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End of the ‘Low, Dishonest Decade’: Failure of the Anglo-Franco-Soviet Alliance in 1939

MICHAEL JABARA CARLEY

In September 1939, as World War II began, W. H. Auden wrote a verse which poignantly described the 1930s, so well in fact that the poem is sometimes remembered in the context of the failure of appeasement:

I sit in one of the dives on Fifty-Second Street
Uncertain and afraid
As the clever hopes expire
Of a low dishonest decade:
Waves of anger and fear
Circulate over the bright
And darkened lands of the earth,
Obsessing our private lives;
The unmentionable odour of death
Offends the September night . . .

Auden’s ‘low, dishonest decade’ began with the Great Depression and unfolded as Nazism and Stalinism oppressed Europe and Soviet Asia. The Anglo-French policy of appeasement led to the abandonment of Abyssinia, Austria and Spain and the betrayal of Czechoslovakia. Yet in spite of all this, the decade was not without moments of hope. The USSR, and especially its commissar for foreign affairs, Maxim Maximovich Litvinov, offered ‘collective security’, or an anti-Nazi alliance, to France and Great Britain. Paradoxically, Stalin’s blood-drenched wickedness did not mean that Soviet foreign policy was wicked also. But in France and Great Britain the determination to resist fascism was sapped by hatred of bolshevism, fear of socialist revolution, and sneaking admiration for Hitler’s repression of the left. Inter-war anti-bolshevism was in fact so like anti-communism after 1945 that it poses the question of when the Cold War began and whether it was a cause or an effect of war in 1939. Anti-bolshevism inspired illusions that Nazi Germany could be encouraged to expand eastward—peaceably, economically, to be sure—to run up against the USSR. The two scorpions’ parlous embrace would leave France and Great Britain out of harm’s way.

Such illusions were dissipated after Nazi Germany destroyed the rump of Czechoslovakia in March 1939. Romania and Poland seemed next on Germany’s list. Should these states fall, France and Great Britain would themselves be threatened.

Perhaps an arrangement with the USSR would be desirable after all. Opposition elements and public opinion in Great Britain and France – both left and right – insisted on it. In April the Soviet government proposed a tripartite alliance, which the British and French rejected. The three governments bargained and bickered over endless wordings of the terms of an agreement. The negotiations which should have been most secret were leaked to the press on all sides and unfolded in an almost circus atmosphere, belying their deadly importance. In August the French and British finally sent missions to Moscow to conclude a military agreement against Nazi Germany. But the talks quickly stalled over the passage of the Red Army across Poland and Romania to meet the enemy. On 23 August the Soviet government signed instead a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany. A week later the German army invaded Poland.

Historians have written voluminously on why the negotiations failed.¹ Stalin was perfidious and had deceived the French and British while secretly negotiating with the Germans. ‘Glutinous knavery . . . surrounded the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact’.² On the other hand, Soviet historians like V. Ya. Sipols have asserted that the French and British did not intend to negotiate seriously and were just stringing along the Soviet government.³ Watt writes that such an interpretation ignores the earnestness of Anglo-French policy makers; the USSR ‘destroyed British hopes of an Eastern Front’ against Nazi Germany.⁴ The French especially, reasserting their policy independence after several years under the British thumb, sought a Soviet alliance and pressed the British to do likewise.⁵ Roberts argues—and Watt concurs—that ‘the perception that British and French leaders were mainly motivated by anti-bolshevism was completely off-beam’. This is not a new idea: Feiling wrote after the war that British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain had no ideological prejudice.⁶ The ideologues, say Watt and Roberts, were on the Soviet side.⁷ The contrary view is not new either: anti-appeasement Conservatives accused Chamberlain and his circle of confusing their class interests with those of their country.⁸ Duroselle speaks of the ‘*décadence*’ of French society.⁹ Girault has written of a divided France rent by ideological divisions between right and left which paralysed the French government.¹⁰ The maverick British historian A. J. P. Taylor in his much discussed—and much dismissed—*Origins of the Second World War* aptly noted that Western reproaches with regard to the Nazi–Soviet non-aggression pact ‘came ill from the statesmen who went to Munich. . . The Russians, in fact, did only what the Western statesmen had hoped to do; and Western bitterness was the bitterness of disappointment, mixed with anger that professions of communism were no more sincere than their own professions of democracy’.¹¹ Taylor, like Soviet historians Medvedev and Volkogonov, concluded that the West left the Soviet government little choice but to conclude a non-aggression pact with Hitler.¹² However, ‘few historians’, writes Gorodetsky, ‘take seriously the invariable Soviet claim . . . that the Soviet Union signed the pact under duress, regarding it as the lesser of two evils’.¹³

The study of Soviet archives, which are beginning to open, may prove or disprove this view, but for now Soviet deceitfulness—though Stalin was certainly proficient in it—appears no worse than that of France and Great Britain. The published Soviet documents, which have not been extensively used by historians, show a commissariat for foreign affairs (Narkomindel) anxious for agreement with the West and angered

by continued Western rebuffs. Narkomindel officials appear on the whole to have been astute political observers and good at their job. However, other evidence to confirm Soviet earnestness comes not from farsighted Soviet diplomats, as opposed to their pudding-headed Anglo-French counterparts, but from *Anglo-French* diplomats, politicians, or soldiers, ignored by those who held ultimate power in London and Paris. The Western 'pragmatic' view—regarded as 'fatuous' by Chamberlain and his retinue—is sometimes reported and sometimes not in the historical literature. It may be found in British and French archival sources and Soviet published documents available now for some time. The papers of Paul-Émile Naggiar, the French ambassador in Moscow, have not been hitherto cited in this context, but are useful because they represent a virtually complete set of the Paris–Moscow cable traffic during the crucial months of 1939—important in view of the destruction of French archives during the war—and because Naggiar left many contemporary and *post facto* marginal comments critical of the Anglo-French conduct of negotiations with the Soviet government. His comments, as well as those of other French and British pragmatists are here reported, and corroborate the evidence of the Soviet published papers.¹⁴

One point is certain: events in 1939 cannot be considered outside the context of the inter-war years. Soviet relations with Great Britain and France were almost always bad. In 1924 the 'Zinoviev letter' allowed the Tories to return to power after a short Labour interlude on the wings of anti-communist hysteria; in 1925 the French and British governments sought to organise an oil embargo against the USSR; in 1927 the British government broke off diplomatic relations with Moscow. In the same year anti-communism and 'red-baiting' electoral politics in France led to a fierce press campaign against the Soviet ambassador in Paris, driving him from his post. The Soviet government's support for revolution in China and the Third International or Comintern's revolutionary propaganda aggravated and imperilled relations with the West. To little avail, Narkomindel attempted during the 1920s to distance itself from the Comintern and to enhance Soviet security and economic growth.

In the 1930s relations were scarcely better. In 1930 the French government, goaded on by the anti-communist press, launched an abortive trade war with the USSR. In 1932 the British government abrogated the Anglo-Soviet trade agreement. Only the growing strength of Nazism in Germany gave the French cause for reflection. In 1932 a centre-left French government signed a non-aggression pact with the USSR; in 1934 a trade agreement was signed; and in the following year a mutual assistance pact. There was no corresponding improvement of Anglo-Soviet relations, and in fact the British government had qualms about the conclusion of the Franco-Soviet mutual assistance pact.¹⁵ By the time the pact was signed, in May 1935, so did the French. Its animators, the radical Herriot and socialist Paul-Boncour, were out of office or out of the way; and the conservative Barthou was dead, murdered by a Croatian fascist in October 1934. Barthou was succeeded by Pierre Laval, who was partial to an accommodation with the fascist states. In 1934 Laval's views were no secret, and Charles Alphand, French ambassador in Moscow, warned him bluntly that if France attempted to come to terms with Germany, 'the Soviets would not hesitate to try to outbid us' in Berlin. Laval paid little attention, and the 'wall of money', or Banque de France, driven by anti-bolshevism, blocked the deepening of Franco-Soviet economic relations.¹⁶

Franco-Soviet staff talks, 1935–37

The Soviet government, which worried about French commitment to the mutual assistance pact, sought to strengthen Franco-Soviet relations through the conduct of military staff talks. Laval himself had raised the idea—in a moment of excess enthusiasm or double-talking jabber—with Stalin in Moscow in May 1935.¹⁷ Soviet representatives pressed the French relentlessly for talks. Laval had scarcely returned from Moscow before the Soviet military attaché broached the question with a French deputy chief of staff.¹⁸ But scarcely had Laval returned to Paris before the French began to stall, a point the Soviet ambassador in Paris, V. P. Potemkin, was quick to report to Moscow. The general staff blamed the delay on Laval, but the generals themselves were in no hurry to parley. France did not need a military agreement with the USSR which would only provide Nazi Germany with a pretext to denounce the 1925 Locarno Western security agreements and reoccupy the demilitarised Rhineland. Poland, fearing the USSR more than Nazi Germany, would be pushed into the arms of Hitler while French relations with Great Britain would also suffer.¹⁹ In the latter half of 1935 Franco-Soviet relations languished and soured. Laval was toppled by the Abyssinian crisis in January 1936, and a palpably relieved Alphand cabled Paris that perhaps now the damage of recent months could be undone.²⁰ But Laval was not the only opposition to closer ties with Moscow.

While Potemkin warned that too much interest in staff talks might be counterproductive, the Soviet government was impatient to see a ratification of the mutual assistance pact, delayed by Laval, and a start to military talks.²¹ Soviet efforts could not have come at a worse time. French national elections took place in May 1936 in an atmosphere of deepening political acrimony between right and left. The Popular Front of Communists, Socialists and Radicals won the elections and formed a government under Léon Blum, but frightened the French right, which feared the spread of communism. Such fears made a deepening of Franco-Soviet relations impossible, although the German occupation of the Rhineland in March 1936 led to ratification of the mutual assistance pact. The USSR was far away and had no borders with Germany. For the right, the Soviet Union was pushing Europe toward war and preparing the way for world revolution. Potemkin judged that the French government had lost its nerve when the German army entered the Rhineland and dared not alienate Great Britain. The government's mood was exemplified by the 'dark and desperate pessimism' of Alexis Léger, the influential secretary-general of the Quai d'Orsay, the French foreign ministry.²²

While the Soviet government doubted French commitment to the mutual assistance pact, it continued to press for staff talks. At the end of June 1936 Litvinov raised the issue with Yvon Delbos, the French foreign minister, as did E. V. Girshfeld, the Soviet chargé d'affaires in Paris, with the deputy chief of staff, General Schweisguth. Girshfeld conceded that the lack of a common Soviet-German border impeded Franco-Soviet military cooperation, but unless the French and Soviet staffs met to discuss common defence issues, there could be no serious cooperation between them. The French government feared provoking Germany: would staff talks have to wait until Hitler was ready to attack?²³ The unfortunate answer to this question became only too apparent three years later.

Schweigsuth went as an observer to Red Army manoeuvres in September 1936, at which time the deputy commissar for war, Tukhachevsky, asked the unwelcome question again.²⁴ So did Litvinov with Blum the following month. With remarkable candour, Blum said that talks were being 'sabotaged' by the general staff and by the war minister, Edouard Daladier. Soviet orders for war matériel were also being blocked by the military bureaucracy. Potemkin said that the Soviet government was beginning to doubt French sincerity in facilitating the build-up of Soviet arms.²⁵ 'Repeated' Soviet initiatives for staff talks put the French government ill at ease, but Daladier was afraid 'to alarm certain friendly powers and to provide Germany with the easy pretext of an attempt at encirclement'. The French war ministry blocked the sale of modern military, especially naval matériel, likewise because of anticipated British objections. It did not mind, however, selling obsolete matériel to the USSR.²⁶

As the leader of an unstable left-centre coalition in a bitter political environment, Blum faced formidable obstacles in deepening Franco-Soviet relations. Daladier's opposition legitimised the general staff's objections and emboldened permanent officials at the Quai d'Orsay, like Léger. But not all members of the Blum government were hostile. Radical Socialist Pierre Cot, the air minister, shared the views of Herriot and Paul-Boncour and was prepared to start staff talks on the narrower basis of air force cooperation without a cabinet decision. Daladier resisted, but Cot pressed on, quite prepared to drag the government along after him.²⁷ On 6 November 1936 he seemed to win the point as the Cabinet agreed to start staff talks initially with the Soviet military attaché. The breakthrough was deceptive: Daladier and the chief of staff, General Gamelin went along to take the initiative out of Cot's hands and to reassert control. 'It would be difficult', noted Schweigsuth, 'to delay any longer without the risk that the air ministry would take control of the movement. . .'²⁸ On 9 November Blum advised Potemkin that Cot's initiative was to be broadened and that Gamelin was coming round. 'In comparison with the previous situation', he said, 'it was a step forward', The Soviet government appeared to take Blum at his word, but feared the negative consequences if the talks failed.²⁹

At the same time Robert Coulondre arrived in Moscow as the new French ambassador. In his first audience with Litvinov on 10 November, he complained about communist propaganda in France. The position of the Radicals was critical, and they were running scared of communism. Litvinov gave assurances and in fact did not care a jot about French communists. He observed to Coulondre that France and the USSR had a common interest in safeguarding the peace against Nazi Germany. Hitler sought to disrupt this unity of purpose by whipping up fears of communism. Would France play into Nazi hands?³⁰ Coulondre did not report his reply, but Litvinov's plea would have fallen on deaf ears in any case. Ideological fears were the mainstay of opposition to closer Franco-Soviet military ties. The growth of the French Communist Party and the Spanish civil war frightened the *grande bourgeoisie* and the general staff. General A. J. Georges, deputy chief of staff, thought the mutual assistance pact should be abandoned altogether. He feared the progress of communism in France and the possibility of a general strike. Georges' colleagues, Generals P.-H. Gérodiás and M.-E. Debeney, considered the Soviet pact a dupe's game for which the dead Barthou was responsible.³¹

Delay and duplicity became the main tactics to scuttle the staff talks. Gamelin told

Schweisguth, 'We need to drag things out'. When a Soviet response to French queries arrived, Schweisguth noted Gamelin's *consigne*: 'we should not hurry, but avoid giving to the Russians the impression that we were playing them along, which could lead them into a political volte-face' [i.e. a rapprochement with Germany].³² Gamelin and Daladier headed the movement; Léger took charge at the Quai d'Orsay.

Schweisguth met the new Soviet military attaché several times, but it was all a charade. 'The situation is still the same', noted Schweisguth, 'gain time, without rebuffing the Russians and without proceeding to staff talks. . .' Daladier calculated that France could do without Soviet support, but not without the British. The British government had had trouble 'swallowing' the mutual assistance pact; it would choke on a military agreement.³³ Léger assured Blum that the war and foreign ministry bureaucracies would loyally respect the government's policy on staff talks, but this was dust in the eyes; not even Daladier intended to respect government policy.³⁴ For Daladier and Gamelin, it was a case of taking one step forward in order to take two steps back.

In February 1937 the Soviet military attaché, A. S. Semenov, met Schweisguth and his superior, General Colson. Semenov said that if Poland and Romania would permit passage across their territory, the Red Army would assist France with all its forces in the case of German attack. If not, Soviet assistance would necessarily be more limited, but the Soviet government was prepared to send troops to France and to provide air support—no doubt a chilling prospect to the Red-obsessed general staff. In return, the Soviet government wanted to know what assistance France could offer in case of German aggression against the USSR.³⁵

Blum saw Potemkin on 17 February after Semenov had met Colson, thanking him for the 'direct and comprehensive' Soviet proposals. Blum wondered if Romania might be persuaded to accept Red Army passage on the assumption that Poland would remain neutral. Potemkin replied that he had 'before hand resigned himself to the refusal of Poland to fulfil its obligations as an ally'.³⁶ A few days later Blum met Daladier, Léger and Gamelin. Daladier's marginal notes blame Schweisguth for delays in the talks, but this is untrue; Daladier and Gamelin were calling the shots, Schweisguth was simply a faithful executor of their policy.³⁷ According to Schweisguth's notes, Stalin himself had written a 'very cordial' letter in favour of a Franco-Soviet military alliance, which Potemkin had read to Blum, who was impressed. But Daladier remained 'sceptical'.³⁸

Schweisguth met Semenov on 19 March, asking more questions about Soviet military capabilities. As for Franco-Soviet cooperation on the ground, Schweisguth indicated that it would be 'extremely difficult' and would be dependent on 'political factors' with respect to Poland, the Baltic and elsewhere.³⁹ Delbos saw Potemkin on 23 March as the latter was preparing to return to Moscow to take up the post of deputy commissar for foreign affairs, vacated by the doomed but brave N. N. Krestinsky, soon to perish in Stalin's purges. Delbos appeared to want to be more encouraging than Schweisguth had been with Semenov. He regretted the absence of contact between Blum and Daladier in recent days because of police shootings on 16 March during a left-wing demonstration at Clichy—a 'diplomatic Waterloo'—implying that this had affected the French response to Semenov. Potemkin would not speculate on the Soviet general staff's reaction to Schweisguth's remarks to Semenov,

but he had his doubts.⁴⁰ On 27 March Blum also sought to reassure the chargé Girshfeld, but he thought it 'expedient' to see Daladier before another meeting with Semenov.⁴¹

The Soviet commissar for war, Voroshilov, reacting angrily to the additional questions posed by Schweisguth, refused further discussions. The Soviet general staff had indicated what it was prepared to do in the event of German aggression against France and asked in return what the French would do in the case of a German attack on the USSR. Instead of an answer, the French had put more questions. Negotiations were deadlocked.⁴²

Blum and Cot manoeuvred for continued discussions, but the British Foreign Office intervened heavily in April and May 1937 to discourage the French. Ironically, the future anti-appeasers, Eden and the Permanent Under Secretary, Vansittart, applied the pressure. But as late as the end of May Blum and Cot still sought to advance the talks.⁴³ Aware of French dissension, Potemkin advised the new Soviet ambassador in Paris, Ya. Z. Surits, not to press the issue. Open discussion in the French government could only make matters worse.⁴⁴ The question was soon moot in any case. At the end of May Stalin authorised a devastating purge of the Soviet high command. Tukhachevsky and other senior commanders were executed after a drum-head trial in early June. Daladier and Gamelin had a pretext to block staff talks, and the Blum government fell on 21 June.⁴⁵ But Daladier never had any intention of agreement to a Soviet military alliance.⁴⁶

The failure of Franco-Soviet staff talks in 1937 was a prelude to the Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations in 1939. The same questions were on the table: passage of the Red Army across Poland and Romania, fear of provoking Germany or driving Poland into the arms of Hitler, hostility from the Baltic states, among other factors. In September 1936 Jean Payart, French chargé d'affaires in Moscow, told Schweisguth that it would not be the USSR which would oppose a Soviet-Polish rapprochement, but Poland, which feared 'bolshevik contagion' and still dreamed of expansion into the Ukraine—after the failure of the Polish invasion in 1920.⁴⁷

Doldrums of Franco-Soviet relations

The abortive talks in 1937 left a bad after-taste. For the French general staff the Stalinist purge of old bolsheviks was hardly troubling, but the 'decapitation' of the Soviet high command—either because the Soviet government was riddled with traitors or with madmen, who had turned on their best generals—gave cause for concern, quite apart from the splendid pretext it offered to block staff conversations.⁴⁸ The French general staff continued to fear communist infiltration in the army, so much so that the deputy chief of staff, Colson, recommended against the attendance of French enlisted men at a concert of the Red Army choir. Such events 'always had an obvious propagandistic intent' and risked having a negative effect on ordinary soldiers who lacked the 'critical judgement' of their officers.⁴⁹

On the Soviet side—or that part of it which survived Stalin's murderous depredations—the duplicity of Daladier and Gamelin was scarcely interpreted as a sign of

French commitment to mutual assistance. At the end of 1937, nine months before the Munich agreement, the Soviet government doubted Anglo-French resolve to resist Nazi Germany. The Soviet ambassador in Paris, Surits, in a stunningly accurate assessment of the French political mood, saw little hope. French resolve was sapped by a fear of tomorrow and the perception of enemies on all sides. Great Britain was France's main ally, and the French government would maintain its ties with London at any cost even though the British took little account of French views. Fear of the 'Red danger' and 'hatred of socialist revolution' dominated the French political agenda to the point where France had lost sight of its vital national interests. The French government sought no deepening of the mutual assistance pact, its only value being a hindrance to a Soviet-German rapprochement. Indeed, the right considered undesirable the defeat of fascism at the expense of increased Soviet influence in Europe. Even the French opposition, led by Herriot and Paul-Boncour among others, was listless and ineffective.⁵⁰ In Moscow Potemkin attacked Coulondre as a collector of anti-Soviet gossip—though undoubtedly there was plenty going around—and a 'puny Philistine'.⁵¹

Litvinov complained to a French journalist in December 1937 that events in France were unfolding as if there were no Franco-Soviet pact. The USSR, he said, appeared isolated, but not by its own choice. This situation could not continue, even if it meant an accord with Germany—and 'why not?' Litvinov quipped. 'Was it possible?', asked the incredulous journalist. 'Perfectly', replied Litvinov.⁵² The French and British governments were not frightened by Litvinov's blunt warning; the Foreign Office queried its European ambassadors and concluded that a Soviet-German rapprochement was unlikely.⁵³

In early 1938 Chautemps, then premier, told Surits that Franco-Soviet ties should be strengthened, but the Soviet ambassador was sceptical. After Delbos complained of French isolation, Surits commented to Moscow that the French had only themselves to blame.⁵⁴ And with reason: when the French military attaché, Colonel Palasse, reported in April 1938 that the Soviet high command was beginning to recover from the Stalinist purges and that the Red Army had a formidable *potentiel de guerre*, he was rounded on by his superiors in Paris.⁵⁵ Palasse stuck to his guns, but the general staff did not want to hear. At the same time, however, Daladier politely—or falsely—sang the praises to Surits of the 'might of the Red Army'.⁵⁶ The Soviet ambassador was not fooled; he wrote scathingly of French policy in July 1938, anticipating the betrayal of Czechoslovakia two months later. Daladier had the temerity to say Soviet support was so certain that French diplomats need do nothing to retain it. Surits saw the British behind French indifference to the Soviet pact, Daladier fearing to lose the British bird in the hand for the sake of the Soviet in the bush. French cabinet members Georges Mandel and Paul Reynaud, who were advocates of a Franco-Soviet alliance, were incensed by such attitudes and advised Surits to insinuate to Daladier that France risked losing the Soviet pact. Fear of all things Soviet contributed to the French attitude. The situation was so bad, said Surits, that the Bibliothèque Nationale had turned down an exhibition of Soviet books. The left in France had weakened, much of the press was hostile, and the political pendulum was swinging to the right.⁵⁷

Effects of the Munich crisis

As the Czech crisis intensified in early September 1938, Litvinov hoped to obtain at the League of Nations a condemnation of the Nazi threat to peace; he sought to put political pressure on Bucharest to permit Red Army passage across Romania to reinforce Czechoslovakia. The Soviet general staff 'advised the French that 30 combat-ready infantry divisions were deployed on its western frontier.⁵⁸ As for Poland, it appeared to have one foot in the German camp: in May the Polish ambassador in Paris told Georges Bonnet, the French foreign minister, that the Polish army 'would not budge' to support France should it go to the assistance of Czechoslovakia in the event of German aggression. The Polish government regarded the USSR as 'enemy No. 1', and would resist any Red Army attempt to cross its territory to aid Czechoslovakia. Colonel Beck, the Polish foreign minister, considered the Czech state 'unviable' and subverted by bolshevism. Polish officials held old grudges against the Czechs, who had been too friendly with the USSR. If Germany was to have the Sudetenland, said Beck in September, Poland would have the Czech district of Teschen—by force if necessary.⁵⁹

In early September Litvinov suggested Franco-Soviet-Czech staff talks, seconded by Coulondre, who pressed the Quai d'Orsay to agree. Bonnet brushed aside the idea. The general staff, he said disingenuously, would keep in touch with the Soviet military attaché in Paris.⁶⁰ In the meantime Bonnet pressed the Czech government not to resist the Poles any more than the Germans. Czech resistance over Teschen could wreck the Munich settlement and lead to war. On 1 October Coulondre telephoned Potemkin for news. 'It's another surrender', said Potemkin; the Czechs had capitulated and the Poles were already moving into the Teschen district. Potemkin implied, said Coulondre, that the Czech capitulation had eliminated any basis for Soviet intervention.⁶¹

The Soviet Union reacted with anger and alarm to the Munich settlement. It is a 'most terrible defeat', said Surits; without a shot being fired France had suffered 'a second Sedan', losing its most faithful ally and an army of one-and-a-half million men. France had been betrayed by the right, which feared the spread of communism in Europe through the victory of Soviet arms. The French government had lost confidence in itself. There was no Clemenceau nor even a Poincaré to rally the country.⁶²

Litvinov took in the full measure of defeat which was his as much as that of France; his policy of collective security was in ruins. Like Surits, Litvinov reckoned that the French had only themselves to blame. They had systematically evaded military staff talks even to support Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain had not dragged Daladier, then premier, and Bonnet after him to Munich. Now, said Litvinov, the British and French governments would have to choose between Nazi domination of Europe or resistance to further Nazi aggression. Litvinov was not hopeful. 'After Munich, who will believe in the word of France', asked the Narkomindel newspaper in Moscow, 'who will remain its ally?'⁶³

Soviet views, ventilated widely in the press, were reported to Paris. The Soviet government interpreted Chamberlain's communiqué with Hitler on 30 September as a British offer of good offices to facilitate German eastward expansion on condition that Germany leave the west in peace. Coulondre and Palasse both warned of Soviet

isolation and the possibility of a Soviet–German rapprochement at Polish expense. Litvinov had not totally given up on collective security, but Coulondre reported—prophetically as it turned out—that having learned from experience, the Soviet government ‘would undoubtedly demand precise guarantees of assistance’ from France and Great Britain before making any further security agreements. The French had no illusions about the gravity of their defeat: in May 1937 Delbos had said to Eden that France could not abandon Czechoslovakia ‘without disappearing as a great power from the map of Europe’. Another defeat like Munich, Coulondre warned, would put France in mortal peril.⁶⁴

The British government, especially Chamberlain, was more optimistic. It was normal that Germany should dominate central Europe, otherwise there would be war every 15 or 20 years, said Lord Halifax, then foreign secretary, to Maisky, the Soviet ambassador in London. Why should Great Britain risk war to save the USSR?⁶⁵ ‘Why indeed?’ asked foreign minister Bonnet. He hinted that France would like to shed its commitments, such as they were, to Poland and the USSR. Rumours circulated that the Nazis were looking to the Ukraine to satisfy their growing territorial appetite. For Bonnet this was both a relief and a concern, and all the more reason to unburden France of dangerous commitments. But in January 1939 other rumours circulated only a month after von Ribbentrop, the Nazi foreign minister, came to Paris to sign an understanding with Bonnet to maintain ‘peaceful and good neighbourly relations’. Holland and western Europe were now the target of Nazi ambition. Suddenly, it seemed less desirable to break commitments to Poland and to the USSR. Anglo-French anti-appeasers, silenced after Munich, began to find their voices.

Anglo-French policy reappraisal

In Great Britain, reappraisal took place within the Foreign Office. Halifax was not as sanguine as Chamberlain about the prospects of an accommodation with Nazi Germany. Neither was Vansittart, now promoted out of the way to chief diplomatic advisor because of a difficult personality and increasing opposition to the Conservative government’s foreign policy. In January 1939 a seemingly academic paper by a Foreign Office clerk, Harold Caccia, reviewing Wheeler-Bennett’s book on the Soviet–German treaty of Brest Litovsk in 1918, touched off an important exchange of views on Anglo-Soviet relations.

Caccia’s memo suggested a re-examination of British policy toward the USSR in the light of the perspective offered by Wheeler-Bennett’s book. Recalling that Lenin had agreed to accept ‘the assistance of French imperialism against German brigands’, he asked why the British government should not adopt the same policy, working on the principle that “‘Russian murderers’” might in certain eventualities be a lesser danger than “‘German brigands’”? Caccia suggested that the new British ambassador in Moscow, Sir William Seeds, attempt to meet Stalin to ‘clarify’ Anglo-Soviet relations, applying Lenin’s first principle.

The memo soon had attached to it minutes from the lowest Foreign Office clerk to Halifax himself, reflecting the gamut of opinion toward the USSR. A central department official, D. W. Lascelles, asked ‘. . . what is there to clarify?’

Essentially, . . . [Anglo-Soviet] relations are based on a mutual and inevitable antipathy and on the realisation that the other party, in attempting to cope with the German menace, will act empirically and solely with an eye to its own interests. The Russians know quite well that if they are attacked by Germany we shall neither assist them nor join in the attack. . .

Lascelles conceded, however, that a little talk with the Soviet authorities might 'have a certain prophylactic effect on the Germans, and it might also . . . be of some use . . . against the English critics of His Majesty's Government'. Other mid-level Foreign Office officials such as Laurence Collier, head of the Northern department, and William Strang, head of the Central department, picked up this idea and pushed it forward, though resisted by the anti-bolshevik Sir Lancelot Oliphant, deputy under-secretary of state, and by Sir Alexander Cadogan, Chamberlain's 'sane, slow man' to succeed Vansittart.⁶⁶ Cadogan opposed an initiative in Moscow since the British government had nothing to offer: 'we should very soon have to disclose the emptiness of our cupboard'. Stalin could ask bothersome questions about what Great Britain might do or not do in the event of a Soviet-German conflict. He might, for example, 'ask whether "no indirect assistance" [to Germany] means standing aside and giving Germany a free hand. And that is not an easy question to answer—at best I do not think we could give Stalin the answer he wants . . .'

Cadogan's views would have confirmed Soviet suspicions about British intentions in eastern Europe, but they did not fully satisfy Halifax, who invited Vansittart to comment. 'Anglo-Soviet relations', Vansittart minuted,

are in a most unsatisfactory state. It is not only regrettable but dangerous that they should be in this state, and a continuance of it will become a great deal more dangerous very shortly. They are in a bad state because the Russians feel, and I think it is an incontestable fact (at any rate it is a very widely stated one), that we practically boycotted them during 1938. We never took them into our confidence or endeavoured to establish close contact with them, and this fact accounts for the gradual drift towards isolation that is going on in Russia. That fact and that tendency we ought to correct and correct soon.

Vansittart was not sure how to proceed. 'What the Russians need is a gesture'. He suggested sending a cabinet minister—either Robert Hudson or Oliver Stanley—to the USSR under the cover of ongoing trade negotiations. Halifax asked Vansittart to see him about his idea.⁶⁷ This marked a certain progress—if one favoured better relations with the USSR—but it was far from a dramatic change in policy. Vansittart had come a long way since 1935 when he thought Litvinov 'obsessed' with the German danger.⁶⁸ He shared the obsession now, but he was no longer permanent under-secretary, and Cadogan and Chamberlain were against him.

The day Vansittart wrote his minute at the Foreign Office he went to see Maisky to complain—neither discreetly nor for the first time—about Chamberlain's policy. Vansittart was in 'great anxiety', noted Maisky, he was 'highly dissatisfied with the state of affairs both in England and in France. . . In his view, 1939 will be the decisive year'. Vansittart argued that British, French, and Soviet interests were identical, and that if they were not careful Hitler would pick them off one after the other—'as an artichoke is eaten leaf after leaf'. Having listened for a while, Maisky answered that Vansittart was preaching to the converted, 'the USSR had all along been upholding the principle of collective security, while London and Paris had been systematically

undermining it'. At the end of their conversation, Vansittart expressed 'hope that in England the policy of "appeasement" would soon come to a deservedly inglorious end'.⁶⁹

There were some modest signs that this was happening. In Moscow Seeds informed Litvinov on 19 February that the British government would send Hudson, secretary for the ministry of overseas trade, to Moscow. Hudson would discuss trade matters, but Seeds hinted that London hoped for a general improvement in relations. Litvinov picked up the hint, but complained of endless Anglo-French capitulations: assurances to the contrary 'nowadays . . . were freely given and as freely broken'. Under the circumstances, Litvinov said that the USSR would 'keep aloof'. Seeds insisted that there was a change of mood in England. All to the good, replied Litvinov, but what is needed is a change in *action*.⁷⁰ Maisky reported that there were further signs of a change in policy, though Litvinov remained sceptical—these were mere 'gestures', and they were not enough.⁷¹

Maisky kept probing. He met Hudson for lunch on 8 March. As Maisky was leaving, he told Hudson 'that he was quite convinced that we, the British Empire, were unable to stand up against German aggression, even with the assistance of France, unless we had the collaboration and help of Russia'. Hudson replied that he thought Great Britain and France were changing direction and that they would eventually triumph with or without the USSR. Hudson recorded this in a minute, concluding that Maisky, having gone 'out of his way to raise these questions . . . may indicate a certain nervousness in the minds of the Russian government'. Vansittart was exasperated when he saw the memorandum, leaving a note for Halifax.

There is unfortunately a great deal of force in what M. Maisky says: for example the British and French air forces are *utterly* unequal to standing up to the *whole* German air force. It is quite essential that a portion should be immobilised on the German Eastern Front. I see little utility in denying these self-evident facts, or in not trying to bring the Russians out of their isolationist tendencies instead of pushing them back in that direction. . .

Before talking like this it is well to remember (1) that we had both Russia & Italy with us in the last war, & then only scrambled through, (2) that France could have had no chance of survival *whatever* in 1914, if there had not been an Eastern Front. She only just survived as it was.

'Surely', Vansittart concluded, 'when a foreign ambassador talks like this there is a very obvious, and infinitely preferable gambit that sticks well out of the ground'. Vansittart, at least, did not need to be a general to sense which way the war winds were beginning to blow. On 14 March Halifax left a minute for Vansittart indicating that he had spoken to Hudson, warning him 'against taking a line that would encourage Russian "withdrawal"'.⁷² Such steps were a little late; the German army marched into Prague the following day, disrupting the pace of change in British policy. Chamberlain, who had not interfered in the 'gestures' being made to the USSR, was now drawn more deeply into the foreign policy debate. He did not like Vansittart's advice and ignored it.

During the same period the French government did even less than the British to repair the damage done to their relations with the USSR. A new French ambassador, P.-É. Naggiar, arrived in Moscow in February 1939. He came from the embassy in

China, and made a good impression on his British counterpart. He had several talks with Litvinov and Potemkin who conveyed the same message as that given to Seeds. Still, Litvinov said that the USSR would continue to support the policy of collective security if the French government would support it also, even though the post-Munich situation was less favourable. In fact, Litvinov made clear his preference for Anglo-Franco-Soviet cooperation. He had earlier expressed his repugnance of Soviet-German economic relations; so many German technicians, said Litvinov, meant so many German spies.⁷³ But the British and French governments could not go on ducking out at critical moments. Naggiar, and Payart before him, warned Bonnet categorically that if they did, the USSR might come to terms with Germany—whatever Litvinov's preferences.⁷⁴ Stalin too warned in an often-quoted speech on 10 March that the Soviet government had no intention of 'pulling other people's [that is to say, French and British] chestnuts out of the fire'.⁷⁵ Of course, warnings like this were old hat, and Bonnet's cables to Moscow were routine until 23 March, a week after the Nazi invasion of the rump of Czechoslovakia.

For Litvinov this was a difficult time. By early 1939 the Stalinist purges had decimated Narkomindel. 'How can I conduct foreign policy', he said to Naggiar in a fit of ill humour, 'with the Lubyanka across the way?'⁷⁶ Litvinov feared seeing his last day there. In March Payart found Litvinov very tense because of criticism in Moscow of his policies, but he carried on.⁷⁷ Common wisdom in the diplomatic community was that Litvinov's days were numbered. Voroshilov, for one, was said to favour a Soviet-German rapprochement; but Stalin opposed it.⁷⁸ Among Litvinov's few surviving colleagues were Potemkin, Surits and Maisky. Were they spared to keep open the option of Soviet-Western cooperation against Nazism? Or was it simply a tyrant's whimsy?

The beginning of Anglo-Franco-Soviet discussions, March-May 1939

On 18 March Litvinov proposed the calling of a six-power conference in Bucharest to discuss the 'possibilities of common action' against further Nazi aggression. Halifax replied to Maisky that a conference would be premature, but he had another idea: a four power declaration by the British, French, Soviet and Polish governments. Would the Soviet government agree to this proposal? Litvinov replied favourably on 22 March. British policy was scarcely a sea change; London was only inviting consultation about what *might* be done later.⁷⁹ But this was still too much for Beck, who rejected the British proposal.

The Polish decision was no surprise to the French government, which trusted the Poles no more than did the Soviet. The French secretary-general, Léger, thought Beck 'entirely cynical and false' and just looking for an excuse 'to tuck in closer to Germany'.⁸⁰ Mistrust was exacerbated by Polish policy during the Munich crisis, when the Polish army had seized Teschen. 'The Germans were not the only vultures upon the carcass', wrote Churchill.⁸¹ Others drew analogies with jackals and hyenas. Presumably, the Poles found the distinction between taking and giving away another state's territory rather a fine one.

Léon Noël, the French ambassador in Warsaw, noted in January 1939 that many Poles feared the Nazis less than the Soviet Union; forced to a choice, they would

collaborate with Germany rather than accept aid from the USSR. Noël reported the comment of the Soviet military attaché, who observed that the Poles would let themselves be crushed rather than accept Soviet aid. Counselling patience, Noël said the Poles would have to be coaxed along.⁸²

It was the old question of whether the Polish government would permit the Red Army to cross Poland to meet the Nazi enemy. French diplomats had reported the difficulty as early as 1934–35—the British also. Soviet troops, Payart had noted, once on Polish territory might not want to leave. The Polish government, having taken Soviet territory in 1919–20, understandably feared that the Soviet Union might one day want to take it back. In 1938 the issue came up repeatedly. No wonder Kennard, the British ambassador in Warsaw, commented after Munich that collective security had foundered on Polish opposition.⁸³

The British were nevertheless more disposed than the French to follow Noël's counsels of patience. Although the British government had taken a dim view of the Polish seizure of Teschen, its attitude to the Poles in March 1939 was to let bygones be bygones. Léger was not so easy to convince, though one Foreign Office clerk remarked that the French were always a little hard on Beck.⁸⁴ Léger advised the British to use 'very clear and firm language' with the Poles, and so did the French ambassador, Corbin. 'He thought the strongest pressure must be brought to bear upon Poland, even to the extent of threats, to secure her collaboration'. Strong language had not been characteristic of the French in recent years—except against French communists, or Italians—and it still was not. Léger complained of being 'surrounded by reticence'. Much of it, of course, was of his own making, but Léger was right in telling the British chargé in Paris that France and Great Britain should not subordinate their attitude to those governments, those 'corollaries', with whom they were consulting. 'That would be to put the cart before the horse. These governments would decide their attitude in accordance with the intentions of France and Great Britain'.⁸⁵ This was undoubtedly true; Lloyd George, the former prime minister, said as much in the House of Commons on 3 April.⁸⁶ The Tory gadfly Churchill would also say it, but he—like Lloyd George—was greatly disliked by Chamberlain. So the British government did not take this sound advice. Neither did Bonnet.

One wonders why. Halifax noted in March that France and Great Britain could not prevent Poland from being overrun by Germany.⁸⁷ Both Lloyd George and Churchill stated in Parliament that there could be no 'eastern front' without the USSR.⁸⁸ Litvinov told Hudson, who finally made it to Moscow on 23 March, that 'France was practically done for. . . full of German agents, disaffected and disunited. . .' He could see the day not too distant when Europe would be fascist from the Bay of Biscay to the Soviet frontier. It would be up to Great Britain and the USSR then, and Litvinov 'made it clear that he had in mind the possibility of resistance by force of arms'.⁸⁹ Who can say that Litvinov was wrong?—but he was going too fast for Chamberlain and other 'men of Munich' in London. Chamberlain did not trust 'the Soviet'—as it was fashionable to say in those days—but one wonders why he trusted the Poles more. Chamberlain did not believe that the Red Army could take the offensive against Germany. This from a British prime minister who just then could put four divisions into the field—'two and two more later'; 'the Soviet' could send 100, 250 after the first year.⁹⁰ But Chamberlain distrusted Soviet motives, they were communists and did

not share 'our ideas of liberty'. Did Beck? Definitely not, but he was not a communist.

Beck was a 'slippery customer' even by British lights: when he came to London in early April he was already facing heavy intimidation from Ribbentrop—though he denied it—over the German-populated 'free city' of Danzig, created under the treaty of Versailles. Beck still hoped for a settlement with Germany, proposing a modest compromise on 25 March and continued commitment to an anti-Russian, anti-communist policy.⁹¹ Léger was after all not so hard on Beck; the British were not hard enough. 'The important thing', said Bonnet, 'was not to give Poland (or, indeed, Romania) a pretext for running out on account of Russia'.⁹² Chamberlain would then be left without a second front or rather with the unacceptable option of 'the Soviet' as his main ally in the east. This had also been a danger in 1938. Nazi intransigence spared Chamberlain the contemplation of such a scenario.

In the face of Polish opposition, the British government abandoned its four-power declaration and offered instead a unilateral guarantee of Poland which it persuaded the French government to make also. Chamberlain explained privately to Lloyd George that Hitler would never risk war if he had to fight on two fronts. 'Where is the second front to be?', asked Lloyd George. Poland, the prime minister responded. Lloyd George 'burst into laughter and began to jibe Chamberlain, noting that Poland had no air force to speak of, an inadequately mechanised army, worse than mediocre armaments, and that Poland was weak internally, economically, and politically',⁹³ Like Vansittart, neither Lloyd George nor Churchill needed to be a general to tell which way the war winds were blowing. In late March the British chiefs of staff also began to sense the winds.⁹⁴ Chamberlain had trouble because anti-bolshevism had twisted round his own weather vane.

The Foreign Office was not unaware of the importance of implicating the USSR in the defence of Poland, and so it invited the USSR on 14 April to join in making a unilateral declaration. The Soviet government had other ideas. On 6 April Maisky raised the question of military staff talks, and he inquired 'with inquisitorial persistence' about Chamberlain's meaning of 'direct and indirect' aggression in a parliamentary statement that day on Poland. Chamberlain appears to have been the first to raise the question of 'indirect' aggression, though Halifax preferred not to explain the prime minister's meaning. Halifax assured Maisky of the British government's desire to create a broad coalition to protect the peace and that this coalition would not be formed without the USSR. But the Foreign Office flatly rejected Maisky's suggestion of a trip by Litvinov to London to facilitate negotiations. Sargent, assistant under-secretary of state, and Cadogan thought this a dreadful idea. It would 'arouse the deepest suspicion in every country where the Soviet connection is feared. . . I hope we will not allow Maisky's fictitious grievances and Litvinov's assumed sulks to push us into action against our better judgement', Sargent suggested 'calling the Soviet bluff by asking them point black to make us a definite and detailed scheme showing the extent to which and the manner in which they are prepared to cooperate with other governments. . .' Cadogan chimed in 'I agree'. 'Personally', Cadogan minuted, 'I regard association with the Soviet as more of a liability than an asset. But I should rather like to ask them what they propose, indicating that we don't want a lesson in "moral issues", but some practical indication of what they propose

should be done'. Halifax concurred—with qualifications: '... of course we want if we can—without making a disproportionate amount of mischief ... —to keep them in with us. ...'⁹⁵

Litvinov—who had many talents—must have been able to read minds. He was certainly well informed.⁹⁶ On 17 April he called the *British* bluff and proposed—in eight points—a tripartite political and military alliance against Nazi Germany. The Foreign Office was confounded; Cadogan thought the Soviet proposals 'extremely inconvenient': they would 'give little additional security', and would alienate our friends and provoke our enemies. 'In order to placate our left wing in England, rather than to obtain any solid military advantage', noted Cadogan, the British government had asked for a Soviet unilateral declaration of support. 'The assistance of the Soviet government would be available, if desired and would be afforded in such manner as would be found most convenient'. Cadogan had to admit, however, that the Soviet proposal put His Majesty's Government in a bind.

... There is great difficulty in refusing the Soviet offer. We have taken the attitude that the Soviet preach us sermons on 'collective security' but make no practical proposals. They have now made such, and they will rail at us for turning them down. And the Left in this country may be counted on to make the most of this. ... There is further the risk—though I should have thought it a very remote one—that, if we turn down this proposal, the Soviet might make some 'non-intervention' agreement with the German government.

Cadogan recommended that Litvinov's proposal should be rejected, and it was—with 'disdain', Corbin would say later.⁹⁷ Cadogan's weather vane was twisted also; and when Vansittart pressed to have the USSR included in a collateral matter, Cadogan exploded in his diary that Vansittart was an 'ass'!⁹⁸ Cadogan was irritated by an interfering predecessor but, personal rivalries aside, the Foreign Office was more divided than the country on the matter of an alliance with the USSR.

The debate over Anglo-Soviet cooperation was heated and continued throughout April. The problem of Romania and Poland—but especially Poland—came up repeatedly. The British ambassador, Kennard, warned that pressure on Poland to cooperate would only make matters worse. Once the USSR became a full member of an anti-German coalition, the Polish government would fear relegation to a secondary role. Moreover, the extraordinary publicity in the press and on radio about a possible agreement with the USSR made Polish opinion anxious and played into the hands of Nazi propagandists exploiting fears of bolshevism. 'Would it not be possible', pleaded Kennard, 'even at this late hour for someone in authority to *insist* that the press and BBC control themselves?' Cadogan thought that showing Kennard's letter to Chamberlain 'might help'.⁹⁹ Collier, head of the Northern department, commenting trenchantly in another context, observed that if Hitler wanted to devour another victim, he could 'always find a pretext without referring to Russia!'¹⁰⁰

Collier was a member of Vansittart's small circle, and at times he boldly criticised the government. In a shocking comment on the minutes of the Foreign Policy Committee, composed of senior cabinet ministers, he noted that if one 'read between the lines', especially of Chamberlain's comments, one could not 'help feeling that the

real motive for Cabinet's attitude is the desire to secure Russian help and at the same time to leave our hands free to enable Germany to expand eastward at Russian expense'. Strang disputed this, but Cadogan, consistent with his earlier views, did not refer to it. Collier warned that the 'Russians are not so naive as not to suspect this, and I hope that we ourselves will not be so naive as to think that we can have things both ways'. Soviet support was worth having, whatever its shortcomings, and 'we ought not to boggle at paying the obvious price—an assurance to the Russians, in return for their promise of help, that we will not leave them alone to face German expansion'. Anything less would not only be cynical but doomed to failure.¹⁰¹ It was not for lack of good advice that British policy went awry; it was for failure to heed it. On 29 April Halifax disingenuously told Maisky that the British government had been 'too busy' to deal with Litvinov's 'very logical and well constructed' proposals.¹⁰²

The French government, whose relations with the USSR had been in a state of torpor since Munich, bestirred itself at the end of March. Funk was the principal motivator, and rising public clamour for better Franco-Soviet relations. The chameleon Bonnet tried to change his colours. In March he had the effrontery to remark to Halifax that the Soviet authorities liked to talk, but not to act. They had to be pinned down as to 'their real intentions'. In several meetings with Surits in April he pressed for greater Franco-Soviet cooperation. Surits and Litvinov reacted cynically, but said that the Soviet government would 'give sympathetic consideration to any concrete proposals'. In Moscow Litvinov quipped that perhaps an isolationist policy would after all be best for the USSR. Payart, standing in for the absent Naggiar, who was ill, noted that such remarks were an effort to stimulate Anglo-French interest. Payart warned, however, that Litvinov's cynical remarks 'almost always indicated the alternative policy directions of other Soviet leaders'. In any event, Litvinov was sick and tired of the Anglo-French cold-shoulder and 'fed up' with Polish and Romanian hostility. He did not intend the USSR to be a lightning rod for Nazi aggression.¹⁰³

The French sought to reassure Moscow. Bonnet—'in a state of complete prostration'—told Surits that an Anglo-Franco-Soviet accord to support Poland and Romania was essential. Daladier railed against the Poles who would lead their country 'to ruin'; Gamelin went to see Surits, *képi* in hand, to say that it was not too late to oppose Nazi Germany. But anti-bolshevism still maintained its hold. The chief of the 2e Bureau said that the USSR would not give help to the West, preferring to watch the 'democracies and totalitarian states . . . cut one another's throats which would pave the way for bolshevism in Europe. . .'. Nevertheless, Surits reported that French public opinion had turned around; press attacks against the USSR had all but ceased. The old French arrogance was gone, they were supplicants now: 'people who need us, not . . . people whom we need'. France was neck deep in rising danger; accommodation with the aggressors was no longer possible and war was imminent. In fact, France and the USSR needed each other. But Surits feared betrayal: we should negotiate, but 'not assume any obligations without reciprocal guarantees'.¹⁰⁴ On 14 April Bonnet proposed an exchange of letters promising Soviet 'immediate aid and assistance' in the event of German aggression. Surits tactfully suggested that Bonnet's proposal would have a better chance of success if it possessed a measure of reciprocity. The following

day Bonnet produced 'a more complete text' where France would render 'immediate aid and assistance' if the USSR in support of Poland and Romania were attacked by Germany. Surits responded reservedly, but advised that his government would perhaps have counter-proposals to make.¹⁰⁵

The British government did not like the French idea any more than Litvinov's proposals which soon followed. Nor did it care for the more positive French attitude to the Soviet idea of a tripartite alliance. Cadogan explained the position to Corbin, but the French ambassador warned that 'a flat rejection would enable the Russians to cause both governments considerable embarrassment, and it would be better if some practical counter-proposals could be devised'. The USSR was entitled 'to ask for the same kind of guarantee from Great Britain and France as Poland is receiving and she could hardly be expected to undertake any obligations without such a guarantee. . .'.¹⁰⁶

'I don't like this much', minuted Halifax, and he was more receptive to Anglo-Soviet cooperation than Chamberlain. Halifax need not have worried; the French were accommodating, and put off Surits.¹⁰⁷ On 29 April Bonnet told the British ambassador in Paris, Sir Eric Phipps, that the French government would go along with British policy if the Foreign Office could persuade the USSR to accept it, though he doubted this would be possible.¹⁰⁸

Foreign Office officials sometimes used the word 'sulk' to describe Soviet unhappiness with Anglo-French policy. They stopped using it after 3 May, after Soviet 'sulks' led to the sudden sacking of Litvinov. This was an important development. Litvinov was the principal advocate of collective security against Nazi Germany. Stalin, who outwardly had little to do with foreign affairs, supported Litvinov and appears to have left him to implement policy. Although Litvinov was not a member of the highest decision-making circles, he did not need to be—as long as Stalin supported him. How else could he have avoided the Lubyanka?

When Stalin evidently decided to widen his options after the long string of failures of collective security, he dismissed Litvinov, whose preference for an alliance with the West against Nazi Germany, apart from other desiderata, would have hampered a reversal of Soviet policy. If Litvinov was not purged, it may have been blind luck—for Litvinov—or it may have been a sign that Stalin had not altogether rejected collective security. But Stalin would have no preferences; he would weigh his options.

Litvinov's successor was Molotov, Stalin's most important lieutenant. Gone was the urbane, blunt but tractable Litvinov, to be replaced by a traditional old bolshevik—one of the few in fact whom Stalin did not have shot—hard, mulish, humourless. Litvinov's endless if angry patience with Anglo-French filibustering and sometime duplicity was over.

The French and British governments were startled by the dismissal. Payart reported that the Soviet government was fed up with British stalling. Litvinov's disappearance could signal a move toward neutrality or, worse, an agreement with Germany, but this seemed unlikely *for the moment*. However, Stalin would be taking a closer hand in Soviet foreign policy, and it would be subject to his *amour-propre*, and to his impulses.¹⁰⁹ Molotov reassured the French and British that there would be no change in Soviet policy—unless, he added cryptically to Seeds, 'other states changed theirs'.¹¹⁰

The main Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations, May–August 1939

Pressure for a Soviet alliance was building up on all sides. Public opinion in Great Britain was vociferous. ‘Winston’, long a thorn in the side of Tory cabinets, challenged the government in Parliament and in the press. What was going on, why the delay in responding to Soviet proposals, why no pressure on Poland to cooperate? The old hater of bolsheviks was for banding together to ‘break Hitler’s neck!’¹¹¹ The British chiefs of staff also started to press for agreement with the USSR. They knew in early May that the French intended to stand on the defensive on the fortified Maginot line in the event of war between Germany and Poland. The Polish army would quickly be defeated without Soviet support, and if the USSR sided with Germany, Great Britain would face the gravest dangers. Vansittart also returned to the charge and seemed to influence the dawdling Halifax.¹¹²

The position of the chiefs of staff discomfited Chamberlain. But “‘Appeasement’”, as British diplomat Oliver Harvey put it, was ‘raising its ugly head again’. *The Times* ran a headline: ‘Danzig is not worth a war’. Chamberlain’s entourage was intriguing; Halifax, a young anti-bolshevik ‘die-hard’ in the early 1920s, was said to regard the USSR as ‘the anti-Christ’. Strang, head of the Central department, thought that Chamberlain opposed a Soviet alliance because it would signal the end of appeasement; he said ‘all at No. 10 are anti-Soviet’. Halifax explained to the French that ‘half the British population’ held the Soviet Union responsible as much as the Nazis for ‘all the troubles of the last 10 years’.¹¹³ Obviously, Halifax had not kept up with British public opinion which massively favoured an Anglo-Soviet alliance, but neither had Chamberlain. He was relieved by Litvinov’s sacking and threatened to resign ‘rather than sign [an] alliance with the Soviet’. Even Corbin attributed the British cabinet’s ‘reticence’ to anti-communist animosity.¹¹⁴

Daladier, who had tamed his communists, was not now so frightened. Neither was Bonnet; he was more worried by the prospects of failure to conclude. There was such a strong movement of public opinion in France and Great Britain in favour of an alliance with the USSR that if negotiations failed, it was essential that the Soviet side ‘and not us’, take the blame.¹¹⁵ Implicitly, this seemed more important for Bonnet than the success of negotiations.

Maisky, assessing British opinion, correctly reported its anti-German mood to Moscow, but he, like Harvey, also noted the resurgence of appeasement.¹¹⁶ On 8 May Molotov commented unfavourably to Seeds on the British delay in responding to Litvinov’s proposals: the ‘Soviet government had always replied . . . within three days, instead of three weeks’. Seeds answered drily, ‘I [take] off my hat to Soviet efficiency’. In mid-May Molotov laid out the Soviet minimum position: a tripartite mutual assistance pact, guarantee of the central and east European states including the Baltics, and a concrete military accord. When Molotov spoke of the Baltic guarantee, Seeds ‘uttered deprecatory noises’, tapping his fingers on the paper which explained the Soviet proposals. But the ‘slab-faced’ Molotov would not be put off.¹¹⁷

Chamberlain finally began to give in to pressure; he swallowed hard and agreed to new proposals—they were half-way measures by Soviet lights, by Churchill’s also—but they went too far for Chamberlain, who was ‘very disturbed’ by the

prospect of agreement.¹¹⁸ On 25 May the British government, with the French in tow, offered a limited mutual assistance pact. Its ignition clause was dependent on the consent of threatened third states, and the proposal was couched in the context of the discredited League of Nations. A clever move, thought Chamberlain, and he privately boasted of it. The League caveat would allow the British government to narrow its commitments or cut them short. The suspicious Molotov picked this up at once and condemned it.¹¹⁹ But according to Cadogan, Chamberlain was prepared 'to leave no stone unturned' to solve the looming crisis over Danzig. He might still save the peace—his way—and he did not want to commit too far to 'the Soviet'. Maisky noted this also and duly reported it to Moscow.¹²⁰

During May the French government pushed the British to respond quickly to Soviet overtures. But they did not press too hard, expressions of impatience were accompanied by the caveat that of course 'the French government would be perfectly well satisfied with the British formula [for agreement] if the Soviet government could be persuaded to accept it'. The French government was not after all so quick to resume the diplomatic initiative. Bonnet instructed Payart 'to take a back seat and let Sir W. Seeds make the running. . .'¹²¹ Bonnet confided to the British ambassador, Phipps, that while an agreement with the USSR was necessary, we must be careful not to allow ourselves 'to be dragged into war' by the Soviet government. Anyway, the 'best policy with the Soviet is to avoid giving them the impression that we are running after them'. Bonnet sneered at cabinet ministers Reynaud and Mandel: 'the [French] communists are unfortunately not the only people here who are under Soviet influence'.¹²² The Quai d'Orsay reiterated to Naggiar, back in Moscow in early June, that the French government would remain in the background. If the British failed to obtain Soviet agreement, the French government could put forward its own compromise solutions. Naggiar, impatient for a quick agreement, did not like Bonnet's policy.¹²³ No one did who wanted an agreement with the USSR.

On 2 June Molotov countered with proposals for ironclad, well defined commitments and in effect returned to Litvinov's initiative of 17 April guaranteeing all the states between the Baltic and Black Seas.¹²⁴ The Soviet counter-offer specified a list of countries to be guaranteed, including the Baltics, and, unlike the previous Anglo-French proposal, it did not condition assistance on the consent of affected third states. Moreover, Molotov's proposal, like Litvinov's, called for the conclusion of a military agreement 'within the shortest possible time' specifying in detail the commitments of the contracting parties.¹²⁵ On the latter point Molotov explained to Seeds that the Soviet government had learned from its experience with the French. The Franco-Soviet mutual assistance pact 'had turned out to be . . . a paper delusion'. Without a military convention the political accord would be worthless. Back in London, Sargent commented, 'the Russians have for years past been pressing for staff conversations to implement its (*sic*) Franco-Soviet pact, and the French largely at our instigation have always refused them'. Molotov had a point. Do not take us for 'simpletons and fools', he would say.¹²⁶

Maisky characterised British policy as 'bazaar technique': 'But even in the bazaar, when asked a shilling one did not begin by offering twopence'. Moscow had the impression that the British government was 'at bottom opposed to a pact and was reluctantly and gradually being pushed against its will into making one'.¹²⁷ If this

meant Chamberlain and his entourage, who can say Maisky was wrong? Chamberlain must have felt like Br'er Rabbit struggling with the tar baby in the Uncle Remus tales: the more he tried to get away, the more he got stuck in the tar. It was only 'Jedge' Stalin who in August 'come long en loosed 'im'.

In June the Foreign Office sent Strang to Moscow to assist in negotiations. Strang told Naggiar that his instructions were not to move toward the Soviet position, but in fact to try to take back concessions made in previous Anglo-French proposals.¹²⁸ No wonder 'the Soviet' mistrusted Chamberlain and Bonnet; the British and French anti-appeasement opposition did not trust them either. In June Churchill questioned the Chamberlain government's good faith. In early July Mandel, the last of the Clemencists, told Surits that the Soviet government 'had every right' to be mistrustful, and he urged Surits to insist on a 'clear and explicit' agreement, so arch appeaser Bonnet could not rat.¹²⁹

In this atmosphere is it any surprise that Stalin—suspicious, ruthless and completely unscrupulous—began to contemplate the possibility of an agreement with Nazi Germany? If the Anglo-French could pursue such a policy, so could he. In April 1939 the Soviet ambassador in Berlin, A. F. Merekalov, went to the German foreign ministry to discuss the fulfilment of Soviet contracts in defunct Czechoslovakia. The meeting focused on economic relations but, as Litvinov had reminded Payart in March, 'there was a close interdependence between political and economic relations. . .'¹³⁰ The German government thought there might be a political opening in this initiative. Merekalov disappeared from the scene, eventually purged but not shot; and the Soviet chargé d'affaires, G. A. Astakhov, took up the parley before he too disappeared in September. Talks continued in May and June on economic matters. Political questions remained at the level of generalities. At the end of June Molotov still appeared more interested in the Anglo-French negotiations.¹³¹

The discussions with the French and British dragged on in June and July, haggling over endless wordings of a political agreement. In early July Sargent admitted to Corbin that the British guarantees to Poland and Romania had been a mistake. The Soviet leaders, having thus obtained a measure of security, could hold out for their own terms. And they did: Molotov stuck tenaciously to the basic Soviet position laid out by Litvinov in April. The French and British had to negotiate or their guarantees would be worthless. Sargent's admission is 'a little late', noted Naggiar; 'to correct this error, Russia's price has to be paid'.¹³²

The key issues were over guarantees of the Baltic states, a definition of 'indirect aggression', and negotiations for a military convention tied to the political agreement. The British feared giving the Soviet government licence to threaten Baltic independence. The Soviet Union feared German aggression through the Baltic with or without consent. Meanwhile, the Baltic states looked on nervously. They preferred a year of Nazi occupation to a day of Soviet—which was what worried the Soviet government.¹³³ The Baltic ambassadors made regular inquiries at the Foreign Office; British ambassadors reported Baltic anxiety and anti-Soviet hostility. In early June Estonia and Latvia signed non-aggression pacts with Germany; German officers supervised the building of their fortifications.

The French government became more impatient and more willing to make concessions to the Soviet point of view, especially on the Baltic issue. But no sooner

did Bonnet send a trumpeting cable to London which insisted on the importance of an immediate agreement than he sent further word that he would defer to the British.¹³⁴ In Moscow Naggiar observed this and became increasingly angry and alarmed. He and Seeds complained repeatedly about press leaks revealing important details of the negotiations. The Soviet authorities—or the Germans for that matter—did not need agents in the Foreign Office; all they had to do was read the London or Paris papers.¹³⁵ Naggiar reported that the Soviet government was complaining again about delays and public statements by Chamberlain and others on British willingness to conciliate Germany. Increasingly impatient, Naggiar asked for what amounted to plenipotentiary powers to conclude an agreement; if the cabinet did not like it, the Quai d'Orsay could disavow him. Bonnet queried the Foreign Office, but the British were reticent and Bonnet did not insist.¹³⁶

Naggiar worried less about the Baltic states than about the question of Poland and Romania. He reminded Paris repeatedly in July that their cooperation was vital to the success of an Anglo-Franco-Soviet alliance. Naggiar raised the issue of Red Army passage across Poland, as did the French military attaché Palasse. If the Polish government did not agree to it there could be no effective eastern front. Poland and Romania could not hold out without Soviet support. And if the eastern front were broken, Germany and Italy could turn all their force against the West. This was not a question of Polish or Romanian security but of French security, quite apart from that of the USSR. The Soviet government understood this point only too well and would not compromise itself against Germany without 'precise and concrete military guarantees', as Coulondre had warned after Munich. New Anglo-French proposals for agreement risked provoking new Soviet counter proposals. If we do not conclude, the USSR could remain neutral or come to terms with Germany based on a partition of Poland and the Baltic states. It is time, said Naggiar, to recognise that relations between states are governed by equations of force. What is needed is a 'classical' military alliance with concrete terms and conditions. No effort should be spared to obtain Polish and Romanian cooperation; no time should be lost in concluding an agreement on Soviet terms in spite of our reservations. Unfortunately, Naggiar minuted later, 'we did nothing in this regard, except at the last minute'.¹³⁷ It was thus not for lack of good advice that French policy also went awry; it was for failure or unwillingness to heed it.

Naggiar correctly identified the problem: neither the French nor British governments were prepared to make the necessary commitments. Bonnet wanted a political, not a military agreement which would require Polish cooperation. Poland did not want to give it, minuted Naggiar, and we did not want to press for it. 'We want a gesture', scribbled Naggiar, 'the Russians want a concrete agreement involving the assent of Poland and Romania'.¹³⁸ The Soviet leaders having been duped in the past, would accept nothing less than an ironclad military alliance. If the Anglo-French did not like Soviet proposals, said Molotov, he was prepared to consider a straight triple alliance guaranteeing the security of the contracting parties against direct aggression.¹³⁹

Bonnet felt trapped. A straight triple alliance would leave Poland and Romania unprotected, but Molotov's insistence on tying political and military agreements together would enable the Soviet government to hold France and Great Britain to ransom. In August, when the danger of war was greatest, the Soviet side could tighten

the screw: either you agree to our terms or we break off talks and the political agreement falls to the ground. Any military agreement would hinge on the assent of the grudging Poles and Romanians.¹⁴⁰ Naggiar's minutes aptly described the situation: the Quai d'Orsay calculated on the 'psychological' effect on Hitler of an Anglo-Franco-Soviet political agreement. 'The puerile idea is that we will force Hitler to back down with words, without the only reality which will cause him to reflect: the assent of Poland to a military accord with Russia'.¹⁴¹ A few days later Naggiar wrote again, 'London and Paris continue not to want to understand what is essential in these negotiations: a military agreement which would permit Russia to make geographical contact with Germany to replicate the military conditions of 1914'.¹⁴²

Not wanting to understand caused mounting frustration in London. The British cabinet, which at first thought the Soviet government was serious about an agreement, though intending to drive a hard bargain, in late July began to wonder. On 19 July Halifax and Chamberlain expatiated in the Committee on Foreign Policy on how 'humiliating for us' it would be to make further concessions to Molotov when he would make none of his own.

[Halifax] said that there should also be borne in mind the effect on Herr Hitler's mind of our going down on our knees to Soviet Russia to implore her assistance. Herr Hitler has a very low opinion of Russia and our action would confirm him in the idea that we were a weak and feeble folk. Considerations of this kind should be taken into account.

On the other hand, domestic pressures were building up, a campaign to put Churchill in the cabinet had been underway for some time, and Chamberlain feared 'considerable trouble' in the House of Commons over delays in concluding an agreement. The prime minister was in no hurry for military conversations, but Halifax feared that it might be 'somewhat difficult to persuade the French to adopt our point of view'. In any event, one cabinet member, sounding like Bonnet, thought that if talks were to break down, it would be important to have public opinion on 'our' side.¹⁴³

Events began to move quickly, and made this cabinet debate somewhat academic. Molotov indicated that he was more or less satisfied with the political agreement, remaining difficulties over the definition of 'indirect aggression' could be settled later. He wanted military conversations to start at once, and Naggiar and Seeds both pressed for acceptance of Molotov's proposal. The French and British governments agreed quickly—for a change. The British, however, were not prepared to let the issue of 'indirect aggression' be set aside and they made agreement on it a condition for the conclusion of a military accord. As Halifax explained at a July meeting of the Committee on Foreign Policy, 'by encouraging Soviet Russia in the matter of internal interference we should be doing incalculable damage to our interests both at home and throughout the world'.¹⁴⁴ The British government did not wish to facilitate the spread of bolshevism. This could explain why earlier in July when one British officer, General Ironside, opined that an agreement with the USSR 'was the only thing we could do', Chamberlain shot back, 'the only thing we cannot do'. Ironside concluded that Chamberlain's policy a month before the invasion of Poland was 'not hurrying on getting in Russia'.¹⁴⁵

On the other hand, the French position was stiffening, or so Léger said to Phipps in July. Daladier was very resolute and 'firmly convinced of the necessity of showing

an irreducible refusal to treat with a régime in whose word no confidence could be placed and with which any treaty must be valueless'. Indeed, 'so convinced was Daladier of the wisdom of an attitude of determined reserve that he had even given orders against any manifestations of friendship towards Germany such as mutual visits for athletic contests and such like: it was better for the time being to renounce the natural instinct to act "en gentlemen". . .'¹⁴⁶ Léger offered no comment—or Phipps did not record it—on negotiations with the USSR.

In the meantime Soviet officials continued discussions with their German counterparts. In mid-July the chief of the Soviet trade mission in Berlin informed Schnurre, responsible for economic negotiations, that the Soviet government was prepared at once to sign a new trade agreement. Schnurre countered by proposing a normalisation of Soviet–German political as well as economic relations. The Soviet side replied evasively, saying that normalisation would have to take place slowly and gradually.¹⁴⁷ Discussions with the French and British still appeared to have priority, but if they went wrong, the option was open for an accommodation with Germany.

In anticipation of staff talks in Moscow the French and British governments made their plans. Neither expected a quick conclusion as the Soviet would want a detailed agreement. Negotiations would drag out and eventually some general undertaking would be concluded. This did not trouble Halifax, since as long as military conversations were taking place, he mistakenly reckoned that 'we should be preventing Soviet Russia from entering the German camp'. Chamberlain went along because 'he did not attach any very great importance' to the talks. He told Admiral Drax, the head of the British mission to Moscow, 'that the House of Commons had pushed him further than he had wished to go'.¹⁴⁸

Making a military agreement conditional on Soviet acceptance of the British definition of 'indirect aggression' led to instructions for British representatives 'to go very slowly' in the military negotiations. If there were no agreement, at least time would be gained until the autumn or winter, delaying the outbreak of war.¹⁴⁹ Complacency was reflected in different ways. As is well known, the British government opted to send its mission to the USSR by a slow merchant ship, its modern flying boats being tied up by routine fleet manoeuvres.¹⁵⁰ The talks seemed of so little import that Halifax had 'scarcely perused' British instructions. Concerns about Soviet impatience if the British dragged out the talks were shrugged off. And the British delegation was instructed to avoid discussion of Soviet aid to Poland and Romania; the Soviet Union would have to negotiate directly with the Polish and Romanian governments.¹⁵¹

British complacency was not entirely shared by the French. They were impatient for the talks to begin and wanted to send their delegation more quickly to the USSR. As was their habit, however, after complaining about British travel plans, they finished by going along with them. Instructions given to the head of the French delegation, General Doumenc, were brief and vague, 'almost useless', according to a British source, though the much longer British instructions were no better.¹⁵² Like the British instructions, they said little about Soviet aid to Poland and Romania, except to note that Poland was unlikely to agree to Red Army passage across its territory.¹⁵³ Doumenc complained to Léger that he was going to Moscow 'empty-handed', not a good negotiating posture for supplicants. Léger agreed. Bonnet and Daladier, more

rousing, urged Doumenc to come back with an agreement. 'Make promises if you have to', said Bonnet. What promises? asked Doumenc. 'Whatever you think necessary', replied Bonnet; if the negotiations fail war is inevitable. '*Au revoir et bonne chance!*', bade Daladier.¹⁵⁴

With such fatuous, if not duplicitous instructions did Doumenc set off to Moscow with his British counterpart, Drax. The Anglo-French delegations arrived on 11 August. Doumenc advised Naggiar that Daladier had given him instructions *not* to agree to any military accord stipulating Red Army passage across Poland. Doumenc should indicate to the Soviet authorities that they were being asked only to provide military supplies to Poland and other such aid as the Polish government might eventually request. 'If the Russians do not want to conclude on this basis', added Daladier, 'I have another card to play, and I will play it if necessary'. Doumenc did not say what it was or Daladier did not name his other card. In any event, Doumenc told Naggiar that Drax's instructions were to delay an agreement. Naggiar was appalled, telling Doumenc that their instructions would kill the negotiations.¹⁵⁵ As the ambassador noted in retrospect, 'I recommended a well defined military agreement and they send from Paris and London two missions instructed to agree to nothing in this regard. As improbable as this seems, it is nevertheless true'.¹⁵⁶

After repeatedly warning of the need to face the question of Red Army passage across Poland, Naggiar was at his wit's end. He immediately cabled Paris that British instructions were at variance with what had been agreed by the three governments and that they were exceedingly dangerous unless the British government 'secretly hoped for the failure of the talks'. The Soviet leaders were already highly suspicious of Anglo-French motives, they would now only become more so. Naggiar asked Bonnet to intervene in London.¹⁵⁷

The Soviet government was aware of what was going on. Mandel told Surits on 2 August that Doumenc was going to Moscow without detailed instructions. 'London and Paris (owing to the pressure of public opinion) want to avoid a breakdown of the talks, but there is no sign of any desire to achieve a serious agreement that should be put into effect immediately'.¹⁵⁸ Maisky sent similar information. In Moscow Stalin observed to Molotov that London and Paris were not serious, they 'still want to play poker'. Molotov advised that they had to go ahead with the talks anyway. 'Let them show their cards', he said. 'Agreed', replied Stalin, 'if we must'.¹⁵⁹

Like Daladier, Stalin also had another card to play—in Berlin. In early August German diplomatic initiatives toward the Soviet government became more pressing as German military preparations for an invasion of Poland matured. 'There was no problem from the Baltic to the Black Sea', said Ribbentrop to Astakhov, which could not be resolved. Astakhov demurred, and the Germans assumed that talks with the British and French remained the Soviet priority. It was still a game of cat and mouse, but not for long. The Soviet leaders not only distrusted the Anglo-French but had to worry about security in the far east. The Red Army was just then fighting off Japanese raids on the Manchurian frontier. The Germans might help in settling the conflict. On 12 August Astakhov indicated to Schnurre that the Soviet government was prepared to undertake economic and political negotiations, the only qualification being that they should take place by stages. On 15 August the German ambassador in Moscow,

Schulenburg, proposed to Molotov a meeting with Ribbentrop in Moscow to settle outstanding differences. Would the German government be prepared to sign a non-aggression pact? asked Molotov. But Molotov stalled on a visit by Ribbentrop; this would require 'adequate preparation'.¹⁶⁰

Meanwhile in Paris the Quai d'Orsay, reacting to Naggiar's cable of 12 August, asked the Foreign Office 'to relax the instructions' to Drax. Seeds also cabled London with the same request. The 'French general has instructions to do his utmost to conclude military agreement at the earliest possible date, and such instructions clearly do not tally with those given to Drax'. Seeds asked to know if the government definitely wanted progress in the talks, 'beyond vague generalities'. If not, it would be a pity 'as all indications so far go to show that Soviet military negotiators are really out for business'.¹⁶¹ The deputy chiefs of staff agreed with Seeds, and the Foreign Office advised that Drax's instructions could be loosened, though not completely. But Halifax was puzzled by Seeds' comment on Doumenc's instructions since the French mission had not shown any impatience to conclude while in London. '*C'est très juste*', minuted Naggiar.¹⁶²

The talks began in Moscow on Saturday 12 August. As is well known, they ran into early trouble when Voroshilov, the head of the Soviet delegation, put his written powers on the table and asked for those of Doumenc and Drax. Doumenc provided a vague letter of authority from Daladier. Drax, embarrassed, said he had none. Voroshilov scowled, but finally agreed to proceed while Drax hurriedly cabled London asking for written instructions by return air mail! The Foreign Office complied; Drax would have power to discuss and to negotiate, but still not to sign.¹⁶³

The French and British had planned to keep the negotiations to generalities. Not Voroshilov; he wanted to discuss operational plans and he would not let his interlocutors dodge the issues. On 13 August, after listening to an exposé by Doumenc, Voroshilov asked how they envisaged the role of the USSR in the event of aggression against the prospective allied powers, and in particular Poland and Romania.¹⁶⁴ The following day, 14 August, Voroshilov repeated his question. Doumenc, respecting Daladier's instructions, answered that each ally would defend its own territory, asking for help if necessary. What if they do not ask in good time? asked Voroshilov. 'It will mean they have put up their hands, that they will have surrendered'. Doumenc responded evasively; Drax said that Poland and Romania would 'soon ['in two weeks', according to Doumenc's account] become German provinces' if they did not accept Soviet military support. The marshal allowed his interlocutors to dance around the issue a little longer, then he cut them short,

I want a clear answer to my very clear question concerning the joint action of the Armed Forces of Britain, France and the Soviet Union against the common enemy . . . should he attack. That is all I want to know . . . Do the French and British General Staffs think the Soviet land forces will be admitted to Polish territory in order to make direct contact with the enemy in case Poland is attacked?

Doumenc and Drax, discountenanced, still tried to dodge, but Voroshilov would not tolerate it. 'I want a straight answer. . . Your opinion is that Poland and Romania will ask for help. I doubt if it would turn out like that. They might ask for aid . . . or they might not, or they might ask for it too late'. If so, 'their forces will be destroyed.

These troops should be used as an additional allied asset; it is in the interest neither of England, nor of France, nor of the USSR that they should be destroyed'.¹⁶⁵

Finally, after five years of Anglo-French evasion, Voroshilov backed his would-be allies up against the wall. Drax was flummoxed. Naggiar was not ready to call it quits. I told you so, he cabled Paris. But it was still not too late to extort an answer from the Poles and Romanians. Seeds cabled London, supporting Naggiar. We are the 'petitioners in this matter', said Seeds, the onus is on London and Paris to obtain an answer from Warsaw.¹⁶⁶

In London the deputy chiefs of staff, whom Chamberlain had tried at times to muzzle or ignore, would be muzzled or ignored no longer. We want 'to put on record', they said pointedly, 'certain general observations on the broad question of the use of Polish and Romanian territory by the Russian forces'. Voroshilov could have written the report. It was no time for half-measures, said the deputy chiefs, the 'strongest pressure' should be brought to bear on Poland and Romania; 'the Russians should be given every facility for rendering assistance and putting their maximum weight into the scale on the side of the anti-aggression powers'. If this is not done, the Poles would have no chance against a German attack.

The supply of arms and war material is not enough. If the Russians are to collaborate in resisting German aggression against Poland or Romania they can only do so effectively on Polish or Romanian soil; and . . . if permission for this were withheld till war breaks out, it would then be too late. The most the Allies could then hope for would be to avenge Poland and Romania and perhaps restore their independence as a result of the defeat of Germany in a long war.

Without immediate and effective Russian assistance . . . the longer that war would be, and the less chance there would be of either Poland or Romania emerging at the end of it as independent states in anything like their original form.

Who can say now that the deputy chiefs were wrong? The 'unpalatable truth', they said, had to be presented 'with absolute frankness' in Warsaw and Bucharest. A treaty with the USSR was 'the best way of preventing a war'; if it failed, Poland and Romania could pay the price of a possible Soviet-German rapprochement.¹⁶⁷

The war winds were blowing hot now, but apparently not hot enough as the Foreign Office was still producing papers on 'indirect aggression', '*Comique si cela n'était pas tragique*', scribbled Naggiar.¹⁶⁸ In Paris Voroshilov's ultimatum and Naggiar's cables prompted the Quai d'Orsay to press the Polish government to accept Red Army passage across Polish territory. The Polish government refused to cooperate. Moscow might think Poland afraid and put up the price of its help. 'Bargaining with the Soviet government . . . was like doing a deal in an oriental bazaar; the essential thing was to show no interest in what you really wish to buy'.¹⁶⁹

On 15 August Bonnet summoned the Polish ambassador in Paris, Lukaszewicz, who said Beck would certainly reject out of hand a Soviet demand for passage.¹⁷⁰ Bonnet sent instructions to Noël to see Beck, and the French military attaché, General Musse, was ordered back to Warsaw. In the midst of a full-blown crisis, commented Naggiar, 'the military attaché was on holiday in Biarritz'. It was worse than that; neither Noël nor Musse was prepared to apply the full rigour of their instructions. Noël feared to compromise his personal position in Warsaw. Musse was vulnerable to Polish influence and questioned Soviet good faith as much as did the Poles.¹⁷¹

Doumenc wanted to send a senior officer to Warsaw, but Paris blocked it for fear of undesirable publicity. He sent instead a subaltern, Captain Beaufre, who could not hope to influence Noël or Musse. Typical of the negotiations, Beaufre missed his plane back to Moscow, prompting Naggiar to more sarcastic marginalia. With such messengers there was no chance of success. The Soviet side would let us cut our throats, Drax reported, over the question of Red Army passage across Poland. Naggiar signalled that if the Poles did not agree, the talks in Moscow would fail.¹⁷²

The Foreign Office sent instructions to Kennard to support the French, though he had no greater success. ‘We have done our best’, Kennard said, but the Polish government would not budge. Quite apart from centuries-old national animosities, ‘strong internal political reasons’ dictated the Polish position.

It is unthinkable that the present political structure of Eastern Galicia could survive the entry of Russian troops, especially as communism makes a certain appeal to young Ukrainians. In Vilna area large White Russian population is politically immature and is easily influenced by Soviet propaganda.¹⁷³

The Foreign Office sent additional instructions, but Kennard replied that he had already used his best arguments and had decided ‘to refrain from further action’.¹⁷⁴

The Quai d’Orsay directed Noël to try again. On 21 August the French government authorised Doumenc—though the British never sent similar instructions to Drax—to sign the best agreement he could get with the Soviet Union. ‘Too late’, minuted Naggiar.¹⁷⁵ On 17 August the Soviet government suggested to Berlin a non-aggression pact with a protocol defining German and Soviet foreign policy interests. Stalin’s willingness to wait for acceptable Anglo-French offers was nearly—but not quite—at an end. When Ribbentrop pressed for an immediate meeting in Moscow, Molotov still stalled, suggesting 26 or 27 August. Until the last moment, the Germans were not certain that the Soviet Union would conclude. Hitler, impatient for a showdown with Poland, sent a cable to Stalin insisting on an earlier meeting. During the evening of 20/21 August Stalin, after some hesitation, agreed.¹⁷⁶ On 21 August Tass announced the signature of a Soviet–German trade agreement; on 22 August that Ribbentrop was expected in Moscow on the morrow to conclude a non-aggression pact.

Doumenc saw Voroshilov on the evening of 22 August in a last-ditch attempt to save the situation. The French government, he said, had authorised him to sign an agreement consenting to Red Army passage across Poland. Does the British government concur? asked Voroshilov. Doumenc did not know. What about the Polish and Romanian governments? asked Voroshilov. Doumenc could not say. ‘I am persuaded’, replied Voroshilov, ‘that the Poles would want to participate directly in our talks had they given their consent to the passage of Soviet troops. They would have insisted. . .’¹⁷⁷ The best the Poles would do was to agree on 23 August that in the event of German aggression some form of Polish–Soviet cooperation would not necessarily be excluded. This is not enough, noted Naggiar.¹⁷⁸ Ribbentrop arrived in Moscow the same day and signed a non-aggression pact in the early hours of the following morning.

The pill was bitter to swallow. Seeds went to see Molotov later on the evening of 22 August after Doumenc had met Voroshilov. The meeting was stormy. Molotov angrily rejected Seeds’ accusation of bad faith. He would not allow the British ‘to

stand in judgement of the Soviet government'. You should have warned us, accused Seeds. The British government does not advise us of changes in its policy, replied Molotov. This is different, retorted Seeds.

The British government was not serious, said Molotov, the 'height of insincerity had been reached when military missions arrived in Moscow empty-handed' and unwilling to deal with the question of Red Army passage across Poland and Romania. You were only 'playing with us', accused Molotov. Finally, the Soviet government had decided—'either yesterday or the day before' surmised Seeds—to accept German proposals.

Seeds denied that the British mission had arrived 'empty-handed'—though Doumenc had used the same expression when discussing his instructions with Léger in Paris. Molotov waved off Seeds' explanation, saying that the passage issue had been raised 'on several occasions in the past' and that the French could never bring themselves 'to give a clear answer'.¹⁷⁹ Who can say that Molotov was wrong? Even in 1935, minuted Naggiar, the USSR had proposed definite treaty obligations 'to which we responded with vague formulations'.¹⁸⁰

Molotov could have added that Litvinov had warned countless times of the Soviet option of a German rapprochement. So did Alphand, Coulondre, Naggiar and Payart. French cabinet ministers Mandel and Reynaud had even encouraged Surits to threaten this option in order to shake French complacency. How many times did I say it? remarked Alphand: 'Implement the [mutual assistance] accord with the USSR, or the Russians will come to terms with the Germans'.¹⁸¹ It had been no use, the French and British governments did not take such warnings seriously—or in any event, seriously enough. The Soviet authorities had been too eager to conclude with the West.

In Warsaw Beck was untroubled by the sudden turn in events which simply confirmed his suspicions of the Soviet Union. 'Really not much had changed', Beck told Noël. When Naggiar saw this report, he minuted, 'One cannot imagine anything more insane'. In Paris Daladier thought the German army would march into Poland in a matter of days. He condemned the Poles' 'folly' as much as the Soviet 'duplicity', though in the latter case he had little room for criticism.¹⁸² Bonnet funkled. He cabled Naggiar to invoke the consultative clause of the 1935 mutual assistance pact. 'A little late', thought Naggiar.¹⁸³ Beyond a Bonnet flirt with Rome, the French ran out of ideas. In London the Chamberlain government sought a way out up to the last minute, but to no avail.

The outbreak of war

In the early morning of 1 September 60 German divisions invaded Poland. On 2 September Chamberlain spoke in the House of Commons not of a declaration of war but of further negotiations. There was consternation in the House which thought that Chamberlain was going to run for it. An Opposition leader rose to speak. One MP shouted 'Speak for England'; the House rumbled its approval. Appeasement was finally dead, or at least dying. It died harder in France. It took the French government three days before it could muster up determination enough to issue an ultimatum to Germany. And the French did so reluctantly, trailing the British. After years of criticising the Red Army, the French high command launched the *drôle de guerre*, not

an offensive, and let Poland be crushed in a fortnight—about what Drax had predicted to Voroshilov a few weeks before.

Is it any wonder that the Soviet leaders mistrusted the French and British governments? If the Anglo-French were ready to let Poland be crushed, would they have done more for the USSR? Volkogonov says that both sides lacked statesmen to overcome mutual distrust and be patient enough to work out an agreement.¹⁸⁴ This is undoubtedly so; perhaps in another week the Poles might have been compelled to yield. But would it have made the French more willing to take the offensive? Thinking not, the Soviet government saw a no-win situation: fight now, or fight later. Stalin preferred to fight later. It was not a question of whether Stalin trusted Hitler more than the Anglo-French; Stalin trusted no one. It was a question of buying time, or of *sauve qui peut*. His decision was akin to that of the Anglo-French in 1938 not to go to war over Czechoslovakia. This was a tit-for-tat policy, encouraging the 'crocodile' to stalk other prey. Stalin's policy was perhaps understandable, but it was not that of Volkogonov's statesman. In hindsight, Stalin gravely miscalculated; he should have been ready to fight at once because even a French army standing on the defensive would have been a far greater asset than no French army at all, as he would discover in June 1941 when the well-blooded, far more powerful Nazi armies invaded the USSR. But hindsight is twenty-twenty; sometimes we forget, noted A. J. P. Taylor, that 'events . . . in the past were once in the future'. In 1942 Molotov saw Strang again in London: 'We did our best in 1939, but we failed: we were both at fault'.¹⁸⁵

Mistrust motivated Anglo-French policy, but anti-bolshevism was its most important component. Watt discounts Western anti-bolshevism, and says Maisky and Litvinov were purblind ideologues who could not see straight.¹⁸⁶ Taylor said that Chamberlain 'seemed to be practising ideological aloofness toward the Soviet Union', but here Taylor understated the case. Chamberlain was an anti-bolshevik ideologue. He mostly hid his ideology for fear of provoking opposition attacks. But he never embraced the idea of an Anglo-Soviet alliance and resisted every move in that direction. Taylor added that an Anglo-Soviet alliance was the policy of the Opposition. Chamberlain was a 'good hater', and when he looked at the possibility of a Soviet alliance 'he saw there faces which reminded him of the Opposition front bench'—but especially of 'Winston who is the worst of the lot', whose entry into the cabinet would signal the end of appeasement.¹⁸⁷ For Chamberlain a Soviet alliance and appeasement were at opposite poles.

The French too were motivated by anti-bolshevism, especially when the French Communist Party and the left in general showed signs of strength, as was the case in the mid-1930s. France had too long 'bitten at the hook of Nazi anti-bolshevik propaganda', the Red bogey had stopped the development of a Franco-Soviet alliance.¹⁸⁸ But in France anti-bolshevism was diluted by uncertainty, sympathy for fascism, and plain fear. By 1939 the Popular Front was dead, French communists were marginalised, and Daladier and Bonnet could contemplate a closer relationship with the USSR, but not too close. The idea that the French resumed the diplomatic initiative in 1939 and were determined to obtain a Soviet alliance is exaggerated. The French objective, like that of the British, was to have the USSR as an obliging auxiliary, out of the German camp, but not fully in the Anglo-French. 'The Soviet'

would be a supplier of 'guns and potatoes', to borrow a phrase, for Poland which would constitute a potential second front against Germany. Not a real second front, but the reflection of one, just menacing enough to bluff Hitler. The French were as fond as Stalin of the image of playing poker, and they played until the last minute.¹⁸⁹ But Hitler did also, and he played *va banque*.

The French and British governments did not doubt the Soviet desire for Franco-Soviet staff talks or for an alliance against Nazi Germany. They feared it—because of the anticipated growth of Soviet prestige and influence and the spread of communism in the event of a victorious war. They did not foresee that a successful Allied coalition where Polish, French and Romanian armies remained in being would limit the expansion of Soviet influence. The idea was to finesse the Soviet leaders, to benefit from their support but not to pay a price for it. The Chamberlain–Daladier policy was less a mistake than a calculated risk which went wrong. It was a policy driven by anti-bolshevism.

About the only contemporary success the French and British governments enjoyed was to put the blame for the failure of negotiations on the Soviet side. At the time, however, the Foreign Office was not so sure. Louis Fischer, a well-known American journalist and historian previously 'infected with bolshevik ideas', but then 'disillusioned and disappointed', like others on the left, by the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact, asked for privileged information for a story condemning Soviet policy. Halifax refused, calculating that the 'left' could scarcely be more disillusioned, and that 'it might not impossibly cause ourselves some embarrassment. . .'¹⁹⁰ Halifax need not have worried; most Western historians still roundly condemn the Soviet leadership for the pact with the Nazis. Perhaps responsibilities should be more equitably apportioned. Until August 1939 the Soviet Union held the high political ground in the effort to resist Nazism. It was high ground awash in blood spilled in the Stalinist purges, but it was high ground nevertheless. The French and British should have been alerted by the sacking of Litvinov, but the 'men of Munich' were blinded by ideological fears and calculations.

Stalin, on the other hand, was too unscrupulous, too cynical to be an ideologue; he was less of one, at any rate, than Chamberlain or Daladier. Litvinov was not one at all; he had been too long in Narkomindel; he was a skilled and courageous diplomat out to serve the national interests of his country. He did not care about the Comintern or the French Communist Party, or any foreign communist party for that matter, he was interested in a Franco-Soviet and then an Anglo-Franco-Soviet alliance against Nazism. Litvinov was the statesman whom Volkogonov says the Soviet Union needed; he had the necessary patience, but not quite the staying power.

It was not for nothing that Auden called the 1930s the 'low, dishonest decade'; in August 1939 Stalin gave up the Soviet's small patch of high ground, which had to be repurchased at terrible cost by the Soviet peoples, though the price of appeasement was high for all the nations which fought fascism. Paradoxically, it was the Soviet leaders who through most of the inter-war years were willing to treat with the West on a more pragmatic basis. Litvinov was the exemplar of this approach. Ideologically driven Soviet foreign policies were the exception, not the rule.

In France and Great Britain the opposite seems true. Anti-communist hysteria during the inter-war years was as strident as it would be after 1945 when it was called

the Cold War. French historians have stressed the *décadence* and the ideological divisions of French society in the 1930s. Dissident British Tories spoke of the appeasers' 'fatal confusion' between class and national interests. The American historian F. L. Schuman wrote that the Cold War started after the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, though it was interrupted during the inter-war years by a period of 'coexistence'.¹⁹¹ These ideas may be carried a step further. The Cold War did indeed begin in 1917, but there was no interregnum. The mutual mistrust engendered by it did much to prevent Anglo-French pragmatists from banding together with the USSR in 1939 to break Hitler's neck and thus contributed greatly to the origins of World War II.

Social Science Federation of Canada, Canadian Federation for the Humanities

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² Earl of Birkenhead, *Halifax* (London, 1965), p. 440.

³ E.g. V. Ya. Sipols, *Diplomatičeskaya bor'ba nakanune vtoroi mirovoi voiny* (Moscow, 1989), pp. 262–267; or I. K. Koblyakov, *USSR: For Peace Against Aggression, 1933–1941* (Moscow, 1976), pp. 144–156. See also 'Kruglyi stol: vtoraya mirovaya voina: istoki i prichimy', *Voprosy istorii*, 6, 1989, pp. 3–32.

⁴ D. Cameron Watt, *How War Came* (London, 1990), pp. 338, 452.

⁵ E.g. Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *La décadence, 1932–1939* (Paris, 1985), pp. 416–417, and *passim*; Robert J. Young, *In Command of France: French Policy and Military Planning, 1933–1940*, (Cambridge, MA, 1978), pp. 236–237, 240–241; and Robert J. Young, 'A. J. P. Taylor and the Problem with France' in G. Martel, ed., *The Origins of the Second World War Reconsidered* (Boston, MA, 1986), pp. 97–118.

⁶ K. Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain* (London, 1947), p. 403; and John Charmley, *Chamberlain and the Lost Peace* (London, 1989), p. 181.

⁷ Geoffrey Roberts, *The Unholy Alliance: Stalin's Pact with Hitler* (Bloomington, IN., 1989), pp. 225–226; and Watt, *How War Came*, p. 120.

⁸ On Tory anti-bolshevism see Margaret George, *Warped Vision: British Foreign Policy, 1933–1939*, (Pittsburgh, PA, 1965), *passim*; Neville Thompson, *The Anti-Appeasers: Conservative Opposition to Appeasement in the 1930s* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 38–40, and *passim*; and Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler: British Politics and British Policy, 1933–1940* (London, 1975), *passim*. On Chamberlain's anti-bolshevism see Sidney Aster, *1939: The Making of the Second World War* (London, 1973), pp. 184–185 and *passim*.

⁹ Duroselle, *Décadence*, pp. 12–27.

¹⁰ René Girault, 'Les décideurs français et la puissance française en 1938–1939', in R. Girault & Robert Frank, eds, *La puissance en Europe, 1938–1940* (Paris, 1984), pp. 34–40.

¹¹ A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (Harmondsworth, 1964), p. 318.

¹² Taylor, *The Origins*, p. 319; Dimitri Volkogonov, *Staline* (Paris, 1991), p. 268; Roy Medvedev, *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism* (New York, 1989), p. 728.

¹³ G. Gorodetsky, 'The Impact of the Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact on the Course of Soviet Foreign Policy', *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, XXXI, 1, 1990, pp. 27–28. For the view that the Soviet government preferred a Soviet–German accord see among others Gerhard Weinberg, *The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany: Starting World War II, 1937–1939* (Chicago, IL, 1980), *passim*, or Adam Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence* (New York, 1968), pp. 257–279). T. J. Uldricks notes that this view 'makes 98 per cent of all Soviet diplomatic activity a brittle cover for the remaining covert 2 per cent'. T. J. Uldricks, 'A. J. P. Taylor and the Russians', in Martel, *The Origins*, p. 178).

¹⁴ In some respects, this article is a *reprise* and an expansion—with published and unpublished papers to hand—of the views of L. B. Namier, *Diplomatic Prelude, 1938–1939* (London, 1948), pp. 143–210. See also F. L. Schuman, *Soviet Politics at Home and Abroad* (New York, 1948), pp. 361–378.

¹⁵ G. Clerk, British ambassador in Paris, n° 31 saving, 26 February 1935, and minute by Orme Garton Sargent, assistant under-secretary of state, C1558/55/18, P[ublic] R[ecords] O[ffice], London],

F[oreign] O[ffice] 371 18827; and Minute, n° N1313/53/38, 15 March 1935, comment by Sargent, PRO FO 371 19456.

¹⁶ Alphand, n°s 505–11, 9 November 1934, M[inistère des] A[ffaires] é[trangères], B[ureau du] C[hiffre], télégrammes à l'arrivée de Moscou, 1934–5; and M. J. Carley, 'Five Kopecks for Five Kopecks: Franco-Soviet Trade Negotiations, 1928–1939', *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, XXXIII, 1, 1992, pp. 23–57.

¹⁷ N. Lloyd Thomas, British chargé d'affaires in Paris, to Anthony Eden, foreign secretary, n° 1310, 14 October 1936, C7262/92/62, PRO FO 271 19880.

¹⁸ Louis Maurin, minister of war, to Laval, n° 1365 2/ÉMA—SAE, 29 May 1935, S[ervice] h[istorique de l']a[rmée de] t[erre, Vincennes] 7N 3186.

¹⁹ Potemkin to Litvinov, 26 June 1935, Kommissiya po izdaniyu diplomaticheskikh dokumentov, *D[okumenty] v[neshnei] p[olitiki] SSSR*, 21 vols (Moscow, 1958–77), XVIII, pp. 415–421; Note, Directeur politique [Paul Bargeton], MAE, 24 June 1935, MAE ancienne série Z—Europe, 1930–1940, followed by the geographic subheading, volume, and folio number, thus Z-URSS/1004, pp. 172–174; and also 'Note sur les avantages et les inconvénients de l'alliance russe', État-Major de l'Armée [ÉMA], 2e Bureau, 24 April 1935, SHAT 7N 3143.

²⁰ Alphand, n°s 36–40, 25 January 1936, MAE BC, télégrammes à l'arrivée de Moscou, 1936.

²¹ Potemkin to Litvinov, 26 July 1935, *DVP*, XVIII, pp. 415–421; Litvinov to Potemkin, 13 January 1936, *ibid.*, XIX pp. 26–27; and 'Record of a conversation of the plenipotentiary representative of the USSR in France with the president of the council of ministers of France [Albert] Sarraut', signed Potemkin, 14 March 1936, *ibid.*, pp. 145–147.

²² Potemkin to N. N. Krestinsky, deputy commissar of foreign affairs, 26 March 1936, *ibid.*, pp. 189–195.

²³ Schweisguth notes, 24 June 1936, A[rchives] n[ationales, Paris], Papiers Schweisguth 351AP/3; and Compte rendu d'une conversation entre M. Hirschfeld, chargé d'affaires de l'URSS, et le général Schweisguth', nd (but 30 June 1936), AN Papiers Schweisguth, 351AP/5.

²⁴ 'URSS, Manoeuvres de Russie blanche de septembre 1936', by Schweisguth, 5 October 1936, SHAT 7N 3184.

²⁵ Litvinov (from Geneva) to the Soviet commissariat for foreign affairs (Narkomindel), 5 October 1936, *DVP*, XIX, pp. 461–462; Potemkin to Narkomindel, 17 September 1936, *ibid.*, pp. 428–429; and Potemkin to Narkomindel, 19 September 1936, *ibid.*, pp. 430–432.

²⁶ Daladier to Delbos, n° 1411 2/ÉMA SAE, 13 October 1936, SHAT 7N 3143; and the dossier entitled 'Cession de matériel à l'URSS (juillet–septembre 1936)', AN Papiers Daladier, 496AP/7.

²⁷ Schweisguth notes, 25 June 1936, AN Papiers Schweisguth, 351AP/3; and Girschfeld to Narkomindel, 8 October 1936, *DVP*, XIX, pp. 465–466.

²⁸ Schweisguth notes, 27 & 31 October, 7 November, 22 December 1936 & 5 January 1937, AN Papiers Schweisguth, 351AP/3; cf., Maurice Vaisse, 'Les militaires français et l'alliance franco-soviétique au cours des années 1930', *Forces armées et systèmes d'alliances: Colloque international d'histoire militaire et d'études de défense nationale* (Montpellier, 1981), II, pp. 696–697; and Young, *In Command of France*, pp. 147–149.

²⁹ Potemkin to Narkomindel, 9 November 1936, *DVP*, XIX, p. 549; and Litvinov to Potemkin, 14 November 1936, *ibid.*, p. 775.

³⁰ Coulondre, n°s 507–20, 12 November 1936, MAE BC, télégrammes à l'arrivée de Moscou, 1936; Coulondre, n°355, 16 November 1936, MAE Z—URSS/1005, pp. 14–22; and R. Coulondre, *De Staline à Hitler, souvenirs de deux ambassades, 1936–1939* (Paris, 1950), pp. 31–32.

³¹ Schweisguth notes, 22 October & 4 December 1936 (comments by General Marie-Eugène Debeney), AN Papiers Schweisguth 351AP/3; and comment by deputy chief of staff Paul-Henri Gérodias on Jean Payart, n° 308, 27 September 1936, SHAT 7N 3124.

³² Schweisguth notes, 8 January & 8 February 1937, AN Papiers Schweisguth, 351AP/3.

³³ Schweisguth notes, 8 February & 19 March 1937, *ibid.*

³⁴ Schweisguth notes, 8 February 1937, *ibid.* Young and Vaisse report the lack of French interest in staff talks, but only allude to French duplicity (Young, *In Command of France*... , pp. 148–149; and Vaisse, 'Les militaires français... ', p. 696).

³⁵ 'Visite du général Semenov...', TRÈS SECRET, 17 February 1937, SHAT 7N 3186.

³⁶ Potemkin to Narkomindel, 17 February 1937, *DVP*, XX, pp. 88–89; and 'Entretien avec M. Potemkine... le 17 Février 1937... Notes prises par Léon Blum', AN Papiers Daladier, 496AP/7,

³⁷ 'Compte rendu au ministre', TRÈS SECRET, n[ot] s[igned], 23 February 1937, AN Papiers Daladier, 496AP/7.

³⁸ Schweisguth notes, 19 March 1937, AN Papiers Schweisguth, 351AP/3.

³⁹ 'Conversation du général Schueisguth avec le général Séménoff. . .', TRÈS SECRET, 19 March 1937, SHAT 7N 3186.

⁴⁰ Potemkin to Narkomindel, 23 March 1937, *DVP*, XX, pp. 141–142.

⁴¹ Girshfeld to Narkomindel, 27 March 1937, *ibid.*, pp. 152, 703–704; and Schweisguth notes, 8 & 9 April 1937, AN Papiers Schweisguth, 351AP/3.

⁴² Schweisguth notes, 8 & 23 April 1937, AN Papiers Schweisguth, 351AP/3.

⁴³ Schweisguth notes, 25 April, 14, 26, & 27 May 1937, *ibid.*; Note by R. G. Vansittart, permanent under-secretary of state, 13 May 1937, C3620/532/62, PRO FO 371 20702; and 'Extract from a record of conversation at a lunch given by the Secretary of State to MM. Delbos & Léger on 15 May 1937', C3685/532/62, *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Potemkin to Surlits, 4 May 1937, *DVP*, XX, pp. 227–228.

⁴⁵ Cf. Anthony Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War, 1936–1939* (London, 1977), pp. 49–50; and Joel Colton, *Léon Blum: Humanist in Politics* (New York, 1966), pp. 210–213.

⁴⁶ So said Étienne de Croy, Léger's private secretary, to Fitzroy Maclean, en route for Moscow, on 17 December 1937 (Untitled minute, 18 December 1937, C8880/532/62, PRO FO 371 20702).

⁴⁷ 'Conversation avec M. Payard (*sic*). . .', nd (September 1936), ns, AN Papiers Schweisguth, 351AP/5; and 'Répercussions possibles d'un contact militaire franco-soviétique sur l'alliance franco-polonaise. . .', ÉMA, 2e Bureau SAE, nd (probably June 1937), SHAT 7N 3143.

⁴⁸ Relating two conversations at the end of June 1937 with the French journalist Pertinax, Lord Chilston, British ambassador in Moscow, to Laurence Collier, head of the Northern department at the Foreign Office, 27 July 1937, N3932/45/38, PRO FO 371 21095.

⁴⁹ 'Note pour le Cabinet du ministre', n° 1579 2/ÉMA—SAE, signed Colson, 7 September 1937, SHAT 7N 3186.

⁵⁰ Surlits to Litvinov, 27 November 1937, *DVP*, XX, pp. 630–634.

⁵¹ Potemkin to Surlits, 19 December 1937, *ibid.*, pp. 671–673.

⁵² Colonel A.-A. Palasse, French military attaché in Moscow, n° 427/S, 28 December 1937, SHAT 7N 3123; and Coulondre, n° 308, 28 December 1937, MAE Z—URSS/1005, pp. 37–42; cf., J. Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Struggle for Collective Security in Europe, 1933–39* (New York, 1984), pp. 153–154.

⁵³ See the exchange of correspondence and minutes in PRO FO 371 21094/21095.

⁵⁴ Surlits to Narkomindel, 15 February 1938, *DVP*, XXI, pp. 77–78; and Surlits to Narkomindel, 22 February 1938, *ibid.*, p. 84.

⁵⁵ 'Note pour le colonel Palasse. . .', n° 1356 2/ÉMA—SAE, signed General Henri-Fernard Dentz, deputy chief of staff, 30 May 1938, SHAT 7N 3186.

⁵⁶ Surlits to Narkomindel, 5 May 1938, *DVP*, XXI, pp. 227–228

⁵⁷ Surlits to Litvinov, 27 July 1938, *ibid.*, pp. 392–402.

⁵⁸ Payart, n°s 663–5, 5 September 1938, MAE BC, télégrammes à l'arrivée de Moscou, 1938–9; and Coulondre, n° 729, 28 September 1938, *ibid.* For a recent study of Soviet military preparations during the Munich crisis, see G. Jukes, 'The Red Army and the Munich Crisis', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 26, 1991, pp. 195–214.

⁵⁹ Bonnet to Noël, n° 390, 23 May 1938, MAE Papiers 1940, Varsovie, télégrammes, départ, 1938–1940; Noël, n°s 472–4, 10 May 1938, *D[ocuments] d[iplomatiques] f[r]ançais*, 2e série (Paris, 1964-), IX, p. 673; 'Note d'audience du ministre [Bonnet]', 22 May 1938, *ibid.*, pp. 846–847; Noël, n° 556, 26 May 1938, *ibid.*, p. 907; Noël, n° 293, 31 May 1939, *ibid.*, pp. 973–979; Bonnet to Coulondre, n°s 541–2, 24 September 1938 & n°s 536–7, 25 September 1938, MAE BC, télégrammes au départ de Moscou, 1938–9; and Coulondre, n°s 724–7, 27 September 1938, MAE BC, télégrammes à l'arrivée de Moscou, 1938–9.

⁶⁰ Payart, n° 661, 4 September 1938, MAE BC, télégrammes à l'arrivée de Moscou, 1938–9; Coulondre, n° 720, 24 September 1938, *ibid.*; Coulondre, n°s 724–7, 27 September 1938, *ibid.*; and Bonnet to Coulondre, n° 555, 28 September 1938, *ibid.*

⁶¹ Coulondre, n° 742, 1 October 1938, MAE BC, télégrammes à l'arrivée de Moscou, 1938–9.

⁶² Georges Clemenceau, *père la victoire*, premier, 1917–1920, and Raymond Poincaré, president of the Republic, 1913–1920, and premier, 1922–4, 1926–9 (Surlits to Litvinov, 12 October 1938, *DVP*, XXI pp. 575–581).

⁶³ 'Record of a conversation of the people's commissar for foreign affairs of the USSR and the French ambassador in the USSR Coulondre', signed Litvinov, 16 October 1938, *DVP*, XXI, pp. 589–590; Litvinov to Surlits, 19 October 1938, *ibid.*, p. 594; Coulondre, n° 283, 18 October 1938, AN, Papiers Daladier, 496AP/11; Chilston, n° 442, 18 October 1938, N5164/97/38, PRO FO 371 22289; Coulondre, n°s 745–8, 5 October 1938, MAE BC, télégrammes à l'arrivée de Moscou, 1938–9.

⁶⁴ Coulondre, n° 265, 4 October 1938, MAE Papiers 1940, Cabinet Bonnet/16, pp. 327–333; Coulondre, n° 283, 18 October 1938, AN, Papiers Daladier, 496AP/11; Palasse, n° 507/S, 18 October 1938, SHAT 7N 3123; and ‘Extract from a record of conversation. . . on 15 May 1937’, C3685/532/62, PRO FO 371 20702.

⁶⁵ Charmley, *Chamberlain*, p. 144; and Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler*, p. 281.

⁶⁶ Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler*, p. 169.

⁶⁷ Memorandum by Harold Caccia, 3 January 1939, and attached minutes, N57/57/38, PRO FO 371 23677.

⁶⁸ Charles Corbin, French ambassador in London, n° 110, 8 February 1935, Z-URSS/972, pp. 116–119.

⁶⁹ Maisky to Narkomindel, 20 January 1939, V. M. Falin *et al.*, eds, *S[oviet] P[iece] E[fforts] on the Eve of World War II (September 1938–August 1939)]* 2 vols (Moscow, 1973), I, pp. 178–180.

⁷⁰ ‘Memorandum of a conversation. . .’, by Litvinov, 19 February 1939, *ibid.*, pp. 214–216; and Seeds, n° 24, 19 February 1939, N902/57/38, PRO FO 371 23677.

⁷¹ Litvinov to Maisky, 4 March 1939, *SPE*, I, pp. 232–233. Watt says that Litvinov and Maisky, ideologically blinkered, did not notice the gradual change in British policy, but clearly they did (*How War Came*, p. 120).

⁷² ‘Secretary of State’, by Hudson, 8 March 1939, N1389/57/38, PRO FO 371 23677; Watt mistakenly says that the Hudson mission was only ‘a narrow exercise in trade promotion’ (*How War Came*, p. 119). On this point see Maisky to Litvinov, 18 March 1939, A. P. Bondarenko *et al.*, eds., *God krizisa, [1938–1939, Dokumenty i materialy]* 2 vols (Moscow, 1990), I, pp. 292–293. These volumes add some interesting details to the story of Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations, but many of the documents have already been published.

⁷³ Payart, n°s 53–8, 1 February 1939, MAE, BC, télégrammes à l’arrivée de Moscou, 1938–9.

⁷⁴ Payart, n°s 50–2, 31 January 1939; n°s 72–8, 6 Feb. 1939, *ibid.*; and Naggiar, n° 134, 24 February 1939; n°s 82–8, 9 February 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/10.

⁷⁵ Payart, n°s 159–66, 11 March 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/10.

⁷⁶ Naggiar’s minute on his dispatch n° 161, 19 July 1939, *ibid.*/8.

⁷⁷ Payart, n°s 171–5, 15 March 1939, *ibid.*/10.

⁷⁸ For an early report see Raymond Brugère, French minister in Belgrade, n° 97, 1 March 1938, Z-URSS/988, p. 59; also Coulondre, French ambassador in Berlin, n° 1203, 4 May 1939, *DDF*, 2e tome XVI, pp. 109–111.

⁷⁹ Cadogan’s minute on a note by Sargent, 20 March 1939, C3775/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23061.

⁸⁰ Eric Phipps, British ambassador in Paris, n° 114, 18 March 1939, C3455/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23060.

⁸¹ Winston S. Churchill, *The Gathering Storm* (Boston, MA, 1948), p. 322.

⁸² Noël, n° 19, 4 January 1939; and n° 74, 12 January 1939, MAE Z—URSS/1019.

⁸³ Payart, n° 313, 20 August 1934, MAE Z—URSS/981, pp. 6–10; Jules Laroche, French ambassador in Warsaw, n°s 483–6, 5 June 1934, MAE Z—URSS/965, pp. 63–65bis; Chilston n° 110 confidential, 9 March 1935, N1313/53/38, PRO FO 371 19456; Kennard to Collier, 6 April 1937, N1926/45/38, PRO FO 371 21095; and Kennard to Sargent, 30 November 1938, *[Documents on] B[ritish] F[oreign] P[olicy]*, 3rd series, 9 vols (London, 1949–57), III, pp. 373–375.

⁸⁴ Phipps, n° 114, 18 March 1939, minute by J. D. Roberts, C3455/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23060.

⁸⁵ R. I. Campbell, British chargé d’affaires in Paris, n° 155 saving, 22 March 1939, C3784/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23061; ‘Record of conversation between M. Léger and Mr. Campbell on March 18th’, C3962/3356/18, *ibid.*; and ‘Record of an Anglo-French Conversation. . .’, 21 March 1939, *DBFP*, 3rd, IV, pp. 422–427.

⁸⁶ William Manchester, *The Caged Lion: Winston Spencer Churchill 1932–1940* (London, 1989), p. 480.

⁸⁷ Birkenhead, *Halifax*, p. 434; and Anita Prazmowska, *Britain, Poland, and the Eastern Front, 1939* (London, 1987), p. 52.

⁸⁸ Taylor, *The Origins. . .*, pp. 276–277.

⁸⁹ Seeds, n° 43, 23 March 1939, C3880/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23061; ‘Notes of a conversation. . . [between Litvinov and Hudson]’, 25 March 1939, *God krizisa*, I, pp. 324–327; and ‘Notes of a conversation. . . [between Potemkin & Hudson]’, 27 March 1939, *ibid.*, pp. 335–337.

⁹⁰ Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, p. 391; and Palasse to Dentz, n° 1955, 124 June 1938, SHAT 7N 3186.

⁹¹ W. Jedrzejewicz, ed., *Diplomat in Berlin, 1933–1939: Papers and Memoirs of Jozef Lipski* (New York, 1968), pp. 504–507; cf., Prazmowska, *Britain, Poland, and the Eastern Front. . .*, pp. 48–49, 60; and Charmley, *Chamberlain*, pp. 182–183.

⁹² 'Record of an Anglo-French Conversation. . .', 22 March 1939, *DBFP*, 3rd, IV, pp. 457–463; and Brian Bond, *British Military Policy between the Two World Wars* (London, 1980), p. 306.

⁹³ Maisky to Narkomindel, 31 March 1939, *SPE*, I, p. 300.

⁹⁴ Bond, *British Military Policy. . .*, pp. 307–308; and Prazmowska, *Britain, Poland, and the Eastern Front. . .*, pp. 51–52.

⁹⁵ Maisky to Narkomindel, 6 April 1939, *God krizisa*, I, pp. 361–363; Halifax to Seeds, n° 255, 6 April 1939, *DBFP*, 3rd, V, pp. 53–54; and minutes, C5430/3356/18, recording the views of Sargent, Cadogan and Halifax between 6 and 8 April 1939, PRO FO 371 23063. *God krizisa* gives more complete versions of at least a few documents previously published in *SPE* where ellipses were not used to indicate deletions. In this case Maisky's report on 6 April of Halifax's assurances of good will was previously omitted (cf., *SPE*, I, pp. 318–320).

⁹⁶ E.g., Litvinov to Surits, 29 March 1939, *God krizisa*, I, pp. 342–343. A source of information may have been a Soviet agent in the Foreign Office (Watt, *How War Came*, p. 116).

⁹⁷ Note by Cadogan, 19 April 1939, C5460/15/18, PRO FO 371 22969; and Corbin, n° 409, 25 May 1939, *DDF*, 2e, XVI, pp. 562–566.

⁹⁸ D. Dilks ed. *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1938–1945* (London, 1971), pp. 178–179.

⁹⁹ Kennard to Cadogan, 18 April 1939, C5859/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23064; Kennard, n° 38 (saving), 19 April 1939, C5676/3356/18, *ibid.*; and n° 116, 18 April 1939, C5682/3356/18, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Minute, C5749/3356/18, 22 April 1939, *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Minute, C6206/3356/18, 29 April 1939, *ibid.*

¹⁰² Maisky to Narkomindel, 29 April 1939, *God krizisa*, I, pp. 410–412.

¹⁰³ 'Record of an Anglo-French Conversation. . .', 21 March 1939, *DBFP*, 3rd, IV, pp. 422–427; Seeds, n° 63, 14 April 1939, C5330/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23063; and Payart, n°s 235–9, 2 April 1939; n°s 265–9, 14 April 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/10.

¹⁰⁴ Phipps to Halifax, n° 373, 28 March 1939, *DBFP*, 3rd, IV, p. 535; Surits to Narkomindel, 7 April 1939; *SPE*, I, pp. 320–321; 8 April 1939, *ibid.*, pp. 321–322; 11 April 1939, *ibid.*, pp. 328–329; and Surits to Narkomindel, 10 April 1939, *God krizisa*, I, p. 367.

¹⁰⁵ Surits to Narkomindel, 14 April 1939, *SPE*, I, *ibid.*, p. 341; and Bonnet to Payart, n° 129–36, 15 April 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/9.

¹⁰⁶ Ivone Kirkpatrick, FO, London, to Phipps, n° 981, 20 April 1939, C5692/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23064; and Minute, C5842/3356/18, 25 April 1939, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*; and Surits to Litvinov, 26 April 1939, *SPE*, I, pp. 360–361.

¹⁰⁸ Phipps, n° 192, 30 April 1939, C6213/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23064; and Bonnet to Corbin, n°s 752–6, 15 April 1939, MAE Papiers 1940, Cabinet Georges Bonnet/16, p. 169.

¹⁰⁹ Payart, n°s 326–9, 4 May 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/10; and Payart, n°s 351–6, 10 May 1939, *DDF*, 2e, XVI, pp. 265–266.

¹¹⁰ Payart, n°s 346–9, 9 May 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/10; Seeds, n° 87, 8 May 1939, C6804/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23065; 'Memorandum of a conversation. . . [between Molotov and Seeds]', 8 May 1939, *SPE*, II, pp. 25–26; and 'Record of a conversation. . . [between Molotov and Payart]', 11 May 1939, *God krizisa*, I, pp. 449–451.

¹¹¹ Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, p. 365.

¹¹² Ian Colvin, *The Chamberlain Cabinet* (London, 1971), p. 225; meeting of the Foreign Policy Committee, Tuesday, 16 May 1939, C7401/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23066; and Vansittart to Halifax, 17 May 1939, C7169/3356/18, *ibid.*

¹¹³ 'Notes prises au cours de l'entretien franco-britannique du 20 mai 1939. . .', AN Papiers Daladier, 496AP/13; John Harvey ed. *The Diplomatic Diaries of Oliver Harvey, 1937–1940* (London, 1970), pp. 286, 290, 290, 292; and Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler. . .*, p. 272.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.* 302; Aster, 1939, pp. 184–185; Dilks, *The Diaries* [Cadogan], 182; and Corbin, n° 409, 25 May 1939, *DDF*, 2e, XVI, pp. 562–566.

¹¹⁵ 'Visite de Monsieur Souritz du 26 mai 1939. . .', MAE Papiers 1940, Cabinet Bonnet/16, pp. 266–268. N. B., the same note in the AN Papiers Daladier, 496AP/13 has a different, less negative conclusion.

¹¹⁶ Maisky to Narkomindel, 3 May 1939 [the same date as Harvey's diary entry], *SPE*, II, pp. 11–13; 9 May 1939, *ibid.*, p. 28.

¹¹⁷ Seeds, n° 87, 8 May 1939, C6804/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23065; Seeds, n° 93, 15 May 1939, C7065/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23066; and Seeds, n° 148, 16 May 1939, C7328/3356/18, *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Cadogan to Halifax, 23 May 1939, C7469/3356/18, *ibid.*; and Manchester, *The Caged Lion. . .*, p. 471.

¹¹⁹ Molotov to Surits, 26 May 1939, *SPE*, II, p. 60; and Payart, n°s 400–05, 27 May 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/10. Watt, *How War Came*, p. 247.

- ¹²⁰ Cadogan to Halifax, 23 May 1939, C7469/3356/18, PRO FO 37123066; Maisky to Molotov, 10 May 1939, *SPE*, II, pp. 30–32; and Maisky to Narkomindel, 21 May 1939, *ibid.*, pp. 52–53.
- ¹²¹ Memorandum, by Strang, 16 May 1939, C7206/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23066; and Phipps, n° 307 saving, 18 May 1939, C7264/3356/18, *ibid.*
- ¹²² Phipps, n° 217, 1 June 1939, C7916/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23067; and Phipps, n° 344 saving, 7 June 1939, C8137/3356/18, *ibid.*; and Phipps to Halifax, 22 June 1939, *DBFP*, 3rd, VI, pp. 150–151.
- ¹²³ Bonnet to Naggiar, n°s 218–9, 14 June 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/9.
- ¹²⁴ Comment from MAE internal note, Direction politique, 5 July 1939, MAE Papiers 1940, Cabinet Bonnet/16, pp. 280–297.
- ¹²⁵ ‘Draft agreement. . .’, 2 June 1939, *SPE*, II, pp. 75–76.
- ¹²⁶ Seeds, n° 161, 30 May 1939, C7937/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23067; and Seeds, n° 181, 20 June 1939, C8840/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23069.
- ¹²⁷ ‘Mr. [W.N.] Ewer’s [diplomatic correspondent, *Daily Herald*] account of his talk with M. Maisky’, nd (but 9 June 1939), C8701/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23068.
- ¹²⁸ See Naggiar’s handwritten notes on his n°s 481–3, 14 June 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/10; and Naggiar, n°s 502–6, 16 June 1939, *ibid.*
- ¹²⁹ Manchester, *The Caged Lion*. . ., 471; and Surits to Narkomindel, 7 July 1939, *SPE*, II, p. 128.
- ¹³⁰ Payart, n°s 185–90, 17 March 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/10.
- ¹³¹ Roberts, *The Unholy Alliance*. . ., pp. 124–127, 145–149.
- ¹³² Naggiar’s minute on Bonnet to Naggiar, n°s 333–8, 5 July 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/9; see also Payart’s earlier, n°s 383–8, 24 May 1939, *ibid.*/10; Naggiar, n°s 442–5, 3 June 1939, *DDF*, 2e, XVI, pp. 655–656; and Naggiar, n°s 543–9, 22 June 1939, *ibid.*, pp. 951–952.
- ¹³³ Naggiar, n°s 449–54, 6 June 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/10; and Seeds, n° 139, 23 June 1939, C8928/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23069.
- ¹³⁴ Bonnet to Corbin, n° 1517, 19 July 1939, AN Papiers Daladier, 496AP/13; and Note by Kirkpatrick, 21 July 1939, C10292/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23071.
- ¹³⁵ Naggiar, n°s 455–9, 6 June 1939; n°s 463–70, 11 June 1939; and n°s 601–03, 2 July 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/10; and Seeds to Sargent, personal letter, 3 August 1939, C11927/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23073.
- ¹³⁶ E.g., Naggiar, n° 484, 15 June 1939; n°s 580–6, 29 June 1939; n° 589, 1 July 1939; n°s 642–4, 7 July 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/10; and Bonnet to Naggiar, n°s 444–8, 15 July 1939, *ibid.*/9.
- ¹³⁷ Naggiar, n°s 629–39, 5 July 1939; n°s 674–83, 11 July 1939; n°s 686–91, 13 July 1939; n°s 699–703, 15 July 1939; n° 707, 16 July 1939; n°s 723–37, 18 July 1939, *ibid.*/10; and ‘Note’, by Palasse, n° 599/S, 13 July 1939, SHAT 7N 3186. Watt mistakenly states that Paris was ill-served by Naggiar who failed to appreciate the possibility of the Soviet Union opting for a German rapprochement (*How War Came*, p. 611).
- ¹³⁸ Naggiar’s minutes on Bonnet’s n°s 423–8, 430–6, 11 July 1939, *ibid.*/9.
- ¹³⁹ Naggiar, n°s 507–18, 17 June 1939, *ibid.*/10; and Naggiar, n°s 534–7, 22 June 1939, *DDF*, 2e, XVI, pp. 938–939.
- ¹⁴⁰ Naggiar, n°s 543–9, 22 June 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/10; Bonnet to Naggiar, n°s 252–9, 24 June 1939, *ibid.*/9; and Corbin to Sargent, 11 July 1939, C9972/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23070.
- ¹⁴¹ Naggiar’s minute on Bonnet, n° 505–11, 25 July 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/9.
- ¹⁴² Naggiar’s minute on Bonnet, n° 548, 30 July 1939, *ibid.*
- ¹⁴³ Meeting of the Committee on Foreign Policy, 19 July 1939, C10267/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23071.
- ¹⁴⁴ Committee on Foreign Policy, 10 July 1939, C9761/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23070.
- ¹⁴⁵ Colvin, *The Chamberlain Cabinet*. . ., p. 229.
- ¹⁴⁶ Phipps, n° 929, 21 July 1939, C10410/90/17, PRO FO 371 22912.
- ¹⁴⁷ Roberts, *The Unholy Alliance*. . ., pp. 148–151.
- ¹⁴⁸ Committee on Foreign Policy, 10 July 1939, C9761/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23070; and Admiral Sir Reginald Drax, ‘Mission to Moscow, August 1939’, p. 7, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, Drax Papers, 6/5.
- ¹⁴⁹ Cabinet conclusions, 26 July 1939, C10629/3356/18, PRO FO 371 20371; Drax, ‘Mission to Moscow, August 1939’, p. 6, Churchill Archives, Drax Papers, 6/5; and ‘Rapport de mission à Moscou’, Capt. de corvette Guillaume, August 1939, SHAT 7N 3185.
- ¹⁵⁰ Committee on Foreign Policy, 1 August 1939, C10826/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23072.
- ¹⁵¹ ‘Extract from the minutes of a meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence. . .’, 2 August 1939, C10952/3356/18, *ibid.*

¹⁵² 'Cabinet extract. . . Major General H. L. Ismay's conversations in Paris on 29 July 1939', C10811/3356/18, *ibid.*

¹⁵³ Gamelin to Doumenc, n° 1522/DN. 3, 27 July 1939, SHAT 7N 3186.

¹⁵⁴ Doumenc, 'Souvenirs de la mission en Russie, août 1939', pp. 11–12, SHAT 7N 3185. Watt and Duroselle quote or refer to this exchange (from excerpts in *DDF*), but they do not mention Doumenc's important comment that he was leaving for Moscow empty-handed—'*les mains vides*' (Watt, *How War Came*, p. 452; and Duroselle, *La Décadence*. . . , p. 428).

¹⁵⁵ Naggiar's minute on his cable, n°s 860–3, 12 August 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/10; Doumenc, 'Souvenirs', 57, SHAT 7N 3185; and the little noted confirmation of Daladier's instructions in L. Noël, *L'agression allemande contre la Pologne* (Paris, 1946), p. 423. Naggiar's minute sharply qualifies what is usually assumed to be French determination to conclude a Soviet alliance. Daladier said in 1946 that Soviet insistence on Red Army passage came as an 'extraordinary' surprise to the French government, but the evidence demonstrates that it was not a surprise at all (Namier, *Diplomatic Prelude*. . . , pp. 204–206; cf., Watt, *How War Came*, pp. 452–453).

¹⁵⁶ Naggiar's retrospective minute on his cable n° 707, 16 July 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/10.

¹⁵⁷ Naggiar, n°s 860–3, 12 August 1939, *ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Surits to Narkomindel, 3 August 1939, *SPE*, II, pp. 168–170.

¹⁵⁹ Volkogonov, *Staline*, pp. 260–261.

¹⁶⁰ Roberts, *The Unholy Alliance*. . . , pp. 151–154.

¹⁶¹ Seeds, n°196, 12 August 1939, C11275/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23072; and Strang's minute, 14 August, *ibid.*

¹⁶² Halifax to Seeds, n° 209, 15 August 1939; Chatfield to Drax, n° 1, 15 August 1939, *ibid.*; and Bonnet to Naggiar, n° 585, 15 August 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/9.

¹⁶³ Seeds, military mission n° 1, 12 August 1939, C11276/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23072; and Instructions, 15 August 1939, *ibid.* For Soviet military expectations, see 'Considerations of the Soviet side for negotiations with the military missions of Great Britain and France', B. M. Shaposhnikov, Soviet chief of staff, 4 August 1939, *God krizisa*, II, pp. 168–174.

¹⁶⁴ 'Record of the evening meeting of the military missions of the USSR, Britain and France', 13 August 1939, *SPE*, II, pp. 196–202.

¹⁶⁵ 'Record of the meeting of military missions of the USSR, Britain, and France', 14 August 1939, *ibid.*, pp. 202–210; and André Beaufre, 1940: *The Fall of France* (London, 1967), pp. 109–13, 118. Beaufre's published account is taken word for word from Doumenc's 'Souvenirs', pp. 74–80, 90, and *passim*, SHAT 7N 3185.

¹⁶⁶ Doumenc, 'Souvenirs', 76, SHAT 7N 3185; Naggiar, n°s 869–72, 14 August 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/10; and Seeds, mission n° 3, 14 August 1939, C11323/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23072.

¹⁶⁷ 'Committee on Imperial Defence, Deputy chiefs of staff sub-committee', meeting of 16 August 1939, C11506/3356/18, *ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ Naggiar's minute on Bonnet to Naggiar, n° 601, 18 August 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/9.

¹⁶⁹ Quoting an un-named Polish foreign ministry official, C. J. Norton, British chargé d'affaires in Warsaw, n° 205, 21 July 1939, C10460/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23071.

¹⁷⁰ 'Conversation du Ministre des Affaires étrangères avec M. Lukachievicz', Bonnet, 15 August 1939, AN Papiers Daladier, 496/AP/13.

¹⁷¹ Doumenc, 'Souvenirs', 96–7, SHAT 7N 3185.

¹⁷² Colson to Doumenc, n° 2388—ÉMA/2-SAE, 15 August 1939, SHAT 7N 3186; Naggiar, n°s 873–4, 15 August 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/10; Noël to Naggiar, n°s 5–15, 18 August 1939, *ibid.*/9; and Charles-Jean Tripier, French minister in Riga, 20 August 1939, *ibid.*; and Drax to Lord Chatfield, minister for the coordination of defence, 16/17 August 1939, C12064/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23073.

¹⁷³ Kennard, n° 279, 19 August 1939, C11585/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23073; and Roger Cambon, French chargé d'affaires in London, n° 2642, 21 August 1939, AN Papiers Daladier 496/AP/13.

¹⁷⁴ Kennard, n° 282, 21 August, 1939, C11701/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23073.

¹⁷⁵ Bonnet to Naggiar, n° 615, 21 August 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/9; and Seeds, mission n° 9, 22 August 1939, and Strang's minute of the same day, C11729/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23073.

¹⁷⁶ Roberts, *The Unholy Alliance*. . . , pp. 154–155; Volkogonov, *Staline*, pp. 262–267; V. Ya. Sipols, 'A Few Months before August 23, 1939', *International Affairs*, May 1989, pp. 124–136; and Note by Schnurre, 19 August 1939, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, series D, 13 vols (London, 1948ff.), VII, pp. 132–133.

¹⁷⁷ 'Memorandum of a conversation between the head of the Soviet military mission and the head of the French military mission', 22 August 1939, *SPE*, II pp. 261–265.

- ¹⁷⁸ Naggiar's minute on Noël to Naggiar, n° 21, 23 August 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/9.
- ¹⁷⁹ Seeds, n° 211, 22 August 1939, C11740/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23073.
- ¹⁸⁰ Naggiar's minute on his telegram reporting Seeds' meeting with Molotov, n°s 941-3, 23 August 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/10.
- ¹⁸¹ Hervé Alphand, *L'étonnement d'être* (Paris 1977), p. 20.
- ¹⁸² Campbell (Paris), n° 543 saving, 23 August 1939, C11815/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23073.
- ¹⁸³ Naggiar's minute on Bonnet to Naggiar, n°s 627-30, 23 August 1939, MAE Papiers Naggiar/9.
- ¹⁸⁴ Volkogonov, *Staline*, pp. 267-269; cf., Namier, *Diplomatic Prelude*, p. 204. See also M.I. Semiryaga's comments in 'Kruglyi stol', *Voprosy Istorii*, pp. 20-24.
- ¹⁸⁵ W. Strang, *Home and Abroad* (London, 1956), p. 159.
- ¹⁸⁶ Watt, *How War Came*, pp. 120, 216-219; and Roberts, *The Unholy Alliance...*, pp. 224-226.
- ¹⁸⁷ Taylor, *The Origins...*, p. 277; Manchester, *The Caged Lion...*, p. 411; cf., Uldricks, 'Taylor and the Russians...' pp. 170-174.
- ¹⁸⁸ Alphand, *L'étonnement...*, p. 20.
- ¹⁸⁹ Jean Chauvel, *Commentaire*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1971), I, p. 59.
- ¹⁹⁰ Untitled note by I. Kirkpatrick and minutes, 27 September 1939, C16202/3356/18, PRO FO 371 23074.
- ¹⁹¹ F. L. Schuman, *The Cold War: Retrospect and Prospect* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1967), pp. 78, 82.