initiated a partial mobilization of Czech forces on 20 May.[97] While secretly taking this action, the Czech government spread rumors of German troop movements near the Czech-German border.[98] These rumors greatly upset Hitler since they were untrue. The World Press spread the false story as well as Britain's demand for Hitler to stop such troop movements on 21 and 22 May. Since no troop movements were discovered by British and French military attaches sent to discover the truth, the World Press reported that Hitler had ordered the termination of troop movements due to Chamberlain's warning.[99] It was then, humiliated by untrue stories spread by the World Press, that Hitler made the decision to settle the Czech Question with the use of force.[100] According to the Foreign Office interpreter, Paul Otto Schmidt, who served as Hitler's chief interpreter:

> On account of the alleged German troop concentrations the Czechs had carried out partial mobilisation on May 20th, and when Germany did nothing the World Press announced jubilantly that the German dictator had yielded. One had only to stand up to him, as the Czechs had done, they said, to make him see reason. Anyone deliberately planning to madden Hitler could have thought of no better method. Openly to accuse a dictator of weakness is the thing least likely to make him see reason--all the more so when, as in this case, the whole matter was pure invention.[101]

In Weizsaecker's analyzation of the situation:

> The World Press had committed an unpardonable psychological error . . . by spreading the story that Hitler had yielded to foreign pressure in the Czech question. Such an allegation Hitler could not endure--particularly as it was untrue. Hitler had embarked on no

> military enterprise, and could not therefore withdraw from one. But this unfortunate provocation by the Foreign Press now really set Hitler going. From then on he was emphatically in favour of settling the Czech question by force of arms . . . .[102]

Set on destroying Czechoslovakia, the German leader immediately sounded out the Italian position. He acquired Mussolini's word that Italy was not interested in the fate of Czechoslovakia on 25 May.[103] The following day Hitler informed Goering of his decision to launch an invasion in the fall.[104] Two days later, on 28 May, the Fuehrer declared to his cabinet members, including Ribbentrop, at a Chancellery meeting that it was his "unshakable will that Czechoslovakia shall be wiped off the map."[105] Hitler was confident that a war against Czechoslovakia could be localized without British and French intervention.[106]

Knowing Hitler's thoughts about the Czech Question, the German Foreign Minister fully supported his master's dream of conquest. Ribbentrop pressed for war against Czechoslovakia, assuring the Fuehrer that the West would not intervene.[107] In the meantime, in early July 1938, the British and French governments declared their willingness to defend the sovereignty of Czechoslovakia.[108] Hitler and Ribbentrop therefore renewed their efforts toward acquiring a military alliance with Italy.[109] Becoming confident of Mussolini's support, Hitler, aided by the constant verbal backing of Ribbentrop, was convinced that he could resolve the Czech Question with the use of arms without intervention by the West because of the Berlin-Rome Axis. Ribbentrop informed Weizsaecker of Hitler's intentions on 21 July.[110] Two weeks later, on 3 August, the Foreign

Minister sent a telegram to his ambassadors abroad stating that the West would not intervene in a Czech-German conflict, and "Czechoslovakia presents no military problem for the German Army and German Luftwaffe, for Czechoslovakia would be overthrown at one blow."[111]

In mid-August Weizsaecker began to realize the seriousness of the situation. For the second time Ribbentrop had informed him of Hitler's intentions. According to the Foreign Secretary, on 19 August, Hitler told Ribbentrop that he:

> was firmly resolved to settle the Czech affair by force of arms. He described the middle of October as the latest possible date . . . . The other powers would certainly not make any move and, even if they did, we should accept their challenge and defeat them . . . .[112]

When Weizsaecker disagreed with this view, stating that Britain and France would intervene in eastern Europe, Ribbentrop became emotional and demanded the Foreign Secretary's complete trust in the Fuehrer's judgment. Weizsaecker recounted the discussion in his memoirs:

> Ribbentrop explained to me that Hitler had never made a mistake . . . . I ought to have faith in his genius, just as he, Ribbentrop, had as a result of many year's experience. If I had not yet won through to this "blind faith"--he used these actual words--he could only wish most urgently, through in all friendliness, that I might soon do so.[113]

For the next few weeks the Foreign Secretary contemplated his predicament. Hitler and Ribbentrop were not interested in any opinions that were contrary to their own.[114] He was convinced that war would break out over the Czech Question. Thus, Weizsaecker, as well as Eric Kordt, used their diplomatic contacts to warn Britain and France of the Fuehrer's

intentions. They employed Theo Kordt, a counsellor at the German Embassy in London and trusted brother of Eric to inform Whitehall,[115] besides informing the British, French, and Italian ambassadors in Berlin.[116] The Foreign Secretary and the Wilhelmstrasse were fully convinced that Hitler's intentions to resolve the Czech Question by use of force would result in war since they firmly believed that Britain and France would militarily support the Czechs.[117]

In early September 1938, Czech President Benes, facing the possibility of German military action, conceded to the demand for the political autonomy of the Sudetenland. Having acquired this concession, Henlein, the Sudeten German leader, backed by Hitler's promise, immediately broke off talks with the Czech government. Both Hitler and Henlein had hoped for the ultimate goal: the German annexation of the Sudetenland. Because of the deadlock in the Sudetenland talks rioting broke out in the region. The ongoing crisis seemed headed for further hostilities with a German invasion looming in the background.[118] As the Sudetenland situation deteriorated, the British government, informed by the German Foreign Office of Hitler's intentions, sought to diplomatically resolve the Czech Question. In early September 1938, the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, proposed a meeting with Hitler. Both Goering, who held great influence with Hitler at the time, and Weizsaecker urged the Fuehrer to accept.[119] Therefore, on 15 September, Chamberlain discussed the Czech Question with Hitler, without the presence of Ribbentrop, at Berchtesgaden.[120] At first, according to

Schmidt who interpreted the conversation, the Fuehrer came on strong to Chamberlain: "I shall not put up with this [the Czech affair] any longer. I shall settle this question in one way or another. I shall take matters into my own hands."[121] Calming down after a few minutes, Hitler took another approach with Chamberlain. He suggested that a plebiscite be held in the Sudetenland to determine the future of the region.[122] Acknowledging his preference for this method of resolving the Czech Question instead of German military action, Chamberlain told Hitler he would seek the British, French, and Czech governments approval of such a plan.[123] Perceiving that Chamberlain had bowed to his "demand," Hitler viewed the British Prime Minister as weak and willing to abandon the Czechs.[124]

One week later, on 22 September, Chamberlain returned to Germany with a reply to Hitler's proposal. Meeting at Godesberg, the British Prime Minister informed the Fuehrer of British support for a plebiscite in the Sudetenland.[125] Hitler, nevertheless, had changed his mind. He now demanded German occupation of the Sudetenland by no later than 1 October 1938.[126] The next day Hitler again gave Chamberlain an ultimatum.[127] The likelihood of war was apparent to all present at the meeting. During a key moment at the conference both leaders were informed of the Czech initiation of general mobilization. Both leaders realized the crisis had taken a turn towards war.[128] Having missed an opportunity to diplomatically resolve the affair, Chamberlain returned to London reconsider the British response.

On 26 September, three days after their meeting at Godesberg, Chamberlain sent an envoy, Sir Horace Wilson, to inform the Fuehrer of the British position regarding the Czech Question. The British envoy told Hitler that the Czech government would not give in to Hitler's demand for the Sudetenland and Britain, as well as France, would defend the sovereignty of Czechoslovakia.[129] In response Hitler demanded the immediate German annexation of the Sudetenland. Schmidt, who served as the interpreter, related in his memoirs that Hitler told Wilson:

> And if they [the Czech government] choose to refuse I shall smash Czechoslovakia! If the Czechs have not accepted my demands by 2 p.m. on Wednesday September 28th I shall march into the Sudeten territory on October 1st with the German army.[130]

Although his declared intentions were to annex the Sudetenland, Hitler desired to annex much more of Czechoslovakia to satisfy his appetite for eastwards expansion. Advice from the Wilhelmstrasse did not support either plan.[131] His close confident, Goering, and Neurath, who remained in Berlin as an advisor, both urged Hitler to not to attack Czechoslovakia, but to negotiate a settlement.[132] Hitler, nevertheless, was willing to risk war to achieve his goals, in the firm belief that the West would not come to the aid of Czechoslovakia.[133] Only Ribbentrop supported Hitler's view of the situation.[134] Weizsaecker warned his superior of this false interpretation of the diplomatic situation, but to no avail.[135] Ribbentrop had "blind faith" in Hitler's judgement. According to Weizsaecker, Ribbentrop "moved around in dreams of war and victory . . . ."[136]

With time running short, Weizsaecker, representing the professional diplomats of the Wilhelmstrasse, met with Goering and Neurath to discuss the crisis. The Foreign Secretary enlisted both men in a movement aimed towards forcing Hitler into mediation.[137] In fact, Weizsaecker suggested that the three of them draft a compromise agreement and provide it to Mussolini for him to propose the settlement to Hitler.[138] Thus, without the knowledge of Ribbentrop, the Foreign Office, Goering, and Neurath drafted the compromise and forwarded it to Mussolini.[139] Meanwhile Goering tried to destroy Ribbentrop's influence with Hitler by accusing the Foreign Minister of "inciting war" and calling him a "criminal fool" in front of the Fuehrer.[140]

With time running out on Hitler's ultimatum, the British, French, and Italian governments worked to avoid a war. On 28 September 1938, the French Ambassador, Francois-Poncet, met with Hitler and Ribbentrop at the Chancellery. He warned the Fuehrer that war would result in any German military move into Czechoslovakia. Schmidt, who witnessed the discussion conducted in the German language, recorded the event in his memoirs:

> From my corner of the room I closely watched the actors in this tense battle for peace. I observed Hitler's reactions how, very gradually, the balance tilted in favour of peace. He no longer flared up, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that he could find anything to say to the arguments which Francois-Poncet advanced with devastating French logic. He became very pensive. Ribbentrop tried to intervene once or twice--and not on the side of peace. Francois-Poncet, who fully realised the danger of even one false word in such a situation, called him sharply to order, with suppressed irritation.[141]

Shortly after this meeting, the Italian Ambassador, Bernardo Attolico, delivered the proposal of an immediate Great Powers meeting in Munich to mediate a peaceful resolution of the Czech Question.[142] The compromise suggestion came as a complete surprise to Ribbentrop, who strongly advocated the invasion of Czechoslovakia.[143] Fearing the loss of Italian support for his dreams of conquest in eastern Europe Hitler took the proposal seriously.[144] Faced at the same time by pressure from his military leaders, including Goering, that Germany was not ready to fight a European war, Hitler accepted Neurath's advice to immediately meet with British, Italian, and French leaders in Munich.[145]

Hitler met with Mussolini, Chamberlain, and Dadalier at Munich on 29 September 1938. In the negotiations, Hitler agreed to a compromise that gave Germany the Sudetenland, but promised no further aggression against Czechoslovakia.[146] Hitler had allowed himself to be side-tracked from his dream of eastwards expansion into Czechoslovakia due to advice from Goering, Neurath, and the Wilhelmstrasse. He immediately regretted this decision.[147] Hitler perceived the British and French acquiesce to German annexation of the Sudetenland as a sure sign of weakness, believing that if he would have followed his own gut feeling, and Ribbentrop's advice, that all of Czechoslovakia would be his.[148] Upon returning to Berlin, Hitler was heard saying, "that fellow Chamberlain has spoiled my entry into Prague."[149] Ribbentrop, who was unable to influence Hitler towards an invasion of Czechoslovakia, criticized the Munich agreement. Reinhard

Spitzy, Ribbentrop's personal secretary, overheard Hitler quietly telling his Foreign Minister: "Well, you don't have to take it so seriously. This paper [the Munich Agreement] is really of no great importance."[150] Even in the Foreign Office, according to Ambassador Dirksen, "it was whispered . . . that the signing of the protocol meant no change in policy."[151] In fact, on 21 October 1938, Hitler gave orders for the German Army to prepare for a surprise attack on Czechoslovakia sometime in the near future.[152]

The Fuehrer's disappointment at Munich changed his view of Ribbentrop overnight. Ribbentrop had been the only advisor who urged Hitler to take action against Czechoslovakia. Goering, Neurath, and the others opposed such an adventure. Now, after the fact, Hitler viewed his Foreign Minister as the only person who had provided him sound advice. Ribbentrop would replace Goering and Neurath as his key diplomatic advisor.[153]

Ribbentrop, realizing his newly acquired importance, understood that the Wilhelmstrasse had betrayed him during the Sudetenland crisis. The Foreign Minister had lost all trust of his professional diplomats.[154] He thus decided to separate himself from disloyal professional diplomats by concentrating his diplomatic activity to a small special staff that would bypass Weizsaecker and the traditional functions of the Foreign Office.[155] Besides establishing his special staff, consisting of former Bureau Ribbentrop members and faithful Foreign Office diplomats, Ribbentrop transferred large numbers of Bureau Ribbentrop members to the

Wilhelmstrasse without enforcing entry requirements.[156] At the same time Ribbentrop moved his office from the ministry to the newly renovated Presidential Palace, which became the official residence of the Foreign Minister, and thereafter rarely visited the Foreign Office.[157]

Ribbentrop was determined not to rely upon the professional diplomatic corps to conduct Hitler's foreign policy. The Foreign Minister would instead employ his hand-picked special staff and trusted members of the Bureau Ribbentrop for diplomatic advice.[158] Commenting on the effect that Ribbentrop's decision had on the Wilhelmstrasse, Ernst Woermann, the Director of the Political Department, told the Nuremberg court:

> [T]he normal duties of a Political Division were missing . . . to use the information received for the purpose of submitting suggestions and give advice to the Foreign Minister; but, . . . in the Fall . . . of 1938 . . . Ribbentrop had specifically told me that he did not desire to receive any unsolicited advice. [Ribbentrop] . . . instituted his own personal working staff with which he discussed all important questions and particularly such questions, which, before this time, had belonged to the sphere of duties of the political division.[159]

In November 1938, Ribbentrop, according to Woermann, declared that the Political Department "was to be restricted to the handling of routine matters."[160] In fact, the Foreign Minister consulted Woermann on official business only five times from the fall of 1938 to 1943, and then on matters of minor importance.[161] The consequence was that Ribbentrop came to rely upon the amateur abilities of current and former members of his Bureau for diplomatic advice. Commenting upon Bureau Ribbentrop methods, Woermann stated that Ribbentrop's confidents prepared their diplomatic advisory notes in a very unprofessional manner. They worked on "principles of speed

and not of accuracy" when preparing reports.[162] And, from what he observed, these reports "played a pretty important part [in diplomatic affairs] because such notes as a rule contained whatever the authors believed Ribbentrop wanted to hear."[163] Summing up the situation within the Wilhelmstrasse, Ulrich von Hassell wrote in his diary on 20 December 1938:

> He [Ribbentrop] is no more inclined to listen to divergent views than his lord and master. The pace in the Foreign Office, it seems, borders on the unbearable; it is a frantic merry-go-round in which everybody's nerves are getting frayed. Even the highest officials--with the possible exception of Weizsaecker, and he to a limited extent--know nothing about the political objectives and general lines of policy.[164]

After Munich, Hitler's foreign policy aimed at acquiring a military alliance with Italy that would allow Germany the opportunity to resolve both the Czech and Polish Questions. Hitler, supported by Ribbentrop, decided to tackle the Czech situation first.[165] The Fuehrer therefore pursued closer relations with Italy as Germany prepared to conquer Czechoslovakia.[166] On 21 October 1938, the German leader directed his armed forces to make preparations for the "liquidation of the remainder of the Czech state at any time . . . ."[167]

Meanwhile, Hitler sent Ribbentrop to meet with Joseph Lipski, the Polish Ambassador to Germany, at Berchtesgaden on 24 October. In a wide-ranging set of proposals, the German Foreign Minister indicated to Lipski that Hitler was interested in obtaining a general settlement of German-Polish differences. After pointing out Poland's isolation from the West, largely achieved by the Berlin-Rome Axis, Ribbentrop suggested an extension

of the German-Polish Nonaggression Pact of 1934 as well as Poland joining the Anti-Comintern Pact. Additionally, Ribbentrop proposed the return of the Free City of Danzig to Germany, an extraterritorial autobahn and railway through the Polish Corridor connecting Germany with Danzig and East Prussia, as well as a treaty confirming the German-Polish borders.[168] After these talks, in which Lipski gave no formal response, the German Foreign Minister travelled to Rome where he proposed a military alliance to Mussolini and Ciano on 28 October.[169]

Several weeks later, on 19 November, Lipski provided his government's reply to Ribbentrop concerning Hitler's proposals in Berlin. The Polish government flatly refused the German offers.[170] Upset that the Poles failed to accept Hitler's limited demands, Ribbentrop issued Lipski a veiled threat. According to the Polish Ambassador:

> Ribbentrop was discursive, reverting to the history of the last crisis, and repeating a statement already known to me that in the political constellation of that time France was actually isolated and that he was convinced that neither France nor England would move to the defense of Czechoslovakia. Ribbentrop quoted . . . this detail to me in order to stress that the Reich could absolutely count on Italy's military aid. Ribbentrop emphasized in his further deliberations Germany's military superiority at that time, remarking that at the present the situation has become even more favorable for the Reich.[171]

Shortly thereafter, on 24 November, Hitler directed his military to prepare for an occupation of Danzig.[172] Meanwhile, the German Army continued to plan for the invasion of Bohemia and Moravia.[173]

Hitler's diplomacy was unfolding in a manner that would provide Germany a military alliance with Italy while forcing the Czech state and

Poland to come to terms with the Third Reich. At the beginning of the new year, Hans-Georg von Mackensen, the German Ambassador to Italy, reported Mussolini's great interest in forming a military alliance.[174] In the meantime, Hitler met with Slovak politicans who sought independence from Prague.[175] The Fuehrer and Ribbentrop also met with the Polish Foreign Minister, Joseph Beck, and Lipski at Berchtesgaden on 5 January 1939. Hitler personally resubmitted his proposals for a German-Polish settlement.[176] The following day, in Munich, Ribbentrop insisted that Beck accept Hitler's proposals, especially the reunion of Danzig with Germany and the construction of an extraterritorial road and railway system.[177] In late January, Ribbentrop travelled to Warsaw to seek Polish acceptance of Hitler's proposals, but failed to acquire the much desired settlement.[178]

Hitler increased the pressure on the Czech state. Although military plans were drawn up, the Fuehrer continued to keep this fact from Ribbentrop and the Wilhelmstrasse.[179] Ribbentrop, his special staff, as well as the Foreign Office were under the assumption that Hitler was trying to force a crisis situation in order peacefully resolve the Czech Question by diplomatic means, similar to Munich.[180] Hitler employed Ribbentrop to discuss affairs with Frantisek Chvalkovsky, the Czech Foreign Minister, in Berlin on 21 January 1939. Following Hitler's directive, Ribbentrop threatened the Czech that "unless there would be a change in Czechoslovakia, the situation might become catastrophical."[181]

Although unaware of actual military plans for the invasion of the Czech state, Weizsaecker and the Foreign Office received indications through their many contacts that Hitler was planning a crisis situation. On 13 February, the Foreign Secretary jotted down on paper that "Czechoslovakia will receive its death blow in approximately four weeks."[182] In fact, Hitler, who continued to distrust diplomats, did not inform even Ribbentrop of the impending invasion until 11 March.[183] About the same time, Weizsaecker discovered the truth from Slovakian sources.[184] Hitler's intentions, however, became obvious. Robert Coulondre, the French Ambassador to Berlin, reported to Paris that German troops were on the move toward Czechoslovakia.[185]

As German forces made final preparations to pounce on Bohemia and Moravia, Hitler called Joseph Tiso, the Slovak nationalist leader, and a delegation of pro-Nazi Slovaks to Berlin on 13 March. Hitler and Ribbentrop directed Tiso to proclaim Slovakia as an independent state, or Germany would be forced to invade Slovakia as well as the rest of Czechoslovakia.[186] Ribbentrop added that Germany would annex a part of Slovakia with the rest being divided among Hungary and Poland.[187] The German Foreign Minister even provided Tiso a draft of Slovakia's declaration of independence.[188] The very next day, on 14 March, Tiso had the Slovak Diet declare Slovak independence from control of the Prague government.[189] At the same time Ribbentrop informed the Italian government of Hitler's decision to occupy Bohemia and Moravia.[190]

Fearing the disintegration of his state, Czech President Hacha requested through the German Embassy in Prague a meeting with Hitler.[191] Hacha and Chvalkovsky, the Czech Foreign Minister, arrived in Berlin late in the evening of 14 March. After midnight they met with Hitler, Ribbentrop, Goering, Weizsaecker, and others.[192] During the meeting Hitler browbeat Hacha to accept an ultimatum requiring his acceptance of peaceful German occupation of Bohemia and Moravia otherwise the German Air Force would bomb Prague.[193] Schmidt, the interpreter, described the situation in his memoirs: "Here was no intimate discussion between man and man. There were a number of people present, but Hacha, Chvalkovsky, and the rest, even Goering and Ribbentrop, were the audience, Hitler the speaker."[194] After a few dramatic moments, including Hacha passing out, the Czech President agreed to Hitler's terms and placed the fate of Czechoslovakia in the Fuehrer's hands.[195] Within days the former Czechoslovakia became the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia as well as the state of Slovakia, a satellite of Germany.[196]

With such a sudden change in the balance of power in central Europe, the world viewed Hitler as a very dangerous menace. Fear struck the hearts of many countries, especially in eastern Europe. The Lithuanian government, realizing that Hitler might have designs on Memeland, a territory largely populated by Germans annexed by Lithuania in 1923, sought support from Britain and France.[197] "The occupation of Prague," according to A.J.P. Taylor, "flung the people of Memel into ungovernable excite-

ment . . . ."[198] The West, however, declined to come to the aid of Lithuania.[199] Thus, on 20 March 1939, the Lithuanian Foreign Minister, Juosaz Urbsys, travelled to Berlin to meet with Ribbentrop regarding the Memeland Question. Ribbentrop, under the guidance of Hitler, browbeat his Lithuanian counterpart by telling him that:

> There were only two ways of solving the Memel problem. The one is the friendly cession of this territory to Germany. Otherwise revolts and shootings would occur and Hitler would then act with lightening speed. Future developments would be governed by the military and not by the politicians.[200]

Having received such a threat, the Lithuanian government agreed to cede Memeland to Germany on 22 March. German troops occupied the territory two weeks later.[201]

In spite of not taking any action to support Lithuania, the British government objected to German aggression in eastern Europe. The invasion of Czechoslovakia, in the eyes of British statesmen, upset the balance of power in Europe in a way that was unacceptable to European security. The British had understood the German desire to reunite lost German territories to the Third Reich, but the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia went beyond the concept of self-determination.[202] As the German Ambassador to London, Herbert von Dirksen, wrote in his memoirs:

> The average Englishman had understood the linking of the Sudetenland as a union of Germans with Germans. The incorporation, however, of seven millions of [a] foreign race was considered irreconcilable with the declared principles of National Socialism itself. It was regarded as unadulterated imperialism.[203]

After the annexation of the Czech state, the Chamberlain government found it extremely difficult to trust Hitler's stated intentions concerning the rest of eastern Europe.[204] As the British Ambassador, Henderson, explained to Ulrich von Hassell, "Hitler had broken every promise made by Berchtesgaden, Godesberg, and Munich. All faith in him is destroyed. He [Henderson] believes that the seizure of Czechoslovakia was a great mistake from the German point of view."[205] In response to Hitler's aggression the British and French governments considered defensive alliances with Poland, Romania, Greece, and the Soviet Union to encircle Germany and maintain the existing balance of power in Europe.[206] Leaving London, Dirksen travelled to Berlin to warn Hitler and Ribbentrop of the change in British policy towards Germany. He warned the Foreign Minister of British intentions to defend eastern Europe at the cost of war, but his superior was not interested in such views. According to Dirksen, "I came to the obvious conclusion that he [Ribbentrop] was imitating Hitler's methods in not wanting to listen to anything not in accordance with his views of world affairs."[207]

Living on the emotional high of successful annexations of Bohemia, Moravia, and Memeland, Hitler and Ribbentrop set upon the path to resolve the Polish Question by means of intimidation and diplomacy.[208] On 21 March 1939, the Foreign Minister met with the Polish Ambassador in Berlin. Ribbentrop insisted that Poland accept Hitler's proposals.[209] Fearing the German threat, on 21 March, the Poles began partial mobilization of their

armed forces to defend their homeland against German aggression.[210] Several days later, on 26 March, Lipski warned Ribbentrop that any German move toward Danzig would result in a German-Polish war.[211] The Poles, nevertheless, would guarantee the Free City of Danzig as well as offer far-reaching traffic concessions between Germany and East Prussia while still maintaining Polish sovereignty in the Corridor.[212] Ribbentrop, revelling in recent diplomatic successes, made known that this reply was totally unacceptable, and indirectly threatened Lipski by comparing the Polish attitude to that of the Czechs during the previous year.[213] The following day, on 26 March, Ribbentrop stressed to Lipski that "relations between the two countries were . . . deteriorating sharply."[214] By the twenty-ninth, the Foreign Minister believed that the climax of the German-Polish crisis had been reach, and the Poles would soon be forced to accept Hitler's demands.[215] However, on 31 March, the British government announced its guarantee to defend the sovereignty of Polish territory in the event of unprovoked aggression by Germany.[216] This relevation suddenly changed the diplomatic situation. Within days the British and Polish governments concluded a defensive arrangement, which was quickly followed by British guarantees to Romania and Greece.[217]

Hitler took offense to this diplomatic activity. He looked for ways to isolate Poland so as to pressure Warsaw to concede to his demands. In the meantime, on 3 April, the Fuehrer directed the German Army to draw up plans for a surprise invasion of the Polish Corridor and Danzig no later

than 1 September 1939.[218] Hitler meant to retake lost German territory one way or another. On 4 April, Hitler, upset at Ribbentrop about Britain's unexpected reaction to the invasion of Prague, ordered Ribbentrop to avoid talks with the Polish government.[219] The following day, however, the Foreign Minister, in an attempt to avoid a European war, had Weizsaecker inform the Polish government that Hitler would not repeat his demands, stressing that "the Polish Government had apparently not fully understood the significance of the offer."[220] Upset at the Foreign Minister's disobedience, on 6 April, Hitler ordered Ribbentrop to mind his own business demanding "the Polish question was to be reserved entirely to himself."[221] In fact, Weizsaecker stated at his Nuremberg trial that the Ribbentrop and the Wilhelmstrasse had little to do with Poland between April and August 1939 because Hitler monopolized German-Polish relations.[222]

Hitler served notice on Britain and Poland regarding their pact. On 27 and 28 April 1938, Hitler denounced the German-Polish Nonaggression Pact of 1934 and Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935.[223] He perceived Chamberlain's agreements with eastern European countries as a British attempt to encircle Germany.[224] He therefore wanted to loosen the diplomatic bonds that hindered German defense efforts. To counter British diplomatic efforts, Hitler looked to Mussolini for the conclusion of a military alliance. He sent Ribbentrop to Milan to arrange the conclusion of a German-Italian alliance in early May.[225] Mussolini was anxious for such an alliance himself because of the Italian invasion of Albania on 7

April.[226] Two weeks later, on 22 May 1939, Ribbentrop and Ciano signed the Pact of Steel, a military alliance treaty drawn up by the Bureau Ribbentrop, in Berlin.[227] Hitler believed this pact to be the answer to Anglo-French policy in eastern Europe.[228] The following day, on 23 May, Hitler held a military conference, without any Foreign Office representation, to discuss the Polish Question. The Fuehrer told his top military staff, including Goering, that "the Pole is not a fresh enemy. Poland will always be on the side of our adversaries. In spite of treaties of friendship Poland has always been bent on exploiting every opportunity against us."[229] The Fuehrer announced his decision "to attack Poland at the first suitable opportunity."[230] Moreover, Hitler told the top military leaders, "we cannot expect a repetition of Czechia. There will be war. Our task is to isolate Poland. Success in isolating her will be decisive."[231]

Having secured an alliance with Italy, Hitler became interested in obtaining an agreement with the Soviet Union concerning the status of eastern Europe. Despite his anti-Soviet sentiments, the Fuehrer understood that such an understanding would totally isolate Poland from the West, making it unlikely that Britain and France would militarily support the Poles during a German-Polish conflict.[232] Hitler saw the British guarantee to Poland as a bluff, but the added benefit of a German-Soviet pact would guarantee a localized conflict instead of a European war.[233] The idea of a German-Soviet agreement came from Ribbentrop, who was still in Hitler's

disfavor over the British reaction to Prague and seeking a way to endear himself to the Fuehrer, in April.[234] The Foreign Minister viewed a German-Soviet understanding as a guaranteed way to diplomatically force the Poles into agreeing to Hitler's demands.[235] He jumped at the opportunity as a way to retain his position as the Fuehrer's top diplomat.[236] Those diplomats in the Foreign Office, such as Weizsaecker and Dirksen, who traditionally had argued for closer German-Soviet relations, supported such an initiative.[237] The German leadership perceived Stalin's dismissal of Maxim Litvinov and appointment of Vyacheslav Molotov as Foreign Commissar as a sign of Soviet interest in a German-Soviet rapproachement on 4 May 1939.[238] Thus, the Wilhelmstrasse, under Hitler's direction, investigated the possibility of closer relations by recalling Gustav Hilger, the Chief of Economic Affairs at the German Embassy in Moscow, to Berlin for consultation with Hitler and Ribbentrop.[239] On 10 May, Hilger answered the Fuehrer's questions concerning the likelihood of a German-Soviet rapproachement at Berchtesgaden. Hilger gave the German leader the impression that Stalin was willing to come to terms.[240]

Hitler, however, hesitated in making a diplomatic move towards the Soviet Union. He waited to find out the results of British and French diplomatic efforts to negotiate an agreement with the Soviet government.[241] Weizsaecker, impatient over the wait, suggested to Ribbentrop that Hilger approach the Soviet Foreign Commissariat to hint at Hitler's desire for closer German-Soviet relations.[242] In the meantime, the

Wilhelmstrasse received signals that the Soviet Union was interested in a rapproachement.[243] Therefore, on 29 May 1939, Hitler made the decision to employ the foreign service to pursue closer ties with the Soviet Union.[244] The Soviet government, nonetheless, showed no immediate interest to begin negotiations. Thus, on 29 July, Ribbentrop directed Count Friedrich Werner von der Schulenburg, the German Ambassador to Moscow, to inform Molotov that Germany was ready to take account of "all Soviet interests" in Poland and the Baltic states.[245]

While little diplomatic activity took place between Germany and the Soviet Union, the relations between Germany and Poland were quickly reaching the crisis point. The German armed forces, under Hitler's direction, prepared for the invasion of Poland. Tension between the two states increased daily because of Nazi-Polish antagonism in Danzig.[246] On 8 August 1939, Hitler had Ribbentrop protest to Lipski about the Polish stand on Danzig. The Polish Ambassador, however, warned Ribbentrop that any further German interference in Polish-Danzig relations would be considered an act of aggression against his government.[247] Such opposition to his diplomatic efforts upset the Foreign Minister. He set his mind on the destruction of Poland.

To discover Mussolini's viewpoint, the Fuehrer requested the Italian Foreign Minister to visit Germany to discuss the German-Polish crisis in early August. Ciano met with Ribbentrop at Salzburg on 11 August. The German Foreign Minister warned his counterpart that the German-Polish

situation was "extremely grave, and that, in his opinion, the clash between Germany and Poland is inevitable."[248] Ribbentrop informed Ciano that both Hitler and himself believed that Britain and France were not prepared to fight and therefore would not militarily support Poland, thus the conflict would be kept localized.[249] The following day, on 12 August, Hitler met with Ciano at Berchtesgaden and reemphasized these statements, adding that Germany would achieve a quick victory against Poland. Hitler stated:

> When the moment for the attack on Poland comes--and that moment will come as the result of the outbreak of a serious incident or else because Germany will force Poland to define her position--the German forces will strike simultaneously at the heart of Poland from all points along the frontier where attacks are launched and follow routes well laid down in advance.[250]

Concerning the reaction of the West, Hitler believed:

> France and England will certainly make extremely theatrical anti-German gestures but will not go to war, because their military and moral preparations are not such as to allow them to begin the conflict.[251]

The next day, on 13 August, Hitler again told Ciano that: "I am unshakably convinced that neither England nor France will embark upon a general war."[252]

While these German-Italian talks proceeded in southern Germany. British and French diplomats arrived in Moscow to seek an agreement with the Soviet Union. This situation at once worried Hitler because the outcome of such talks could create a significant obstacle to German plans for the invasion of Poland.[253] It looked like the West might be able to block his plans by creating a military bloc encircling Germany. Dirksen

had been reporting from London that Britain would standby its promise to Poland since July.[254] Worried about the outcome of of the Moscow talks, Hitler immediately ordered Ribbentrop to seek a rapproachement with the Soviet Union. On 14 August, the Foreign Minister sent a telegram to Molotov, seeking a meeting between the chief diplomats, and calling for friendly cooperation between the two states. He stressed that there were no real conflicts between Germany and the Soviet Union, and offered to settle spheres of influence in eastern Europe.[255] Such pleas from the German government were sent as the Wilhelmstrasse received warnings from the British government.[256] These warnings, nevertheless, were highly encouraged by Weizsaecker and the professional diplomats in the Foreign Office as a way to deter Hitler from any warlike action.[257] The Wilhelmstrasse also informed Whitehall of Ribbentrop's move towards the Soviet Union, fearing that a German-Soviet agreement would increase the likelihood of war.[258] But, on 16 August, while still talking to the British and French delegates, Stalin had Molotov notify Count Schulenburg of his desire to improve German-Soviet relations. He suggested that the two states sign a nonaggression pact.[259] Ribbentrop quickly informed Molotov of Hitler's interest in this proposal.[260] Fearing a Soviet agreement with the West in the meantime, on 18 August, Hitler had Ribbentrop seek an immediate meeting with Molotov to conclude such a pact. Hitler considered it essential to clarify German-Soviet relations before Germany invaded Poland.[261]

Stalin accepted the idea of a quick meeting on 20 August. He sent Hitler a draft of a nonaggression pact,[262] and approved Ribbentrop's trip to Moscow.[263] The Fuehrer consented to the draft that afternoon.[264] On 22 August, Hitler gave his Foreign Minister full powers to negotiate and sign the nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union: an agreement that he had already fully approved.[265] Ribbentrop quickly travelled to Moscow. Once there, he received a telegram from Hitler directing him to ask Stalin to agree to dividing eastern Europe into German and Soviet spheres of interests.[266] Thus, on 23 August, Ribbentrop and Molotov, in the presence of Stalin, signed the Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact, including an additional secret protocol dividing eastern Europe into two spheres of interest.[267] The British and French delegation left Moscow empty-handed two days later.[268]

While Ribbentrop was signing the pact with Molotov, Hitler permitted British Ambassador Henderson and the German Foreign Secretary to visit him at Berchtesgaden on 23 August. Henderson handed Hitler a letter from the British Prime Minister declaring that "we are standing by our commitments."[269] Both Henderson and Weizsaecker warned the Fuehrer that Britain would assist the Poles and that Mussolini would not come to the aid of Germany.[270] Commenting on this meeting, Weizsaecker wrote in his memoirs: "My words were spoken into the air. It was clear that Hitler was working for war, and was only uncertain as to whether it could be localised."[271]

Upon his return the next day, Ribbentrop was greeted by an excited Hitler at Berchtesgaden. The Foreign Minister had provided his master the pact that would assure the isolation of Poland, and an easy conquest for Germany. Hitler, according to William Carr, "assumed that the western powers would be so stunned [by the announcement of the Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact] that they would lose all heart for war."[272] Paul Otto Schmidt, who had accompanied Ribbentrop to Moscow, wrote in his memoirs: "By their suprise move in this round of the diplomatic contest, Hitler and Stalin had checkmated England and France."[273] In the midst of the German-Polish crisis the conclusion of the pact provided Ribbentrop great prestige with Hitler, and placed the Foreign Minister's influence with his master at its zenith.[274] Now having achieved Soviet neutrality Hitler was ready to crush the Poles. The German Army was ready to march.[275]

Despite success in achieving an agreement with the Soviet Union, Hitler discovered that the West had not abandoned the Poles. The British Parliament ratified the Anglo-Polish alliance on 25 August 1939.[276] Moments after this announcement, the French Ambassador warned Hitler that France would fight for the Poles.[277] If this was not enough, the Italian Ambassador delivered a message to Hitler from Mussolini declaring that Italy was not ready to fight a war.[278] According to Schmidt, "the letter was a bombshell. He [Hitler] was bitterly disappointed at this sudden . . . defection of his ally."[279] Now "deeply shaken," the Fuehrer reacted by postponing the invasion of Poland.[280]

At this point the counsel of Ribbentrop, Weizsaecker, Goering, and the General Staff advised Hitler to avoid war because Britain and France would stand by their commitment to Poland.[281] Hitler, nonetheless, quickly regained confidence in his opinion that the West would not intervene, and suddenly decided to risk the possibility of a European war to conquer Poland.[282] Realizing the threat to his influence with Hitler, Ribbentrop quickly changed his opinion to match his master's.[283] Weizsaecker complained in his memoirs that Ribbentrop "did not want to take advice from anyone, or to change his views on account of what anyone said."[284] The Foreign Minister, according to Weizsaecker, "did not and would not believe that the Allies would make common cause with Poland."[285] Upset at the Wilhelmstrasse, the Foreign Minister told Weizsaecker and his staff that if they failed to follow Hitler's orders for an aggressive policy than "he would shoot [them] personally in his own office."[286]

Although threatening war, Hitler was still willing to achieve his demands by diplomatic means. On 28 August 1939, the Fuehrer gathered his General Staff together at the Reich Chancellery. According to General Franz Halder, the Chief of the General Staff, Hitler said he was "determined to have [the] eastern question settled one way or another. Minimum demands: Return of Danzig, settling of Corridor question. If minimum demands not satisfied, then war . . . ."[287] The Fuehrer declared that Germany would attack Poland on 1 September, barring any further postponements.[288] That same day Hitler met with the British Ambassador in

the presence of Ribbentrop at the Chancellery. The Fuehrer told Sir Nevile Henderson that he had made up his mind on settling the Polish Question once and for all.[289] Henderson informed Hitler that the British government desired the Poles to negotiate with Hitler directly, instead of through London. Henderson believed that the Poles would follow London's advice in this matter.[290]

The following morning Hitler was again somewhat indecisive on what avenue to pursue, diplomatic or military action.[291] In front of the Foreign Secretary, Goering advised the German leader: "Let's drop the 'all-or-nothing' game." To which Hitler replied: "All my life I have played for 'all-or-nothing'."[292] Later that day Hitler met with Henderson and indicated his willingness to talk directly to the Poles if a plenipoteniary arrived in Berlin no later than 30 August.[293]

Having been issued an ultimatum, the Polish government rejected the idea of direct German-Polish talks. They began general mobilization on the morning of 30 August.[294] Hitler had half expected the British to pressure the Poles into handing Danzig over to Germany and agreeing to extraterritorial road and railways through the Polish Corridor.[295] Arriving at Ribbentrop's office after midnight, Ambassador Henderson told the Foreign Minister that there would be no Polish plenipotentiary. Up to this point Ribbentrop had expected to begin negotiations. According to Schmidt, the interpreter, Ribbentrop demanded the immediate arrival of a Polish diplomat with full powers to negotiate a treaty. Becoming extremely

upset, the Foreign Minister told Henderson that the situation was "damned serious!"[296] He then read out loud Hitler's demands, drafted by the Wilhelmstrasse in the hope of another Munich type of agreement, rather slowly to the British Ambassador, calling for a return of Danzig to Germany, an extraterritorial road and railway through the Polish Corridor, as well as a plebiscite in the Corridor.[297] Under Hitler's instructions, Ribbentrop refused to provide a copy of the demands to Henderson since they were intended for a Polish envoy and the deadline had already expired.[298] Hitler had issued an ultimatum and would carry through with his threat. Commenting about this meeting, Schmidt told the Nuremberg court:

> The atmosphere during that conference was . . . charged with electricity. Both participants were extremely nervous. Henderson was very uneasy; and never before, and perhaps only once afterwards, have I seen the Foreign Minister so nervous as he was during that conference.[299]

Having heard Hitler's demands, the British Ambassador, considering them "not unreasonable," immediately travelled to visit Lipski at his home in Berlin.[300] Now, after Germany's ultimatum to Poland had expired, Henderson found, awoke, and informed Lipski of Hitler's demands at two o'clock in the morning on 31 August.[301] Not authorized with powers to accept these demands, Lipski forwarded them to the Polish Foreign Minister in Warsaw later that morning, but received a negative reply from Beck.[302] Hitler viewed the failure of a Polish envoy to show up in Berlin as a rejection of his demands.[303] Hitler's last minute diplomacy had failed.

The German plan to attack Poland was within hours of being launched. Goering argued against the attack, believing that Britain and France would declare war on Germany.[304] Goering pleaded with Hitler to try once again to diplomatically resolve the Polish Question.[305] But, on the afternoon of the thirty-first, Hitler made the final decision for the attack to proceed.[306] He instructed Ribbentrop of the impending invasion plans.[307] Realizing that the British would never disavow their guarantee to Poland, the Foreign Minister finally got up enough courage to tell Hitler that he believed the British would fulfill their obligations to Poland.[308] But, it was too late! Hitler was already convinced that Britain and France lacked the resolve to fight in aid of Poland.

German forces attacked Poland on 1 September 1939. Within hours the British and French ambassadors arrived at the Chancellery to hand Ribbentrop ultimatums concerning the unprovoked attack on Poland. Henderson and Coulondre found the Foreign Minister extremely upset over the situation.[309] The following day Britain and France began to mobilize.[310] On 3 September, Henderson arrived at the Chancellery. With instructions to receive the ambassador, Schmidt accepted the British declaration of war. Schmidt entered Hitler's office and read the declaration to both the Fuehrer and his Foreign Minister. Both Hitler and Ribbentrop were surprised at the West declaring war.[311] According to Schmidt:

> [B]oth gentlemen were absolutely silent for about a minute. I could clearly see that this development did not suit them at all. For a while Hitler sat in his chair deep in thought and stared somewhat

worriedly into space. Then he broke the silence with a rather abrupt question to the Foreign Minister, saying, "what shall we do now?"[312]

Summing up the crisis, Ulrich von Hassell wrote in his diary on 1 September 1939:

> Hitler and Ribbentrop wanted war with Poland and knowingly took the risk of war with the Western Powers, deluding themselves to varying degrees up to the very last with the belief that the West would remain neutral after all. The Poles, for their part . . . confident of English and French support, had missed every remaining chance for avoiding war. The Government in London, whose ambassador did everything to keep the peace, gave up the race in the very last days and adopted a kind of devil-may-care attitude. France went through the same stages, only with much more hesitation. Mussolini did all in his power to avoid war.[313]

NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

1. Wolfgang Michalka, "Conflicts within the German Leadership on the Objectives and Tactics of German Foreign Policy, 1933-9," chap. in The Fascist Challenge and the Policy of Appeasement, ed. Wolfgang Mommsen and Lothar Kettenacker (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983), 48; Dirksen, 186; Fest, Face of the Third Reich, 179; Ernst Woermann testimony, 2 July 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 140, Folder 6, 11036, 11052; Gustav Adolf Steengracht von Moyland, 23 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 140, Folder 1, 9878; Eric Kordt testimony, 4 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 8, 7400-1; Weitz, 143.

2. Papen, 407; Francois-Poncet, 226; Hill, "The Wilhelmstrasse in the Nazi Era," 46; Order of the Fuehrer and Reich Chancellor on the Command of the Wehrmacht, 4 February 1938, Hitler's Third Reich: A Documentary History ed. Louis S. Snyder (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1981), 275.

3. Constantin von Neurath testimony, 24 June 1946, TMWC, 16:641; Fest, Hitler, 543; Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse, 45.

4. Francois-Poncet, 227; Joachim von Ribbentrop testimony, 28 March 1946, TMWC, 10:241; Hitler's Decree, 4 February 1938, 1337-PS, NCA, 3:913.

5. Ribbentrop, 78; Weizsaecker, 119; Galeazzo Ciano, Ciano's Hidden Diary 1937-1938, trans. Andreas Major, introd. Malcolm Muggeridge (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1953), diary entry for 7 February 1938, 71; Weitz, 151.

6. Dirksen, 181; Papen, 406.

7. Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 169.

8. Dirksen, 186.

9. Papen, 408-39. Papen served as the German Ambassador to Turkey from April 1939 to August 1944 (Louis L. Snyder, Encyclopedia of the Third Reich [New York: Paragon House, 1976], 266-67).

10. Ulrich von Hassell, The Von Hassell Diaries 1938-1944, introd. by Allen W. Dulles (Garden City: Doubleday, 1947), 5.

11. Weizsaecker, 118.

12. Gilbert, Nuremberg Diary, 138; Irving, Goering, 203.

13. Hill, "The Wilhelmstrasse in the Nazi Era," 557.

14. Francois-Poncet, 233.

15. Ernst von Weizsaecker testimony, 10 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 137, Folder 2, 8098.

16. Weizsaecker testimony, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 13, 7701.

17. Francois-Poncet, 233.

18. Ibid.

19. Weizsaecker testimony, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 13, 7692.

20. Hill, "The Wilhelmstrasse in the Nazi Era," 564.

21. Seabury, "Ribbentrop and the German Foreign Office," 539.

22. As quoted in Irving, Goering, 203.

23. Dirksen, 186.

24. As quoted in Michalka, "Conflicts within the German Leadership on the Objectives and Tactics of German Foreign Policy, 1933-9," 48.

25. Ribbentrop testimony, 29 March 1946, TMWC, 10:243.

26. Mackensen memorandum, 8 February 1938, DGFP(D), 1:503-4.

27. TWC, 12:14; Weinberg, The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany, 2:278-79. Keppler was Hitler's expert on Austrian political and economic matters (Weitz, 149).

28. Keppler to Ribbentrop, 7 February 1938, DGFP(D), 1:500-2.

29. Papen, 414; Weitz, 152.

30. Excerpt from General Jodl's diary, 1780-PS, NCA, 4:361; Alan Bullock, Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 564; Papen, 414; Weitz, 153.

31. Kurt von Schuschnigg affidavit, 19 November 1945, 2995-PS, NCA, 5:711.

32. As quoted in Bullock, Hitler and Stalin, 565.

33. Gehl, 173.

34. Hitler-Schuschnigg meeting minutes, 12 February 1938, TWC, 12: 714-16; Berchtesgaden Protocol, 12 February 1938, DGFP(D), 1:515-17.

35. Kordt testimony, 4 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 7, 7364; Hill, "The Wilhelmstrasse in the Nazi Era," 566; Ribbentrop testimony, 29 March 1946, TMWC, 10:244-49.

36. Woermann to Ribbentrop, 17 February 1938, DGFP(D), 1:525; Weizsaecker memorandum, 28 February 1938, DGFP(D), 1:227.

37. Woermann to Ribbentrop, 21 February 1938, DGFP(D), 1:208-9; Harvey, 64, 66; Cockett, 48, Halifax, 198; Gilbert and Gott, 68-69.

38. Keppler memorandum, 28 February 1938, DGFP(D), 1:548-49.

39. Weizsaecker to Hassell, 10 January 1938, DGFP(D), 1:171-72.

40. Ribbentrop to Henderson, 4 March 1938, DGFP(D), 1:248. Henderson denied this statement to Ribbentrop the following day, but Hitler had already perceived his own version of the conversation (Henderson to Ribbentrop, 5 March 1938, DGFP(D), 1:249-50).

41. Weizsaecker to Ribbentrop, 9 March 1938, DGFP(D), 1:562.

42. David Irving, The War Path: Hitler's Germany 1933-1939 (New York: Viking, 1978), 81.

43. Fest, Hitler, 545; Irving, Goering, 206.

44. Andreas Hillgruber, Germany and the Two World Wars, trans. William C. Kirby (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 64; Irving, The War Path, 81; Fest, Hitler, 546.

45. Irving, Goering, 210.

46. Gilbert, Nuremberg Diary, 304.

47. Neurath testimony, 24 June 1946, TMWC, 16:642; Irving, The War Path, 81.

48. Weizsaecker testimony, 7 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 13, 7700; Neurath testimony, 24 June 1946, TMWC, 16:643; Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 171.

49. Irving, The War Path, 82; Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 172.

50. Bullock, Hitler and Stalin, 566; Irving, Goering, 206; Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 172.

51. Irving, The War Path, 81.

52. Woermann testimony, 2 July 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 140, Folder 2, 10872.

53. Ribbentrop to Hitler, 10 March 1938, DGFP(D), 1:263.

54. Braeuer memorandum, 11 March 1938, DGFP(D), 1:570.

55. Ribbentrop, 86.

56. Irving, The War Path, 78.

57. Weizsaecker testimony, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 13, 7712.

58. Woermann testimony, 2 July 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 140, Folder 2, 10872.

59. Ribbentrop memorandum, 11 March 1938, DGFP(D), 1:273-75; Esmonde M. Robertson, Hitler's Pre-War Policy and Military Plans 1933-1939 (New York: Citadel Press, 1963), 118.

60. Hildebrand, The Foreign Policy of the Third Reich, 63; Robertson, 115; Christopher Thorne, The Approach of War 1938-1939 (London: Macmillan, 1967), 46-47.

61. Schmidt, 80. See also Ciano, Ciano's Hidden Diary, 87; Hitler to Mussolini, 11 March 1938, DGFP(D), 1:573.

62. Francois-Poncet to Delbos, 12 March 1938, The French Yellow Book: Diplomatic Documents (1938-1939), ed. Ministere des Affaires Etranqeres (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1940), 2-3; Francois-Poncet to Delbos, 12 March 1938, The French Yellow Book, 3.

63. Transcripts of telephone calls from the German Air Ministry, 11-14 March 1938, 2949-PS, NCA, 5:642-54.

64. Weitz, 157-58

65. Ibid.

66. Law concerning the union of Austria with Germany, 13 March 1938, 2307-PS, NCA, 4:997-98.

67. Henderson to Neurath, 11 March 1938, DGFP(D), 1:578; Francois-Poncet to Neurath, 11 March 1938, DGFP(D), 1:578.

68. Weizsaecker testimony, 10 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 137, Folder 2, 8090.

69. Weitz, 155.

70. Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse, 61; Lewis Namier, "Ernst von Weizsaecker," chap. iny In the Nazi Era (London: Macmillan, 1952).

71. Weizsaecker, 122; Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse, 61. Eric Kordt and the professional diplomatic corps had faith that Weizsaecker would regain control of foreign policy for the Wilhelmstrasse (Kordt testimony, 3 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 6, 7335-36).

72. Woermann testimony, 2 July 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 140, Folder 2, 10848, 10873.

73. Appendix II, DGFP(D), 2:1031; Appendix IV, DGFP(D), 2:1044, 1052.

74. Kordt, Nicht aus den Akten, 183-89; Woermann testimony, 6 July 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 140, Folder 7, 11127.

75. Dirksen, 194, 196.

76. Kordt testimony, 3-4 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 7, 7335-36, 7343.

77. Ibid., 4 June 1948, Box 136, Folder 7, 7345.

78. Weizsaecker, 126.

79. Weitz, 163. See also Weizsaecker, 128; Ribbentrop, 80-81.

80. Weizsaecker testimony, 10 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 137, Folder 2, 8090; Kordt testimony, 4 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 7, 7345; Woermann testimony, 6 July 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 140, Folder 7, 11128.

81. Woermann testimony, 6 July 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 140, Folder 6, 11052-54.

82. Wilhelm Keppler, 16 July 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 142, Folder 2, 12931-932.

83. Francois-Poncet, 233.

84. Weitz, 162.

85. Woermann testimony, 6 July 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 140, Folder 6, 11052.

86. Ibid., 2 July, Box 140, Folder 6, 11036.

87. Kordt testimony, 4 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 8, 7400-1.

88. Fest, The Face of the Third Reich, 179.

89. See Ronald M. Smelser, The Sudeten Problem, 1933-1939: Volkstumpolitik and the Formulation of Nazi Foreign Policy (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1975).

90. Weitz, 165; Ribbentrop memorandum, 29 March 1938, 2788-PS, NCA, 5:422-24.

91. As quoted in Weitz, 165.

92. Leonidas E. Hill, ed., Die Weizsaecker-Papiere (Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Vienna: Propylaeen, 1977), 126; Mario Toscano, The Origins of the Pact of Steel (Baltimore: The John Hopkin's University Press, 1964), 5.

93. Schmundt memorandum, 22 April 1938, DGFP(D), 2:239-40; Irving, Goering, 219.

94. Ciano, Hidden Diary, 112.

95. Ibid.

96. Eisenlohr to Ribbentrop, 12 May 1938, DGFP(D), 2:275.

97. Weizsaecker, 134.

98. Ibid.; Dirksen, 197; Schmidt, 85-86; Weizsaecker to Ribbentrop, 20 May 1938, DGFP(D), 2:296.

99. Hill, Die Weizsaecker-Papiere, 144-45; Irving, Goering, 219.

100. Operation Green directive, 20 May 1938, 388-PS, NCA, 3:311.

101. Schmidt, 88. See also Henderson, 178.

102. Weizsaecker, 135-36.

103. Ciano, Hidden Diary, 121.

104. Irving, Goering, 220.

105. Fritz Wiedemann affidavit, 21 November 1945, 3037-PS, 5:743. See also Schmundt Papers, April-October 1938, NCA, 3:305, 311; Hitler's speech, 30 January 1939, NCA, 4:1101.

106. Weizsaecker testimony, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 13, 7717; Kordt testimony, 4 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 7, 7376.

107. Weizsaecker testimony, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 13, 7717; Weizsaecker memorandum, 21 July 1938, DGFP(D), 2:504; Weizsaecker memorandum, ca. 19 August 1938, DGFP(D), 2:593-94; Weizsaecker memorandum, 30 August 1938, DGFP(D), 2:662-63; Erich Kordt affidavit, 25 September 1947, American Military Tribunal documents, Nuremberg, Germany, Documents in Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, OGL 17 [hereafter cited as AMT documents, UND, OGL 17], NG-3605, Box 235, Folder 4, 2. See also Williamson Murray, The Challenge in the European Balance of Power, 1938-1939 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 182.

108. Francois-Poncet, 258-59.

109. Ciano, Hidden Diary, 135.

110. Weizsaecker memorandum, 21 July 1938, NG-3716, TWC, 12:797-98.

111. Ribbentrop to Embassies Abroad, 3 August 1938, DGFP(D), 2:529-31.

112. Weizsaecker memorandum, 19 Augusut 1938, DGFP(D), 2:593. See also Weizsaecker, 137.

113. Weizsaecker, 137.

114. Hitler and Ribbentrop refused to see Dirksen in August and September 1938 although they knew that the German Ambassador to Britain carried warnings from Prime Minister Chamberlain (Dirksen, 207).

115. Kordt testimony, 4 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 7, 7386.

116. Weizsaecker, 146, 148.

117. Weizsaecker testimony, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 13, 7717; Kordt affidavit, 25 September 1947, AMT documents, UND, OGL 17, NG-3605, Box 235, Folder 4, 2; Weizsaecker, 148-49.

118. Smelser, 234-42

119. Schmidt, 91.

120. Ibid.

121. Ibid., 92.

122. Weizsaecker note, 16 September 1938, DGFP(D), 2:810.

123. Schmidt memorandum, 15 September 1938, DGFP(D), 2:786-98.

124. Weizsaecker, 150-51.

125. Schmidt, 96-97.

126. Francois-Poncet, 263; Weizsaecker, 151.

127. Schmidt, 100; Hitler to Chamberlain, 23 September 1938, DGFP(D), 2:889-91; Hitler to Chamberlain, ca. 23 September 1938, DGFP(D), 2:908-10.

128. Hencke to Ribbentrop, 24 September 1938, DGFP(D), 2:920; Schmidt, 101.

129. Schmidt, 103, 105; Weitz, 182.

130. As quoted in Schmidt, 104.

131. Weizsaecker testimony, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 13, 7717; Kordt testimony, 4 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 7, 73888; Hassell, 38; Weizsaecker, 148-49; Hill, "The Wilhelmstrasse in the Nazi Era," 567.

132. Paul Otto Schmidt testimony, 24 August 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 146, Folder 19, 178-31-835; Neurath testimony, 24 June 1946, TMWC, 16:646-47; Irving, Goering, 229; Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 175-76, 181; Manvell and Fraenkel, Goering, 200; Kordt testimony, 4 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 7, 7388.

133. Weizsaecker, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 13, 7717; Ciano, Hidden Diary, 161; Kordt testimony, 4 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 7, 7376.

134. Kordt testimony, 4 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 7, 7376; Weizsaecker, 152; Robertson, 145; Hassell, 10; Ciano, Hidden Diary, 161; Weizsaecker testimony, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 13, 7712, 7717; Manvell and Fraenkel, Goering, 201.

135. Weizsaecker testimony, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 13, 7717.

136. Ibid., Box 136, Folder 13, 7718.

137. Kordt testimony, 4 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 7, 7388.

138. Ibid.

139. Weizsaecker, 154; Schmidt testimony, 24 August 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 146, Folder 19, 17831-835; Schmidt, 111; Manvell and Fraenkel, Goering, 201; Hill, "The Wilhelmstrasse in the Nazi Era," 567.

140. Manvell and Fraenkel, Goering, 200.

141. Schmidt, 106-7. See also Francois-Poncet, 266.

142. Francois-Poncet, 267; Ciano, Hidden Diary, 165.

143. Weizsaecker testimony, 7 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 13, 7719, 7723.

144. Schwerin-Krosigk affidavit, 18 May 1946, TMWC, 40:476; Weitz, 154.

145. Manvell and Fraenkel, Goering, 199, 201; Middlemas, 400; Schmidt, 107; Ribbentrop to Missions Abroad, 28 September 1939, DGFP(D), 2:994.

146. Munich Protocol, 29 September 1938, TWC, 12:818-20.

147. Weizsaecker testimony, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 13, 7729; Carr, Arms, Autarky, and Aggression, 102.

148. Carr, Arms, Autarky, and Aggression, 102; Francois-Poncet, 261.

149. Hjalmar Schacht testimony, 2 May 1946, TMWC, 12:531.

150. Reinhard Spitzy, So Haben wir das Reich Verspielt, Bekenntisse eines Illegalen (Munich: Langen-Muller, 1988), 320. See also Poole, 141.

151. Dirksen, 211.

152. Carr, Arms, Autarky, and Aggression, 102.

153. Weizsaecker, 157.

154. Ibid., 159; Weizsaecker testimony, 10 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 137, Folder 2, 8090, 8093.

155. Weizsaecker testimony, 10 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 137, Folder 2, 8090-1; Kordt testimony, 4 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 7, 7347.

156. Kordt testimony, 4 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 7, 7341, 7346.

157. Ibid., Box 136, Folder 7, 7553; Schmidt, 175; Albert Speer, Spandau: The Secret Diaries, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Macmillan, 1976), 142; Hans-Georg von Studnitz, While Berlin Burns: The Diary of Hans-Georg von Studnitz 1943-1945, trans. R.H. Stevens (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), 259; Weitz, 238.

158. Weizsaecker testimony, 10 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 137, Folder 2, 8092; Woermann testimony, 6 July 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 140, Folder 6, 11050.

159. Woermann testimony, 6 July 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 140, Folder 6, 11039-40. Kordt stated at the trial of his colleagues in Nuremberg in 1948: "Ribbentrop had . . . given an order that the foreign mission [embassy] should only report facts and abstain from commenting on them" (Kordt testimony, 4 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 7, 7375).

160. Ibid., Box 140, Folder 6, 11055.

161. Ibid., Box 140, Folder 6, 11056.

162. Ibid., Box 140, Folder 7, 11128.

163. Ibid.

164. Hassell, 26.

165. Ibid., 54.

166. Ibid., 16; Robertson, 150.

167. Hitler directive, 21 October 1938, DGFP(D), 4:99-100. See also Rich, Hitler's War Aims, 1:111; Thorne, 93; Carr, Arms, Autarky, and Aggression, 102.

168. Lipski memorandum, 24 October 1938, Diplomat in Berlin, 1933-1939, 453-54; Hewel memorandum, 24 October 1938, DGFP(D), 5:104-7.

169. Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, 242-46; Ciano, Hidden Diary, 185; Schmidt memorandum, 28 October 1938, DGFP(D), 4:515-20.

170. Ribbentrop memorandum, 19 November 1938, DGFP(D), 5:127-28.

171. Lipski to Beck, 19 November 1938, Diplomat in Berlin, 1933-1939, 466-67.

172. Keitel directive, 24 November 1938, 137-C, NCA, 6:949-50.

173. Keitel directive, 17 December 1938, DGFP(D), 4:185-86.

174. Mackensen memorandum, 3 January 1939, DGFP(D), 4:545-46; Ribbentrop to Ciano, 9 January 1939, DGFP(D), 4:550.

175. Simon Newman, March 1939: The British Guarantee to Poland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 90.

176. Lipski, 482; Schmidt memorandum, 5 January 1939, DGFP(D), 5:152-58.

177. Ribbentrop memorandum, 10 January 1939, DGFP(D), 5:159-61; Lipski, 482.

178. Lipski, 485; Ribbentrop memorandum, 1 February 1939, DGFP(D), 5:167-68.

179. Woermann testimony, 6 July 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 140, Folder 2, 11084; Weizsaecker testimony, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 13, 7715, 7731.

180. Weizsaecker testimony, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 13, 7731.

181. Schmidt memorandum, 21 January 1939, staff summary analysis, International Military Tribunal documents, Nuremberg, Germany, Documents in Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, OGL 17 [hereafter cited as IMT documents, UND, OGL 17], Box 195, Folder 6, 2795-PS, 55.

182. Leonidas E. Hill, "Three Crises, 1938-39," Journal of Contemporary History, 3 (January 1969), 124. See also Hill, Die Weizsaecker Papiere, 150-52.

183. Keitel to Ribbentrop, 11 March 1939, DGFP(D), 4:234-35; Ribbentrop, 94.

184. Weizsaecker testimony, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 13, 7732; Weizsaecker, 175.

185. Coulondre to Bonnet, 13 March 1939, The French Yellow Book, 67-68.

186. Crimes Against Czechoslovakia Report, 3061-PS, NCA, 5:867; Hewel memorandum, 13 March 1939, 2802-PS, NCA, 5:443-47.

187. Weinberg, The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany, 2:471, n.21.

188. Ibid.

189. Newman, 91; Ribbentrop, 94; Altenburg memorandum, 14 March 1939, DGFP(D), 4:252-53.

190. Weizsaecker memorandum, 14 March 1939, DGFP(D), 4:261.

191. Henke to Ribbentrop, 13 March 1939, DGFP(D), 4:249; Newman, 91.

192. Hewel memorandum, 15 March 1939, DGFP(D), 4:263-69.

193. Ibid., 266-69; Lacroix to Bonnet, 15 March 1939, The French Yellow Book, 86; German Crimes against Czechoslovakia Report, Czech Government, 3061-PS, NCA, 5:857; Weizsaecker, 176; Schmidt, 123-24.

194. Schmidt, 123.

195. Czech-German Declaration, 15 March 1939, DGFP(D), 4:270; Schmidt, 124-25.

196. German-Slovak Protocol, 23 March 1939, IMT documents, UND, OGL 17, Box 195, Folder 6, 2793-PS.

197. Alfred E. Senn, The Great Powers, Lithuania, and the Vilna Question, 1920-1928 (Leiden, The Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1966), 107-21.

198. A.J.P. Taylor, The Origins of the Second World War (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1961), 209.

199. Julius P. Slavenas, "Lithuania, Klaipeda-Memel, and Hitler," Baltic History, 3 (1974), 266.

200. Hewel memorandum, 20 March 1939, staff evidence analysis, IMT documents, UND, OGL 17, Box 196, Folder 3, 2956-PS.

201. Slavenas, 266; Reich decree, 23 March 1939, TC-53-A, NCA, 8:408.

202. Henderson to Halifax, 28 May 1939, British Foreign Office, The British War Blue Book: Documents Concerning German-Polish Relations and the Outbreak of Hostilities between Great Britain and Germany on September 3, 1939 (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1939), 24.

203. Dirksen, 217.

204. Newman, 104.

205. Hassell, 45.

206. Theo Kordt to Ribbentrop, 22 March 1939, Auswaertiges Amt, Documents on the Events Preceding the Outbreak of the War [hereafter cited as DEPOW] (Berlin and New York: German Foreign Office, 1939), 295; Theo Kordt to Ribbentrop, 23 March 1939, DEPOW, 295-96.

207. Dirksen, 216, 218.

208. Hitler directive, 25 March 1939, DGFP(D), 6:117-19.

209. Lipski, 502; Ribbentrop memorandum, 21 March 1939, DGFP(D), 6:70-72.

210. Chamberlain speech, 31 March 1939, TMWC, 41:109-10; Lipski, 508.

211. Ribbentrop memorandum, 26 March 1939, TMWC, 41:110-14.

212. Ribbentrop memorandum, 26 March 1939, DGFP(D), 6:121-24.

213. Weizsaecker to Moltke, 27 March 1939, DGFP(D), 6:127.

214. Ribbentrop, 102; Schmidt memorandum, 27 March 1939, DGFP(D), 6:135-36.

215. Schliep to Moltke, 29 March 1939, DGFP(D), 6:155-56.

216. Chamberlain speech, 31 March 1939, TMWC, 41:109-10; Chamberlain speech, 31 March 1939, The British War Blue Book, 48.

217. Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, 282; Theo Kordt to Ribbentrop, 13 April 1939, DEPOW, 309; Anglo-Polish Communique, 6 April 1939, The British War Blue Book, 49.

218. Keitel directive, 3 April 1939, DGFP(D), 6:186-87; Hitler directive, 11 April 1939, DGFP(D), 6:223-28.

219. Hassell, 54; Weinberg, The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany, 2:561.

220. Weizsaecker to Moltke, 5 April 1939, DGFP(D), 6:195.

221. As quoted in Weinberg, The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany, 2:561, n.89.

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230. Ibid., 6:576.

231. Ibid., 6:575.

232. Hillgruber, 66; Weitz, 208; Anthony Read and David Fisher, The Deadly Embrace: Hitler, Stalin, and the Nazi-Soviet Pact 1939-1941 (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), 75-77.

233. Weizsaecker, 192.

234. Wolfgang Michalka, "From the Anti-Comintern to the Euro-Asiatic Bloc: Ribbentrop's Alternate Concept of Hitler's Foreign Policy Programme," chap. in Aspects of the Third Reich, ed. H.W. Koch (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 276; Ribbentrop, 109-10; Weitz, 206; Ribbentrop interrogation testimony, 30 August 1945, NCA, Sup. B, 1186.

235. Ribbentrop, 110.

236. Weitz, 208.

237. Weizsaecker, 186-87; Hill, "The Wilhelmstrasse in the Nazi Era," 568.

238. Hilger and Meyer, 293; Tippelskirch to Ribbentrop, 4 May 1939, Auswaertiges Amt, Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941: Documents from the Archives of the German Foreign Office, eds. Raymond J. Sontag and James S. Beddie (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 1948), 2-3.

239. Hilger and Meyer, 293.

240. Ibid.

241. Weizsaecker to Schulenburg, 27 May 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941, 9.

242. Weizsaecker memorandum, 25 May 1939, DGFP(D), 6:586-87.

243. Ribbentrop to Hitler, 29 May 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941, 10-11.

244. Ribbentrop memorandum, 29 May 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941, 11; Weizsaecker memorandum, 30 May 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941, 12; Weizsaecker to Schulenburg, 30 May 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941, 15; Weizsaecker to Schulenburg, 30 May 1939, DGFP(D), 6:610.

245. Weizsaecker to Schulenburg, 29 July 1939, DGFP(D), 6:1006-9.

246. Hassell, 53. See also Herbert S. Levine, Hitler's Free City: The History of the Nazi Party in Danzig, 1925-39 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

247. Ribbentrop to Lipski, 9 August 1939, TMWC, 41:118-19.

248. Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, 297. See also Galeazzo Ciano, The Ciano Diaries 1939-1943: The Complete, Unabridged Diaries of Count Galeazzo Ciano, Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1936-1943, ed. Hugh Gibson, introd. Sumner Welles (New York: Doubleday, 1946), 119.

249. Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, 297-98. See also Schmidt, 132.

250. Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, 300.

251. Ibid., 301. See also Ciano, The Ciano Diaries 1939-1943, 119; Schmidt, 132.

252. Schmidt, 132.

253. Schulenburg to Ribbentrop, 11 August 1939, DGFP(D), 7:28.

254. Dirksen, 222. On 13 August 1939, Dirksen arrived in Berlin to warn of the British intention to go to war in support of Poland. Hitler and Ribbentrop would not meet with their ambassador to accept such a warning, however. According to Dirksen, they did not want to hear information contrary to their belief that Britain and France would not fight for the Poles (Dirksen, 228, 231).

255. Ribbentrop to Schulenburg, 14 August 1939, Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939-1941, 50-52; Schulenburg to Ribbentrop, 11 August 1939, DGFP(D), 7:28.

256. Henderson to Halifax, 16 August 1939, The British War Blue Book, 115-119.

257. Ibid.; Weizsaecker, 192.

258. Kordt, Nicht aus den Akten, 311-19; Henderson to Halifax, 16 August 1939, The British War Blue Book, 115-119; Hill, "The Wilhelmstrasse in the Nazi Era," 568.

259. Schulenburg to Ribbentrop, 16 August 1939, DGFP(D), 7:76-77. See also Schulenburg to Ribbentrop, 16 August 1939, DGFP(D), 87-90.

260. Ribbentrop to Schulenburg, 16 August 1939, DGFP(D), 7:84-85.

261. Ribbentrop to Schulenburg, 18 August 1939, DGFP(D), 7:121-23.

262. Schulenburg to Ribbentrop, 20 August 1939, DGFP(D), 7:150-51.

263. Schulenburg to Ribbentrop, 20 August 1939, DGFP(D), 7:149-50.

264. Ribbentrop to Schulenburg, 20 August 1939, DGFP(D), 7:156-57.

265. Hitler declaration of full diplomatic powers for Ribbentrop, 22 August 1939, DGFP(D), 7:200.

266. Weizsaecker to Schulenburg, 23 August 1939, DGFP(D), 7:221.

267. Schmidt, 138; Ribbentrop, 111; Hilger and Meyer, 300-4; Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, DGFP(D), 7:245-46.

268. Schulenburg to Ribbentrop, 25 August 1939, DGFP(D), 7:295.

269. Chamberlain to Hitler, 22 August 1939, The British War Blue Book, 125-27; Franz Halder, The Halder War Diary 1939-1942 ed. Charles Burdick and Hans-Adolf Jacobsen (Novato, Calif.: Presido Press, 1988), 38.

270. Weizsaecker testimony, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 14, 7754-755.

271. Weizsaecker, 204.

272. Carr, Arms, Autarky, and Aggression, 123.

273. Schmidt, 138-39.

274. Carr, Arms, Autarky, and Aggression, 116.

275. Weizsaecker testimony, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 14, 7755.

276. Anglo-Polish Mutual Assistance Pact, 25 August 1939, The British War Blue Book, 49-52.

277. Schmidt, 145.

278. Ibid., 146; Weizsaecker, 207.

279. Schmidt, 146.

280. Halder, 34-35, 39; Weizsaecker, 205; Ribbentrop, 117; Weizsaecker testimony, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 14, 7755.

281. Woermann testimony, 6 July 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 140, Folder 7, 1128-129; Dirksen, 226; Ribbentrop, 116-17; Halder, 35.

282. Ribbentrop interrogation testimony, 10 October 1945, NCA, Sup. B, 1252; Ciano, The Ciano Diaries 1939-1943, 129.

283. Weizsaecker testimony, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 14, 7747; Ribbentrop, 117.

284. Weizsaecker, 192.

285. Ibid., 193.

286. Weizsaecker testimony, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 14, 7747. See also Dirksen 231.

287. Halder, 37.

288. Ibid., 40.

289. Schmidt memorandum, 29 August 1939, DGFP(D), 7:381-84.

290. Ribbentrop, 118; Halder, 42.

291. Weizsaecker, 208.

292. As quoted in Weizsaecker, 208.

293. Taylor, The Origins of the Second World War, 272; Ribbentrop, 119; Schmidt, 249.

294. Halder, 42; Ribbentrop, 121; Schliep memorandum, 30 August 1939, DGFP(D), 7:442; Beck to Lipski, 31 August 1939, Diplomat in Berlin 1933-1939, 572.

295. Halder, 40.

296. Schmidt, 150-51.

297. Hassell, 68-72; Kordt, Nicht aus den Akten, 234-35; Schmidt, 150, 152; Schmidt memorandum, 31 August 1939, DGFP(D), 7:451-54. Ribbentrop told the International Military Tribunal that Hitler himself had drawn up the document (Ribbentrop testimony, 1 April 1946, TMWC, 10:367).

298. Ribbentrop, 123; Schmidt, 153; Ribbentrop testimony, 29 March 1946, TMWC, 10:275.

299. Schmidt testimony, 28 March 1946, TMWC, 10:197. For the British viewpoint of this meeting, see Henderson, 283-87.

300. Taylor, The Origins of the Second World War, 274.

301. Lipski to Beck, 31 August 1939, Diplomat in Berlin 1933-1939, 571.

302. Beck to Lipski, 31 August 1939, Diplomat in Berlin 1933-1939, 572; Ribbentrop, 118.

303. German Communique to Britain, 31 March 1939, TMWC, 41:121-22.

304. Weizsaecker, 209.

305. Hassell, 69.

306. Ribbentrop testimony, 29 March 1946, TMWC, 10:276; Directive No. 1 for the Conduct of War "Case White", 31 August 1939, Adolf Hitler, Blitzkrieg to Defeat: Hitler's War Directives 1939-1945 trans. and ed. Hugh Trevor-Roper (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964), 3-5.

307. Ribbentrop testimony, 29 March 1946, TMWC, 10:276.

308. Ibid., 10:275.

309. Schmidt, 155.

310. Ibid., 156.

311. Weizsaecker testimony, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 14, 7755.

312. Schmidt testimony, 10 March 1946, TMWC, 10:200.

313. Hassell, 71.

CHAPTER VII

RIBBENTROP AND THE WILHELMSTRASSE DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The outbreak of war in September 1939 resulted in the demise of Nazi diplomacy and the increased importance of military matters. Directing the Polish Campaign, Adolf Hitler had no time for his Foreign Minister and the Wilhelmstrasse. The Fuehrer would now rely upon his General Staff for military and diplomatic advice in carrying out the war against Poland and its allies.[1] As Ernst von Weizsaecker told the American Military Tribunal, "Hitler preferred to talk to a soldier about foreign policy rather than to experts."[2]

Hitler's unfavorable disposition towards professional diplomats, of course, was nothing new. He had always despised, and, according to Joachim von Ribbentrop, "hated" the diplomatic corps.[3] But, now, the Fuehrer was upset at his own Foreign Minister, the Nazi Ribbentrop, because of the British and French declarations of war against Germany on 3 September 1939. Although firmly believing that the West would not intervene in a German-Polish conflict, Hitler, himself, could not but help blame Ribbentrop for the unexpected outcome since, after all, the Foreign Minister was the so-called expert on relations with Britain and France. Key members of the

Nazi inner circle, of which Ribbentrop never belonged, loudly declared the Foreign Minister to blame for the possibility of a European war.[4] However, Hitler, finally realizing the shortcomings of his top diplomat, was forced to keep Ribbentrop on as Foreign Minister since to dismiss the champagne salesman would mean admitting his own miscalculations in diplomacy.[5]

In order to maintain his position in the Third Reich, Ribbentrop needed to take drastic actions to demonstrate his loyalty and usefulness to the Fuehrer. At the onset of the invasion of Poland, the Foreign Minister distanced himself from the professional diplomats at the Foreign Office, whom he also hated for their disloyal service to Hitler and himself.[6] He relied upon the advice and services of his own Secretariat, also known as the Bureau _Reichsaussenminister_ (RAM).[7] This group consisted of such trusted diplomats as Erich Kordt and Paul Otto Schmidt, as well as former members of the Bureau Ribbentrop, including Walther Hewel, Gustav Adolf Steengracht von Moyland, Franz Sonnleithner, and Rudolf Likus.[8] With this assortment of officials, Ribbentrop procured cars aboard Heinrich Himmler's special train and travelled to the war front to be close to the Fuehrer.[9] Steengracht von Moyland, who had previously worked for Ribbentrop in London (1936-38) and Berlin (1938-39) managed the Foreign Minister's saloon cars.[10] Throughout the Polish Campaign, and for most of the following military campaigns during the Second World War, Ribbentrop and the Bureau RAM utilized this train to keep in close contact with Hitler and his field

headquarters.[11] According to Gustav Hilger, who joined this select group of advisors in 1941:

> [Ribbentrop] followed Hitler everywhere [in his special train] in order to be close to him at all times. The special train included a parlor car for the minister himself, two dining cars, and no less than eight sleeping cars housing a crew of aides, male and female secretaries, counselers and expert consultants, and a numerous bodyguard responsible for von Ribbentrop's personal safety. The whole thing was very much like a circus which put up its tents here or there just as required, or just as the foreign minister's whims desired.[12]

From this train Ribbentrop directed the operations of the German Foreign Office. Throughout World War II, the Foreign Minister loyally carried out the orders of the Fuehrer as the surest way to remain in Hitler's favor. Steengracht von Moyland told the Nuremberg court that "Ribbentrop himself never laid down any policy. He merely executed what Hitler ordered him to do and towards Hitler he was in a sort of trance and he followed all of his orders blindly."[13] To carry out Hitler's orders, Ribbentrop utilized the telephone in his saloon-car to direct the Foreign Office in Berlin on actions to take.[14] During his trial at Nuremberg, Weizsaecker complained of this management technique, stating that Ribbentrop "always wanted to hold all political decisions in his own hands, irrespective of where he happened to be."[15] Moreover, Ribbentrop would not allow Schmidt to provide the Foreign Secretary copies of reports and notes on Hitler's conferences.[16]

The Foreign Minister lacked trust for the professional diplomats at the Wilhelmstrasse. He appointed Nazis from the Bureau Ribbentrop to control the activities of the career diplomats. He made Theodor Habicht

the Deputy Director of the Political Department, under Ernst Woermann.[17] But, more importantly, Ribbentrop rapidly promoted Martin Luther to the position of Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs.[18] From this position, Luther controlled internal matters at the Wilhelmstrasse, and acquired considerable power over the career diplomats by bugging their offices and telephone calls, and reporting treasonable matters to the Foreign Minister.[19] Weizsaecker, the State Secretary, complained that Luther "made a note of my visitors, tapped my telephone wires, and installed a monitor system in my own study."[20] With aid from Luther, Ribbentrop was preparing to dismiss 150 to 200 of the top officials at the Wilhelmstrasse, including Weizsaecker and Kordt, in early 1940.[21] He planned to replace them with members of the Bureau Ribbentrop, which he disbanded on 1 February 1940.[22] Hitler, nevertheless, denied Ribbentrop his quest to shakeup the Wilhelmstrasse in June 1940. He realized that the expertise of the diplomatic corps might still be needed, while Ribbentrop was useless for most diplomatic requirements other than carrying out instructions.[23]

In the fall of 1939, Adolf Hitler and his General Staff formulated plans to attack the West.[24] Having no direct knowledge of such planning, in October, Foreign Secretary Weizsaecker, nonetheless, tried to dissuade the Fuehrer from launching an offensive against the West.[25] For numerous reasons Hitler postponed an offensive through the Low Countries against the British and French forces deploying in France. Even so, the war at sea was

active.[26] In this light, Hitler realized the British threat to his northern flank in Scandinavia, and the possible loss of important iron-ore supplies coming from Sweden and shipped via Norwegian ports to Germany.[27]

Hitler was greatly interested in the neutrality of Norway. In December 1939, Alfred Rosenberg arranged for Vidkun Quisling, the leader of the Norwegian Nasjonal Samling Party, to secretly meet with the Fuehrer without the knowledge of the Foreign Office.[28] Quisling, who sought power in Norway, warned Hitler that the West was planning to occupy Norway, and stressed the need for German action to prevent such a move.[29]

Instead of striking directly at Germany, Britain and France made plans to cut off German supplies of iron-ore from Scandinavia. As early as October 1939, the Allies schemed to plant mines in Norwegian coastal waters with the possibility of deploying an expedition force to occupy the iron-ore mines in Sweden.[30] Nevertheless, on 30 November, the Soviet Union attacked Finland, and therefore, temporarily redirected the attention of the Allies from Norway and Sweden further east.[31] By February 1940, however, Britain and France were planning to occupy key ports in Norway.[32]

German military intelligence was well aware of Allied plans for occupying Norway.[33] To prevent the Allies from outflanking Germany and acquiring forward air force and naval bases, Hitler and his military staff secretly planned to invade and occupy both Norway and Denmark. Such plans, according to Hitler, were "designed to protect by force of arms the neutrality of the Northern countries."[34] Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, the Head

of the German Military Intelligence Service, secretly informed Eric Kordt of such plans, who told his close confederate, Weizsaecker.[35]

Meanwhile, the German General Staff kept planning for an offensive against the buildup of British and French forces along the eastern border of France. Plans called for German forces to attack the Allies through the Low Countries.[36] Ribbentrop became aware of the invasion plans, but Hitler shared no information with his Foreign Minister regarding military details. The Fuehrer, however, told Ribbentrop that Germany needed to conduct a preemptive strike through the Low Countries, which were risking their neutral status by coordinating military efforts with the West, in order to safeguard the Ruhrland from an Allied invasion.[37]

Hitler sent his Foreign Minister to meet Mussolini and Ciano in Rome on 10 March 1940. Ribbentrop informed the Duce of Hitler's plans to attack the West, and defeat France by the fall of 1940.[38]

While preparing for the invasion of the West, German military officials began noting the British Royal Navy's incursions into Norwegian waters on 28 March 1940.[39] Ribbentrop was made aware of this fact by the German Ambassador to Norway the following morning.[40] Wasting little time, on 2 April, Hitler issued an order for German forces to invade and occupy Norway and Denmark on the ninth.[41]

Having received such instructions, General Wilhelm Keitel, the Chief of Staff of the High Command, drafted a letter to Ribbentrop informing him of the upcoming military action, and requesting the Foreign Minister to

coordinate the diplomatic aspect with the military operations planned against Norway and Denmark.[42] The following morning, on 3 April, Keitel again wrote to Ribbentrop. Distrusting the loyalty of his diplomats, Hitler feared that the Wilhelmstrasse would leak out word of the upcoming invasion to the foreign diplomatic corps in Berlin. Keitel told Ribbentrop: "In accordance with the Fuehrer's specific instructions, . . . request that the number of persons participating in the preparations be restricted to the fewest possible."[43] To minimize the amount of time that military information would be in the hands of untrustworthy diplomats, both of Keitel's letters were not handed to Ribbentrop until 7 April.[44]

Ribbentrop followed orders and informed only a few key diplomats of Hitler's plans. Weizsaecker, keenly aware of the impending invasion through Kordt and military friends, took leave from Berlin.[45] Ribbentrop had Schmidt and several members of the Languages Division in the Foreign Office prepare and translate notes for the Danish and Norwegian governments in secrecy at the Hotel Adlon on 8 April.[46] That same day the Royal Navy began laying mines in Norwegian territorial waters.[47]

As planned, German forces invaded Denmark and Norway on 9 April. The action surprised many of the top diplomats at the Wilhelmstrasse. Ernst Woermann, the Director of the Political Department, knew nothing about the impending invasion.[48] Even the Denmark and Norway specialists at the Foreign Office were not aware of Hitler's plans.[49] Ribbentrop's task was to deliver diplomatic notes to the Danish and Norwegian ambassadors that

explained Hitler's reasons for the invasion and to request their respective governments to not resist.[50]

On 9 May 1940, as German forces made the last preparations for the attack against the West, Hitler informed Ribbentrop of military matters and requested him to prepare diplomatic notes for the ambassadors of Belgium, Luxembourg, and The Netherlands. The Foreign Minister immediately called Schmidt and language experts from the Foreign Office to the Presidential Palace to draft and translate the diplomatic notes in complete secrecy from the officials at the Wilhelmstrasse.[51] He told Schmidt that "if news of this offense leaks out, the Fuehrer will have you shot. I shall not be able to save you."[52] It was not until one o'clock in the morning on the tenth that Weizsaecker was informed of Hitler's military plans and Ribbentrop's diplomatic activities planned for later that morning.[53] The entire Foreign Office, with the exception of the Secretariat and the languages division, had been kept in the dark about military matters until the last moment.[54]

German forces initiated Hitler's preemptive offensive strike against the Allies through the Low Countries on 10 May 1940. Hitler had Ribbentrop personally meet with the Belgian, Dutch, and Luxembourg ambassadors.[55] Ribbentrop informed the Belgian and Dutch diplomats that their countries had not fulfilled their obligations as neutral countries, and that "they have attempted . . . to maintain the outward appearance of neutrality, but in practice both countries have shown a one-sided partiality for Germany's

opponents and have furthered their designs."[56] He made it plain that Hitler believed a British and French attack through the Low Countries into the Ruhrland to be imminent. Moreover, the Foreign Minister declared:

> [I]n this struggle for existence forced upon the German people by England and France, the Reich Government is not disposed to await idly the attack by England and France and to allow them to carry the war by way of Belgium and the Netherlands into German territory. It has therefore now issued the command to German troops to ensure the neutrality of these countries by all the military means at the disposal of the Reich.[57]

Ribbentrop warned that the Germans would fight if they met any resistance. To the diplomatic representative from Luxembourg, the Foreign Minister only mentioned the necessity for German forces to attack the Allies through his country.[58]

The German blitzkrieg quickly defeated the Allied effort resulting in the humiliating withdrawal of British forces from Dunkirk and the capitulation of France. With Germany and Britain still at war, Hitler concentrated his efforts on the Battle of Britain during the summer of 1940.[59]

Meanwhile, Hitler began turning his attention toward his principal enemy, the Soviet Union. Stalin had tread upon Hitler's interests by occupying the German part of Lithuania in June 1940.[60] On 31 July 1940, the Fuehrer's deeply held anti-communist views, combined with increasing German-Soviet tension over territorial disputes in eastern Europe, prompted him to brief the German General Staff that the Soviet Union must be "smashed" by the spring of 1941.[61]

In September 1940, the Fuehrer sent Ribbentrop to meet with Benito Mussolini to encourage a greater Italian exertion toward defeating Britain. The Duce, however, had other ideas. He preferred to take action in an eastward direction to conquer and expand his power into Yugoslavia and Greece. The German Foreign Minister was overwhelmed by the presence of the Fascist leader, and found it impossible to convince him of concentrating the war effort on Britain.[62]

While he travelled one direction, Ribbentrop, under Hitler's directions, sent Heinrich Stahmer, a member of the Bureau RAM who was the former Chief of the Far Eastern Section in the Bureau Ribbentrop, as an envoy to Tokyo to arrange a military alliance with Japan.[63] The Fuehrer wanted Japanese military assistance against British forces in the British Empire, as well as to neutralize the United States.[64] Impressed by Germany's victories against most of Europe and desiring to invade French Indochina, the Japanese government desired to join the German-Italian military alliance.[65] With great ease Stahmer achieved success in negotiating the Tripartite Pact (Germany, Italy, and Japan), signed in Berlin by Ribbentrop, Galeazzo Ciano, and Saburo Kurusu, the Japanese Ambassador to Germany, on 27 September 1940.[66]

Tension was at a high between Germany and the Soviet Union because of territorial squabbles over Bessarabia and Romania during the fall of 1940.[67] Ribbentrop wanted to avoid a German-Soviet war at all costs. He suggested to Hitler that the Soviet Union join the Tripartite Pact as a way

to avoid war.[68] The Fuehrer rejected such an idea, but was willing to discuss German-Soviet territorial interests in eastern Europe. Thus, on 13 October 1940, Ribbentrop instructed Count Schulenburg, the German Ambassador in Moscow to request that Stalin send a diplomatic representative to Berlin to discuss "their interests on a worldwide scale."[69]

Thus, on 12 November 1940, the Soviet Foreign Commissar, Vyacheslav Molotov arrived in Berlin to discuss matters. During this meeting Ribbentrop suggested that Stalin look southward towards the Indian Ocean for expansion instead of the Balkans.[70] However, Molotov astonished his counterpart by calling for Hitler's recognition of Soviet interests in the Balkans, Soviet bases on the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, Soviet military control of Bulgaria and the entire area of the Straits, as well as a halt to all Germany military activity in Finland.[71] These demands were reaffirmed by Molotov in a statement to the Count Schulenburg in Moscow on 25 November.[72]

In the meantime, Mussolini had launched an Italian invasion on Greece on 28 October 1940. The short-lived offensive bogged down against Greek resistance within a few days, and Italian forces had dropped back to Albania by 11 November.[73] On 4 November, nevertheless, Hitler had decided to assist the Italians and pull them out of an embarrassing situation by launching a German attack against Greece.[74] To accomplish this the Fuehrer

needed Yugoslavia to either remain neutral, or better yet, support the action against Greece. Because of the geographical position of Yugoslavia, Hitler would desperately need the cooperation of Belgrade to carry out any operation aimed at Greece. Hitler therefore met Aleksandar Cincar-Markovic, the Yugoslav Foreign Minister, at Berchtesgaden, on 28 November 1940. For cooperation with the German effort, the Fuehrer promised the Yugoslav government assistance in acquiring the seaport of Salonika. At the same time, he suggested that Yugoslavia join the Tripartite Pact.[75]

In spite of the Greek-Italian War, the Fuehrer furthered his plans against the Soviet Union. On 18 December 1940, Hitler issued orders for the armed forces to prepare for Operation Barbarossa, designed to "crush Soviet Russia in a quick campaign . . . even before the conclusion of the war against England."[76] Although the General Staff, according to Barry Leach, shared Hitler's optimism about the task facing them,[77] Ribbentrop urged Hitler to avoid war with the Soviet Union.[78] The Fuehrer brushed aside any such advice and kept his Foreign Minister uninformed about military preparations.[79]

The situation in the Balkans became more serious in early 1941. The British were deploying troops and aircraft to Greece. Realizing this to be the opening of a new front, Hitler hastened to counter British plans. On 21 and 22 January, Hitler and Ribbentrop met Mussolini and Ciano at Salzburg to discuss plans for a German invasion of Greece.[80] Three weeks later, on 14 February, Ribbentrop met the Yugoslav Minister President,

Dragisa Cvetkovic, and the Yugoslav Foreign Minister at Fueschl. He strongly suggested that Yugoslavia join the Tripartite Pact and assist in the attack against Greece.[81] Prince Paul, the Regent of Yugoslavia, met with Hitler at Berchtesgaden and discussed politico-military matters on 4 March.[82] The Yugoslav government decided in favor of Hitler's proposals, and joined the Tripartite Pact on 25 March 1941.[83]

The situation took a significant turn two days later when a group of Yugoslav Army officers, led by General Dusan Simovic, overthrew the Cvetkovic government.[84] That same day, on 27 March, Hitler, who was enraged by such an act against an ally, ordered the Germany military "to smash Yugoslavia militarily and as a state."[85] Hitler told the General Staff and Ribbentrop that this action, combined with the attack against Greece, would delay Operation Barbarossa by about four weeks.[86] According to Weizsaecker, Hitler was personally offended by the putsch: "He decided, on the spur of the moment, to attack Yugoslavia and gave military orders for this within a few hours."[87] To crush Yugoslavia, Hitler sought assistance from his client states. He had Ribbentrop discuss the matter with Doeme Sztojay, the Hungarian Ambassador to Berlin, to encourage Hungarian military action against Yugoslavia with the promise of an outlet to the Adriatic as a reward.[88] On 5 April, Hitler instructed Ribbentrop and the Bureau RAM, without the assistance of Weizsaecker and the Foreign Office, to prepare the diplomatic notes to be handed over the Greek and Yugoslav representatives the following morning.[89]

The German military machine began the invasion of Greece and Yugoslavia on 6 April 1941. Ribbentrop met and explained the reasons for the invasions to the Balkan representatives in Berlin. To the Greek ambassador the Foreign Minister pointed their obvious alliance with Britain and acceptance of British forces on Greek soil.[90] He cited the recent putsch by anti-German officers along with their support for British operations in Greece as Hitler's reason for an attack to the Yugoslav representative.[91]

Even though the invasion of the Balkans caused a delay, Hitler continued to plan for German forces to attack the Soviet Union. The fact that Stalin signed a Treaty of Friendship with Yugoslavia during the first week of April 1941 only infuriated the Fuehrer.[92] He would crush the Soviet Union in a surprise attack. In April Hitler informed Ribbentrop of his military plans. The Foreign Minister objected to Hitler's plans; but, realizing the shakiness of his position within the Third Reich, Ribbentrop quickly agreed with his master's reasoning.[93] Ribbentrop described his position in his memoirs:

> I myself at any rate wanted to try one more diplomatic approach to Moscow, but Hitler refused to allow any further demarche, and forbade me to talk to anyone about it; no diplomacy, he said, would make him change his mind about Russia's attitude, which was quite clear to him, and it might well deprive him of the weapon of tactical surprise for an attack.[94]

Painfully aware of Hitler's plans by way of confidents in the military, Weizsaecker and the Wilhelmstrasse opposed an invasion of the Soviet Union. The Foreign Office believed that Stalin wanted to avoid a conflict.[95]

Hitler safeguarded the invasion plans from his allies until a week before the attack. Then, on 15 June 1941, Ribbentrop met Ciano in Venice and told the Italian Foreign Minister of Hitler's decision to attack the Soviet Union.[96]

As German forces prepared to attack the Soviet Union, the Foreign Minister, under Hitler's directions, avoided all contact with the Soviet Ambassador, Vladimir Georgievich Dekanozov.[97] The next day, on 22 June 1941, as the German military machine invaded the Soviet Union, Ribbentrop had Dekanozov called to a meeting at the former Presidential Palace at four o'clock in the morning. Paul Otto Schmidt related the situation in the Foreign Minister's office in his memoirs:

> I had never seen Ribbentrop so excited as he was in the five minutes before Dekanosov's (sic) arrival. He walked up and down his room like a caged animal. "The Fuehrer is absolutely right to attack Russia now," he said to himself rather than to me; he repeated it again and again as though he wanted somehow to reassure himself. "The Russians would certainly themselves attack us, if we did not do so now." He went on walking up and down the large room in a state of great excitement, his eyes flashing, and kept repeating these words.[98]

Schmidt attributed Ribbentrop's attitude to the fact that the creator of the Nazi-Soviet Pact was now having to destroy his work.[99] Nevertheless, upon Dekanozov's arrival, the Foreign Minister quickly and politely informed him that "the hostile attitude of the Soviet Government toward Germany and the serious threat that Germany saw in the Russian concentration on the eastern border of Germany, had forced the Reich to [take] military countermeasures."[100] Schmidt believed that Ribbentrop

probably thought that this was the beginning of the end for the Third Reich.[101] Initially, however, the attack was a complete tactical surprise along the whole eastern front and German forces drove deep into Soviet territory.[102]

The swift movements of events and German success after June 1941 threatened Ribbentrop and the Foreign Office with the prospect of becoming obsolete. The Foreign Minister and the Bureau RAM used their special train to follow and stay close to Hitler at the eastern front.[103] Erich Kordt had been dismissed from the Secretariat and sent to Tokyo.[104] Johann Georg Lohmann took his place as Senior Counselor, and others, such as Gustav Hilger, had joined the Bureau RAM.[105] As the war progressed Ribbentrop and diplomacy became less important to the Fuehrer. In fact, the Foreign Minister confided to a subordinate in the Bureau RAM of "the inescapably logical consequence of German world supremacy: Hitler would need no Foreign Minister."[106] During the summer of 1941, Hitler considered plans to reduce the staff of the Foreign Office to the bare minimum.[107] In July 1941, upset at his loss of status, Ribbentrop offered to resign from his post.[108] After Hitler's acceptance, Ribbentrop quickly reconsidered his action and asked for a reinstatement to his position as Foreign Minister, and was granted it.[109] Gustave Gilbert, the psychiatrist at Nuremberg, wrote about this situation that Ribbentrop "panicked at the threat of losing favor . . . [and after regaining his position] had given his word of honor never to question his [Hitler's] judgment again."[110]

After this incident, Hitler had Ribbentrop concentrate on getting Japan to attack the Soviet Union, British possessions in the Far East, and the United States.[111] But, the Japanese seemed unwilling to launch a strike, especially against the Soviet Union since they had signed a nonaggression pact with Moscow in April 1941.[112] Hitler had pressed Yosuke Matsuoka, the Japanese Foreign Minister, that Japan strike Singapore and American possessions in the Pacific Region,[113] declaring that "Germany would strike . . . without delay in case of a conflict between Japan and America, because the strength of the tripartite powers lies in their joint action . . . ."[114] Following the invasion of the Soviet Union, Ribbentrop cabled Eugen Ott, the German Ambassador to Tokyo, and stressed the need for him to do his utmost to get the Japanese to attack the Soviets in Siberia.[115] On 28 November 1941, Ribbentrop told Hiroshi Oshima, the new Japanese Ambassador to Berlin:

> It is essential that Japan effect the New Order in East Asia without losing this opportunity. There never has been and probably never will be a time when closer cooperation under the Tripartite Pact is so important. If Japan hesitates at this time, and Germany goes ahead and establishes her European New Order, all the military might of Britain and the United States will be concentrated against Japan.[116]

The German Foreign Minister added that:

> [H]e did not believe that Japan could avoid a showdown with the United States, and that the situation could hardly even turn more favorable to Japan than it was now. It was his view that when one was strong, one should take advantage of it. One should not hesitate tackling the Americans right now. It seemed better at any rate to bring a problem to a head at the right moment than to keep putting it off.[117]

Receiving word of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hitler and Ribbentrop, at the eastern front, were taken by surprise.[118] The Foreign Minister actually believed that the information was probably enemy propaganda, which had tricked the German press.[119] Discovering the truth on 8 December, Ribbentrop notified Oshima that Hitler had issued orders for the German Navy to attack American ships.[120] Three days later, on 11 December, Hitler declared war against the United States. Commenting on Hitler's reason for such an action, Schmidt stated in his memoirs, "from what Ribbentrop said at the time I got the impression that, with his inveterate desire for prestige, Hitler, who was expecting an American declaration of war, wanted to get his declaration in first."[121] In his own memoirs, Ribbentrop described the situation:

> As soon as the reports about Pearl Harbour arrived--a complete surprise to us--my first reaction was that we had no contractual obligation to join in the war against the U.S.A. But when I discussed the matter with [Friedrich] Gaus, the head of the legal department in the Foreign Office, he declared that we could not act in that way and that this argument would in practice mean "the political demise" of the Three-Power Pact. Even so I did give the Fuehrer a sober exposition of the contractual terms, according to which, I held, we were not bound to declare war on the U.S.A. The text of the Pact only provided for our aiding Japan if she were attacked by a third Power. Hitler, however, replied: "The Americans have already opened fire on us, so that a state of war exists even now. Japan will never forget if we do not take the consequences. Besides, soon, and probably at once, we shall be at war with American, for this has been Roosevelt's aim all along.[122]

Even so, Hans Dieckhoff, the German Ambassador to the United States (1937-38), believed that Hitler and Ribbentrop did not take the Americans as a serious threat. In his opinion:

> Neither Hitler nor Ribbentrop had any real understanding of the situation in the United States. Hitler counted on the bad experience of the Americans in the First World War [and American neutrality legislation] a sure hindrance to any new American intervention in Europe.[123]

Although successful in getting Japan to attack British and American possessions, Ribbentrop failed to get Tokyo to assist Germany in the war against the Soviet Union. On 9 July 1942, the Foreign Minister pleaded with the Japanese that "if Japan attacked Russia now, it would lead to her final moral collapse; . . . never again would Japan have such an opportunity as existed at present, to eliminate once and for all the Russian colossus in Eastern Asia."[124] In April 1943, Ribbentrop told the Japanese Ambassador, "that without doubt this year presented the most favorable opportunity for Japan . . . to attack Russia, which certainly would never again be as weak as she is at the moment."[125] However, he was never able to convince the Japanese to fight a war on two fronts.

Ribbentrop and the Foreign Office lacked an important diplomatic role by 1943. The Third Reich was diplomatically isolated from all but a handful of neutrals and several vassal states. Ribbentrop had gradually lost his stage where he could act out his role as an important statesman. Nonetheless, in the eyes of fellow diplomats, Ribbentrop never amounted to much. At no time was his position as Foreign Minister secure from opponents. Without repute in Nazi Party circles, Ribbentrop was totally dependent upon Hitler's patronage.[126] Hermann Goering, Heinrich Himmler, Martin Bormann, Joseph Goebbels, and Alfred Rosenberg all viewed Ribbentrop

as "haughty, stupid, a fool."[127] In his description of Ribbentrop, Hans-Georg von Studnitz of the Foreign Office Press Department stated:

> The Foreign Minister has put all he possesses on one card--Hitler. A single frown from Fuehrer Headquarters, and his whole world tumbles about his ears. His greatest agony occurs when he has been unable for some considerable time to obtain an audience with Hitler. Over him, as over all the other "paladins," hangs the Damoclean sword of disfavour. But his skin is thinner than that of the others.[128]

For five years Ribbentrop had put up with challenges to his authority as Foreign Minister by members of Hitler's inner circle. He had continually struggled for control of foreign propaganda with Goebbels and the Propaganda Ministry.[129] Slipping from favor during the winter of 1942 and 1943, Ribbentrop was now presented a challenge for control from within the Foreign Office.[130] Martin Luther, Ribbentrop's own hand-picked Director of the Internal Affairs Department, tried to overthrow his superior by submitting charges of incompetency with the assistance of Himmler's staff. The Foreign Minister discovered the conspiracy, reported it to the Fuehrer, and obtained Luther's banishment to a concentration camp, where Himmler made life easy for his ally.[131]

With such treason coming from the Wilhelmstrasse, Ribbentrop turned hostile against his top Foreign Office officials.[132] He shook up the Wilhelmstrasse by dismissing Ernst von Weizsaecker, Ernst Woermann, and Friedrich Gaus as Foreign Secretary, Director of the Political Department, and Director of the Legal Department. Weizsaecker was reassigned as the Ambassador to the Vatican while Woermann was sent as the German

representative to the Japanese-controlled government in Nanking, China.[133] Ribbentrop appointed the loyal Baron Steengracht von Moyland as the Foreign Secretary on 30 March 1943.[134] Moreover, the Foreign Minister employed the Gestapo to search the offices and desks as well as tap the telephone calls of the Wilhelmstrasse to collect evidence of treasonable acts.[135]

Despite losing favor with Hitler, Ribbentrop remained the German Foreign Minister until the last days of the war. Goebbels continually pressed the Fuehrer for Ribbentrop's dismissal, hoping to become the new Foreign Minister himself.[136] Meanwhile, the Allied aerial bombardment of Berlin destroyed much of the Foreign Office. The raid of 11 August 1943 resulted in severe damage to the Wilhelmstrasse, resulting in Foreign Secretary Steengracht von Moyland and his diplomats moving into twenty-two different buildings scattered across the breadth of Berlin in order to carry on their diplomatic duties.[137] Ribbentrop, however, spent most of the time at the eastern front close to the Fuehrer,[138] but under constant criticism from Goering.[139] The Soviet advance westwards resulted in Hitler, as well as Ribbentrop, returning to Berlin in late 1944.[140] Allied bombings of the capital city destroyed what was left of the Foreign Office as well as damaged the former Presidential Palace.[141] On 14 April 1945, Foreign Office personnel left the city for the Salzburg area before the arrival of the Red Army.[142] With the war lost, Hitler finally made the decision to rid himself of Ribbentrop.[143] During the last few days of the

Third Reich Count Lutz Schwerin von Krosigk, the former Finance Minister, was appointed as the new German Foreign Minister.[144]

NOTES TO CHAPTER VII

1. Gustav Adolf Steengracht von Moyland testimony, 23 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 140, Folder 1, 9878.

2. Ernst von Weizsaecker testimony, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 13, 7703-4.

3. Ribbentrop, 163.

4. Speer, Spandau, 142; Joseph Goebbels, The Goebbels Diaries 1942-1943, ed. and trans. Louis P. Locher (New York: Doubleday, 1948), 267; Seabury, "Ribbentrop and the German Foreign Office," 545; Koch, Aspects of the Third Reich, 194; Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse, 265; Studnitz, 163.

5. Poole, 153; Speer, Spandau, 143; Studnitz, 162-63.

6. Weizsaecker testimony, 10 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 137, Folder 2, 8093.

7. Ibid., Box 137, Folder 2, 8092.

8. Schmidt, 161; Appendix I, DGFP(D), 9:693; Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse, 105-7.

9. Steengracht von Moyland testimony, 23 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 138, Folder 16, 9752-54; Schmidt, 160.

10. Steengracht von Moyland testimony, 23 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 138, Folder 16, 9752-54.

11. Ibid.; Weizsaecker testimony, 10 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 137, Folder 2, 8091.

12. Hilger and Meyer, 294.

13. Steengracht von Moyland testimony, 23 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 140, Folder 1, 9878.

14. Schmidt, 160-61.

15. Weizsaecker testimony, 10 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 137, Folder 2, 8097. See also Weizsaecker testimony, 10 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 137, Folder 2, 8091.

16. Paul Otto Schmidt testimony, 24 August 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 146, Folder 19, 17824-829.

17. Ernst Woermann testimony, 2 July 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 140, Folder 6, 11060.

18. Weizsaecker, 271.

19. Steengracht von Moyland testimony, 23 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 138, Folder 16, 9760-65; Eric Kordt testimony, 4 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 7, 7347; Weizsaecker testimony, 10 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 137, Folder 2, 8093-94.

20. Weizsaecker testimony, 10 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 137, Folder 2, 8094.

21. Ibid., 9 June 1948, Box 136, Folder 16, 7891; Kordt testimony, 4 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 8, 7413; Weizsaecker, 242, 271; Schmidt, 255; Weitz, 259.

22. Woermann testimony, 6 July 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 140, Folder 7, 11127-128; Hess to Rosenberg, 30 January 1940, AMT documents, UND, OGL 17, NG-1078, Box 217, Folder 5, 1.

23. Schmidt, 255; Weizsaecker, 242.

24. Hitler directives, 9 October 1939, 18 October 1939, 20 November 1939, _Hitler's War Directives 1939-1945_, 13-18.

25. Kordt testimony, 4 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 8, 7408; Weizsaecker testimony, 9 June 1948, AMT transcript, Box 136, Folder 16, 7886.

26. Peter Calvocoressi and Guy Wint, _Total War: Causes and Courses of the Second World War_ (London: Allen Lane, 1972), 105-6.

27. Joachim von Ribbentrop testimony, 30 March 1946, _TMWC_, 10:281.

28. Weizsaecker, 228; Weizsaecker testimony, 9 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 16, 7882-83.

29. Weizsaecker, 228.

30. Ross, 127-28.

31. See Max Jakobson, The Diplomacy of the Winter War: An Account of the Russo-Finnish War, 1939-1940 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961).

32. Auswaertiges Amt, Britain's Designs on Norway: Documents Concerning the Anglo-French Policy of Extending the War, German Foreign Office White Book No. 4 (New York: German Library of Information, 1940), 5-21; Ross, 128; Eleanor M. Gates, End of an Affair: The Collapse of the Anglo-French Alliance 1939-1940 (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981), 38-43; B.H. Liddell Hart, History of the Second World War (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1970), 54-55.

33. Patrick Salmon, "Crimes against Peace: The Case of the Invasion of Norway at the Nuremberg Trials," chap. in Diplomacy and Intelligence during the Second World War, ed. Richard Langhorne (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 246, 250.

34. Hitler directive, 1 March 1940, Hitler's War Directives 1939-1945, 22-24.

35. Eric Kordt affidavit, 27 September 1947, AMT documents, UND, OGL 17, NG-3605, Box 235, Folder 4, 3.

36. Hitler directive, 18 February 1940, Hitler's War Directives 1939-1945, 21-22; P.M.H. Bell, The Origins of the Second World War in Europe (London: Longman Group, 1986), 270.

37. Auswaertiges Amt, Allied Intrique in the Low Countries: Further Documents Concerning the Anglo-French Policy of Extending the War, German Foreign Office White Book No. 5 (New York: German Library of Information, 1940); German Government memorandum to Belgian Government, 9 May 1940, DGFP(D), 9:301-6; Gates, 52-53; Ribbentrop testimony, 30 March 1946, TMWC, 10:284; Ribbentrop exhibit 221, TMWC, 41:126-27; Bargeton to French Foreign Ministry, 9 November 1939, TMWC, 41:128; Gamelin to French Embassy in London, 13 November 1939, TMWC, 41:129-30; Ribbentrop exhibit 243, TMWC, 41:136-37.

38. Memorandum, ca. 10 March 1940, IMT documents, UND, OGL 17, Box 195, Folder 9, 2835-PS. See also Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, 341.

39. Braeuer to Ribbentrop, 28 March 1940, DGFP(D), 9:35.

40. Braeuer to Ribbentrop, 28 March 1940, IMT documents, UND, OGL 17, Box 175, Folder 6, D-843.

41. Salmon, 246; Hitler directive, 2 April 1940, DGFP(D), 9:66-67.

42. Keitel to Ribbentrop, 2 April 1940, DGFP(D), 9:68-72.

43. Keitel to Ribbentrop, 3 April 1940, DGFP(D), 9:72-73.

44. Ribbentrop, 134-35; Ribbentrop testimony, 30 March 1946, TMWC, 10:282.

45. Weizsaecker testimony, 10 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 137, Folder 1, 8014-15.

46. Schmidt, 174-75.

47. Grundherr memorandum, 8 April 1940, DGFP(D), 9:98.

48. Woermann testimony, 6 July 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 140, Folder 9, 11192.

49. Weizsaecker testimony, 9 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 16, 7883.

50. Ribbentrop to Braeuer, 9 April 1940, DGFP(D), 9:103; Danish Foreign Ministry memorandum, 9 April 1940, NCA, D-628, 7:98-99.

51. Schmidt, 175.

52. Ibid.

53. Weizsaecker, 233; Weizsaecker testimony, 9 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 16, 7887.

54. Woermann testimony, 6 July 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 11204-205; Weizsaecker testimony, 10 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 137, Folder 1, 8028.

55. Ribbentrop, 136-37; Schmidt 176; German Government memorandum to the Dutch Government, 9 May 1940, DGFP(D), 9:301-6; Weizsaecker testimony, 10 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 137, Folder 1, 8028.

56. German Government memorandum to the Dutch Government, 9 May 1940, DGFP(D), 9:301-6.

57. Ibid.

58. German Government memorandum to the Luxembourg Government, 9 May 1940, *DGFP(D)*, 9:306-7.

59. Liddell Hart, 87-108.

60. Ribbentrop, 145.

61. Extract from General Halder's diary, 31 July 1940, *DGFP(D)*, 10:373; Weizsaecker, 241; Gerhard L. Weinberg, "Germany's Declaration of War on the United States: A New Look," chap. in *World in the Balance: Behind the Scenes of World War II* (Hanover and London: University of New England Press, 1981), 83; Kennan, *Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin*, 339-44.

62. Memorandum, 19 September 1940, *NCA*, 1842-PS, 4:477-78.

63. Appendix I, *DGFP(D)*, 11:1241; Appendix III, *DGFP(D)*, 11:1260; Johanna M. Meskill, *Hitler and Japan: The Hollow Alliance* (New York: Atheneum, 1966), 17-18.

64. Stahmer and Ott to Ribbentrop, 10 September 1940, *DGFP(D)*, 11:57-58; Stahmer and Ott to Ribbentrop, 19 September 1940, *DGFP(D)*, 11:123-25; Stahmer and Ott to Ribbentrop, 20 September 1940, *DGFP(D)*, 11:132; Ribbentrop to Mackensen, 24 September 1940, *DGFP(D)*, 11:164-65; Schmidt, 224; Weinberg, *World in the Balance*, 18.

65. Ott to Ribbentrop, 3 September 1940, *DGFP(D)*, 11:10.

66. Ribbentrop, 141; Tripartite Pact, 27 September 1940, *DGFP(D)*, 11:204-5.

67. Molotov to Schulenburg, 21 September 1940, *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy, 1917-1941* [hereafter cited as *SDFP*], 3 vols., ed. Jane Degras (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953; reprint, New York: Octagon, 1978), 3:470-74; Ribbentrop, 145-47.

68. Frau von Ribbentrop affidavit, 5 December 1945, *TMWC*, 41:155-58.

69. Stalin to Ribbentrop, 21 October 1940, *SDFP*, 3:474-75; Ribbentrop to Stalin, 13 October 1940, *Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939-1941*, 213.

70. Ross, 131.

71. Schmidt, 218; Kennan, Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin, 342.

72. Molotov to Schulenburg, 25 November 1940, SDFP, 3:477-79.

73. Knox, 209.

74. Martin van Creveld, Hitler's Strategy 1940-1941: The Balkan Clue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 57-62.

75. Schmidt memorandum, 29 November 1940, DGFP(D), 11:728-35.

76. Hitler directive, 18 December 1940, DGFP(D), 11:899.

77. Barry A. Leach, German Strategy against Russia 1939-1941 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 87-89.

78. Frau von Ribbentrop affidavit, 5 December 1945, TMWC, 41:155-58.

79. Ribbentrop testimony, 2 April 1946, TMWC, 10:429; Hitler directive, 18 December 1940, DGFP(D), 11:899.

80. Ribbentrop, 143; Weizsaecker, 251;

81. Schmidt memorandum, 15 February 1941, DGFP(D), 12:79-88; Schmidt memorandum, 15 February 1941, DGFP(D), 12:88-96.

82. Ribbentrop to Mackensen, 5 March 1941, DGFP(D), 12:218-19; Ribbentrop to Heeren, 7 March 1941, DGFP(D), 12:230-32.

83. Heeren to Ribbentrop, 17 March 1941, DGFP(D), 12:303-4; Schmidt memorandum, 25 March 1941, DGFP(D), 12:354-57.

84. Heeren to Ribbentrop, 27 March 1941, DGFP(D), 12:368; Heeren memorandum, 3 April 1941, DGFP(D), 12:444-46.

85. Hitler Conference minutes, 27 March 1941, DGFP(D), 12:373.

86. Ibid., 12:372; Ribbentrop, 143.

87. Weizsaecker testimony, 10 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 137, Folder 1, 8040-41. See also Weizsaecker testimony, 9 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 16, 7895.

88. Hewel memorandum, 28 March 1941, IMT documents, UND, OGL 17, Box 195, Folder 5, 2763-PS.

89. Ribbentrop to Erbach, 5 April 1941, DGFP(D), 12:464-65; Weizsaecker testimony, 9 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 16, 7895; Weizsaecker testimony, 10 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 137, Folder 1, 8041.

90. German Government to Greek Government, TMWC, 41:139-42.

91. German Government to Yugoslav Government, TMWC, 41:142-47.

92. Schulenburg to Ribbentrop, 4 April 1941, DGFP(D), 12:451-52; Weizsaecker, 251.

93. Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse, 114-15; Weizsaecker, 253; Weizsaecker memorandum, 28 April 1941, Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939-1941, 330-34.

94. Ribbentrop, 152.

95. Weizsaecker memorandum, 28 April 1941, Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939-1941, 333-34; Weizsaecker testimony, 9 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 16, 7900; Weizsaecker testimony, 10 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 137, Folder 1, 8048; Schulenburg to Ribbentrop, 24 May 1941, DGFP(D), 12:870. Hitler told Count Schulenburg of the plan to invade the Soviet Union while the ambassador was on leave in Berlin during April 1941 (Hilger and Meyer, 328).

96. Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, 446.

97. Bruns memorandum, 21 June 1941, DGFP(D), 12:1059; Jasper memorandum, 21 June 1941, DGFP(D), 12:1059; Weizsaecker memorandum, 21 June 1941, DGFP(D), 12:1061-63.

98. Schmidt, 234.

99. Ibid.

100. Schmidt memorandum, 22 June 1941, DGFP(D), 12:1074-75.

101. Schmidt, 234.

102. Gerhard L. Weinberg, Germany and the Soviet Union, 1939-1941 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1954), 167; Liddell Hart, 164; Read and Fisher, 646.

103. Schmidt, 248-49.

104. Kordt affidavit, 27 September 1947, AMT documents, UND, OGL 17, NG-3605, Box 235, Folder 4, 4.

105. Hilger and Meyer, 338; Appendix I, DGFP(D), 13:1011.

106. Seabury, "Ribbentrop and the German Foreign Office," 546.

107. Weizsaecker, 258; Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse, 112.

108. Seabury, "Ribbentrop and the German Foreign Office," 546.

109. Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse, 119.

110. Gustave M. Gilbert, The Psychology of Dictatorship (New York: Ronald, 1950), 201.

111. Ribbentrop, 159; Weizsaecker, 256; Ribbentrop to German Embassies Abroad, 2 March 1941, NCA, 1834-PS, 4:472.

112. Weizsaecker, 250.

113. Schmidt memorandum, 31 March 1941, DGFP(D), 12:376-83.

114. Schmidt memorandum, NCA, 1881-PS, 4:524.

115. Ribbentrop to Ott, 28 June 1941, DGFP(D), 13:40-41; Ribbentrop to Ott, 28 June 1941, DGFP(D), 13:41; Ribbentrop to Ott, 1 July 1941, DGFP(D), 13:61-63; Ribbentrop to Ott, 25 August 1941, DGFP(D), 13:375-79.

116. Oshima to Japanese Foreign Minister, NCA, D-656, 7:160.

117. Memorandum, 28 November 1941, DGFP(D), 13:868.

118. Schmidt, 237; Ribbentrop, 159.

119. Schmidt, 237.

120. Oshima to Japanese Foreign Ministry, NCA, D-657, 7:163.

121. Schmidt, 237.

122. Ribbentrop, 160.

123. As quoted in Poole, 146.

124. Memorandum, 9 July 1942, NCA, 2911-PS, 5:580.

125. Memorandum, 18 April 1943, NCA, 2929-PS, 5:603.

126. Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse, 166.

127. Speer, Spandau, 142.

128. Studnitz, 164.

129. Schmidt, 162; Joseph Goebbels, The Goebbels Diaries 1939-1941, ed. and trans. Fred Taylor (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1983), 32, 109, 150, 170, 177, 189-90, 194, 198, 290-91; Goebbels, The Goebbels Diaries 1942-1943, 301, 512, 547; Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel, Dr. Goebbels: His Life and Death (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 148.

130. Poole, 153.

131. Steengracht von Moyland testimony, 23 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 138, Folder 16, 9765-66; Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse, 132-33; Speer, Spandau, 142. Gustav Hilger wrote that Ribbentrop was "basically ignorant and hardly capable of independent thought, he constantly surrounded himself with experts and idea-men whose brains he could pick whenever it suited him (Hilger and Meyer, 339).

132. Hassell, 270.

133. Woermann testimony, 2 July 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 140, Folder 2, 10848-850; Weizsaecker, 277; Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse, 133.

134. Steengracht von Moyland testimony, 23 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 138, Folder 16, 9767, 9771. Goebbels called Steengracht von Moyland a "mediocre figure," believing him to be "at best a high-grade private secretary" (Goebbels, The Goebbels Diary 1942-1943, 398).

135. Studnitz, 61.

136. Joseph Goebbels, Final Entries 1945: The Diaries of Joseph Goebbles, ed. Hugh Trevor-Roper, trans. Richard Barry (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1978), xxiv, xxvi, 228.

137. Studnitz, 95.

138. Ibid., 159-60.

139. Manvell and Fraenkel, Dr. Goebbels, 304; Goebbels, The Goebbels Diaries 1942-1943, 267.

140. Studnitz, 210.

141. Ibid., 241, 251.

142. Hilger and Meyer, 340.

143. Manvell and Fraenkel, *Dr. Goebbels*, 316.

144. Seabury, *The Wilhelmstrasse*, 148.

CHAPTER VIII

DIPLOMATS ON TRIAL AT NUREMBERG

Towards the end of the war the Allies made plans to round up and try key Nazi leaders for war crimes. From the very beginning the Allies wanted to indict Adolf Hitler, Heinrich Himmler, Hermann Goering, Joachim von Ribbentrop, and Joseph Goebbels for their crimes against peace.[1] However, Hitler, Himmler, and Goebbels all escaped such a trial by committing suicide in the last days of the Third Reich. This left Goering and Ribbentrop as the top two surviving Nazis to be indicted by the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg on the charges of conspiracy to wage wars of aggression, crimes against peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.[2] Thus, since Hitler, the prime formulator of German foreign policy, was dead, Ribbentrop became the key target for the Allies in condemning the policy that led to war. At the insistence of the French, the International Military Tribunal also indicted two other diplomats, Constantin von Neurath and Franz von Papen, for their part in the conspiracy.[3] Although they disagreed, the British and American officials accepted Neurath and Papen being included as major war criminals in spite of the fact that they did not play key parts in the crisis period that led to war.[4] Both men were being indicted for their diplomatic activities during 1933 to 1938.[5] Neurath had served as Hitler's first Foreign

Minister (1932-38) and Papen as both Vice Chancellor (1933-34) and, later, as the German Ambassador to Austria (1934-38). Including these diplomats, the International Military Tribunal indicted and tried twenty-two major war criminals at Nuremberg during 1945 and 1946.

In planning for the military tribunal, the Allies had picked the conspiracy theme as the best charge to collectively level at a group of Nazi leaders representing different functions within the German government. It was the one charge that they could easily indict the majority of the defendants.[6] With Hitler dead and Ribbentrop having served as his top diplomat during the period of German aggression, the Allies were especially interested in building up a solid case against the former Foreign Minister in order to denounce the aggressive policy that led to world war. Thus, the Allies placed considerable emphasis on Ribbentrop's central role as Foreign Minister when they collected documents to prosecute the war criminals on the conspiracy charge. The importance of convicting Ribbentrop meant that the Allies would spend a considerable effort amassing evidence against him to ensure an absolutely unquestionable conviction.[7] Such a significant effort by the prosecution against him, as well as his own mental deterioration, would make it virtually impossible for Ribbentrop to defend himself during the trial.[8]

Indicted on the conspiracy charge at Nuremberg, Ribbentrop, Neurath, and Papen pleaded not guilty on 21 November 1945. Although hard on Neurath for his actions as Hitler's first Foreign Minister, the prosecution

primarily went after Ribbentrop. They produced an enormous amount of documentation to support their argument that Ribbentrop performed a key role in the conspiracy to wage wars of aggression. The prosecution argued that his presence at so many of Hitler's meetings had given Ribbentrop a thorough knowledge of German planning and action, and it was alleged, were enough to prove his complicity.[9]

In his defense, Ribbentrop argued that he had no influence on Hitler's foreign policy. He told the Nuremberg court, "when Hitler gave an order, I always carried out his instructions in accordance with the principles of our authoritarian state."[10] He stressed that Hitler kept diplomatic and military matters separate, resulting in his being kept out of military planning.[11] His argument was supported by Goering who told the court that Ribbentrop "did not make foreign policy,"[12] and General Wilhelm Keitel, who admitted that the Fuehrer had not authorized him to inform the former Foreign Minister about military plans.[13] To defend himself, Ribbentrop submitted over 300 documents and called several witnesses, including Paul Otto Schmidt and Gustav Adolf Steengracht von Moyland, in an attempt to prove his lack of influence in foreign relations. The tribunal refused to accept well over half of Ribbentrop's document collection, citing irrelevance and the lack of English translations.[14] Defense witnesses told of Ribbentrop's devoteness and unquestionable loyalty to the Fuehrer. Steengracht von Moyland, the former Foreign Secretary, told the court that Ribbentrop "felt himself personally bound to Hitler, whom he followed with

soldierly obedience, and he stood under a certain hypnotic dependence on Hitler."[15] His defense stood on the argument that Hitler was his own Foreign Minister, and Ribbentrop just loyally carried out his master's instructions.[16]

During his own testimony, Ribbentrop, according to many observers, found it beyond his ability to defend himself and Hitler's foreign policy.[17] After the first day of testimony, Neurath and Papen were saying that Ribbentrop's performance and evidence showed that he had no conception of Hitler's policy.[18] Neurath told Gustave Gilbert, the prison psychiatrist: "You can see by the way he talks that he did not have the faintest conception of foreign affairs . . . ."[19] Another defendant, Hjalmar Schacht, stated that "Ribbentrop should be hung for his stupidity; there is no worse crime than stupidity."[20] Even Goering, who had aspired to become Foreign Minister, stated after Ribbentrop's pitiful display that he wished that during his own testimony, which took place before Ribbentrop's, he would have said more about Hitler's foreign policy so as to enlighten the world.[21] In the following days during the cross-examination, Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe, the chief prosecutor against the former Foreign Minister, destroyed what remained of Ribbentrop's case with relative ease.[22] Commenting on Ribbentrop's performance, Papen later wrote:

> When he [Ribbentrop] came under cross-examination, he attempted no measured defence of Hitler's policies, whose most determined advocate he had been for more than twelve years. He revealed himself to the

> world as what some of us already knew him to be, a husk with no kernel, and an empty facade for a mind.[23]

Thus, as Bradley Smith commented on Ribbentrop's trial:

> [W]ith the overwhelming body of evidence against him tailored perfectly to fit the legal categories established by the Tribunal, such as participation in specific war planning, nothing Ribbentrop or his counsel did could conceivably affect the result.[24]

Judgement day came on 30 September 1946. The International Military Tribunal found Ribbentrop and Neurath guilty of conspiracy to wage wars of aggression, and acquitted Papen.[25] Ribbentrop was sentenced to death by hanging, and Neurath received a fifteen-year prison sentence at Spandau.[26] The Allies executed Ribbentrop at Nuremberg on 16 October 1946. Reflecting upon Ribbentrop's trial, Albert Speer, another defendant at Nuremberg, stated:

> Ribbentrop's guilt, that is, did not consist in his having made a policy of war on his own. Rather, he was to blame for using his authority as a supposed cosmopolite to corroborate Hitler's provincial ideas. The war itself was first and last Hitler's idea and work.[27]

In addition to the trial of the major war criminals, the Allies planned to try less important Nazis for their part in the conspiracy to wage wars of aggression. The United States Army was responsible for the conduct of such trials in the American Zone of Occupation in Germany. In the last of a series of trials the American Military Tribunal indicted twenty-one defendants in what became known as the Ministries Case, held at Nuremberg during 1947 to 1949.[28] Eight of the defendants were former officials of the German Foreign Office. Only seven of these men, however, were initially charged with the conspiracy to wage wars of aggression.[29]

Steengracht von Moyland, a former Foreign Secretary (1943-45) was not indicted on this charge, but on the charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.[30]

American officials selected Foreign Office defendants based upon their position of authority, involvement in the conspiracy, and availability. Hans-Georg von Mackensen, Neurath's Foreign Secretary (1936-38), had died in an American prison camp in August 1946.[31] The United States Army arrested Ernst von Weizsaecker, Ribbentrop's Foreign Secretary (1938-43), who had stayed at the Vatican for more than a year after the war, in July 1947.[32] He, along with Ernst Woermann, the former Director of the Political Department (1938-43), were the top diplomats indicted on the conspiracy charge. The Tribunal also tried minor diplomatic officials such as Wilhelm Keppler, the State Secretary for Special Duties (1938-45), Edmund Veesenmayer, Keppler's assistant (1938-44), Karl Ritter, Ambassador for Special Duties (1939-45), Otto von Ermannsdorff, the Deputy Director of the Political Department (1941-45), and Ernst Bohle, the State Secretary for Foreign Organization (1937-41).[33] Before long, nevertheless, the American Military Tribunal dropped the conspiracy charges against Ermannsdorff and Bohle.[34] Interestingly enough, no former members of the Bureau RAM were indicted for the conspiracy to wage wars of aggresssion despite the presence of Eric Kordt, Steengracht von Moyland, and Paul Otto Schmidt at the trials.

The diplomats pleaded not guilty to the conspiracy charge. Weizsaecker told the American Military Tribunal that the charge of a diplomatic conspiracy was a figment of the prosecution's imagination.[35] In their defense, the diplomats argued that they had no influence over Hitler's formulation and conduct of foreign affairs. Weizsaecker told the court, "my impression on the rare occasions when I did see Hitler personally was rather that I bored him, probably with my dryness and objectivity."[36] Both Weizsaecker and Woermann told the Tribunal that the Foreign Office lacked influence with both Hitler and Ribbentrop. Ribbentrop relied upon a small select group, mainly his Secretariat, to assist him in the conduct of policy.[37] In their defense, Kordt stressed the opposition to Hitler and Ribbentrop at the Wilhelmstrasse. He told the court how Weizsaecker and the career diplomats went to great lengths, including treason, to keep the European peace. In fact, the Gestapo had executed eleven members of the Foreign Office for their actions.[38] Kordt, the close confident of the Foreign Minister, professed that both Hitler and Ribbentrop greatly disliked professional diplomats, with few exceptions, and thus went to great lengths to bypass the Foreign Office in the formulation and conduct of foreign policy.[39] Schmidt, probably in order to avoid any charges against himself, kept his statements as a defense witness brief and avoided discussing his role in the conduct of Hitler's policy.[40]

In April 1949, the American Military Tribunal announced judgement on the Foreign Office defendants. Weizsaecker, Woermann, and Keppler were

found guilty for their part in the conspiracy to wage wars of aggression against Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland.[41] The court acquitted Ritter and Veesenmayer.[42] On 13 April, the Tribunal sentenced Weizsaecker and Woermann to seven years in prison while Keppler received a ten-year prison sentence based upon his guilt in the conspiracy as well as crimes against humanity.[43] The defendants immediately filed a motion for the Tribunal to set aside their convictions.[44] This request for Weizsaecker and Woermann was granted on 12 December 1949.[45] Woermann's prison sentence, however, was not commuted, but reduced from seven to five years because of his conviction for crimes against humanity.[46] Weizsaecker, nonetheless, had his sentence commuted to time served, and he was immediately released, despite the fact that he, too, had been convicted for crimes against humanity.[47] The United States released Woermann in October 1950 and Keppler in January 1951.[48] As for Constantin von Neurath, the Allies released him from Spandau because of poor health in 1954.[49] Ribbentrop, of all the diplomats, was the only one to be held to the full extent of his sentence.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VIII

1. Bradley F. Smith, The Road to Nuremberg (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 179; Bradley F. Smith, The American Road to Nuremberg: The Documentary Record 1944-1945 (Stanford: Hoover Institute Press, 1982), 152, 174.

2. International Military Tribunal indictment, NCA, 1:13-82.

3. Bradley F. Smith, Reaching Judgment at Nuremberg (London: Andre Deutsch, 1977), 68; Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 220-21.

4. Ann and John Tusa, The Nuremberg Trial (New York: Atheneum, 1983), 92, 94; Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 224;

5. Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 224-25.

6. Smith, Reaching Judgment at Nuremberg, 49; Smith, The Road to Nuremberg, 51-52, 84, 123, 125; Smith, The American Road to Nuremberg, 50.

7. Smith, Reaching Judgment at Nuremberg, 183-84.

8. Robert E. Conot, Justice at Nuremberg (New York: Harper and Row, 1983), 348; Gilbert, Nuremberg Diary, 10, 136.

9. TMWC, 22:530-32; Tusa, 299-300.

10. Joachim von Ribbentrop testimony, 2 April 1946, TMWC, 10:416.

11. Ibid, 1 April 1946, 10:321.

12. Hermann Goering testimony, 22 March 1946, TMWC, 9:620.

13. Wilhelm Keitel testimony, 5 April 1946, TMWC, 10:598; Gilbert, Nuremberg Diary, 139.

14. Ribbentrop, 192.

15. Gustav Adolf Steengracht von Moyland testimony, 26 March 1946, TMWC, 10:110.

16. Poole, 131.

17. Gilbert, Nuremberg Diary, 137-39.

18. Tusa, 303.

19. Gilbert, Nuremberg Diary, 135.

20. Ibid., 11.

21. Tusa, 303.

22. Ibid., 306-7.

23. Papen, 552.

24. Smith, Reaching Judgment at Nuremberg, 184.

25. TMWC, 22:530-32, 570-74, 580-82, 588-89.

26. Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 236-38.

27. Speer, Spandau, 143.

28. See case 11, TWC, vols. 12-14; AMT trial transcript, UND, OGL 17, Boxes 136-46; AMT trial evidence documents, UND, OGL 17, Boxes 205-50.

29. TWC, 12:20-35. See also TWC, 12:419-1330.

30. AMT trial transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 129, Folder 2, 31.

31. Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 236.

32. Weizsaecker, 305, 309.

33. TWC, 12:14-15.

34. Ibid., 14:323, 435.

35. Ernst von Weizsaecker testimony, 8 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 13, 7718.

36. Ibid., Box 136, Folder 13, 7703.

37. Ibid., 11 June 1948, Box 137, Folder 7, 8274; Ernst Woermann testimony, 6 July 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 140, Folder 6, 11037, 11039-40, 11050, 11055-57 and Box 140, Folder 7, 11128.

38. Eric Kordt testimony, 3 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 6, 7327.

39. Ibid., 4 June 1948, Box 136, Folder 7, 7348-49, 7353.

40. Paul Otto Schmidt testimony, 24 August 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 146, Folder 19, 17819-835.

41. TWC, 14:865, 890, 951, 963-65.

42. Ibid., 14:865.

43. Ibid., 14:866-69.

44. Ibid., 14:946.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., 865, 965.

47. Ibid., 14:865, 1004; Weizsaecker, 310.

48. TWC, 14:965, 1002-4.

49. Heineman, Hitler's First Foreign Minister, 238.

CONCLUSION

The International and American Military Tribunals convicted key members of the Wilhelmstrasse for their so-called involvement in the Nazi conspiracy to wage wars of aggression. These diplomats were looked upon as guilty for supporting Adolf Hitler's aggressive foreign policy. Likewise, diplomats, especially those from the losing side, Germany, were held responsible for the outbreak of war in 1914. The international world had come to the point where it would hold diplomats, who were traditionally the promoters of peace, responsible for the plans and actions of their politico-military superiors. In Germany, a nation known for its militarism, the diplomatic service would take as much, if not more, blame for world wars than the military establishment.

Beginning with Otto von Bismarck, strong German leaders sought to be their own Foreign Minister. German diplomatic success, nevertheless, was backed up by a powerful military. Even though the Iron Chancellor created Germany through a combination of diplomatic and military action, the importance of the army was paramount in achieving this accomplishment. Nonetheless, Bismarck, as Imperial Chancellor and Prussian Foreign Minister, exercised complete control over the activities of the Wilhelmstrasse. He dominated every aspect of German diplomacy. Replacing the Iron Chancellor, Kaiser Wilhelm II established his autocratic leadership of Germany by the

late 1890s. Emulating his predecessor, Wilhelm II, although heavily under the influence of the military, dominated German foreign affairs. Under both Bismarck and the Kaiser, the Foreign Office was subservient to the Imperial leadership and served as a mere technical apparatus to carry out foreign policy decisions. Foreign Office officials had little, if any, influence on the formulation of international political policy. This changed after the First World War when Germany lacked an autocratic leader and was militarily weak. The Wilhelmstrasse, especially under Gustav Stresemann, acquired considerable influence on the making of foreign policy during the Weimar era. German diplomats were viewed as the experts who could gradually strengthen Germany's weakened international position by negotiating an end to the Versailles restrictions. Becoming Chancellor of Germany in 1933, Adolf Hitler quickly became a strong leader and rapidly worked to make Germany diplomatically and militarily strong again. Moreover, Hitler sought to carry on the German tradition of an autocratic leader acting as his own Foreign Minister in the style of both Bismarck and Wilhelm II.

The Fuehrer, like Bismarck and the Kaiser, appointed men to the top diplomatic post who were loyal and trustworthy, and would not challenge his diplomatic leadership in the formulation and conduct of foreign policy. Bismarck's foreign secretaries, except for his son Herbert, were no more than administrative experts that ran the day-to-day operations of the Wilhelmstrasse. Wilhelm II appointed men, with the exception of Chlodwig Hohenlohe-Schillingsfuerst and Bernhard von Buelow, to the top diplomatic

post that knew little about foreign relations. Leo von Caprivi and Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg both lacked experience in foreign relations. Under the Kaiser's absolute rule, neither Hohenlohe, Buelow, or Bethmann would argue with their master's diplomatic viewpoint, realizing that they could be dismissed as easily as Bismarck had been.

Interestingly enough, neither Bismarck or Wilhelm II held the diplomats of the Foreign Office in high esteem. This prejudice was also held by Hitler. Shortly after taking power, Hitler quickly began to bypass his Foreign Minister, Constantin von Neurath, and the Wilhelmstrasse by relying upon amateur diplomats to carry out his instructions. Gradually the Fuehrer put faith in the loyal champagne salesman, Joachim von Ribbentrop, to carry out his policy. The inexperienced Ribbentrop unofficially became Hitler's top diplomat, supplanting what little influence Neurath and the Foreign Office had over Hitler's foreign policy. With complete control of the Third Reich, Hitler dismissed Neurath and replaced him with Ribbentrop as the official Foreign Minister in 1938. During the period of crises in Europe in 1938 and 1939, the Wilhelmstrasse, as during the time of Bismarck and the Kaiser, had little, if any, influence over the formulation and conduct of Hitler's foreign policy. Hitler, like his autocratic predecessors, acted as his own Foreign Minister as well as controlled military planning. Although lacking influence over the formulation of foreign policy, Ribbentrop, nonetheless, through his own method of ingratiating himself with the Fuehrer, ultimately swayed Hitler's decisions in the aggressive

attempts to fulfill policy objectives that risked a European war. Such influence was evident during the crisis over Czechoslovakia and Poland.

Despite inexperienced leadership in its top post during most of the Wilhelmine and Hitler periods, the German Foreign Office was usually managed by a career diplomat that could supervise both the ministry and the conduct of foreign affairs. Bernhard von Buelow, Alfred von Kiderlen-Waechter, and Gottlieb von Jagow served the Kaiser as experienced foreign secretaries who assisted their unskilled superiors. Not only did the seasoned diplomat Neurath serve Hitler as Foreign Minister, with the vain hope of maintaining the influence over the formulation and conduct of foreign policy acquired during the Weimar era, but Bernhard Wilhelm von Buelow, Hans-Georg von Mackensen, and Ernst von Weizsaecker served as highly experienced diplomats in the position of Foreign Secretary during the Third Reich. Even so, the Foreign Office was rife with a trend of insubordination that was rare under Bismarck. In the Kaiser's time, Friedrich von Holstein and Kiderlen-Waechter divided the ranks of the Wilhelmstrasse against their masters. Buelow, and to a much less extent Neurath, opposed Hitler's control over foreign affairs during the early years of the Third Reich. Ernst von Weizsaecker and Ernst Woermann, among others, were unwilling to loyally conduct Nazi foreign policy thereafter. However, it was impossible to resign from the Foreign Office by the late thirties. Eric Kordt told the American Military Tribunal that the career diplomats knew they would be sent to concentration camps because of their

knowledge of state secrets.[1] Wilhelmstrasse diplomats, nonetheless, committed treasonable acts in efforts to avoid a European war. For their troubles, the Nuremberg courts tried and convicted Neurath, Weizsaecker, and Woermann for conspiring to wage wars of aggression. On the other hand, the courts convicted the amateur Nazi diplomats, Ribbentrop and Wilhelm Keppler, for their parts in the conspiracy. Keppler played a minor role in the annexation of Austria,[2] whereas Ribbentrop served the Fuehrer as the top Nazi diplomat who loyally carried out his master's instructions.

Possessing extreme arrogance, vanity, ambition for status and narrow-mindedness, Ribbentrop was disliked by Hitler's inner circle as well as the international world. He had few friends other than the Fuehrer. He was therefore an easy target for criticism and as a possible scapegoat for the failure of Hitler's foreign policy.[3] His arrogant style of diplomacy had offended the conservative British diplomatic community from the start. It was they who submitted Ribbentrop's name towards the top of their list of persons for trial in the latter stages of the war. Neither Ribbentrop or the Wilhelmstrasse formulated Nazi foreign policy, however. The Foreign Minister, nevertheless, had no living friends to support him and plenty of enemies that wanted to convict him for the results of Hitler's foreign policy. Although the prime formulator of foreign relations, Hitler, was dead, Ribbentrop realized at his Nuremberg trial that he would have to take full responsibility for the mistakes of Nazi foreign policy and pay for them with his life.[4]

NOTES TO THE CONCLUSION

1. Eric Kordt testimony, 4 June 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 136, Folder 7, 7339-40.

2. Wilhelm Keppler testimony, 16 July 1948, AMT transcript, UND, OGL 17, Box 142, Folder 2, 12930-931.

3. H.W. Koch, _Aspects of the Third Reich_, 194.

4. Ribbentrop, 180.

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In researching this thesis, a wide variety of sources were used to examine the involvement of the German Foreign Office in the Nazi conspiracy to wage wars of aggression. The Nuremberg manuscripts in the Special Collections at the University of North Dakota's Chester Fritz Library proved very valuable. The American Militlary Tribunal collection contains complete trial transcripts and many documents concerning Weizsaecker and other Foreign Office officials not hitherto published. However, the International Military Tribunal documentation concerning Neurath and Ribbentrop is not as complete as in the published ten volume series of _Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression._ The Chester Fritz also possessed complete sets of the _Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal_ (42 volumes) and _Trials of War Criminals before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law No. 10_ (15 volumes). Of obvious usefulness were the _Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945,_ Series C and D. Published memoirs and diaries of important German, British, French, Italian, Polish, and American diplomatic personnel provided insight concerning the activities of the German Foreign Office. Of course, the memoirs of Bismarck, Holstein, Wilhelm II, Buelow, Bethmann Hollweg, Dirksen, Weizsaecker, Papen, Schmidt, Hassell, and the unfortunately, incomplete memoirs of Ribbentrop contributed greatly to my effort.

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