

Eighty years since the midnight diplomatic pact: an overture to the Second World War

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ABSTRACT

This contribution presents and describes one of the biggest diplomatic successes of the 20th century, still veiled in the myth. Signature of the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, signed on August 23rd 1939. The agreement, which is a proof of capable diplomacy, the agreement that top country leaders themselves could not achieved it, where diplomatic teams are irreplaceable. The pact, signed by the two completely different and opposite countries, suddenly met at the given moment in the given situation. The agreement, which shows how diplomatic communication, the irreplaceability of diplomats as well as secrecy and confidentiality, is the important key when the agreements are concluded. A Pact that did not see the final minute to sign it, because at least from Germany long planned war could begin. An alliance that caused millions of people to die, an alliance that has led many plans fall into the water. A pact that is very complex, both historical and mythical. What happened and what were the reasons for the signature, we analyze in this contribution. There are still quite a few secrets and questions, especially on the Russian side. Once they open the archives, we will be able to re-examine it-again.

KEY WORDS: pact, diplomacy, cable2, Ribbentrop, Molotov

POVZETEK

Prispevek predstavlja in opisuje enega izmed največjih diplomatskih podvigov 20. stoletja, ki je še danes zavil v mit, to je podpis nemško-sovjetskega sporazuma o nenapadanju 23. avgusta 1939. Sporazum, ki je dokaz sposobne diplomacije in ga tudi najvišji voditelji sami ne bi zmogli podpisati brez pomoči diplomatske elite. Pakt, ki sta ga podpisali dve popolnoma različni in nasprotni totalitarni državi, ki sta se v danem trenutku srečali v sporazumu. Ta kaže pomembnost diplomatske depeše in nenadomestljivost diplomatov pri doseganju elitnih dogovorov, kar je ključnega pomena pri sporazumih. Pakt, ki ni videl zadnje minute, da se podpiše, saj se je, vsaj s strani Nemčije, dolgo načrtovana vojna lahko začela. Zavezništvo, zaradi katerega je umrlo na milijone ljudi, zavezništvo, zaradi katerega je marsikaj padlo v vodo. Pakt, ki je zelo zapleten, tako zgodovinsko kot mitično. Kaj se je dogajalo in kakšni so bili razlogi, analiziramo v članku. Še vedno pa ostaja precej zaprtih skrivnosti in vprašanj, predvsem na ruski strani. Ko bodo odprti tudi njihovi arhivi, bomo lahko ponovno raziskovali.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: sporazum, diplomacija, depeša, Ribbentrop, Molotov

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2 Since there are different terms for a diplomatic report we use in this contribution either cable or dispatch.

INTRODUCTION

There are so many ways and opportunities to remember and discuss why the Second World War happened at all. They all knew in that time that it was not needed or at least not in such a huge range, but there will always hang an open question – could it be different? What if the war could be completely avoided? And there is endlessly number of questions and they can result in pretty the same opinion. There is one thing which deserves a place to talk about – diplomacy and its success or failure. Many of people never knew or heard of Non-aggression Pact Ribbentrop-Molotov, exceptional pact famous for its overture to the Second World War, and this is the subject we will dedicate this article to. The fame that goes to the people, who are sworn in to really take good care of their own country interest. People – diplomats, who don't cling even when their friendly partners are in conflict called war. This article is examining how diplomacy can achieve robust agreements between countries and whether diplomacy is really such a crucial and effective state factor that can influence politics with its advice and recommendations. To repeat the theoretical statements; diplomacy is the regulation of relations between subjects of public international law³.

In the 20th century, however, the United States had a great influence on international relations. As a community, they showed a system of internal relations to their countries, were pragmatic about their diplomacy, made alliances and influenced foreign policy. Ever since Europe had to face US foreign policy for the first time, its leaders have sought to strike a balance between a complete system and global reforms. For almost 150 years, European nations have not touched America. When this happened, America was twice involved in the world war and the war began between European nations⁴.

In this contribution we will discuss diplomatic and strategic reasons that united Germany and the Soviet Union to sign the non-aggression Pact. We will analyze fascinating dispatches which are still not well recognized and are showing diplomatic background one of the most important era in history. How diplomats earned honor to convey such important, strategic and secret information on the conclusion of agreements. At the same time, we compare the state to its interests. They are clearly and very strictly written in the huge number of dip-

3 Jazbec, 2009, p.19.

4 Kissinger,1994, p.20

lomatic cables themselves. This means that we will try to understand why two such different countries have decided to make a diplomatic move at a given moment with an extremely strong belief in its validation. The article shows the excellent practice of military diplomats and the achievement of the impossible and the belief of possible.

80 YEARS AFTER MIDNIGHT DIPLOMATIC TOAST

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The war for every nation that you influence is the end of an era. Whether it comes back from as a victor or a loser, the life order crashes, with his representatives also failing, and then a new, supposedly better order for future generations will be created in the old plains. Therefore, the end of the war is also a good source for gathering, editing and harnessing experience. In doing so, nations are recognizing their weaknesses and trying to remedy them in order to live happier in the future, but also not to be defeated in the coming war⁵.

No matter the fact that World War II already lists enormous writing material and at the same time also many contributions about war diplomacy and even more about Nazism and communism, the 80th anniversary of the beginning of the Second World War in this article is described differently. The 80th anniversary with symbolic memory note, more than ever. It is very common to write about Nazism, in fact, this is the most described period until now in our history. However, there is not much written that the Second World War fire up the agreement, brief and concise. Secret. Almost mythic. Agreement written in one sentence. Its signature was the green light for one of the worst battles in the world. The battle where Nazism and communism met, a battle that brought millions of victims and radically changed Europe long after the end of the war. Without diplomacy and its fundamental role, there would be no signature of the pact. But what would it be then? Would there exist another reason for the war? Diplomacy, however, is a substitute for reaching an amicable settlement between countries. The purpose of diplomacy is to strengthen inter-state relations, nations or organizations where interests are maximized. It does not involve risk and the need to use force, it seeks peace. When diplomacy falls because countries are stuck or at war, it can be said that diplomacy is also useful during the war⁶.

5 Vauhnik, 2017, p.15.

6 Marks <http://www.britannica.com/topic/diplomacy> 18.06.2016.

Diplomacy is a great skill in words, that is, communication in the form of exchange of thoughts and ideas between countries and international organizations. This is reflected through personal ambassadorial interviews or written correspondence (dispatches). The simplest arrangements are at the highest level of the country for Prime Ministers to meet in person and exchange ideas. But centuries of experience and practice have shown that an ambassador is irreplaceable when such interstate agreements are reached. However, the ambassador rarely acts alone; is the head of a diplomatic mission in the field and has a team that works in harmony and has a good network. There have been many events in Europe and in the world over the last decades, such as the existence of NATO and the European Union. In every corner of the world, superpowers set rules and create problems at the same time, requiring every country to somehow show and define its priorities in foreign policy. Diplomats have a lot of work to do here, and we think they will have more, we think years of intense work await them. Countries no longer feel this kind of security when entering international relations. Previously, diplomats worked mostly in war settings, but today they have much more analytical, critical and concrete work to do⁷.

There are so many ways and opportunities to remember and discuss why the Second World War happened at all. They all knew in that time that it was not needed or at least not in such a huge range, but there will always hang an open question – could it be different? What if the War could be completely avoided? Could have the Western Europe stopped Hitler? There is one thing deserves a place to talk about – diplomacy and its success or failure. And this is the subject we dedicate this article to. The fame that goes to the people, who are sworn in to really take good care of their own country interest. Diplomats who don't cling even when their friendly partners are in conflict called war.

Europe suffered massive number of changes between the First and Second World War and was completely changed by its country structures. That was all the result of great fighting in both wars which were crucial bad scenario of the 20th Century. Today we know, at least we think we know almost every reason why the scenario happed for the second time. Also, we know that the devil seed was planted soon after the First World War was finished. It was just taking time to grow and to make great strategies with people, who were just waiting for a chance to stand up.

7 Feltham, 1996, p. 2.

But here we discuss success or failure of diplomacy 80 years back; it is shown in great and shiny success and had so much work to do after the First War. We should not forget – after the war it is time to make peace – and diplomacy it is foreign policy branch which regulates friendly relations with countries where the interest is needed. But diplomacy had really a lot of work to do since the beginning of 20th Century. But the open question stays forever – was it successful or unsuccessful? We know that diplomacy can prevent war, or it can create it. Every time it is a crucial achievement of foreign policy, which is driven to the internal country's interest.

GERMANY AND SOVIET UNION - THE UNWANTED LAND-S

Germany was identified as the main culprit of the First World War and it was imposed to high war damages, estimated at 126 billion gold marks, payable in 50 years, territorially damaging it and limiting its army. The treaty was perceived by the Germans as a great injustice and humiliation and was regarded as a “” document of hatred⁸.

Diplomacy between the two world wars was very active, because there were many reasons for this. First, the parallel existence of two opposing systems, capitalism and socialism, secondly, the extreme aggravation of all the capitalist contradictions that led people to the Second World War. Diplomacy had the biggest work, which, as a result, turned out to be a partitioned block in Europe. On the one hand, allies, on the other central powers. The policy of appeasement, reconciliation and reassurance from the victorious countries, opened the door for the Germany implementing the Versailles Treaty was obstructed. US diplomacy tried to stabilize situation in Europe. On the other hand, German diplomacy did not miss any opportunity not to exploit the opposition among the Allies to the new war. Among the winning countries, there was an internal competition, so the way of victorious countries, and successfully escaped the fulfillment of the obligations of the Treaty of Versailles and grown and strengthened its military power. Soviet diplomacy worked more calmly and did not reject agreements with capitalist countries. For the sake of isolation, they have welcomed all trade agreements. The brave and determined fight of the Soviet government for peace has served a steady rise in international reputation. But the diplomacy of Western imperialist countries rejected Soviet proposals. Instead of organizing the diplomacy of allied countries against Ger-

8 Repe, 1998, p.47.

many, it continued to implement a policy of appeasement towards German aggression. The danger that was threatening the world by fascist Germany was obvious. Hitler was able to mask his revenge by providing peace. His diplomacy invited separate nations to negotiate agreements, at the same time proclaiming a crusade against Bolsheviks. Soviet diplomacy urged tirelessly to unite the countries in order to guarantee collective security. By breaking up the political negotiations with the Soviet Union, France and Great Britain broke the front against Hitler and opened the road of German fascism⁹.

West Europe was many years reluctant to Hitler and to his vicious ideas and requests. West Europe was trying to cover their eyes to blindness that Hitler it's not a big danger to Europe. They were mistaking hardly, since he was even more dangerous as his neighbors could even imagine. His diplomatic team helped him to drive pragmatic policy under cover, resulting in a lot of intelligent solutions. West was to occupy with itself, sadly. And in this self-raising situation, specially United Kingdom and France were slowly letting to much freedom to Nazism and to its dangerous absolutistic leader. On the one side they were afraid, on the other side they were almost sure, that Hitler could not start a new war. Sure, that he was not prepared, equipped. At least not yet. But with the poor action the Allies just gave him a perfect excuse to launch a quick start and helped a lot for raising Nazism.

Only the Soviet Union was left alone on the World map, with abandoned feeling. Angry that West left them out of any agreement. Ignore them many times, not offered to be equal partner with issues dealing after the World War I. And with all big waving that Soviet Union exist on the map, didn't bring satisfying results. At last not in the needed time. Soviet Union was underestimated from the West. One should not ignore that the country was very low-industrial, few steps behind, what resulted in bad feeling. The winning countries, booming with power, intelligence, war equipment, technology. And there was Soviet Union, country with its own leader was deleting people like dominos and his purges were like cutting grain or grass. Soviet Union has tried many times to make agreement against Nazism. But unsuccessfully. That is why Stalin had to find a quick solution. And the result was 'Pact with the devil'. Pact with the biggest enemy. But for them happened to be a logical step in that moment. With the pact they have bought more than one year of peace, time to develop war industry and collect peo-

9 Potemkin, 1948, p.11.

ple. They didn't have industry, but they had raw materials, which were fundamental for their enemy friend. So, they did find business-to-business solution with help of diplomatic team. They didn't have industry, but they had raw materials, which were fundamental for their enemy friend. So, they did find business-to-business solution with help of diplomatic team. They stuffed Germany with needed raw materials and Germans produced war technology. Till the last day of Barbarossa¹⁰ they have complied with the non-aggression Pact principles and trade agreement.

INTERVAL PERIOD – DIPLOMACY REVELATION

The First World War swept Europe, changed its map, scared people and was a quick cause for new events. There was a simultaneous existence of communism and capitalism, following that the ideology and practice of both were totally opposite and this differentiation caused difficulties between the country's possibilities. Germany was an actual loser. Countries were focused only on their goals and they were extremely egoistically oriented towards people, nations and groups. Countries wanted self-determination. Their great goal was a possible destroying situation of the Germany, country with enormous wealth. For this, the President of the United States, Wilson gave them the cause. And this is a diplomatic skill. When, however, the time came for Europe to step together against the enemy Hitler, the countries were too burdened with one another to be able to make a shield. This non-synchronization costed them War.

The winners of the WWI found out very soon that Germany did not comply with the obligations of the Treaty of Versailles and that it was likely to prepare revenge but didn't believed. They started to take it seriously and establish diplomatic contacts with the Soviet Union in order to gain protection. But the story got tangled a little differently. With the establishment of the Axis forces, the peace of Versailles began to collapse. The victorious countries competed too much against each other in order to be sufficiently sovereign against Germany and the forces of the Axis. Great Britain feared France. The English did not bother Germany and did not have such a strong interest. England and France fought for the Ruhrland.

In 1922, the Soviet Union and Germany signed the Treaty of Rapallo,

¹⁰ Barbarossa was the code name for the attack operation on the Soviet Union.

which was a blow to the victorious countries, urged all forces to break the Treaty of Rapallo. There were ideas and attempts to attack the Soviet Union.

The winning countries greatly strengthened their diplomatic activities. Their aim was to closely follow the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, to paralyze Germany by taking as many fleets, weapons and raw materials as possible. Germany was a country that already had 70 million inhabitants, more than France or England, and from this view it represented a potential threat to neighboring countries that did not want to risk fighting. The winners underestimated Germany, instead of trying to establish diplomatic arrangements with it. Unfortunately, they were unwilling to find out that the establishment of diplomatic relations would be a better decision. At the time, Germany was already in successful and first-rate diplomatic negotiations with the Soviet Union, and since 1922 it has signed secret agreements with it. The Soviet Union therefore was searching for the partner. German diplomacy was very persistent, polite, and it was behaving exactly as the Soviets liked. Despite attempts by France and England to establish pacts, Soviet Union has opted for Germany. These countries were driving low-respect diplomatic negotiations, sometimes even second-class diplomats have been sent, which the Soviet Union understood as an underestimation.

Many of the events and contracts that ran in the pre-World War II had a dual role. Some gave Germany a great boost for even greater strength; others gave Germany a lot of freedom that it could become (secretly) even more willing to realize the ideas and wishes of its leader. They were increasingly giving up Germany. The Agreement from Locarno from 1925 is an extremely important event of diplomatic rehabilitation of Germany and the West. Germany has thus far departed from fulfilling the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles. It got a good starting position for making even more revenge. England and France mistakenly tried to regulate peace. However, the West had, of course, secret plans – they wanted to direct German aggression against the Soviet Union. Pro-Soviet intent is the essence of Locarno agreements. Because of the treaty, the Soviet Union felt very bad, it was overlooked again.

After the major economic crisis in 1929, Germany received remission of reparations at the Lausanne Conference in 1939. It itself experienced a severe blow to the crisis, but the ideology did not suffer the

effects. Stronger than ever continued with the rise of Hitler to show sharp teeth to the West and still insisted, to achieve its goals.

With the Munich agreement, Germany was returned the Sudeten region in Czechoslovakia. Thus, Czechoslovakia was dissolved. The agreements were signed with a heavy heart, but the West thought that is only way to avoid the occupation. But Hitler did not hold this agreement as well. When he achieved his goals and strengthened his right flank and avoided fighting on two fronts (the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact on non-aggression), he could begin a war with the attacks in Poland. Hitler led a very tactical diplomacy against England; from it he also knew how to make fun. According to naivety and trust, they showed that they are leading old-fashioned and blind diplomacy. A treaty that should bring the world peace, at least West was hoping so. At the same time, the Soviet Union again experienced a reprise of ignorance, this time also a serious threat. Perhaps it was only aware that they again helped Hitler and Nazism to occupy Europe.

The suggestion that the Sudeten were entitled to self-determination, which meant joining to Germany, was not implemented. Hitler pledged to occupy the territory peacefully after October 1st. Of course, Hitler was not to be believed, he boasted on October 2nd how he would destroy the rest of the Czech Republic¹¹.

The Munich agreement between the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Italy was expected to prevent the worst. In order not to invade German troops into Czechoslovakia, it was forced to give up Sudeten territories inhabited by Germans. Chamberlain mistakenly thought he would find peace this way. Hitler did not stick to the deal, early in October of that year he walked into the area and connected the rest of the country. Following this very violent act, the United Kingdom and France finally found that they had too much yielded to Germany and promised assistance to Poland in the re-German attack, which was later not confirmed¹².

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN GERMANY AND SOVIET UNION

Diplomats are successful only if they have contacts and relations. They depend on them, as this is a source of information necessary for their

¹¹ Overy, 2015.

¹² Boden, 2004, p.93.

work. The information is fundamental to know the situation. They must therefore move a lot, be present at different places and events, get in touch with as many people as possible, from whom important information could be received¹³.

Even though both countries had the form of a totalitarian regime, the difference is still difficult to find. We must look for it in basics and theory. Practically, the system looks the same, but the implementation was quite different. Nonetheless, some countries inherited systems of fear, oppression and violence. Prior to World War II, the parliamentary system was anchored only in Great Britain, France, Czechoslovakia and Scandinavian countries.

The reality between the systems is not that different, while the theoretical differences are large. What are the real-life differences in communism and fascism? No socialist system in real life has ever truly implemented socialism as found in theory. There has never been a socialist government without a single leader. Social classes were never eliminated. The funds were not properly allocated¹⁴.

Non-Marxist historians know that Nazism is essentially a type of fascism that fits ideally into the context of European fascism. It has many features of Italian fascism, extreme nationalism, anti-Semitism and a very offensive mindset against communism and socialism. It comes from where it threatened the existence of major advances in industrialization. Such a concept of Nazism, a form of fascism in the totalitarian system, suggests to us that Nazism is very similar to Stalinism in the Soviet Union, such as a one-party state, complete government control of the media, and a centrally run economy. However, both countries had different goals. With the above-mentioned theory, we can add that the German Holocaust can be understood as a response to the Bolshevik terror and the Russian state war and the liquidation of the kulaks a few decades later. There is no simple formula to explain to us the existence of Nazism today, but it certainly was a reaction to the process of destabilization of the Industrial Revolution. In any case, he should not be regarded as a last resort, as he sought an ideal world in the future, without sick people and without people who would offend the nationality of the true Germans¹⁵.

13 Jazbec, 2007, p.128.

14 Curiosity Aroused (2013). What's the difference between Communism vs Fascism? URL: <https://curiosityaroused.com/politics/whats-the-difference-between-fascism-vs-communism/> 22.03.2018.

15 Williamson, 2005, p.94.

Both countries had the platform of peace from the Brest-Litovsk agreement. However, in 1939, the Soviet Union had enough deviation from the Western powers and at the same time Germany was in urgent need of a one-front struggle to capture the battlefield on two fronts. The Soviet Union successfully transformed diplomacy in the years before the Second World War, as Hitler's power in Europe grew and all the attention was directed at Germany. During this redirecting of attention, Stalin was much occupied with doing purges and murdered many of his people. Hitler was engaged in oppressing of the Jews population in carrying out his self-satisfied psychological policy. The Munich conference brought the end of kindness, the self-determination of Stalin, who was determinate to offer the possibility to his ideological enemy. And the path that led to the non-aggression pact was created.

Hitler was known as a successful rhetoric, what helped him to achieve with his diplomatic team extremely important and secret agreements what helped him built a military fortune outside his own country. That is why it was logical that he chosen the Soviet Union for his partner. Soviet Union had raw materials and hope of non-attack, when he would start to cut the wounds to the West, whose wounds hurt them. But Stalin had a tough personality and characteristics of a dictator. He led the country of great power and with huge resources.

Hitler, despite having psychopathic personality, continued to work as a top manipulative politician. That helped him a lot in implementing policies and agreements. Germany was always known as a country driving pragmatic policy. Policy that worked conscientiously. Hitler himself was a specialist on breaking rules (like treaty of Versailles or ban on weapons production).

On the other side of the Pact there was – Stalin, a person whose privacy is difficult to write about. We know that he was very against-Hitler oriented, but he signed the pact with such a system. Although today it might seem that Stalin, for the cost of victory, sacrificed millions of people in the battle against Hitler (because only a large number of dead soldiers were the formula to victory), we must know that he did not set the war on his own – Hitler served it to him. He had to fight – but in fact he could have won the war with much fewer casualties. Although he fought against the backwardness of generations, after the war he somehow could not create a peaceful balance with capitalist countries. He succeeded in gigantic progress, which left the agrarian

country behind and drove Soviets to industrialized country. However, the presence of the United States and the post-war strengthening did create coexistence. However, the presence of the United States and the post-war strengthening did create coexistence.

Stalin was a man, a tyrant and a killer. It was the horror of that time. He had a lot of psychological moments in which he was making steps that were mostly related to the liquidation of people. If we can compare it, we must compare it with Hitler¹⁶.

RIBBENTROP, MOLOTOV AND STALIN MIDNIGHT TOAST ON THE 23TH OF AUGUST 1939

Although the Pact did not see the hour before signing it, its finalization nevertheless gave the instable feeling until the last minute of the signature. Understanding is not as easy as it seems at first glance. Due to the insensitivity of Stalin and the final pressures of Hitler, the diplomatic strain of five months could quickly fall to a zero point. It is much more difficult to organize worse than good.

Signing a Pact between Germany and Soviet Union had from political reason logic, it was alternative, since the cooperation between United Kingdom and France has fallen. London and Paris have promised defense to Poland year 1939 in the same time they have rejected Germany from attacks in brought Soviet Union to defense coalition. But Stalin assumed that both, France and United Kingdom will stay neutral and turn the back Poland, if the Germany would put armed force in the country¹⁷.

A successful diplomatic team stands behind the creation of the pact and its realization. On the German side, that was Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop and on the Soviet side Mikhailovich Molotov. Top diplomatic representatives Weizsäcker and Schulenburg were directing the diplomatic communication. No decision was taken without a clear confirmation of Hitler and of Stalin. The states exchanged many diplomatic reports; the German archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Berlin recorded more than 1000. Negotiations and correspondence began in April 1939, a pact was signed in August, also a secret protocol and trade agreements were signed at the same time. In September 1939 both sides made an exchange in some spheres of

16 Šömen, 2015.

17 Snyder, 2013.

interest in the Balkans and in the Baltic states.

Although Stalin was suspicious for the entire five months before signing the Pact and somehow avoided negotiations, due to German aggression, he replaced Foreign Minister Litvinov for Molotov at the beginning of the negotiations. Litvinov was Jew. That was a clear sign that he is willing to put possibilities on the table.

“Appointment of Molotov as Foreign Commissar simultaneously retaining his position as Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars is published as ukase of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of May 3 by Soviet press with great fanfare. Dismissal of Litvinov appears on last page as small notice under “Chronicle.” Sudden change has caused greatest surprise here, since Litvinov was in the midst of negotiations with the English delegation, at the May Day Parade still appeared on the reviewing stand right next to Stalin, and there was no recent concrete evidence of shakiness in his position. Soviet press contains no comments. Foreign Commissariat is giving press representatives no explanations”¹⁸.

From the mentioned cable, we find that the replacement of Litvinov was a great surprise. But Stalin left the door open for the possibility of negotiating with the Germans if negotiations with the British would not bring success. At least, in their opinion, the Soviet Union was very close to signing the alliance with the West, which made Hitler’s diplomatic world to wait for the expulsion. Even though the both states were rejecting their state systems, they left opportunities open. At the same time, they were not ready to risk anything. Both countries were pursuing tactics and held conversations only at the level of economic relations.

“I (Shulenburg) opened the conversation by saying to Herr Molotov that the last proposals of Herr Mikoyan in our economic negotiations had presented several difficulties which could not be immediately removed. We now believed that a way had been found to come to an understanding and we intended in the very near future to send Geheimrat Dr. Schnurre to Moscow to discuss with Herr Mikoyan whether an agreement could be reached on the basis of our proposals. I asked whether Herr Mikoyan was prepared to confer with Herr Schnurre.

18 Lilian Goldman Law library, Yale Law School. The Avalon project. Nazi-Soviet Relations Page. URL: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/ns002.asp 7.03.2019.

Herr Molotov replied that the course of our last economic negotiations had given the Soviet Government the impression that we had not been in earnest in the matter and we had only played at negotiating for political reasons. At first it had been reported that a German delegation was coming for economic negotiations to Moscow (I suggested that this report did not emanate from us but from the Polish and French press), and later it was to the effect that Herr Schnurre was coming alone. Herr Schnurre did not come, but Herr Hilger and I had conducted the negotiations and then these negotiations also had faded out. The Soviet Government could only agree to a resumption of the negotiations if the necessary “political bases” for them had been constructed”¹⁹.

“The Reich Minister directed me to maintain extreme caution in my conference with Molotov. As a result, I contented myself with saying as little as possible and took this attitude more because the attitude of Herr Molotov seemed to me quite suspicious. It cannot be understood otherwise than that the resumption of our economic negotiations does not satisfy him as a political gesture, and that he apparently wants to obtain from us more extensive proposals of a political nature. We must be extremely cautious in this field as long as it is not certain that possible proposals from our side will not be used by the Kremlin only to exert pressure on England and France. On the other hand, if we want to accomplish something here, it is unavoidable that we sooner or later take some action. It is extraordinarily difficult here to learn anything at all about the course of the English French-Soviet negotiations. My British colleague, who apparently is the only one who is active in that connection here (he was being announced to Herr Potemkin when I was visiting the latter), preserves an iron silence. Even neutral diplomats have not been able to learn anything. My French colleague has been away for some time. The Counselor of Embassy and Charge in the last few days asked us for a transit visa, so that it seems that he also is going to leave Moscow soon. If the reports are correct that France will now take over the negotiations in the matter of the French-British-Soviet “alliance,” these negotiations may well take place not here but in Paris. My Italian colleague is of the opinion that the Soviet Union will surrender her freedom of negotiation only if England and France give her a full treaty of alliance. It is often stated here (I do not know whether it is correct) that one of the principal reasons for the hesitation of England in accepting the Soviet proposals for a military alliance

19 Lilian Goldman Law library. Yale Law School. The Avalon project. Nazi-Soviet Relations Page. URL: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/ns006.asp 6.03.2019.

is the question of Japan. London is afraid of driving the Japanese into our arms if she guarantees the defense of all Soviet frontiers. If Japan should come into our arms voluntarily, this consideration for England should be eliminated".²⁰

In these moments German foreign department felt possible fear of London and Moscow having a closing deal moment. Here the Soviet diplomacy showed some diplomacy skills by chance.

At the end of May, Germany decided on an unambiguous dispatch, informing German diplomats in Moscow that, regardless of the Russian-British negotiations, it was entering negotiations with them also. With three strictly confidential dispatches, Germany is exploring the starting position for any negotiations. Russia has been less prone to negotiations.

Weizsäcker reports with dispatch on May 30th, 1939, that Germany had decided to enter negotiations with the Soviet Union. She cited the Prague Trade Mission as a starting point and calls for the external and internal relations to be separated.

"I described to Molotov the impressions which I had gained from talk with influential personalities in Berlin, particularly with the Reich Foreign Minister. I pointed out that we would welcome a normalization of the relations between Germany and Soviet Russia, as the State Secretary had stated to the Soviet Charge in Berlin. For this we had furnished a number of proofs, such as reserve in the German press, conclusion of the non-aggression treaties with the Baltic countries and desire for resumption of economic negotiations. From all this it was evident that Germany did not have any bad intentions toward the Soviet Union, particularly since the Berlin Treaty was still in force. We, on the German side, would continue to take advantage of any opportunity to prove our goodwill. However, we had had no answer from the Soviet Union to the question of what Molotov meant in his last conversation with me by "creation of a new basis of our relationship". We also objected to the attitude of the Soviet press. My impression is that the Soviet Government is greatly interested in knowing our political views and in maintaining contact with us"²¹.

20 Lilian Goldman Law library. Yale Law School. The Avalon project. Nazi-Soviet Relations Page. URL: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/ns008.asp 6.03.2019.

21 Lilian Goldman Law library. Yale Law School. The Avalon project. Nazi-Soviet Relations Page. URL: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/ns020.asp 6.03.2019.

In the beginning of July German-Soviet negotiations became stronger. After some quiet time of not mentioning political scene, the economic negotiations were put in front. Schulenburg and Molotov have done a meeting where interests between countries in the future were main subject. The diplomatic communication was placed, and many friendly subjects were open. Schulenburg new that Molotov can affect media press and that was relevant for Germany. "Thereupon Molotov asked, "Are you convinced that the Berlin Treaty is really still in force and has not been abrogated by later treaties concluded by Germany?" I replied the following: "I know of no such treaties and have no reason to doubt the validity of the Berlin Treaty."²²

At the end of July, Germany began to hurry; Ribbentrop itself was involved in the negotiations and put pressure on the Soviet Union. Poland's issues and interests in the Baltic became a topic for conversations with Molotov. Until the month of August, the whole top diplomatic establishment was included in the talks. After a very quick response, they agreed on the Trade Agreement, the areas of interest, and in particular on one – that the Non-aggression Pact was reached. A trade agreement worth some 400 million Reich marks granted the Soviet Union a loan in the form of exports, and imports from the Soviet Union included the supply of raw materials, the repayment of a loan from 1935, and the supply of Soviet goods under the German-Soviet agreement of 1938²³.

August started strongly in diplomatic communication. The dispatches were very intensive, many per day. All the main diplomatic and political elite was included in negotiations.

The 3th of August brought dispatch with "very urgent" content from Weizsäcker to Schulenburg where he is asking fast and detailed conversation with Molotov to clear the conditions for customization of German-Soviet interests. "In accordance with the political situation and in the interest of speed, we are anxious, without prejudice to your conversation with Molotov scheduled for today, to continue in Berlin the clarification of terms for the adjustment of German-Soviet interests. To this end Schnurre will receive Astakhov today and will tell him

22 Lilian Goldman Law library. Yale Law School. The Avalon project. Nazi-Soviet Relations Page. URL: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/ns022.asp 6.03.2019.

23 The German-Soviet Economic Agreement signed 1938 to supply Germany with raw materials in exchange for the German establishment of factories in the territory of the Soviet Union by machinery and machine tools, the supply of ships, vehicles and other means of transport with a total value of 120 million Reich marks.

that we would be ready for more concrete discussions if that is also the desire of the Soviet Government. We would propose in this case that Astakhov obtain instructions from Moscow. We would then be prepared to speak quite concretely concerning problems of possible interest to the Soviet Union”²⁴.

“Last evening, I (Ribbentrop personally) received the Russian charge who had previously called at the office on other matters. I intended to continue with him the conversations with which you are familiar, that had previously been conducted with Astakhov by members of the Foreign Office with my permission. I alluded to the trade agreement discussions, which are at present progressing satisfactorily, and designated such a trade agreement as a good step on the way toward a normalization of German-Russian relationships, if this was desired. It was well known that the tone of our press with regard to Russia had for over half a year been a very different one. I considered that, insofar as the desire existed on the Russian side, a remolding of our relations was possible, on two conditions:

- a) Noninterference in the internal affairs of the other country (Herr Astakhov believes he can promise this forthwith);
- b) Abandonment of a policy directed against our vital interests. To this, Astakhov was unable to give any clear-cut answer, but he thought his Government had the desire to pursue a policy of mutual understanding with Germany”²⁵.

The strong communication on this day in the next one showed has Soviets are having troubles to trust Germany since long history of hating their Union. Moscow and their diplomats very trying to double check many countries like Denmark, Latvia, Estonia, and Finland, how they approach the idea of German-Soviet non-aggression pact. And the ideological differentiation was also an iron wall.

On the 14th of August Ribbentrop has dispatch to Molotov very important arguments, where he is pointing that ideological contradictions which were the reason for disagreements between countries should be over forever and the new future path on friendly way should be opened.

24 Lilian Goldman Law library. Yale Law School. The Avalon project. Nazi-Soviet Relations Page. URL: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/ns027.asp 6.03.2019.

25 Lilian Goldman Law library. Yale Law School. The Avalon project. Nazi-Soviet Relations Page. URL: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/ns028.asp 6.03.2019.

“He had received instructions from Molotov to state here that the Soviets were interested in a discussion of the individual groups of questions that had heretofore been taken up. A. designated as such questions, among others, besides the pending economic negotiations, questions of the press, cultural collaboration, the Polish question, the matter of the old German-Soviet political agreements. Such a discussion, however, could be undertaken only by degrees or, as we had expressed it, by stages. The Soviet Government proposed Moscow as the place for these discussions, since it was much easier for the Soviet Government to continue the conversations there. In this conversation, A. left the matter open as to whom we would propose to conduct the conference, the Ambassador or another personage, to be sent out”²⁶.

Between 16th and 21st of August many of important dispatches between Molotov and Ribbentrop was exchanged. And they all showed how very important and fast diplomacy ball was this. The content was focused on same arguments, from Berlin to Moscow were flowing the instructions and backwards very important information about the negotiations in the top diplomatic ranking.

A very fast diplomatic response was done at the same day late afternoon, where Ribbentrop is asking for immediately invitation for visiting Moscow to sign the Non-aggression Pact, where he confirms that all points of Pact which were prepared from Molotov are in the wishes with Germany.

“I (Ribbentrop personally) request that you again call upon Herr Molotov with the statement that you have to communicate to him, in addition to yesterday’s message for Herr Stalin, a supplementary instruction just received from Berlin, which relates to the questions raised by Herr Molotov. Please then state to Herr Molotov the following:

1) the points brought up by Herr Molotov are in accordance with German desires. That is, Germany is ready to conclude a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union and, if the Soviet Government so desires, one which would be irrevocable for a term of twenty-five years. Further, Germany is ready to guarantee the Baltic States jointly with the Soviet Union. Finally, it is thoroughly in accord with the German position, and Germany is ready, to exercise influence for an improvement and consolidation of Russian-Japanese relations.

26 Lilian Goldman Law library. Yale Law School. The Avalon project. Nazi-Soviet Relations Page. URL: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/ns033.asp 6.03.2019.

2) The Führer (Hitler) is of the opinion that, in view of the present situation, and of the possibility of the occurrence any day of serious incidents (please at this point explain to Herr Molotov that Germany is determined not to endure Polish provocation indefinitely), a basic and rapid clarification of German-Russian relations and the mutual adjustment of the pressing questions are desirable. For these reasons the Reich Foreign Minister declares that he is prepared to come by plane to Moscow at any time after Friday, August 18, to deal on the basis of full powers from the Führer with the entire complex of German-Russian questions and, if the occasion arises to sign the appropriate treaties.

ANNEX: I request that you read these instructions to Herr Molotov and ask for the reaction of the Russian Government and Herr Stalin. Entirely confidentially, it is added for your guidance that it would be of very special interest to us if my Moscow trip could take place at the end of this week or the beginning of next week²⁷.

Later that night their Berlin received the dispatch from Schulenburg where the content was very clear. "The Government of the U.S.S.R. is of the opinion that the first step toward such an improvement in relations between the U.S.S.R. and Germany could be the conclusion of a trade and credit agreement.

"The Government of the U.S.S.R. is of the opinion that the second step, to be taken shortly thereafter, could be the conclusion of a non-aggression pact or the reaffirmation of the neutrality pact of 1926, with the simultaneous conclusion of a special protocol which would define the interests of the signatory parties in this or that question of foreign policy and which would form an integral part of the pact"²⁸.

Since there was not much time left, Polish situation got every minute more complicated; Ribbentrop has sent Pact draft with briefly two articles. In this time also Moscow has realized that war cannot be avoided any more. But there was still Soviet delay in signing the Pact because of the Trade agreement signature as a priority.

On the late evening of the 18th of August Ribbentrop personally sent dispatch with all the agreements for the proposals. "We were, there-

27 Lilian Goldman Law library. Yale Law School. The Avalon project. Nazi-Soviet Relations Page. URL: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/ns038.asp 7.03.2019.

28 Lilian Goldman Law library. Yale Law School. The Avalon project. Nazi-Soviet Relations Page. URL: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/ns039.asp 6.03.12019.

fore, now asking for an immediate reaction to the proposal made in the supplementary instruction regarding my immediate departure for Moscow. Please add in this connection that I would come with full powers from the Führer, authorizing me to settle fully and conclusively the total complex of problems.

As far as the non-aggression pact especially is concerned, it seems to us so simple as to require no long preparation. We have in mind here the following three points, which I would ask you to read to Herr M., but not to hand to him.

ARTICLE 1. The German Reich and the U.S.S.R. will in no event resort to war or to any other use of force with respect to each other.

ARTICLE 2. This agreement shall enter into force immediately upon signature and shall be valid thereafter for a term of twenty-five years.

Please state in this connection that I am in a position, with regard to this proposal, to arrange details in verbal discussions at Moscow and, if occasion arises, to comply with Russian wishes. I am also in a position to sign a special protocol regulating the interests of both parties in questions of foreign policy of one kind and another; for instance, the settlement of spheres of interest in the Baltic area, the problem of the Baltic States, etc. Such a settlement, too, which seems to us of considerable importance, is only possible, however, at an oral discussion.

Please emphasize in this connection, that German foreign policy has today reached a historic turning point. This time please conduct conversation, except for above articles of agreement, not in the form of a reading of these instructions, but by pressing emphatically, in the sense of the foregoing statements, for a rapid realization of my trip and by opposing appropriately any possible new Russian objections. In this connection you must keep in mind the decisive fact that an early outbreak of open German-Polish conflict is probable and that we therefore have the greatest interest in having my visit to Moscow take place immediately”²⁹.

On the night of August 23rd to August 24th, three of highest diplomatic representatives were joined to sign the Pact; Foreign Minister of the

29 Lilian Goldman Law library. Yale Law School. The Avalon project. Nazi-Soviet Relations Page. URL: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/ns040.asp 6.03.12019.

German Government Joachim von Ribbentrop, Foreign Minister of the Russian Government Molotov and Stalin. They discussed the problems in certain countries and laid the groundwork and later signed a non-aggression pact between the two countries. They mostly talked about countries that were in one way or another connected to one country or another. During these talks, Stalin showed good information about all countries, not least he knew the situation in the military in both England and France. There was a toast at the end of the conversation. Most importantly, the two countries have signed a non-aggression pact, as well as a secret protocol in which countries share areas of interest. Thus, Bessarabia, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and a part of Poland come to the Russian interest zone. The memorandum they signed before the Pact was signed was labeled “very secret” and “state secret”.

On the 23rd of August, at the signing of the Pact, also secret protocol was signed, dividing interests in the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and in Finland. The northern border of Lithuania represented the border between influential areas. The interests of Lithuania and the Vilnius region were recognized by each of the two. The secret protocol also regulated the territorial and political reorganization of areas belonging to Poland. The boundary would take place around the river line of the Narew, Wisla and San rivers. The Soviet Union also noted that it had interests in Bessarabia.

In September, officially after the start of World War II, when Poland was no longer in existence, the country signed a Treaty on border and friendship in the territory of the former Poland. They added a confidential protocol where the Soviet Union agreed not to obstruct the citizens of the Reich or those of German origin who reside in the area of former Poland under its jurisdiction if they wish to migrate to Germany. With the additional secret protocol, the countries again changed the Baltic interests and thus added the territory of Lithuania to the influential area of the Soviet Union, while at the same time Lublin and parts of Warsaw were allocated under the influence zone of Germany.

When the countries settled their interests in Poland on September 28th, they strengthened the strong link of the pact regarding to the war and its subsequent actions. Country didn't exist anymore. They decided even more strongly to join against France and England if attack on Germany or the Soviet Union would appear. They signed the declaration,

which is now quite absurd and impossible to read but at that moment, it meant the strong iron fact that Stalin believed in. The declaration says that by signing contracts (on the same day) they have solved the problems caused by the collapse of the Polish state and creating the basis for lasting peace in Eastern Europe. The desire was to end the war, but if that does not happen and the West will be ineffective, it means that England and France are responsible for the continuation of the war.

The countries signed a concrete pact, a pact that was essentially written in Stalin's style that did not disturb Hitler, as he had his own direct plans where no one could stop him. Nevertheless, the signature of the Pact was delayed late on the night of August 23, 1939. At the very signing, both Foreign Ministers Ribbentrop and Molotov and Stalin himself were present. After signing, they reached into their hands and raised the toast high, which also flew to Hitler. The pact was largely well received in both countries, as they were managing media content and disclosed only the wished. On September 1, Germany attacked Poland and broke it in a time of two weeks.

Signing the pact with Germany had certain logic of political reasons for Stalin. It was an alternative, since the alliance with Great Britain and France failed. London and Paris promised safety to Poland in 1939 by deterring Germany from attack and at the same time bringing the Soviet Union into a defensive coalition. But Stalin was aware that both London and Paris would probably turn their backs if Germany would attack Poland or the Soviet Union. For the Soviet Union it seemed to be the smartest solution to make agreement with Germany and observe the capitalist countries how they are fighting. Stalin's plan was to remain strong by the end of the war³⁰.

In his memories of the Pact, Weizsäcker, who was at the time Secretary of the German Foreign Ministry, wrote that negotiations with the Soviets in his mind left a great mark. Perhaps Germany could succeed in retaining the Western powers and building its alliance with the Soviet Union. The mentioned pact fulfilled Hitler's dream of extending the living space for the Germans – in the land of Soviet Union and Poland. But in June 1939, it was clear that Hitler wanted a narrow pact with the Soviet Union just to attack Poland and divide it. Then Weizsäcker changed his mind and began to hope that the Western forces would

30 Snyder, 2013, p.115.

win, and that Stalin would not benefit from the war also. He felt that Britain did not do enough that Germany was trying to attack Soviet Union. Stalin did not want to hear this, he believed tight in agreement with Poland, the territory they conquered together. Since no party has made any progress in negotiations with the Soviet Union, Weizsäcker believed that the war could be avoided. Soviet will, British power and Italian attempts to influence on the Iron Pact of May 1939, was supposed to hold Hitler back. But he led a war against Poland, he wanted to stay within its borders, which was impossible³¹.

An examination of Allied archives and Soviet sources reveals Stalin's foreign policy to be unscrupulously *realpolitik*, dominated by a realization of the Soviet Union's relative weakness. The pact, however, was not regarded as a foolproof guarantee for Soviet western borders in view of Stalin's deep-seated suspicion of British-German reconciliation. Thus rather than commitment to Germany and a division of Europe to spheres of influence Stalin regarded strict neutrality as the crowning success of his diplomacy. Such neutrality, however, remained precarious throughout the interregnum of 1939-1941. It was sapped by the Soviet benign attitude to Germany, by contemplated Allied action against Soviet Union, and by the profound gnawing fear in the Kremlin of a British connivance in a future war with Germany. Consequentially, especially after the fall of France, Stalin was forced to resort to such exceedingly subtle dual diplomacy that its meaning was often lost on his partners. His obsessive suspicion of a separate peace hampered his judgment and contributed to the paralysis which struck him as war drew nearer³².

Balance interpretation of the Pact and his consequences are still veiled in myth. Moreover, historians are still swayed by the indignation prevalent in Western Europe after the conclusion of the Pact, uncritically adopting the contemporary judgment that Soviets had thrown in their lot with Germany. These tendencies should not be dismissed lightly. Hitler's decision to fight Soviet Union can no longer be viewed as a crude aggressive act but rather as a preventive war. Operation Barbarossa was justified by traditional German geopolitical interest and the threat posed to Germany and the civilized western world by Stalin's abhorrent totalitarian regime³³.

31 Hill, 1974, p.33.

32 Gorodetsky, 1990, pp. 27-41.

33 Same as footnote Nb. 19. pp. 27-41.

Adolf Hitler's decision to invade Russia was the result of the beliefs and illusions of a dictatorial demonic psyche. Ever since World War I ended in 1918, he was convinced that Bolshevism helped defeat Germany and that the German Communist Party of which he was a leader could bring the Reich to Moscow³⁴.

By signing the Pact Hitler achieved a huge diplomatic success. The diplomatic capacity of his dictatorship is a paradigm of the 20th century. Hitler's dictatorship was responsible for the collapse of modern civilization, as a nuclear explosion in modern society. It showed what people are capable of: barbarism, ideological wars, genocide, brutality and greed. He never witnessed this sacred until then. The starting point was a leader who was sworn by the ideological mission of national revival and racial cleansing. It was about pursuing politics, in a nonhuman way, with enthusiasm³⁵.

Not to forget that September was the most important month of 20th century, the month of beginning of the Second World War. War happened immediately after the Non-aggression Pact was signed. On the 28th of September Germany and Soviet Union signed the additional secret protocol where the interest in Poland which didn't exist anymore was settled; the war could continue. Both countries have signed protocol, where they have shown that the war between France on one side and United Kingdom on the other side should be finished. Both governments will try to do all the best to achieve this goal, if will not happened than the responsibly for the continuing the war goes to France and United Kingdom³⁶.

34 The New York Times Company (2018). Hitler's Russian blunder. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/1981/06/21/magazine/hitler-s-russian-blunder.html>. 20.03.2018.

35 Kershaw, 2012.

36 Lilian Goldman Law library. Yale Law School. The Avalon project. Nazi-Soviet Relations Page. URL: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/ns086.asp 7.3.2019.

CONCLUSION

In spite of the fact that the Pact and the need for its existence as a first impression appeared to be the urgent need of the Soviet Union to gain time to strengthen, it was the result of the signing, the enormously rapid crushing of Hitler and his diplomacy, and his devastating and cynical policies, diplomatically reversed the Soviet story in favor – that is, that Soviet Union will have the most benefits. Hitler's rapidly evolving ideologies were remarkable. His clearly diverging ideology of military attacks is Barbarossa's – the conquest attack of the Soviet Union. This was not about the war of two countries, but about the war of two ideologies. We could say that the actions of the West forced Germany and the Soviet Union to cooperate. Both were pressed against the wall after the end of the First World War and diplomatically isolated. Can we understand from this point of view that the World War II could be avoided?

The Non-aggression Pact is an excellent example of diplomacy. Pact won his signature, of course, at the request of two absolutist leaders who endorsed the agreements. In reachable cables we cannot find obviously outstanding speculation or unevenness. In general, the Soviet side and the German side are both also extremely pure, pragmatic and in general, the Pact is written very realistically and in a realistic moment. All can be seen from the fulfillment, since the trade agreement was in use almost until the attack. Secret protocols were also implemented. In any case, the reader knows that the Pact was a fine example of diplomatic moves, especially from the German side.

The reasons why we can put the Pact as an excellent example of diplomacy are several. One of the main reasons is the joining deal of two totally different countries; we can easily say enemies, joining in an agreement in the basis of non-aggression. On the other side the superiority of Pact are Hitler's intentions to Stalin's believes into the credibility and trust of keeping a deal for a purpose written in an agreement. At the very beginning of the negotiations between countries untrusted relations of Soviet diplomacy peak, covered with intense positive and patient diplomatic atmosphere from German side can be cleared. We can guess in this time if Stalin had overviewed the ambiguity of Pact in that time. For sure he had serious doubts about the trust in Hitler himself, but in that time and in that moment that seemed the only smart solution to keep in peace for a while. Exceptionality goes to Germa-

ny diplomacy, which showed that negotiations are better resulting in being in the right time quiet and patient, since the right time for the result will come. Just that the Pact was sadly the overture and help for Germany to started one of the cruelest wars in the world's history.

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