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Reacting to Hitler: Polish, Hungarian, Lithuanian, and Romanian foreign policy, 1933-1939

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Reacting to Hitler:
Polish, Hungarian, Lithuanian, and Romanian Foreign Policy, 1933-1939

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Thesis

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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For Mom and Dad

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ABSTRACT

The nations of East Central Europe have traditionally been portrayed as “victims” of Nazi German expansionism. In this work the foreign policies of Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, and Romania from 1933 to 1939 were examined through the paradigm of Hitler's major foreign policy achievements to explore this prevalent notion and to discern why the foreign policies of these governments failed. These included his rise to power in 1933, the remilitarization of the Rhineland, the *Anschluss* with Austria, the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, and the invasion of Poland. Specifically, the reactions of these four nations to German action and their relationships with each other were examined. It was found that their foreign policies ended in failure due to their inability to substitute shortsighted national objectives that focused on regional revision at the expense of their neighbors for regional security directed against German expansionism.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1919 the victorious powers of the First World War convened at Versailles to decide the fate of the post-war world. Before them was no easy task. In their triumph, three great empires had collapsed under the strain of four years of the most horrendous warfare the world had yet seen. It was now their job to reconstitute Europe from the rubble of the old. New nations were created. Existing ones were enlarged and expanded. All this was done primarily at the expense of the defeated Central Powers. Poland and Lithuania were returned to the map of Europe and, with the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire, an independent Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Austria were created. Romania also benefited, receiving Transylvania for its participation during the war. All told, from the Baltic to the Black Sea in 1919, seven countries existed where three had been. While unthinkable at the time, the treaty intended to preserve the peace would be shattered by war within twenty years.

On September 1, 1939, Adolf Hitler again plunged Europe into conflict in his bid to impose German hegemony across the continent and secure his Third Reich's thousand year future. His war would last until 1945, resulting in the deaths of more than forty million Europeans.¹ Unlike the previous conflict, the Second World War was not the result of a complicated chain-reaction that dragged the continent into war. Rather, it was initiated by Hitler, with the singular purpose of conquest and extermination. The spark that characterized the origins of the first was also absent from the second, as the crescendo that led to the German invasion of Poland was long in duration. Given Hitler's

focus on East Central Europe with an increasingly aggressive foreign policy, the question was when, not how.

This work focuses primarily on the foreign policies of four of those East Central European nations: Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Lithuania during the interwar period from January 1933 until September 1939. During this period, each of the four countries followed the continent as a whole in the long, slow slide towards war. Their relationships with the Hitler regime were, however, fundamentally different from those of the other European Great Powers, in that they were active participants in the revisionist process that eventually culminated in the Second World War and the region's downfall. This leaves us, then, with the question: why did these four independent nations, each either new to the map or newly configured by the treaty of Versailles, slowly succumb to Germany and Hitler from 1933-1939? The answer is rooted in the complexities of the region.

The tumultuous aftermath of the First World War deeply affected the development of East Central Europe, with political power eventually becoming consolidated by reactionary, authoritarian regimes. The governments of Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, and Romania were each fervently nationalistic and, through their political aims, sought to give expression to that sentiment. For Hungary and Romania, this meant actively seeking or maintaining, respectively, their historic frontiers. The Polish and Lithuanian regimes were equally committed to restoring their nations' historic territories and influence. Because their policies and political aims were directed against each other, however, as a whole, the region was profoundly committed to collective security as a means of protection from the ambitions of their neighbors.

With Hitler's appointment as German Chancellor on January 30, 1933, all that changed. The relative stability that had characterized East Central European international politics was jolted by the emergence of a regime that, at its core, was expressly revisionist and committed to overturning the Treaty of Versailles. Hitler's Germany was a threat to the established order. But in that danger, the governments of Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, and Romania each saw opportunity. The dynamism of the Third Reich's foreign policy could be utilized as a catalyst for their own national agendas. Initially, the risks were minimal. Germany, in 1933, was not yet the military power it would become later in the decade. Hitler needed calm, amicable relations with his neighbors while he consolidated his hold on power at home. This afforded the Polish, Hungarian, Lithuanian, and Romanian governments the occasion to advance their own foreign policy aims. However, as the decade progressed and German foreign policy successes accumulated, each nation began altering its policy goals in response to Hitler's advance. They began reacting to Hitler, and, in doing so, each found itself either outmaneuvered, outfoxed, or overpowered by the Third Reich. In the end, all four countries became subjugated by Germany, willingly or not.

The opportunities provided by a revisionist Germany were, however, a double-edged sword. In working with Hitler in myopic pursuit of the rapid realization of their individual foreign policy goals, each became complicit in the undermining of the region's already weak commitment to collective security. Without this system of support, however weak or ineffectual it may have been, Hitler was able to exploit their national interests and regional aims for his own purposes and slowly but surely isolate them from each other. United, perhaps they could have checked German expansionism. Divided,

they hardly stood a chance. Working with Hitler, they became instruments of their own downfall.

This process was gradual, taking place over six years in three distinct stages. To reflect this progression, the work is divided thematically into sections that encompass each of those distinct phases. The first, in which Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, and Romania began to move away from their western alliances and towards cautious friendship with Hitler, took place from 1933 until the remilitarization of the Rhineland in March 1936. From the 1936 until the *Anschluss*, or union, with Austria in March 1938, the four governments had shifted their alignment to a place somewhere in between the two polemics. While not committed to either the West or to Germany, their behavior was reflective of broader continental uncertainties. The final phase, which lasted from the aftermath of the *Anschluss* until Germany's invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, saw each nation become more directly involved with Hitler and the Third Reich. This framework also serves a secondary purpose, and that is to demonstrate the importance of Hitler's foreign policy to the region and the effect it had on East Central Europe.

It is also the intent of this work to comment on the ongoing intentionalist and functionalist debate.² In specific ways, each interpretation of Hitler's foreign policy has merit and validity in the proper context. Broadly, the foreign policy that Hitler presented to Gyula Gömbös, the Hungarian Prime Minister from 1932-1936, during his state visit at Berchtesgaden on June 17-18, 1933, was identical to the policy outlined in the later 1937 Hossbach memorandum. The latter document is often regarded by intentionalist historians as proof of Hitler's malevolent, expansionist objectives.³ Taking into account the similarities between the June 1933 conversation and the 1937 memorandum, it is

clear that not only did Hitler have definite objectives in mind at this early date, but expected to carry them out, as he eventually did, in 1938.

Conversely, the core of A. J. P Taylor's argument forwarded in his *Origins of the Second World War* – that Hitler reacted just as much as he acted – has demonstrated an equal validity, although in a more limited way. For instance, had Hitler manipulated events in their entirety during the Sudeten crisis in September 1938, the result would have been Czechoslovakia's dismemberment in a localized war by her three neighbors: Germany, Poland, and Hungary. The affair did not, however, go according to plan. Hungary's armies were supposed to draw Czech forces from the German frontier, allowing the Wehrmacht to cross the mountainous Bohemian border with significantly less resistance. However, when events reached their climax, the Hungarians developed an acute case of cold feet, and Budapest refused to do little more than engage in saber rattling.⁴ Their behavior was justified. The Hungarian military was woefully unprepared for any offensive operations and had enough ammunition to sustain only two days of fighting.⁵ Even if war had broken out and the conflict remained localized, it is debatable how useful Budapest's divisions would have been to the operation. Poland's participation in the Czechoslovakian crisis of 1938, while complimentary to Hitler's plans, was not orchestrated by the German government.⁶ Berlin had been made aware of Polish designs earlier in the year, and since Warsaw's political objectives complimented their own operation, the Germans related their approval.⁷ As it was with the Hungarians, Polish action turned out to be less in practice than promise. Combined, the impact of independent Polish and Hungarian policy decisions prevented Hitler from achieving the *fait accompli* that he desired. This forced him to the negotiating table in 1938.⁸ Even at

this late stage, the Poles and Hungarians were still acting largely of their own volition. By remaining inert when Hitler needed them to act, they retained their ability to act independently and forced Germany's dictator to react to them. This does not support Taylor's thesis that the Second World War originated from a confluence of random events. It does, however, demonstrate that his views still have their place if put in the proper context.

In researching this work, numerous sources, both primary and secondary, were consulted. Interest in the region as a whole, and especially the foreign policies of East Central European governments, has increased substantially over the last thirty years. However, despite this, many of the primary sources remain economically and physically unavailable. Fortunately, an excellent selection of secondary material that is drawn from the primary sources is readily accessible. This has made it possible, in conjunction with German, Polish, and British official sources, to cross-reference the unavailable material with relevant secondary sources that base their argumentation on otherwise inaccessible documents, making it possible to verify the accuracy of the secondary material. Although an indirect approach, the methodology has proved to be reliable and accurate.

It is not a requirement for any nation to work with others for any reason. Survival and the advancement of its own objectives are its mandate. However, it is necessary to look beyond the present and into the future. The weighing of distant possibilities, deciding upon desired results, and choosing a course of action to achieve those ends, are charges demanded of responsible leadership. In this, the governments of Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, and Romania failed. Although each regime understood the importance of regional unity and collective security, they eventually abandoned that

pursuit in favor of making gains at the expense of their neighbors. This undercut the region's strength, meager as it was, and eventually contributed to the nightmare of each national leader: being caught in the middle of a conflict between Germany and the Soviet Union. All Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, and Romania had to offer to such an event was a theater of war and subservience to the victor.

CHAPTER 1: AWAY FROM THE WEST

Shortly after noon on Monday, January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler and the new nationalist cabinet trooped into Reich President Paul von Hindenburg's rooms at the Reich Chancellery, still arguing over Hitler's continued demands for new Reichstag elections following his appointment as Chancellor. Their meeting had been scheduled for an hour earlier, but bickering over this point had delayed Hitler's "providential" moment, much to the annoyance of the aging Hindenburg. Following formalities and a short speech by the President, Hitler swore an oath to fulfill his constitutional obligations for the good of the nation. Only twelve years later, upon the shattered ruins of the Third Reich, would the hollowness of the words spoken that afternoon be clear. That wintery January day was not, however, the downfall of Hitler's Germany but the final death knell for the republic that had preceded it. Democracy had been dead for some time, with only its façade remaining intact. Its passing was not solemnly observed either. Instead, it was mourned that day by an anxious, silent crowd gathered along the Wilhelmstrasse by Joseph Goebbels and given its funerary procession later that evening by torchlight.¹ Much as it eventually went down in flames, so was the Third Reich born.

For the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, that otherwise nondescript day and short, unremarkable ceremony was the culmination of more than a decade of struggle. The violence in the streets, the fighting over how to achieve the party's ends, the electoral victories and defeats, the political compromises and the near dissection of the party were all vindicated in that moment. To the average German, its meaning was largely derived from an individual's political persuasion. Communists and socialists

shortly came to view it as a day of dread, while to the political Right it was a triumph. For the rest, their ballot decision in November 1932 tacitly expressed their discontent with what the chaotic republican system had become and their ideological sympathies for National Socialism.² To Germany's East Central European neighbors, it equally was a day of mixed emotions.

I

Poland, the recipient of vast swaths of German territory as a result of the Versailles settlement and perennial target of revisionist rhetoric, viewed this as merely a changing of the guard and expected a continuation of Berlin's anti-Polish policies.³ Relations between the two countries had, since Poland's reemergence following the First World War, been strained due to their mutually antagonistic behavior. At the heart of their rancor was the territorial concessions Germany had been forced to make to its newly created neighbor, a condition that successive Weimar governments never accepted. Consequently, a "Prussian" policy was actively pursued by Berlin throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, which aimed at recovering the Corridor, the small strip of land that provided Poland with access to the sea, and reuniting East Prussia with Germany proper. The return of Danzig (Gdańsk), which had become a Free City under the administration of the League of Nations, and the coal rich region of Upper Silesia was also desired.⁴ Because of the military limitations imposed upon Germany by the Versailles Treaty, Berlin was forced to pursue its revisionism peacefully. On numerous occasions, though, the German leadership was keen to articulate that this was not their preferred methodology and that whenever the military option became viable, it could be pursued.⁵

This tense atmosphere over territory created a powder-keg-like environment in

which any minor incident seemed to have the potential to ignite an armed conflict between the two nations, although the bluster was more for international prestige and appearances. One such incident on July 31, 1932, involved Baron von Rintelen, the German *charge d'affaires* in Warsaw, angrily removing a Polish naval ensign from his fence during a national celebration. Von Rintelen had taken particular exception to the flag's placement, because it reminded him that Poland had become a naval power at Germany's expense. The Polish government viewed this action as a direct insult to its national honor, and August Zaleski, Poland's Foreign Minister, formally demanded von Rintelen's resignation.⁶ Berlin attempted to smooth over the incident but found no sympathetic ear. Even the normally moderate Colonel Józef Beck, who was vying to replace Zaleski and was conducting a shadow foreign policy different in character from his superior's, was highly vocal in his condemnation and outrage over the incident.

As was characteristic of German-Polish relations during this period prior to Hitler's appointment as Chancellor, this rather innocuous matter was blown entirely out of proportion by both sides. National pride and bitterness aside, the behavior of the two governments in this instance was demonstrative of the antagonism between Berlin and Warsaw. This downward spiral carried the indelible mark of Versailles but was more the result of conscious foreign policy decisions made by each government.

Germany had, since Gustav Stresemann's brief Chancellorship in 1923, pursued a policy that fostered better relations with Britain and France and recognized the Reich's western border while deliberately precipitating uncertainty and mistrust with Poland. This is evidenced in the 1925 Locarno treaties, specifically the Rhineland Pact portion signed by Germany, Italy, Britain, France, and Belgium, which renounced the use of

violence between the signatories and pledged mutual assistance by all parties in the event one was attacked by the other. A similar treaty was signed with Poland, although it offered nothing in the way of territorial guarantees, only pledging to eschew violence in the resolving of differences and to subject disagreements to international arbitration. If, in the latter half of the 1920s, Berlin remained true to the “spirit of Locarno” and worked for a general Western European *détente*, then the Reich government made only the most cursory efforts in the east. No bullets were fired, but a war of words raged. The German government had made a technical distinction between the requirements of the treaty and the *geist* that it was supposed to embody, noting that only war was forbidden, but that Locarno expressly said nothing about verbal assaults.⁷ It was with this attitude that the German government dealt with Poland, making liberal use of inflammatory rhetoric that was intended to for domestic consumption. This tactic allowed Berlin to assuage public demands for border revision and portrayed the government as actively seeking that end.⁸

In reality, it was all Germany could do. The Treaty of Versailles limited its armed forces to a strength of 10 divisions, 3 of which were arrayed on the Polish border. Facing it across the frontier were five Corps (15 divisions), totaling half of the entire Polish army. The German Defense Minister, the retired General Wilhelm Groener, even remarked that in the event of a conflict with Poland, the “German army would have to withdraw to the Oder” and would be unable to undertake offensive operations. Compounding the fear of a Polish surprise attack and the Reichswehr’s numerical inferiority to its potential adversary was a belief that any attempt at bringing about territorial revision in the east would unite the Locarno Powers against Germany in a war that it stood no chance of winning. On the other side of the border, the Polish army was

in an equally defensive posture, held in check by the fear of a qualitative German edge in troop training and tactics. In the event of hostilities, its battle-plan called for the elimination of the German exclave of East Prussia to ensure access to the sea, but no drive for Berlin.⁹

It was, equally, all Poland was capable of. For all of Warsaw's blustering and bravado, the horrendous state of the Polish economy prevented any possibility of launching and sustaining a major offensive against Germany. The Stresemann-initiated tariff war had exacted its toll, compounding the effects of the Great Depression and exacerbating the nation's socioeconomic woes.¹⁰ Poland's trust in its once staunch ally France was also beginning to wane, and the construction of the Maginot Line raised serious doubts as to the true nature of French commitment to the region.¹¹ If a conflict were to erupt, it was very likely that Poland would face Germany alone while threatened by massive civil unrest on the home front. These were possibilities on which Marshal Józef Piłsudski, Poland's dictator since seizing power in a military *coup d'état* in 1926, was not willing to gamble.

Thus, on the eve of Hitler's rise to power, the threat of war between the two East Central European neighbors was far more imagined than real, although the two sides did not behave as if that were so. In Warsaw, it was generally expected that the fury of the Nazi movement would be directed against Poland first, and, consequently, the government warned all of its diplomats abroad about this likely reorientation of German policy.¹² Hitler himself was equally fearful of hostilities, warning Colonel Walther von Reichenau in East Prussia in December that the uncertain political situation in Germany provided a conducive atmosphere for a surprise Polish attack.¹³ However, it is the

perception of reality rather than reality itself that ultimately influences behavior. In the case of German-Polish relations in the months following Hitler's appointment, this shaped the interaction between the Hitler and Piłsudski regimes and created the emergence of a new demeanor in Polish foreign policy.

The years of bad relations between Germany and Poland had created an atmosphere filled with tension and mistrust, and this mood carried itself over, inaugurating the new era with a crisis that was little more than a continuation of the problems of the past. On February 15, 1933, the Danzig senate notified the Polish government that it intended to withdraw the Polish detachment of harbor police and replace it with a force under its own jurisdiction; coincidentally, on the same day, Colonel Józef Beck, the new Polish Foreign Minister, was presenting his first official address stressing calm in dealing with Hitler and National Socialism.¹⁴ As Warsaw had no control over this force, it was feared that this act was a precursory step to facilitate a Nazi takeover of the city through the infiltration of undetected *Sturmabteilung* (SA) or other German nationalist paramilitary units which, once gaining control of Danzig, would then ask Berlin to be annexed to the Reich.¹⁵ Rumors of an impending assault on the Polish garrison and munitions depot on the Westerplatte further fueled this concern, and on March 5, 1933, Piłsudski decided to reinforce the garrison with 120 additional troops.¹⁶ The next morning, the military transport *Wilja* landed at the Westerplatte with the reinforcements, bringing the total Polish presence up to 208 soldiers who secured the munitions depot. The attack and takeover that prompted the action never occurred, and the entire matter was resolved through an emergency meeting of the Council of the League of Nations on March 13.¹⁷

While on the surface this incident is nondescript and characteristic of German-Polish relations as they had been conducted prior to Hitler's rise to power, several important distinctions must be made. Although the reinforcement sent to the garrison was little more than a token gesture, it was the first time that a German affront to Polish interests had been met with direct action.¹⁸ The response was not random but carefully calculated and conceived by Piłsudski as a lively "energetic act" that was intended to be a psychological and tactical test of Hitler and his regime's mettle.¹⁹ Strategically, the move was designed to be provocative and elicit a response that could be closely observed so as to ascertain Germany's actual state of readiness in the event of armed conflict.²⁰ The date for the action was also chosen for shock value, as it coincided with the German Reichstag elections. To add yet another layer of complexity to the matter, Beck and Piłsudski had also intended for the move to serve as a message to Britain and France that Poland would no longer tolerate any ideas of border revision to satiate German claims and to indicate to the French that Poland would, in the future, be conducting an independent foreign policy.²¹

The cumulative effect of this scheming was twofold. First, it dispelled the international belief that Poland was merely one of France's numerous East Central European clients.²² This message was particularly directed at Great Britain, a nation that, according to Beck, Poland had no direct contact with before 1933, but it was equally intended for the international community at large. Second, it was the first conscious step by the Polish government to assert itself as the Great Power that it was beginning to believe itself to be. Although such a claim would not be made publicly by Warsaw, the behavior and decisions made by Piłsudski and Beck indicate that Poland was taking an

affirmative step in that direction. The positive resolution of the incident, from Warsaw's perspective, also initiated the process of psychological confidence in that reality-divorced schema.

On the heels of this modest success, Piłsudski apparently unleashed the boldest and most audacious Polish foreign policy initiative since Poland's reconstitution in 1919: an offer of preventative war against Hitler to Warsaw's principal ally, France. But was such a proposal ever made? Accounts of this offer permeate the historiography covering the period and, judging by the frequency with which references to this appear, it deserves special consideration. Although the various accounts disagree as to exactly how far along Piłsudski's scheme developed, it is clear that it was, at the very least, conceptualized.²³ As to the extent that consideration was given to this scheme, accounts differ wildly. Some sources relate that it was carefully considered before being rejected by Piłsudski himself, while others indicate that the proposal was formally extended to the French before being declined. The truth lies somewhere in between.

According to Beck and his wife Jadwega, the Marshal considered the idea, weighing both the pros and cons and even going as far as to conduct an informal survey of opinion in government circles. Ultimately, the relative weakness of the Polish military caused him to discard the notion of preventative war as a plausible policy line.²⁴

The fact that Piłsudski even considered the issue seems odd, given that he was quite pleased with Hitler's rise to power and believed him to be less dangerous to Poland than previous German leaders. What Piłsudski truly wanted was an understanding with Hitler based on the existing territorial settlement, as his greatest fear was a further reduction of Poland's territory.²⁵ To achieve this end and bring the Germans to the

negotiating table, he purposely concocted and spread rumors of a preventative war in conjunction with France and Britain through diplomatic channels.

The entire episode, then, was a ruse. Jules Laroche, the French Ambassador to Warsaw from 1926 to 1935, would have been the logical recipient and messenger in the event such a proposal was offered, but recorded in his memoirs that he received no communication to that effect. Laroche found the entire matter unbelievable, as he could not see Piłsudski risking his military reputation on an uncertain war with Germany when he had already secured his warrior's legacy by defeating the Soviet Union in 1920. Poland's ambassador to Berlin, Józef Lipski, speculated that Piłsudski likely sent the offer through military channels, which the Marshal trusted for discretionary reasons, although no proof that the suggestion was floated to the French in this manner exists either. Édouard Daladier, the French Defense Minister, was unaware of the proposal, as was General Maxime Weygand, the French Army's Chief of Staff, who stated that he "never heard of any such overture of Piłsudski."²⁶

Naturally, the French could not reject something that they never received. However, the offer, or rather the rumor of it, was never intended for them. The entire affair was a diplomatic follow-up to the Westerplatte incident and designed to be a continuation of Piłsudski's new approach to foreign policy and furthering of Warsaw's ongoing psychological test of Hitler. Within that framework, from the Polish perspective, the ruse was a complete success. Towards the end of the year, feelers put out by Warsaw began to indicate that the Germans were interested in reaching an understanding with Poland.

This rising tide of amicability resulted in the January 26, 1934, German-Polish

non-aggression pact. Although little more than a hollow expression of superficial goodwill, the temporary security it offered was exactly what Piłsudski wanted. However, the Marshal was pragmatic in assessing the document's true meaning, noting that it likely meant that Hitler had merely postponed his designs on Poland until Germany was as strong as the Führer wished before he would risk war.²⁷ This was in agreement with Piłsudski's conceptions of foreign policy, which predicted behavior based on a simple risk-return assessment. Within this framework, Piłsudski and his protégé Beck were certain that internal and external forces precluded any chance of Germany gaining meaningful and lasting results from military action, leaving the Reich predisposed to an accord.²⁸ Placing faith in prognostic formulas is always highly dubious, but in this instance, Beck's instincts proved correct.

The degree to which the threat of preventative war played a part in bringing about the German-Polish rapprochement is debatable, as there were numerous factors that contributed to the conclusion of the agreement. First and foremost was the state of affairs within Germany, which was no less chaotic in the inaugural months of Nazi rule than during the dying days of the republic. The daily orgies of street violence instigated by an unleashed SA were spiraling out of control, resulting in public anger in even pro-Nazi circles.²⁹ For political reasons, Hitler did little to rein in the Brown Shirts even though, as the year progressed, the organization began to constitute a serious threat to his power. Ernst Röhm, the head of the SA, was calling for a second revolution and, by the end of 1933, had all but publicly split with Hitler. Röhm's continued calls for incorporating the SA into the Reichswehr were also creating difficulties for Hitler with the military, which was ramping up to its crescendo at nearly the same time the non-aggression treaty was

signed in late January.³⁰ The German economy, for all the NSDAP rhetoric and propaganda to the contrary, was still in a relatively dismal state. By January 1934, Nazi work programs had reduced unemployment totals by roughly 2 million, but this still left the overall figure hovering near 4 million.³¹ Rural areas were the main beneficiaries of the Battle for Work, with its focus on road construction and other unskilled, manual labor-intensive activities, while industrial and major urban centers felt little relief.³² To strengthen his position domestically and prepare for expansion on a grand scale in the east, Hitler needed calm and quiet, conditions that war with Poland certainly would not provide.

Piłsudski's rumor of preventative war, which he began spreading in March, coincided with the initiation of both the German works programs and the escalating problems with Röhm and the SA, adding yet one more concern to an already extensive list. This undoubtedly had some sort of psychological effect on Hitler, making him anxious to lessen the tension with his eastern neighbor, as he could not be entirely sure whether Piłsudski was bluffing or not.³³ However, he would not cave to Polish threats. At a May 1933 meeting with Alfred Wysocki, the first Polish ambassador to Berlin, Hitler flatly refused to consider any special position for the Poles in Danzig but did emphasize that territorial revision could not be achieved by war, a position that resonated positively when it was related back to Warsaw.³⁴ He followed this encounter with a speech at the Reichstag on May 17, 1933, that stressed his desire for peace in Europe and outlined a broad foreign policy that Germany would follow to that end, subtly aiming it in Warsaw's direction.³⁵ To demonstrate sincerity, Hitler restrained the Danzig Nazis, ushering in a period of relative calm and nullifying, for the moment, the most contentious

issue between the two countries.³⁶ An ending of the Stresemann-instigated eight-year tariff war further sweetened the pot. All of these gestures were contrary to the advice Hitler was receiving from Constantin von Neurath, Germany's Foreign Minister, and Herbert von Dirksen, the German ambassador to Moscow, who both stressed that only continuous revisionist agitation with regard to Poland rather than conciliation could effect a proper territorial settlement.³⁷ Germany's Führer did not, however, heed their council, as his main objective was rearming the Reich and preparing it for war. An arrangement with Poland, like all other foreign policy matters, would be a temporary exigency that was not intended to outlast its usefulness. A deal would be made.

Piłsudski and Hitler were both seeking the same end but by contrary means and for drastically different purposes. It was Piłsudski who took the first step toward rapprochement, sending Lipski to Berlin in late autumn with orders to speak directly with Hitler on the matter. The diplomat and the dictator met on November 15, with Lipski relating Piłsudski's critical message about "the necessity" of taking "steps to reinforce security" not only for the present, but for the future as well, as anything less would result in "the loss of a security factor in German-Polish relations."³⁸ The threat was implicit and, although no direct reference to the possibility of preventative war was made, it was fear of that scenario that Piłsudski hoped to conjure in German minds. It was not necessary. At the meeting Hitler spoke of his desire to work with Poland bilaterally to resolve differences between the two countries and even alluded to a future settlement of certain problems via compensation, and, unknown to Lipski, a draft non-aggression agreement had already been drawn up by the *Auswärtiges Amt*, or German Foreign Office.³⁹ The draft was presented to Piłsudski in Warsaw the next week on November 27

at the same time Lipski received a copy from von Neurath. Piłsudski gave no immediate reply and departed the same day for Vilnius to mull the proposal over.

Given the context of the German document, it is understandable that the Poles were less than enthralled. The draft, in its opening paragraph, offered a direct insult to Polish national honor, alluding to the fact that Poland owed its very existence to the Treaty of Versailles and in further paragraphs made numerous references to the need for a “just” settlement between Germany and Poland.⁴⁰ Such innuendos pertaining to the lands stripped from Germany were not unnoticed, nor was the fact that the “important problems” were left undefined and vague, theoretically enabling either party to elevate any issue to that level and pursue arbitrational recourse without guilt.⁴¹ Whether the language of the draft was specifically chosen by Hitler to test Poland’s upper-limits of accommodation or the text was inserted independently by hostile bodies within the *Auswärtiges Amt* intending to kill the agreement is unclear, as either possibility was equally plausible. Whatever the case may have been, Piłsudski remained mute on the issue and made no counterproposal until January 9, 1934.⁴²

Talks continued until January 20, with the Germans growing anxious for the finalization of the declaration. It was during this period of intense negotiations over highly technical but immensely significant language that Lipski truly shined as a plenipotentiary, gaining Berlin’s acquiescence to virtually all the Polish demands, including Piłsudski’s requirement that the agreement be short and devoid of “chancery devices.”⁴³ On January 24 the document was complete, requiring only signatures to make it official.

In a rare instance of mutual satisfaction with a negotiated agreement, both the

parties involved were able to leave the table contented. Hitler had achieved his main objective, a temporary *détente* with his eastern neighbor, which freed his hand to focus on other equally pressing foreign and domestic issues. He also added a significant reference of peaceful intent to his resume, which he could, in the future, exploit. Piłsudski was equally pleased with the outcome, as he had had to give up nothing to secure the arrangement. Further, the declaration, coupled with Warsaw's similar 1932 non-aggression treaty with the Soviet Union, placed Poland in a position the Marshal felt was favorable, as it allowed for some semblance of balance between Poland's historically hostile neighbors.⁴⁴ More important and dangerous for Poland was yet another confirmation that Warsaw's new approach to foreign policy was correct, as it was based on the belief that Great Power posturing had effected the results rather than the specific circumstances that actually did. Piłsudski may have been pragmatic about the whole episode, but success is like liquor: the more one tastes, the drunker one becomes. The Marshal may, in this instance, have been stoically holding his vodka, but his protégé Beck was certainly becoming emboldened by its effects.

II

In Hungary, the initial reaction to Hitler's appointment as chancellor was generally positive in government circles. The Prime Minister, Gyula Gömbös, was one of the first world leaders to send a letter of congratulations to the Nazi leader, alluding to the common principles and ideology of the two regimes and urging closer trade relations. In that letter, Gömbös also expressed a desire for closer cooperation between the Magyar and German minorities in the various successor states of East Central Europe, as this was, in his mind, essential to any future political collaboration.⁴⁵ Although the latter point

never materialized in any concrete fashion, the ideological similarities to which Gömbös alluded would shortly form the cornerstone of a very complicated and deeply intimate relationship that was to last until the fall of the Third Reich.

Hungary, like Germany, had been divested of much of its historic territory by the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, with almost two thirds of the kingdom being either awarded to neighbors that had fought with the Allies during the First World War or used to create the successor nations of the defeated Dual-Monarchy.⁴⁶ Every country that shared a frontier with Hungary profited in some way from the redistribution of its lands, although Romania was by far the greatest beneficiary, receiving a larger portion of Hungarian territory than what remained of the Magyar state itself.⁴⁷ The economic impact of Trianon was equally devastating, stripping Hungary of 59 percent of its transportation infrastructure and incredible amounts of natural resources.⁴⁸ Hungarian manufacturing and industry were not affected nearly as much in terms of lost capacity potential as most of its factories were in and around Budapest. However, its industry was severed from its primary raw material supplies and markets, placing the nation largely at the mercy of its neighbors.⁴⁹ To add further insult to injury, more than 3 million ethnic Magyars were expatriated from their homeland and placed under the rule of foreign governments.⁵⁰ While the combined effects of Trianon did not specifically predispose Hungary to eventual collaboration with Nazi Germany, the indelible mark the treaty left on the national psyche all but ensured that revisionism would never be more than a fleeting thought away.

This was especially true and made manifest in all aspects of political life in Hungary throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, where Trianon revisionism enjoyed

virtually unanimous support and endorsement on both sides of the political spectrum. The only dissenting voices came from the few Social Democrats who were generally willing to accept the loss of the non-ethnic Hungarian lands but still demanded revision of the treaty to bring the Magyar majority areas outside Budapest's domain back under Hungarian control. Such sentiments were limited in their acceptance, failing to permeate down to the working classes or their parties, and were entirely absent from the dialogue of the conservative and radical Right, which called for, and actively sought, revision of Trianon.⁵¹ Revision was, however, well nigh impossible to achieve in any material way. The Treaty of Trianon had severely reduced Hungary's military, limiting its size to 35,000 men and prohibiting the retention of a General Staff, rendering the institution largely a glorified police force.⁵² Hungary's neighbors Yugoslavia, Romania, and Czechoslovakia were also arrayed in a defensive alliance, known as the Little Entente, which was directed at preventing Hungarian revision and aggression, providing for a very real deterrent against such hubristic inclinations.

This inability to effect the desired revision did little to quiet the voices calling for its realization within the country, resulting in a slow but steady increase in the radicalization of populist right-wing domestic politics. The crass nature of these quasi-fascist movements had a limited influence on the aristocratic and traditionally conservative elements that dominated Hungarian society, as the aspirations of the national elite were already directed at restoring the glory of the kingdom's historic past. As border revision was implicit in their thinking, this led to a certain degree of intermingling between the factions based solely on the ends they wished to achieve.⁵³ Still, by the autumn of 1932, economic instability and the effects of the global depression

forced Admiral Miklós Horthy, the Hungarian regent and much clichéd naval commander without a fleet, to incorporate elements of the radical Right into the government; and in October he asked Gömbös to accept the position of Prime Minister and form a cabinet.⁵⁴

Despite Gömbös' advocacy for the reorganization of Hungary as a one-party state along totalitarian lines, the aristocratic conservatives that put him in power effectively curtailed his more extreme positions once he assumed the driver's seat. As a condition of his appointment, Gömbös was forced to publicly disavow his rabid anti-Semitism and place members of the rightist, conservative István Bethlen era political machine in key administration positions. He had to promise to maintain the current governmental structure, theoretically limiting his freedom of action in an effort by Horthy to purchase his services, rather as Hindenburg and von Papen attempted to do with Hitler three months later.⁵⁵ Although similarities between the two situations seemed parallel, Horthy, unlike Hindenburg with Hitler, was indebted to Gömbös, whom he had come to know and respect during the tumultuous year 1919, when the latter sponsored his command of the Hungarian counterrevolutionary army and later directed the more violent aspects of the "white terror" that followed in the wake of the Hungarian Socialist Republic's collapse.⁵⁶ Whatever the true nature of Horthy's personal feelings, the move was entirely tactical on his end and only really intended to placate the growing extreme-right. However, once in power, the energetic Gömbös wasted little time in making his presence felt, forwarding a ninety-five point national work plan that was entirely fascist in character, promising, among other things, national unity and economic reform.⁵⁷ In the realm of foreign policy, he followed up the April 4, 1927, peace and cooperation agreement Bethlen signed with Mussolini, by reaffirming its general position and

extending the treaty's trade aspects to provide relief for Hungarian farmers desperate for markets to offload their surplus wheat.⁵⁸

The next major foreign policy initiative for Gömbös would come in June 1933, when he worked out a trade and compensation agreement between Hungary and Germany. Although a rather mundane matter, the deal was significant for two important reasons. The first was that it further alleviated the national economic woes by providing another outlet for agricultural surplus, and the second because it inaugurated the new Southeast European policy of Hitlerite Germany.⁵⁹ With regard to the former, the benefits for Hungary were obvious. The nation had been virtually isolated internationally until the late 1920s, with the Bethlen-Mussolini deal marking the first diplomatic step towards ending that status and providing Budapest with an ally that could potentially assist Hungary in realizing its revisionist aspirations. This new deal further extricated Hungary from international pariahdom and bolstered domestic support for Gömbös and Horthy by casting their lot with an international figure who was dedicated to the destruction of Versailles and the existing European order. For Germany, it was an important inroad into the region, which held vital resources that were essential to Hitler's autarkic policies and the first tentative move toward economic domination of Southeastern Europe.⁶⁰

Fifteen days later, on June 17, Gömbös claimed another international first, meeting Hitler at Berchtesgaden to discuss potential future political and diplomatic collaboration between the two countries. As was the German dictator's style, Hitler monopolized the conversation and frankly related to Gömbös the future course of German foreign policy. Specifically, Hitler told the Hungarian Prime Minister that the

current European peace settlements could only be revised by force and that, even if concessions were wrested from the powers that be, his true aims could only be realized through war.⁶¹ Conflict with the French would be inevitable and Czechoslovakia would be smashed in due course as well.⁶² Being somewhat of a Hungarian exploratory mission in and of itself, Gömbös sounded Hitler out on several issues important to Budapest, placing particular emphasis on the state of German-Austrian relations and Berlin's intentions toward its southern neighbor. The Hungarian leadership viewed an *Anschluss*, or union, between the two German states as something of an inevitability, but, as it was expressly forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles and Austria was a vital trading partner and conduit for Hungarian goods, such an event was not highly desirable.⁶³ It would, in effect, give Germany great power over Hungary through the absorption of one of the nation's key markets and thereby limit its international activities unless Budapest decided to forsake a major outlet for its agricultural products. However, these fears were allayed. According to Hitler, there would be no immediate *Anschluss*.⁶⁴ On the subject of Hungarian revisionism, Gömbös was bitterly disappointed. Germany would not support Hungary in any attempt to regain Transylvania from Romania and would accede to the return of only its former lands that contained Magyar majorities in Czechoslovakia.⁶⁵

If Hitler's rejection of Hungarian aims was a bitter pill to swallow, then the uproar, both domestically and abroad that awaited Gömbös when he returned to Budapest, was equally difficult to ingest. At home, many thought that the visit had occurred too soon, as the disposition of the West and Little Entente in regard to Hitler was still to be seen, and it might elicit a negative international response from those sectors.⁶⁶ Of equal concern was the reaction of Mussolini, who considered Hungary and

the Danubian region very much within the Italian sphere of influence. Moreover, the Italian leader was uneasy about any extension of German power in this direction. Despite his initial apprehensions, Mussolini was soon assuaged by Hungarian overtures confirming Budapest's commitment to Rome. It is probable too that the fact that Gömbös left Bavaria with little to show other than personally impressing Hitler with his bravery for making the trip amid the uncertainty of its international reception contributed to the clamor. He had risked much and only returned with vague promises to extend the trade agreement signed earlier in the month, which would not be completed until February 1934.⁶⁷ As a consolation prize, Hitler reciprocated the Hungarian gesture of goodwill by sending von Papen to Budapest in September. The meeting was of little consequence and simply reaffirmed Germany's position on Hungarian revision, stressing the need to focus it northward against Czechoslovakia and to accept the loss of territory to Romania and Yugoslavia.⁶⁸

For the remainder of 1933 and into the early months of 1934, Hungarian-German relations were courteous in character and the demeanor of their exchanges reserved. Budapest's major concern, German annexation of Austria, seemed like a remote possibility for the moment, and Gömbös used this period of relative calm in an attempt to further consolidate his domestic position. He pushed to create the position of vice-prime minister and a new economics ministry that would be under his direct control, allowing him to shape the economy along fascist lines, but these moves were met with resistance by Bethlen conservatives within the business sector, and Gömbös was forced to abandon these schemes.⁶⁹ Ironically, for all his efforts at expanding his own power, the only political victory he scored during this period was a measure that greatly extended those of

the regent.

This brief respite was shattered on July 25, 1934, with the assassination of the Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuß by members of the *Deutsche Nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei* (DNSAP), the Austrian wing of the Nazi party, in a botched coup attempt. Hitler's involvement in the putsch was limited and, although it is clear that he was aware of it and had given the attempt his tacit approval, it seems that his judgment was based on faulty information provided by the Austrian Nazis. There was to be no general uprising and the Austrian military, which Theo Habicht, the titular head of the DNSAP, had promised Hitler would support and participate in the putsch, instead acted in defense of the government and rapidly subdued the insurrection.⁷⁰ Mussolini's mobilization and deployment of forces to the Brenner Pass provided a further deterrent for any possible action by the Reichswehr, should the situation have developed into a full-blown attempt at *Anschluss*.

Although the assassination and July Putsch was largely an internal German affair, its occurrence and aftermath placed the Hungarian government in an awkward position between Hitler and Germany on one side and Italy and Mussolini on the other. Gömbös had been working on a policy directed at facilitating cooperation and collaboration with both Berlin and Rome, aiming towards an eventual tripartite arrangement that included a fascist Hungary dominating all of Central and Southeastern Europe.⁷¹ The botched putsch put a major kink in those plans, generating animosity and discord between the two powers that Gömbös wished to bring together. Equally problematic were Hungary's relations with each country in regard to Budapest's position on union between Germany and Austria. Acquiescence would improve relations with Berlin and move Hungary

closer to Germany, which was exactly what Gömbös desired. It might even win Hungary enough favor with Hitler to regain the Burgenland, a strip of territory lost to Austria as a result of the Treaty of Trianon. However, Mussolini was still opposed to such an event, and any outstanding support from the Hungarians in favor of an *Anschluss* was all but certain to complicate relations with Rome. The sentiment of conservative circles within Hungary was equally reserved, as an independent Austria, to a degree, afforded the government some latitude in dealing with Germany and maintained the country's freedom of action. Fortunately for Horthy and Gömbös, no decision on the issue was required and the entire matter largely resolved itself. In this instance, inaction was the obvious choice to make amid two equally bad alternatives, and this was exactly what the Hungarians did, preferring to defer action until it became clear as to how the situation was likely to play itself out. This would, in the future, become characteristic of Budapest's political behavior, only there would be much more on the line and serious consequences for remaining inert when called to act.

III

Lithuania, situated on Europe's cold Baltic coast, reacted to Hitler's appointment as Reich Chancellor with surprisingly little fervor, treating the Nazi "seizure of power" as merely a personnel rotation. There were no demonstrations, no protests or even outward expressions of concern by the government. General Petras Kubiliūnas, the head of the Lithuanian army, related his belief that he did not foresee Germany being a threat to Lithuanian interests.⁷² In fact, it seems that the event only served to confirm the prevailing notion that a major shift in the European political climate was occurring and that the Lithuanian government had only to decide whether it wished to be part of it or

pursue a course in line with the political mainstream.⁷³ However, this was a somewhat paradoxical crossroads, as, in its compositional character, Lithuania's government was already part of that discernable rightward movement.

Democracy in Lithuania had died on December 17, 1926, during a coup instigated by the military and ultranationalist conservatives that toppled the leftist government of Kazys Grinius, under the pretext that a communist takeover and invitation for Soviet occupation of the country was imminent. This excuse was a sham, given the fringe position occupied by the communist party in Lithuania and its active repression by the government. Widespread enmity for Russian imperialism and a strong sense of nationalism, tempered by the war fought between the Bolshevik forces and the nascent republic from 1919 to 1920, further made this scenario untenable. In all probability, the entire affair was prompted by a gross overreaction on the part of the "secret association of officers" to an unfounded belief that the Siemas, or national parliament, was selling out the farmers and peasantry.⁷⁴ After a brief two-day struggle, Antanas Smetona, Lithuania's first president and one of the primary leaders of the coup, was restored to his former office and inaugurated a period of dictatorial rule that was to last until the country's fall and occupation during the Second World War.

One of Smetona's first acts as president was to install Augustinas Voldemaras as prime minister.⁷⁵ Strong-willed, fervently nationalist, and farther to the right in his ideology than Smetona, Voldemaras soon molded Lithuania into a state almost entirely dependent upon himself, Smetona, and the military for its direction and defense. Political opponents were dealt with through extra-judiciary use of the *Geležinis Vilkas*, or Iron Wolf, organization, which was quasi-fascist in character and loyal to himself and the

paramilitary guard of his *Tautininkai*, or Nationalist Party. During his tenure as prime minister, he crafted a foreign policy that was centered on Lithuania's two most vital issues: the recovery of the historic capital Vilnius from Poland and maintaining the status of the Memel (Klaipėda) region.

Memel had been detached from Germany following the First World War and was administrated by the French from February 15, 1920, until January 10, 1923. During this three-year period, there had been an ongoing debate as to how the territory would be administered in the future, with the arguments being entirely derived from the national outlook of the interested parties. Germany desired the reunion of the region with the country proper, and these sentiments were echoed by the large German minority that resided there, although free city status was considered a viable alternative, with Poland calling for the latter as well.⁷⁶ The Lithuanian government wanted the Memelland for itself, as it would largely unite the majority of Lithuanians under one flag and, perhaps more importantly, provide the nation with a desperately needed port.⁷⁷ The entire situation was further complicated by Lithuanian fears that Poland, which Kaunas had had no real relations with since the disastrous 1920 war that cost the country Vilnius and one-third of its territory, may have been willing to exchange the Corridor and Danzig for Memel.⁷⁸ Within the region itself, an organization known as the Supreme Salvation Committee of Lithuania Minor provided agitation for annexation to Lithuania proper and clandestinely organized the citizenry for a future uprising.

On January 10, under the cover of Germany's default on its war reparations and subsequent occupation of the Ruhr industrial region by the French, the Supreme Salvation Committee and detachments of the Lithuanian army, disguised in civilian

clothing, invaded the Memelland and took control of the local government.⁷⁹ There were protests of the action by the British, French, and Germans, but, as each was encumbered by the Ruhr crisis, Lithuania was able to present them with a *fait accompli* and consolidated its gains in relatively short order. The annexation was later confirmed by the League of Nations with the provision that the Memelland be administrated as an autonomous region within Lithuania proper, with that status being guaranteed by the Great Powers.⁸⁰

This action and the manner in which the Memel territory was administered by Lithuania became the focal point of German-Lithuanian relations, with each side using the region as leverage against the other for its own ends. Germany utilized rumors of an exchange of the Polish Corridor for acquiescence to Polish acquisition of Memel and threatened to refer instances of ill-treatment of the German minority to the League of Nations, both matters to which Kaunas was highly sensitive, to extract concessions for its expatriates.⁸¹ In this way, Berlin was able to block and reverse attempts by Smetona to dissolve the regional Seimelis (Landtag for the Germans) in 1927 and 1930, respectively. The Lithuanian government was equally opportunistic, dangling promises of better treatment for the Memel-Germans in return for Berlin's support in regaining Vilnius from Poland.

As a part of the "Voldemaras Course," the foreign policy scheme that Lithuania followed from roughly 1927 until the early 1930s, the conciliatory gesture had almost no discernable impact on the country's relations with Germany.⁸² Certainly Lithuanian *prima facie* adherence to the League of Nations statutes guaranteeing the autonomy of the Memelland brought about a degree of amicability in their interactions, but the Reich's

desire for the territory's return never dissipated. Germany needed no impetus to stimulate its anti-Polish rhetoric, and the cumulative result of the convenience friendship was a one-sided bargain that gave Berlin a potential ally to safeguard East Prussia in the event of a conflict with Poland without necessitating any reciprocity.⁸³ This made Lithuania somewhat dependent upon the Soviet Union for help in regard to the Vilnius issue, although in reality little tangible assistance was offered.⁸⁴ Overall, the "Voldemaras Course" was a dangerous charter for Lithuania, as it actively sought the aid of two countries, Germany and the Soviet Union, that had very specific designs on the Baltic nation that were detrimental to the nation's health. Further, collaboration with its two neighbors severely undermined Lithuania's credibility in the West, particularly in France, although its true impact was negligible in this regard, as Paris favored Poland over Lithuania in the region.⁸⁵

In 1929, Voldemaras was dismissed from office while in Geneva and replaced by Juozas Tūbelis. This was in response to Voldemaras' increasing involvement with the *Geležinis Vilkas* and movement to the political right, which threatened Smetona's position and was in conflict with his own ideological preferences.⁸⁶ The installment of the new prime minister had little practical bearing on national policy, as Tūbelis was Smetona's brother-in-law and the appointment only served to cover Smetona's seizure of absolute power. This move also signaled a fundamental change in Lithuanian foreign policy, which, under the guidance of Foreign Minister Stasys Lozoraitis, was to favor policy coordination with Lithuania's neighbors and, more importantly, to attempt to restore diplomatic ties with Poland.⁸⁷

In theory, the scheme ensured Lithuanian security through a clash of German,

Soviet, and Polish interests predicated on each country's aversion to Lithuania being drawn too far into any one sphere. Should that occur, Lozoraitis assumed that the other two would oppose the aggressor. In practice, affairs were far more complicated. The "Lozoraitis Concept," as the policy came to be called, did not adequately account for Vilnius, which was the lynchpin of Lithuanian policy, but merely served as an exploitative issue to Germany and the Soviet Union. Both countries signed non-aggression pacts with Poland in 1932 and 1934, respectively, which, for Lithuania, dictated that policy coordination entail a *détente* with Warsaw. The Lithuanian government regarded the return of Vilnius as a prerequisite condition for any easing of tensions, but on this issue, the Poles were not to be moved. Attempts at rapprochement were further stymied by Smetona's insistence that Germany and Russia continue to be solicited for support in the Vilnius issue, as the continued attempts only provided Warsaw with a pretext for rebuffing Lithuanian overtures.⁸⁸

The "Lozoraitis Concept" and Smetona's own *Viduraine Linija*, or non-alignment schema, lost their momentum and viability with Hitler's rise to power, due to his lack of immediate interest in Lithuania and Germany's steadily improving relations with Poland. Lithuania, along with the rest of the Baltic region, was a part of Hitler's *Lebensraum* concept, but that was work for the future. For the time being, the German dictator needed a period of international calm while he consolidated his domestic position and, to this end, he signed a trade agreement with Lithuania in 1933 that provided a modest boost to the Lithuanian economy and partially repaired flagging relations.⁸⁹

By the winter of 1933 and early 1934, affairs between the two countries had taken a decided turn for the worse as a result of increased National Socialist activity among the

Memel-German population in Klaipėda. The Lithuanian government suspected that the agitation was being orchestrated from Berlin and began a series of crack-downs on the NSDAP affiliated groups, arresting local party leaders and banning the parties on July 13, 1934.⁹⁰ The situation continued to simmer for the remainder of the year and into 1935 when, under the auspices of preventing a National Socialist revolt, the Lithuanian authorities arrested and imprisoned many leading figures in NSDAP associated circles.⁹¹ In all, 128 Germans were put on trial for treason against the Lithuanian state and undesirable association with the Third Reich, which outraged Hitler and brought about economic reprisals.⁹² The actions of the Lithuanian government may have also contributed to the ultimate downfall of an “Eastern Locarno” treaty, as when that issue was being discussed by Hitler, Anthony Eden, and John Simon in Berlin on March 25, 1935, Hitler flew into a spastic rage at the mere mention of Lithuania.⁹³

The remainder of 1935 passed in similar fashion, with Germany continuing to exert economic pressure on Lithuania with little effect. However, by the spring of 1936, it became clear to Germany that its attempted punishment of Lithuania was having a negligible impact and was only really affecting Memel-Germans, as Kaunas had offset the economic blow by seeking out new trading partners.⁹⁴ This forced a reappraisal of the situation in Berlin, although Germany’s options were limited. Hitler had withdrawn the country from the League of Nations on October 21, 1933, which became official on that same date in 1935, leaving no recourse through that body. Even if Germany had still been a member, it is unlikely that protests would have accomplished much, as the League Council had all but given Lithuania *carte blanche* to handle affairs in the Klaipėda region as it deemed appropriate.⁹⁵ Appeals to the Memelland statute signatories also proved

fruitless, with little more than stern warnings being issued to the Lithuanian government, all of which were ignored.⁹⁶

Were Germany a lesser power, this would have been a tremendous setback, but such was not the case. In the greater scheme of Hitler's foreign policy, this difficulty with Lithuania was a subplot, adding only a contextual layer. The German dictator's gaze was fixed elsewhere and his attention devoted to matters far bolder and more audacious. Lithuania could wait for the moment.

IV

Hitler's coming to power was viewed as a serious threat to national interest and security in Romania, although this attitude prompted no immediate reorientation of Bucharest's policy towards Germany.⁹⁷ The Third Reich was a distant menace with which Romania shared no common border, affording the country a measure of security, both physical and psychological. An alliance with France, still in force, offered further comfort. However, events soon conspired to draw Romania into a position that necessitated direct interaction with Hitler's Germany and an adjustment of policy to accommodate the changing international landscape.

As a member of the Allies during the First World War, Romania benefited immensely from its participation in the conflict. It had entered the war in 1916 after sitting on the fence in cautious neutrality for the first two years, considering offers by both the Allied and Central Powers and, after gaining the acquiescence of the Entente for possession of Transylvania through the secret 1916 Treaty of Bucharest, invaded the Habsburg Empire on August 27. The offensive was a disaster and resulted in the occupation of nearly the entire country by German forces. After Russia withdrew from

the war, Romanian options were severely limited and the government was forced to make peace with Germany, signing the Treaty of Bucharest on May 7, 1918. In accordance with that document, the Dobrudja region was ceded to Bulgaria and several mountain passes in the Carpathians to Austria-Hungary.⁹⁸ The collapse of the German war effort later in the year provided an opportunity to make significant gains and strengthen Bucharest's position at the bargaining table. To that end, on November 10, Romania reneged on its treaty with the Central Powers and launched a new offensive into Transylvania in the closing moments of the conflict. This invasion was far more successful than the first, given the meager resistance offered due to the utter collapse of the Austro-Hungarian state, and the entire region was occupied with minimal military effort by December.⁹⁹ Formal annexation followed later that month.¹⁰⁰

The experience of the Great War had a profound effect upon Romanian foreign policy over the next two decades, shaping its framework and providing guidance for its course. Occupation and defeat imbued a conviction among the country's leading statesmen that peace could only be preserved through collective security and, in that endeavor, Romania actively participated in the League of Nations. In that forum, the country's permanent representative and sometimes Foreign Minister Nicolae Titulescu continually pushed for diplomatic resolutions to international disputes and argued for the need to maintain good relations among all nations, both large and small. Altruism aside, there was a calculated rationale behind the position. Titulescu believed that the only way in which Romania could ensure its continued independence was through international order and, based on this scheme, he pursued that agenda with great zeal.¹⁰¹ In accordance with that objective and in an effort to guard against Hungarian irredentism,

Romania, along with Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, formed the Little Entente in 1921, with France supplementing the defensive arrangement.¹⁰² Bucharest was also concerned about Soviet designs on Bessarabia, as Russia had never accepted the region's union with Romania during the confusion of the Russian Civil War. Although the two neighbors had pledged to resolve the matter peacefully, an air of suspicion lingered.¹⁰³

Romania held to this policy for the duration of the 1920s, primarily focusing its attention inward in an attempt to master the country's myriad of social and economic woes. Land reform was instituted by the government in an attempt to ward off communism and, although drawing criticism from some medium sized landholders, the redistribution policy was mostly effective.¹⁰⁴ The economic benefits from this policy were, however, not forthcoming. Overall agricultural yields during the decade and into the 1930s were significantly less than their pre-war levels, and the government's emphasis on manufacturing and heavy industry dictated that insufficient capital was earmarked for the new smallholders, leaving them in the lurch.¹⁰⁵ The reform process also encumbered the recipients of plots with debts to the previous land-holders, although the mechanics of redistribution technically made them indentured to the state.¹⁰⁶ This, coupled with low international market prices for wheat and cereals, Romania's primary crops, negated any profit, however meager, for the peasantry and inclined Bucharest to seek out trade agreements that would keep the country fiscally solvent.

Expansion of the nation's borders at the end of the war drastically remolded the compositional ethnography of the country, creating considerable minority friction that the Romanian government found difficult to manage. Alien nationalities such as Hungarians, Germans, Jews, and Ruthenians were never truly integrated into the larger societal

construct or accepted by the *Regateni* (Romanians who resided within the pre-World War I borders, or the old-kingdom) and faced discrimination at the hands of the Romanian bureaucracy. Anti-minority policies were enacted and, in Transylvania, demagyarization was encouraged among all groups. Germans in the region quickly took to the spirit embodied in the effort and, with alacrity, began to rediscover their cultural identity while Jewish residents responded with far less enthusiasm, outwardly demonstrating a fondness for the old Magyar administration that they believed to be fairer and more efficient. The considerable Hungarian minority was especially feared for its political acumen and subsequently became the target, both direct and indirectly, of Bucharest's xenophobic onslaught. Although harsh in tone and direction, the effects of the Romanian government's policies were mitigated by the inefficacy of the country's highly centralized and clumsy bureaucratic system. However, the slack was compensated for by the younger generation of Romanians who, having seized the banner of nationalism, put the governmental line into practice, much to the detriment of Magyar, Jew, and German alike.¹⁰⁷ This created a cycle of antagonism that compounded already existent internal division, which, in turn, was detrimental to relations with both Germany and Hungary.

Thus, when Hitler came to power, the Romanian disposition towards Germany was decidedly negative. Poor treatment of the ethnic-German minority played a role in souring relations with the Nazi regime, although attempts by the NSDAP *Auslands-Organisation*, or Foreign Organization, to meddle in Romanian domestic politics had an equally detrimental effect.¹⁰⁸ Initially neither side displayed any interest in rectifying the situation, and Titulescu, ever the opportunist, used the unfriendly atmosphere and perceived menace from the Reich as an expedient in his designs to make the Little

Entente a more cohesive alliance. The “Pact of Reorganization” was signed in Geneva in mid-February 1933, theoretically inaugurating a new period of cooperation between the Entente members, who now swore to respect and consider each other’s vital interests when conducting foreign policy. In reality, little changed. The alliance was still only aimed at Hungary and remained strictly defensive in nature. Titulescu’s primary motivation for the reorganization was his concern about the possibility of Czechoslovak and Yugoslav rapprochement with the Soviet Union, which would undermine Romania’s position in the long-standing dispute with Moscow over Bessarabia. To gain support on that particular issue, he had to agree to a wide-ranging statute that encompassed all the member states’ foreign policy concerns as well, which, due to the continuing animosity between Germany and Czechoslovakia, made Bucharest party to Berlin and Prague’s mutual hostility without any real cause.¹⁰⁹

At this early stage of the Hitler-era in Europe, this action had no significant impact on the general course of Romanian foreign policy, but it is demonstrative of the manner in which Bucharest conducted and would continue to administer its relations. The “reorganization” of the Entente was a stopgap measure intended to fulfill a specific and immediate need in Romanian policy, and Titulescu pursued the matter with that aim strictly in mind. At the time, the cards seemed to be in his favor. The Little Entente was supposedly more cohesive and viable as an alliance, which, in keeping with Titulescu’s principle of collective security, offered a measure of protection in international relations. France, the broker of Eastern Europe, was still interested and participatory in the region, providing a further defensive bulwark against aggression. However, the house was flimsy. Romania’s alliance, for all its propaganda of being a “superior international unit”

that constituted a multinational Great Power, was a far cry from that status.¹¹⁰ The Entente was capable of handling Hungary or punishing Bulgaria, but incapable of warding off a concerted effort by a major European power.¹¹¹ Relying upon the French was equally a gamble. Although vocally pledged to the security of East Central Europe, political divisions within the French government and an uncertain British commitment to its once erstwhile ally made dependence on Paris a risk.¹¹² Further, the entire affair subtly placed Romania in a position between Germany and the Soviet Union, exactly where Titulescu believed it foolish to be, lest the country be swallowed by either.¹¹³ Still, the short-term gain was enough to justify the endeavor.

Relations between Germany and Romania remained cool for the rest of 1933 and into 1934, with Hitler finally taking steps towards rapprochement that autumn. In October, he instructed Hermann Göring to inform the Romanian government via their minister in Berlin, Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen, that the Reich had no interest in supporting Hungarian irredentism and was committed only to revision of the non-territorial aspects of the Versailles treaty.¹¹⁴ The move was intended to facilitate a rapprochement with a message tailored to Romanian concerns and meant to diffuse responsibility for revisionist clamor onto Italian shoulders. As further enticement and to demonstrate Germany's sincerity, an offer was made to increase the level of German trade with Romania from 5 million to 25 million Reichsmarks.¹¹⁵ The overtures were treated with skepticism, as both Titulescu and King Carol II feared this was a cover for German political penetration of the country.¹¹⁶ However, despite these concerns, economic need won out and the two sides entered into a series of negotiations, with a deal finally being concluded on March 23, 1935.¹¹⁷

The German-Romanian Commercial Treaty was beneficial to both sides, alleviating some of Germany's grain needs and inserting much needed foreign capital into the Romanian market.¹¹⁸ Berlin also achieved its desired economic penetration of Southeastern Europe, which it hoped would lead to increased political influence.¹¹⁹ However, absent from the agreement was the one resource vital to Hitler's clandestine rearmament program: oil. Romania and Germany had had a preexisting treaty for petroleum signed in June 1930 and, because of this arrangement and Bucharest's insistence that petroleum be purchased with currency rather than industrial equipment, no provision for its delivery was worked in to the new treaty. Because of this snag and the lack of resolution on the issue, it appears that the Germans assumed that oil would still be received as per the 1930 deal until a satisfactory work-around could be devised, whereas the Romanians behaved as if the new arrangement replaced and invalidated it. Owing to the duration and detail of the negotiations, it is highly unlikely that the issue simply fell through the cracks and was lost amid the shuffle. Rather the Romanians purposely stalled on the issue, using promises of future resolution and numerous accusations of German recalcitrance to offload their grain without making any concessions on oil. This was Titulescu's method of maintaining freedom of action and staving off a German monopolization of Romanian trade.¹²⁰

As a Francophile, Titulescu was very much interested in seeing Romania continue to be aligned towards France, although circumstance made this a difficult course. French economic needs did not mesh well with Romanian output, whereas the German market was complimentary to its Southeastern European counterpart, which led to a gravitating of the two countries towards each other due to mutual interest.¹²¹ The trade agreement

exemplified this and, from 1935 onward, German imports from Romania steadily increased.¹²² Still, Titulescu tried to keep his government from sliding too far into the German orbit and, while conducting the economic negotiations, he actively tried to facilitate an expansion of the French alliance system in Eastern Europe by pushing for Soviet inclusion. By adding Russia to the pact, he hoped to kill two birds with one stone, by creating a formidable deterrent to potential German aggression and to deprive the Third Reich of a possible ally.¹²³ The scheme never came to fruition as Titulescu planned, despite the conclusion of French-Soviet and Czechoslovak-Soviet mutual assistance agreements in May 1935, since King Carol and the majority of the Romanian government were opposed to any involvement in the arrangement because it would require allowing the Red Army to transverse Romanian territory.¹²⁴ Consequently, Carol forbade Titulescu to enter into negotiations with the Soviet Union, and Romanian participation in the Paris-Prague-Moscow axis was stifled.

This did not immediately produce a wave of relief in Berlin, even though the rumor of Romania becoming party to such an arrangement was cause for concern. German diplomats were continually requesting updates regarding Titulescu's views on rapprochement with the Soviets, and the issue almost completely dominated relations between the two countries for the remainder of 1935.¹²⁵ Even confirmation that no negotiations were taking place from King Carol failed to diminish German interest in the issue, and it would not be until December that Titulescu himself publicly denied the rumors in the Romanian parliament.¹²⁶ Titulescu had, by this time, virtually no domestic support for what was quickly becoming a personal crusade but was still vocal about the plan until February 1936, when he finally put the matter to rest. From his vantage point

in Berlin, Hitler could only have viewed the turn of events with a certain degree of delight. German fears of encirclement by a ring of French allies were reduced and, with Soviet troops unable to reach the Reich directly without illegally entering either Romania or Poland, cover was offered for a major foreign policy endeavor that he was about to unleash.

V

Following the conclusion of the 1934 German-Polish non-aggression pact, relations between the two countries became less tense, and attempts were made by each nation to portray each other positively at home.¹²⁷ Still, serious issues remained unresolved. Specifically, the long-standing tariff war and minority difficulties, both complications that were sidestepped in the effort to negotiate the pact, needed to be addressed promptly lest the goodwill personified by the agreement should ebb prematurely.¹²⁸ The former was settled in relatively short order with a supplemental trade agreement signed on March 5 that ended the customs war and was intended to bolster the general upswing in public sentiment in both Germany and Poland, while the latter remained a thorny matter.¹²⁹ However, amid the more positive atmosphere, doubts were being raised on the Polish side as to the longevity of the pact. Lipski in particular believed that internal forces within Germany would eventually counteract the agreement's spirit and that Warsaw would do well to continue to approach relations with Berlin with caution.¹³⁰

The Polish ambassador's concerns were not unfounded, although for the remainder of 1934, German-Polish relations were more or less amicable with the only contentious issues arising between the two countries being disputes over attempts by the

German government to economically control coal mines in Silesia and Polish management of German industrial assets.¹³¹ Even the issue of Danzig failed to surface, but not for lack of effort. On this issue, Hitler chose to fund the city and restrain the local Nazis, earmarking roughly 1.1 million Reichsmarks monthly for this purpose.¹³²

Discussion of an “Eastern Locarno” treaty, similar in structure and thrust to the series signed in 1925 by Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, and Belgium, prompted further collaboration between Warsaw and Berlin in November. The concept was not well received in either capital, although for markedly different reasons. For Hitler, the proposal would require him to accept multilateral restrictions on German freedom of action and was tantamount to soliciting his acquiescence to and participation in a pact largely directed against himself.¹³³ The latter sentiment was shared by Beck, who believed the whole affair was little more than a thinly veiled French attempt to forge an anti-German bloc under the guise of collective security that pushed Eastern Europe closer to the Soviet Union.¹³⁴ This presented the Polish foreign minister with a dilemma. To reject the proposed arrangement would curry favor in Berlin but alienate Poland from its traditional ally and possibly antagonize Russia unnecessarily. Because Beck was intimately familiar with the German position, he knew that accepting the French plan would incur Hitler’s enmity and likely torpedo all that had been accomplished over the past year.¹³⁵ Inaction and maintenance of the status quo was the pertinent course to follow and, to that end, he hinged Polish participation on Germany’s and refused to provide any guarantees for Czechoslovakia.¹³⁶ This effectively killed any chance that Poland would play a further part in Eastern Locarno discussions and helped to sink the entire affair, which was shelved altogether in the autumn of 1935.

German-Polish relations continued to improve throughout 1935, building upon the goodwill born over the previous year. Both countries remained solid in their opposition to the Eastern Locarno agreement despite French pressure for its realization, and strove to maintain their fragile *détente*. Danzig was still the primary issue that, at any juncture, could cause a hiccup in relations, but so long as the Nazi regime respected Polish rights to the city and restricted its activities to meddling in matters that only affected ethnic Germans, Warsaw was content to look the other way. Even Hitler's announcement of open German rearmament and the reintroduction of conscription on March 16, both measures that were flagrantly in violation of Versailles, failed to elicit any significant reaction from the Poles. Certainly both Beck and Piłsudski were less than ecstatic about the German move but realized that, given Poland's own armaments deficiencies, it would be imprudent to take any action.¹³⁷ However, events beyond Warsaw's control soon left the Polish government in the lurch.

The Final Declaration of the Stresa Conference on April 14, which reaffirmed the Locarno treaties and provided for a united front against further German violations of Versailles, placed Warsaw in an awkward position. The Polish government, which considered its nation among the ranks of the great European powers, felt slighted at not being invited to participate at Stresa, as this was both an affront to that self-perception and a not so subtle indication that this image was not widely accepted.¹³⁸ As a result, Beck was faced with a dilemma. He could act as a leader of the great power he professed Poland to be, and have his country constitute the lone voice of support for German action by standing in opposition to the Stresa Front, possibly sacrificing Warsaw's alliance with France in the process. Alternatively, he could bow to Western pressure and tow the

conference line, which would complicate relations with Germany and slightly diminish Polish prestige. Prevalent sentiments within the country made the second option the more sensible and, consequently, Beck decided to join the Western Powers in a united front against Hitler.¹³⁹ This came as a shock to Berlin, as conversations between the German ambassador to Warsaw, Hans Adolf von Moltke, and the Polish Deputy Foreign Minister, Count Jan Szembek, in early April had confirmed Poland's negative disposition to multilateral arrangements and a desire to build upon what had already been accomplished in the East.¹⁴⁰ In a possible retaliatory move, on May 2 the German government decided to suspend its subsidization of Danzig, which instigated a trade and currency crisis that was not resolved until the end of August 1936.¹⁴¹

The economic predicament was not sufficient in and of itself to seriously damage German-Polish relations, but the flaring of Danzig issues and the revival of talk about an Eastern Locarno pact over the remainder of 1935 and into 1936 served to create tension between the two countries. In May, Beck reaffirmed to Moltke the long-standing Polish position on any eastern multilateral arrangement and since France had just recently concluded bilateral treaties with both the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, he considered the matter dead.¹⁴² During a subsequent conversation Beck clarified the situation further, relating to the German ambassador that discussions with Pierre Laval, the French Foreign Minister, had resulted in a clearing of the air of Franco-Polish difficulties and he had gained Laval's acceptance of Poland's special circumstances, which now afforded Warsaw a free hand in the handling of its affairs without risk to its alliance with France.¹⁴³ This, coupled with a requisite period of amicability following Marshal Piłsudski's death from liver cancer on May 12 and assurances from Beck that

Poland intended to continue its late leader's policies, stemmed any abrupt deterioration in relations but could not indefinitely halt that process.¹⁴⁴ Questions over the Danzig currency issue remained unresolved and, by August, the entire matter had morphed into a larger discussion of German-Polish trade discrepancies.¹⁴⁵

Specifically, the Polish government believed that it was owed 29.5 million zloty in rail-transit dues, which Warsaw believed the Germans were withholding in an attempt to extort Poland's acceptance of National Socialist revision to the Danzig constitution.¹⁴⁶ Arthur Greiser, a member of the *Schutzstaffel*, or SS, and eventual *Obergruppenführer* within that organization, had been elected president of the Danzig senate, and his confrontational methods of administration created an atmosphere that raised Polish concerns about possible infringement upon the nation's vital interests in the port. In a tactical move, Hitler chose not to restrain the Danzig Nazis as he had done in the past and let the situation play itself out, even going so far as to propose an alliance against Soviet Russia and offering the Ukraine and control of Lithuania as a way of testing Warsaw's limits.¹⁴⁷ Poland was not, however, to be moved by promises without guarantees, rebuffing the proposal and sticking to its position. Eventually, the Polish government suspended all rail traffic across the Corridor in its own effort to bring the Germans to the negotiating table, although by February 1936, discussion of the issue was becoming more infrequent due to Hitler's attention being focused on other pressing business.

VI

In the aftermath of the botched Austrian Nazi coup attempt and murder of Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuß on July 25, 1934, the Hungarian government sought to gather as much information as it could on German intentions as regarded Austria. The

reply received to its official inquiry from Hitler was lengthy, idealistic, and overtly neutral, expressly desiring a manifestation of popular will, much like himself, to lead the country, but doubtful that such a scenario would come to fruition.¹⁴⁸ Contained within the message were subtle undertones to the effect that an *Anschluss* was inevitable and that Hungarian acquiescence to such an enterprise would not be forgotten. Although not specifically expressed, Hitler's message was clear: resign Austria to its fate and focus Hungarian attention elsewhere. The locale the German dictator had in mind was Hungary's northern neighbor, Czechoslovakia, and directing Budapest's attention there served two distinct purposes. First, it would shift Hungarian revisionism away from Yugoslavia and Romania, and second, it would allow for combined pressure on Prague. As an added benefit, collaboration with Germany would afford Hungary protection from the Little Entente.¹⁴⁹

For Gömbös, the Hungarian prime minister, the scheme was a hard sell domestically. National irredentism was largely Danubian in focus and there was a prevalent skepticism as to the true nature of German intentions. The warming of Berlin's relations with Yugoslavia and the negative portrayal of Hungary in the German press seemed to confirm this duplicity. Despite these obstacles, Gömbös saw his country's future aligned with Germany and, once the international fervor over the assassination of the Yugoslav King Alexander and French Foreign Minister Jean Louis Barthou by the Croatian *Ustaše*, or revolutionary movement, had dissipated, he began to take steps to move Hungary in that direction. In late 1934, he sacked twenty-two generals and replaced them with cronies loyal to himself, ensuring the military's support of his policies, and in 1935 he signed a grain for arms deal with Germany. Gömbös continued

to press his luck, forcing Béla Imrédy and Miklós Kállay, two key supporters of the Bethlen opposition faction, to resign from the government, which facilitated its rapid collapse and prompted Admiral Horthy to call for new elections in March.¹⁵⁰

The scheme, while producing the absolute majority Gömbös had hoped for, quickly backfired on him. Bethlen, his staunch opponent, was re-elected and able to attract enough support from conservative circles to block the Prime Minister's plans to reorganize the country as a corporate state along the Italian model, forcing Gömbös to drop the plan altogether. This precipitated a split in the fascist coalition, with the more extreme faction of the Hungarian right moving away from Gömbös, believing him not to be truly committed to the ideology's tenets.¹⁵¹ The cumulative result was an unstable parliamentary majority that could only rarely be brought together on specific issues and the slow but steady isolation of Gömbös within the government.

Hungarian foreign policy was also becoming increasingly impotent due to Germany's reorientation of its own policies. Budapest's guarantee of Austrian independence in the March 1934 Danubian Agreement had never sat well with Hitler, and the support he had once given to Gömbös was now becoming a hindrance to friendship with Romania and Yugoslavia due to their concern over Hungarian revisionism.¹⁵² A late 1935 meeting between Hitler and Gömbös confirmed this new German attitude, and the message then was the same as it had been in June 1933, although now Hitler stressed the need for Hungarian rapprochement with its neighbors.¹⁵³ Despite running counter to national aims, Gömbös related to Hitler that this could be made domestically palatable regarding Yugoslavia, as the Vojvodina territory ceded to the southern Slavic kingdom was miniscule in comparison to Hungary's other territorial adjustments. However, any

easing of the tensions with Romania would be difficult due to Titulescu's untrustworthiness.¹⁵⁴ Though not explicitly stated, it is likely that Gömbös was making reference to the Romanian government's treatment of its Hungarian minority. Whatever the case may have been, the result of the meeting was that revision would only take place within a German approved framework and that Berlin's goodwill was becoming increasingly tied to economic and military concessions. The German-Italian *détente* that resulted from Hitler's support of Mussolini during Italy's invasion of Abyssinia earlier in the year further boxed the Hungarians in, removing Budapest's only viable source of support.

For a man like Gömbös who believed that domestic political support was intrinsically related to the ability to achieve foreign policy success, this was more of a death-sentence than were his rapidly deteriorating kidneys. The political base Gömbös once had been able to count on was now abandoning him, and he was losing Horthy's confidence.¹⁵⁵ In government circles, there was also a growing fear that, should Admiral Horthy suddenly die, Gömbös would declare himself regent with unlimited power, establish a Hitler-esque dictatorship, and throw Hungary headlong into an alignment with Germany at the expense of the country's vital interests.¹⁵⁶ Plans were made to remove him from power, but Gömbös saved them the effort. In March 1936 he left the country to seek treatment for his kidney disease in Munich, and in Budapest it was decided to let him expire there, which he did on October 6.

His death marked the end of a specific chapter in Hungarian foreign policy that saw the Hungarian government move closer to Germany in a manner that, in the immediate aftermath of Gömbös' departure from power, was beneficial for Hungary in

the short-term. Increased trade had initially brought high prices for Hungarian agricultural surpluses and, after 1935, armaments and industrial capital. This helped to stabilize the national economy. It also contributed to stemming the rising tide of fascism, much to the dismay of Gömbös and his supporters, but to the relief of the traditional conservative Magyar elite who were loathe to see their grip on power erode. There were, however, long-term risks that came with these gains. Prosperity was largely the result of Gömbös tying the German and Hungarian economies together, which gave the Third Reich an incredible amount of power over Hungary and made disengagement nearly impossible.¹⁵⁷ By 1936, this process was well underway but by no means complete, and if Budapest had so chosen, escape from the German orbit was still an option, although a difficult one. At the time, though, there was no need to consider such a contingency, as the European political landscape was testy but not odious or threatening. However, shortly after dawn on March 17, that atmosphere would drastically change.

VII

Relations between Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Lithuania over the period from January 1933 to March 1936 were highly subject to the particular national aims of each country and dependent upon how a potential partner fitted those plans. With the exception of the Polish and Lithuanian governments, which were in a *de facto* state of war, each country remained in diplomatic contact with the others, with either ambassadors or ministers occupying posts in the various national capitals. The mechanics of their intercourse were also polite, and no institutional dysfunction inhibited their interactions. This created a diplomatic environment that was every bit as active as that of the western powers and just as well connected: perhaps even more so, given that

regional politics in east central Europe were highly subject to the actions of the traditional powers. On the periphery of Europe, the Soviet Union was also an omnipresent actor in these nation's considerations due to Russia's proximity, requiring Moscow to be treated with more *gravitas* than in the west. The effect of this was that, as a region, there was a strong focus on collective security beyond that of the League of Nations or French and British guarantees and a strong desire to base that on internal strength without "great power" assistance.

Lithuania was perhaps the exception to this generalization, although not for lack of need or effort. The 1920 war with Poland and subsequent loss of its historic national capital, Vilnius, injected a degree of rigidity into Lithuanian foreign policy, which became entirely directed at regaining the city and subordinated all other considerations to that aim.¹⁵⁸ Consequently, the cultivating of relations with Hungary and Romania suffered, as neither country was interested in helping Lithuania achieve its objective, and both were more favorably disposed to Poland anyway. This forced the Lithuanian government to attempt to utilize Soviet and German pressure as leverage against Warsaw, although this was a dangerous proposition, as both powers had interests of their own in the Baltic, which were detrimental to the region's continued independence.

The failure of both the "Voldemaras Course" and the "Lozoraitis Concept" by the time Hitler had ascended to the German Chancellorship, caused President Antanas Smetona to drastically reappraise Lithuania's current policy and to discern the country's true friends and foes. The options were few. Great Britain had long lost interest in the region and the French were in alliance with Poland, offering no potential for the return of Vilnius. Earlier schemes that had involved both Germany and Russia had resulted in

failure and, like the Lithuanian gestures, their friendship was little more than thinly veiled opportunism. Turning to the other Baltic nations, Latvia and Estonia, was a possibility, but there were complications there as well. Neither governments had any interest in embroiling themselves in the ongoing conflict between Lithuania and Poland over a city in which they had little interest. Estonia even went so far as to rebuff Lithuanian advances in 1934 so as not to damage its relationship with Warsaw. Faced with a myriad of poor prognoses, Smetona decided that the only viable option was to seek a rapprochement with Poland, despite the outstanding Vilnius issue.¹⁵⁹

Initial Lithuanian attempts at restoring relations in 1934 through indirect and unofficial means were rebuked out of hand by Piłsudski, who refused to deal with the Lithuanian government in any manner other than official.¹⁶⁰ However, the Marshal soon relented, realizing that with the state of German-Polish relations being as good as they had been in years and German-Lithuanian relations suffering due to increased NSDAP agitation in Klaipėda, this would be an opportune moment to normalize relations between the two countries. Unofficial talks began in late January, but nothing came of them. The discussions became stalled over Vilnius and Lithuania's insistence that Poland at least recognize the legitimacy of Lithuanian claims to the city, which was not forthcoming. No further movement occurred on the issue until a year later in January 1935, when Smetona and Foreign Minister Lozoraitis decided on a new approach to the same issue. Reestablishing relations with Warsaw would become the primary goal of Lithuanian policy, and to this end, the two men favored a plan that worked in gradual steps, avoiding any direct discussion of Vilnius while at the same time not relinquishing national claims to the city.¹⁶¹ Despite these conciliatory gestures, the effort ended in failure.

In reality, it was unrealistic of Smetona or Lozoraitis to believe that any offer, no matter how finely worded or delicately packaged, would move the Poles on the issue. Piłsudski and Beck had no obligation to do anything, as Poland controlled Vilnius and, consequently, held the trump card in negotiations. Certainly, Warsaw desired normal relations with its northern neighbor, but on its own terms. However, in 1934 and 1935, these were somewhat unclear. There were those within the Polish government, Piłsudski among them, who wished to see the old Commonwealth of the seventeenth-century reconstituted and thought that if Vilnius was denied to Lithuania, Kaunas would eventually warm to the idea of union along that historic model. Others went as far as to deny the legitimacy of the Baltic republic itself.¹⁶² Although such extreme sentiments were pervasive within the Polish government, they had little bearing on Piłsudski, who, despite his vacillating tactical approach to the situation, ultimately desired reconciliation with the Lithuanians as part of his greater *Międzymorze*, or between the seas, concept.¹⁶³

Piłsudski had long been a proponent of Prometheism, the notion that the best way to destabilize the Soviet Union was to support non-ethnic Russian nationalism within that country's borders, but events in the early 1930s had caused him to change his views regarding the pursuit of that agenda.¹⁶⁴ Specifically, the 1932 non-aggression pact with Moscow and the rise of Hitler in Germany made it clear to the Marshal that a shift of focus was required, and, consequently, the entire project lost steam.¹⁶⁵ Still, Piłsudski did not let the slow, gradual demise of Prometheism deter him from actively seeking to facilitate the creation of his Polish-dominated *Międzymorze* bloc, to which Lithuania and the entire Baltic region was integral. By the time of his death in May 1935, both governments were on the verge of normalizing relations, and the project seemed one step

closer to realization. The *détente* was, however, short-lived, and in January 1936 the Marshal's protégé Beck berated Lithuania in a public speech, eliciting a similarly harsh response from Smetona and effectively slamming the door on any further improvement in relations between the two countries.¹⁶⁶

This did not put an end to Polish aspirations for a *Międzymorze* alliance in East Central Europe; rather, it merely signaled a change in the tactical approach that Beck, as Piłsudski's foreign policy protégé and successor, would adopt in his prosecution of the scheme. Although Lithuania could be crossed off the list of potential allies, Latvia and Estonia, two nations with which Poland had good relations, were still possibilities. Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia, the Scandinavian countries, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Italy, and Greece were all equally positively disposed to Poland and, in mid-1935 and early 1936, were potential alliance partners should *Międzymorze* be presented properly.¹⁶⁷ However, this was nearly impossible. Disputes between the various countries proved to be insurmountable obstacles and Beck, although a talented diplomat, had neither the charm nor charisma to unite such a broad bloc under any kind of leadership, let alone manage to get it to agree to look for direction from Warsaw. As a result, he began to shift his own focus and that of the whole *Międzymorze* concept to something far more realistic: his "Third Europe" project.

Technically, Beck envisioned a "Third Europe" bloc to be no less expansive than Piłsudski's *Międzymorze*, encompassing much of the same territory and still to be dominated by Poland, although there were key differences. First, Czechoslovakia, a country whose existence Beck was not entirely wedded to, was to be excluded from the concept, as was Lithuania.¹⁶⁸ The Polish Foreign Minister had also decided to narrow his

focus to Poland's southern neighbors, Hungary and Romania, working to establish good relations with each. To that end, his task was eased by Poland already possessing an alliance with the Romanians, having signed a series of defensive treaties with Bucharest in 1921, 1926, and 1931, although differences between Beck and Titulescu had soured the relationship considerably by 1934.¹⁶⁹ Conceptually, the two were not far removed from each other, both holding collective security to be fundamental to regional safety. Where they differed was in tactical demeanor. Titulescu sought to include the whole of Europe in containing a revived Germany, whereas Beck desired to see the creation of an independent bloc that was capable of providing for its own protection and able to abstain from the affairs of the Great Powers. An effort was made to incorporate Poland into the Little Entente before Piłsudski's death, but even Romanian mediation proved unable to reconcile the territorial dispute between Warsaw and Prague.¹⁷⁰ Further complicating matters were rumors of Titulescu's attempts at rapprochement with the Soviet Union, a fundamental violation of the 1931 defensive treaty's spirit and an undermining of Beck's scheme.¹⁷¹ This left Polish-Romanian relations by early 1936 in a state of steady decline, although the damage was not irreparable.

In contrast to Warsaw's relationship with Romania, Polish-Hungarian relations had taken an opposite course from 1933 to 1936. Due to historic bonds, the two countries harbored impressions of each other that were generally positive, and their diplomacy was courteous and cordial. Though long in gestation, Hitler's appointment as Chancellor in 1933 prompted Piłsudski to reach an understanding with the Hungarians, as the nation formed both an integral part of his *Międzymorze* concept and offered an opportunity for Polish influence to penetrate beyond the Carpathians.¹⁷² Kálmán de Kánya, the

Hungarian Foreign Minister, and Gömbös both held international designs similar in scope to Piłsudski, envisioning a similarly large bloc consisting of Hungary, Poland, Austria, Germany, and Italy. Working towards this end, official meetings were held in Warsaw during October 1934 to strengthen the ancient bonds between the two countries, but ultimately nothing significant was accomplished. Gömbös and the Hungarian delegation returned to Budapest with little more than assurances from Piłsudski that Poland would never take up arms against Hungary and the lingering echoes of the Marshal's lecture on the need for Hungary to mend its relations with the Romanians.¹⁷³

This latter point, centered almost entirely on Romania's acquisition of Transylvania in the aftermath of the First World War, proved to be a huge obstacle in the development of Hungarian-Romanian relations. The stakes were too high for any simple fix, and the fact that the region was regarded by the Magyars as the ancient cradle of their civilization all but ensured that Budapest would be loathe to temper its irredentist clamor.¹⁷⁴ At the time, this was of little consequence to the Romanian government, which could rely on the relative safety the Little Entente provided and combined German and Polish pressure on the Hungarian government to seek reconciliation with its neighbor as further insurance. However, it was a tenuous security guarantee, as in principle, neither Warsaw nor Berlin recognized the validity of the Treaty of Trianon and it was only their conflicted views on exactly how East Central Europe should be politically oriented that prevented that particular issue from surfacing.¹⁷⁵

Regional scheming was at the collective heart of East Central Europe and each nation pursued its international agenda with its own vital interests in mind. Although the dividends gained, if any, from January 1933 to early 1936 were few, they were

significant because they set the precedent for future activity. Poland, with its foreign policy becoming almost exclusively directed by Beck, worked toward the realization of his “Third Europe,” a tactical restructuring of Piłsudski’s *Międzymorze* project and domination of the region. By 1936, he still had far to go in that endeavor, but it is clear from those first tentative steps that this was the direction in which the pseudo-Great Power was being steered. The Hungarians were thinking in broadly similar terms, with a grand Central European alliance system central to both Gömbös and Kánya’s plans. National weakness made such machinations unrealistic and, compounded by German economic penetration, began the slow process of drawing Budapest to the brink of an unalterable decision, although that point of no return was still in the future. Romania was in an equally unenviable position, faced with the allure of German currency and capital for its fragile economy, but wary of the consequences of intimate dealings with the Third Reich. Circumstances were, however, favorable to Bucharest. The Reich was still distant, and faith in the Little Entente and collective security embodied in the League of Nations provided a measure of comfort. As it had done before, Romania could hedge its bets and make its decisions without haste. Only Lithuania was hemmed in by circumstance. Three of its neighbors were hostile, and the Baltic Entente, created in 1934, was inadequate to counter a serious threat by any of them. Poland, Lithuania’s arch-nemesis and possessor of Vilnius, was unfriendly, but the possibility of rapprochement offered the potential to reintegrate the country into the region. However, the Lithuanian government’s rigidity on the Vilnius issue provided Beck with the initiative and control of the entire situation, leaving Kaunas subject to international whims. Further muddling the picture for the region’s governments was Hitler and his

Third Reich, which on Saturday, March 7, 1936, entered the demilitarized Rhineland in violation of Versailles.

CHAPTER 2: IN THE MIDDLE

Shortly after one in the afternoon on March 7, 1936, elements of the newly rechristened Wehrmacht crossed the Hohenzollern Bridge in Cologne. Their arrival was unannounced, but as word began to spread throughout the city, an air of excitement soon spread. Men and children greeted the force with cheers and applause, while all along the soldier's path women strewed flowers. The reoccupation of the Rhineland had begun. Although the selective press coverage by Joseph Goebbels depicted the scene as a veritable triumph of German will and a bold, brazen stroke by Hitler against Versailles, the situation was far removed from the confident reconquest shown on newsreels throughout the country and around the world.¹

The move had been a gamble and, during the immediate forty-eight hours following the Rhineland's remilitarization, Hitler and the German high command were wrought with anxiety over the possible Western response. Their fears were not unjustified. The force that had been ordered into the demilitarized zone numbered only 30,000 men in total, with a scant 3,000 advancing into the region in depth, and faced a potential adversarial force that, with French allies included, was nearly 200 divisions strong.² With German rearmament only recently begun as outlined by the army High Command in 1933, the Wehrmacht in 1936 was not yet the formidable force it would demonstrate itself to be in 1939 and, being ill-equipped to face such massive opposition, had been ordered to offer no resistance and withdraw if confronted by the French. Even Hitler later confided that "we would have had to withdraw with our tails between our legs"³ in the event of any reprisal from Paris. However, the repercussions that

Germany's dictator and his Minister of War, General Werner von Blomberg dreaded, were not forthcoming.

Unknown to the Germans, the French government had already made the decision not to oppose any move by Berlin into the Rhineland, eliminating the principle threat that Hitler and his generals had expected and rendering their concern unnecessary.⁴ Although the German force that eventually marched into the region was only 30,000 men, the French military included SS, SA, and other Nazi organizations among its combatant projections and estimated German actionable strength to number roughly 295,000 men, far more than the skeletal active army France maintained along its eastern frontier. Those soldiers already in the field were intended to do no more than defend the border while the army was mobilized, which would take seventeen days to complete. This afforded the Germans precious time to consolidate their gains and prepare a defense with their phantom army for a French offensive that its psychology, spirit, and capabilities precluded. Further, the military possessed no plan for any action in the event Germany moved to remilitarize the Rhineland. This, coupled with a lack of will to fight by the British and an indication from Mussolini that, as far as he was concerned, both Locarno and Stresa were dead, left France isolated in its resistance to German revision of Versailles and restricted its possible responses accordingly. Indeed, for Hitler, it truly was the psychological moment to act.⁵

On the other side of Europe, all eyes were trained westward with great interest in how the aftermath of Hitler's *fait accompli* would resonate on the international scene, for each country was very interested in the result. What was dismissed as a domestic political act in the West and explained away to minimize its broader impact was viewed

quite differently by Germany's East Central European neighbors due to their differing relationships with the Third Reich. Hitler had thrown down a gauntlet, and France and Britain failed to accept the challenge. This fact did not go unnoticed by the regional governments and began the process of pushing them towards Germany.⁶

I

In Budapest, the Hungarian government's reaction to Hitler's "Saturday surprise" was generally positive, although it did not come as much of a shock, as Kálmán de Kánya, the foreign minister, had been made aware of the move the previous day. However, others within the government were less well informed. Gyula Gömbös, by now Prime Minister in name only, applauded the German move from his hospital room in Munich with satisfaction, although he was unable to influence Hungarian policy from what was to become his deathbed. Admiral Miklós Horthy, the widely popular regent, was equally impressed by the bold stroke and thoroughly pleased with the manner in which he believed Locarno to have been rendered void. As Hungary was too weak to follow Germany's example, Horthy hoped that this reassertion of German might on the world stage would lead to benefits for Hungary. Specifically, he wished to see Hitler pursue a Danubian policy much as Bismarck had, with the Magyars to be utilized as proxies for German hegemony in the region.⁷

Oddly, the enthusiasm expressed by members of the Hungarian government failed to disseminate into the country's foreign policy, since, following the remilitarization of the Rhineland, Budapest began to institute a program that attempted to move the country away from Berlin's influence rather than closer to its erstwhile friend. Known as the "Free Hand" policy, it was designed to keep Hungary aloof from not only Germany but

from the western Allies as well until one side emerged dominant. This was in stark contrast to Gömbös' policy that sought alignment with Germany and his and Kánya's later abortive plans to incorporate both Hungary and the Reich into a larger European bloc consisting of the two along with Austria, Italy and Poland.⁸ Kánya, surprised only by the timing of Hitler's action, saw the potential danger for Hungary shrouded in the otherwise broader positive ramifications, for though the current international order appeared open for reinterpretation, it was limited to German designs.⁹

The name "Free Hand" belied the policy's reality, as it was conceived out of necessity rather than choice.¹⁰ With Kánya's previous attempt to check growing German power having ended in failure, it was the only option that was left. However, technically another still existed: pushing Hungary directly into Berlin's orbit completely on German terms, which was no choice at all. That would have rendered Hungarian aspirations of regaining Transylvania from Romania and the Vojvodina district from Yugoslavia subject to Hitler's whims, based upon how those goals fit his particular needs at a given moment when the issue was broached. Consequently, Kánya formulated his policy purely out of pragmatism, though it was not entirely devoid of creative merit. Theoretically, alignment with Britain was still possible in 1936, although such a drastic reorientation of national foreign policy only truly existed in Horthy's delusions.¹¹ Britain was too far away and uninterested in Hungary for any tangible results to be yielded and tended to defer to France, which was allied with Budapest's enemies, in regard to Danubian politics. For the scenario to retain any viability, Hungary likely would have had to renounce, or, at the very least, tactically set aside its irredentist aims, which the government was unwilling to do.

Conversely, working with Germany held several advantages. Unlike Britain, the Reich was within close proximity and had expressed interest in Hungarian affairs within the context of its greater regional strategy. This made Berlin exploitable for the pursuit of Budapest's own designs in a way that the West was not. The similar social and political development of the two countries since the end of the First World War had also produced regimes that were complimentary in their political outlook and shared the same basic regional goals, namely Danubian border revision and hegemony.¹² No firm German commitment to any other nation offered potential that alignment with the West did not, as Hungary could become a principle collaborator with Germany without being forced too deeply into the arms of the Third Reich. Still, there were risks. Moving Hungary towards Germany required a delicate balance that, if not properly maintained, could throw the country headlong into Germany's orbit by alienating Budapest from the rest of Europe. However, this was deemed worth the risk in the interest of revision.

Once the initial fervor over the remilitarization of the Rhineland had died down, Kánya sought to influence Hitler regarding the duration of the non-aggression pacts he had offered to each of Germany's neighbors in his Reichstag speech of March 7. Of concern was the twenty-five-year term, which, if allowed, would have conflicted with Hungarian interests. Certainly Hungary was not, in early 1936, in any position to act on its revisionist aims, but with the assistance Budapest expected from the Third Reich, Kánya undoubtedly assumed that the country would be by 1961. His mind was, in particular, on Czechoslovakia, and he pushed Hitler to consider a ten-year offer similar in structure to the treaty between Germany and Poland. In his thinking, this would afford Hungary the time to rearm and eventually participate, along with the Germans, in the

destruction of the Czech state within the framework discussed by Hitler and Gömbös in 1933 and 1935. Based upon his concern and lightning quick inquiry regarding the extension of a pact to Czechoslovakia, it appears that even the well informed Kánya was deceived as to Hitler's true intent and actually believed the offers to be genuine. He pestered the Wilhemstrasse until the end of April regarding that issue before finally being given confirmation that the entire matter was nothing more than a "utopian delusion" and that the Reich had no interest in pursuing it further.¹³

During this time, the Hungarians were also probing the Germans for an official expression of friendship or consultation, preferring a document that encompassed both notions as a reward for their hitherto Germanophile policies. Their groping was flatly rebuffed on the grounds that the aftermath of the Rhineland action was not an opportune moment for such a gesture and that it would be Germany, not Hungary, that would determine when such an hour had come. This left the Hungarians in the lurch, since for all their shows of support and friendship toward the Reich, the government in Budapest was left with little tangible benefit. Although the economic deals signed in 1933 were still in effect, they did not offer the kind of capital Kánya, Horthy, and the new prime minister in waiting, Kálmán Darányi, desired. Even a meaningless extension of gratitude in the form of a friendship pact would have served the Hungarian government well to raise its international standing, but the Germans would not budge.¹⁴

This did not deter the Hungarian government from its course, which was slowly becoming very much counter to its official "Free Hand" policy. However, in the interest of revision, Hungary needed to remain on good terms with Germany to secure armaments, even if this meant being relegated to a subordinate position in the

relationship.¹⁵ Still, the Magyars saw opportunity in this, as even from their subordinate position they were very much a part of Hitler's Danubian scheming and felt that they were advantageously placed to influence German policy in the region. Of particular interest to the Hungarian government was the continued independence of Austria as well as the Czechoslovakia question, and in August, Horthy made an unofficial visit to Berchtesgaden to sound Hitler out on both issues. In a meeting that lasted nearly three and a half hours, the Admiral stressed patience in regard to *Anschluss* with Austria, noting that it was only the older generations that hindered union with Germany and that, when they died out, the younger would invariably seek to become absorbed into the Reich.¹⁶ Ostensibly Horthy was attempting to persuade Hitler to allow what the Hungarians viewed as inevitable occur organically, but Hungarian national interest was what he was actually attempting to preserve. An independent Austria guaranteed an alternative outlet for Hungary's agricultural produce and staved off German domination of its market, leaving Hungary with some room to maneuver. Horthy also reaffirmed Hungary's position that Czechoslovakia was a "cancerous tumor" and that Budapest was still committed to action against Prague in conjunction with Germany as long as British or French intervention could be prevented.¹⁷ Although the meeting dealt only in broad generalities, both Hitler and Horthy walked away from the encounter pleased.

Gömbös' death from kidney failure on October 6, 1936, in Munich and the lavish funeral arranged for the Hungarian Prime Minister in Budapest presented yet another opportunity for the two governments to come together. In a tribute to the morbid setting, Herman Göring, the morphine-addicted, multi-titled and utterly corrupt head of the Luftwaffe, presented Kánya with Germany's Danubian plans that threatened to suffocate

Hungary's own regional policy. Much of what had been stressed to Horthy by Hitler in August was reiterated, although this time the German message carried a more sinister undertone. Hungary was to settle its border disputes with Romania and Yugoslavia and focus its revisionism on Czechoslovakia, which was to be occupied and Austria annexed to the Reich. The matter of Germany's rapidly accumulating debt to Hungary was also broached by Göring, but rather than seeking to work towards a balancing of the deficit, the Germans instead demanded more foodstuffs in exchange for increased armaments deliveries. Kánya, undoubtedly expecting simple pleasantries and official sympathy, was taken aback by Göring's brashness and could only promise that Gömbös' policies would be continued. For all his many faults, Gömbös, in the last days before his death, made a final and rather astute observation about the Third Reich. Germany was friendliest when it was weak, but when it regained its strength, Hungary would no longer be a vital partner when other suitors sought Germany's affection.¹⁸ Göring's words to Kánya confirmed the dead Magyar's prediction.

This left Kánya, Horthy, and Darányi in a serious predicament, for how could Hungary justify revision against Czechoslovakia if it peaceably settled equally outstanding disputes with both Romania and Yugoslavia? The Hungarian regime did not enjoy the total national political control that the Nazis commanded, further complicating matters for Budapest. Any overt renunciation of revision, even if purely for tactical expedience, would bolster domestic support for the rapidly growing fascist movements within the country that possibly could directly threaten the government.¹⁹ However, the fear of alienating the Reich was an even greater concern and, with few international friends, Hungary could not afford to slight Germany.

With Budapest thrust between a rock and a hard place, the Hungarian government fell back upon the tenets of its “Free Hand” policy and attempted to split the difference, balancing its own and German prerogatives throughout the end of 1936 and into 1937. The balance, though, was precarious and could be thrown off-center at any given moment. Such a destabilization occurred following a November 1 speech by Mussolini in which he expressed solidarity with the Magyars in their revisionist aspirations.²⁰ His words sparked a frenzy in Hungary and led to a brief elevation of the public imagination that, with Italian assistance, restoration of the kingdom’s historic borders might be at hand. This was cause for concern in Germany, as Constantin von Neurath, the German foreign minister, and Hitler feared that were Budapest to act on public sentiment, it could bring the Little Entente powers closer together. This would wreck all previous German efforts to wrench the alliance apart.²¹

In an effort to prevent any such action, Alfred Rosenberg, the head of the Nazi party’s foreign section and principal intellectual, penned a November 15 article for the *Völkischer Beobachter*, that openly chastised Hungarian aspirations. The same sentiments were expressed in person a week later in Berlin to Budapest’s minister, Döme Sztójay, by the German Foreign Minister. According to von Neurath, the Hungarian government needed to understand that total revision was impossible and that its aims were unachievable through peaceful means. For all of Mussolini’s rhetoric, von Neurath made it clear that he did not believe that any assistance would be forthcoming from Rome unless the Hungarians were willing to accept political gestures as capital. Germany was the only nation that could, within reasonable limits, help Hungary to realize its goals and, with that in mind, it would be prudent to focus Budapest’s attention on Czechoslovakia.²²

The writing was on the wall and, while the Germans in late 1936 and throughout 1937 were still not able to force Hungary to abide strictly by Berlin's revisionist scheme, their increasing economic domination of the kingdom ensured that Hitler's word was heeded. To further rein in the Hungarians, Hitler stepped up his support of the German minority in Hungary, ostensibly in response to Horthy's continuing Magyarization policies, although the measure was more akin to political blackmail. In a communiqué issued to Hungary's foreign ministry on December 1, 1936, Hitler effectively tied the future of German-Hungarian relations to an immediate cessation of Budapest's assimilation policies and further upped the ante by ordering Nazi agitators to infiltrate Hungary under the guise of tourists. So as not to alienate the Hungarian government, whose help the Germans believed they needed to take apart Czechoslovakia, Berlin later softened its approach, veiling the demand for ethnic-German political autonomy within Hungary in a geopolitical rationale.²³

If, so went the German argument, Magyarization ceased and the treatment of Hungary's ethnic minorities improved, then the national groups whose territory Hungarian revisionist aspirations encompassed would be more positively disposed to return to the kingdom.²⁴ Such a scenario was highly unlikely, but it was conceived with German, not Hungarian, interests in mind. While Berlin was courting the Hungarians, similar overtures of friendship had been made to the Romanian and Yugoslavian governments. According to the proposed German policy, a tempering of Hungary's forced assimilation of its minorities would further Germany's strategic aim of stabilizing Southeastern Europe and bringing the region under German sway. Realizing they needed the Reich to have any hope of overthrowing Trianon, the Hungarians quietly agreed to

the German demands and, although Magyarization of Hungary's other minorities continued, its German population received a reprieve.

The minority issue notwithstanding, 1937 passed relatively quietly, with German-Hungarian relations focused primarily on Czechoslovakia. Specifically, Budapest was concerned about Hitler's still open offer for a non-aggression pact with Prague and how, if the signing of such a treaty were to occur, this would impact Hungarian revisionism. Several official requests for updates on the matter were made by Kánya through Sztójay, much to the annoyance of von Neurath, who grew weary of continually reiterating the unchanging German position. According to von Neurath, the offer remained on the table as a matter of diplomatic good faith, although he believed the likelihood of any movement on the issue to be nil, as Berlin's relations with Prague were too poor to be revived in the short-term. However, if the Hungarian concern proved to be too great, both he and Hitler gave their consent to a Hungarian-Czechoslovak rapprochement but stressed that this might not be best for Hungary's long-term interests. Czechoslovakia was now little more than a satellite of the Soviet Union and, although von Neurath did not explicitly state it to Sztójay, working towards a *détente* with Prague would be akin to siding with Bolshevism. The allusion was likely intended to conjure memories of Hungary's brief experience with communism under the short reign of Béla Kun and, given that the Horthy regime owed its hold on power to portraying itself as a reactionary bulwark against Bolshevism, subtly present the Hungarians with a black or white decision. An alternative strategy, with German interests at its core, was provided. Von Neurath argued that Romania was a country with which Hungary had equally poor relations, but if the Hungarian government was serious about rapprochement with its

neighbors, that nation was the most promising candidate. Though not overtly stated, a *modus vivendi* could be arranged regarding Transylvania, which would be requisite for a general improvement in relations between the two governments. Certainly, that would be a bitter pill to swallow domestically, but appropriate measures could be taken to minimize the public uproar.²⁵ In this endeavor, Hungary would not be acting alone, as the Reich was also actively attempting to alter Bucharest's disposition towards Germany and move the country away from the Little Entente. A similar demonstration of goodwill by Budapest was likely to have an equally positive effect and would contribute to the realization of a scenario in which Czechoslovakia would be isolated from its former allies to the benefit of both Germany and Hungary.²⁶

When this line was related to Kánya, he took it to heart, and for the remainder of the year based Hungarian policy on this framework. In February and June he rebuked advances by the Czechoslovakian government for an understanding with Budapest. Although he undoubtedly had German strategy in mind when doing so, Prague's attempts to link general rapprochement to a Czechoslovak-Hungarian non-aggression pact in exchange for a formal recognition of Hungary's right to rearm made rejecting the proposals much easier. Hungary had already begun that process and the right to do so was considered to be inherent, rendering the Czechoslovakian offers strategically useless. Hungarian rearmament, although slow and strictly within the nation's tight budgetary constraints, was common knowledge and had already been given *de facto* approval by the other members of the Little Entente through their lack of protest regarding that violation of Trianon. The non-aggression pact would have been equally worthless, as Prague was unwilling to make an explicit promise that would have taken precedence over

Czechoslovakia's Entente obligations, leaving Hungary in virtually the same relatively poor strategic position it currently occupied.²⁷

By June, no movement had been made on either the Romanian or Yugoslavian fronts, leaving Hungary exactly where it stood at the beginning of the year, with the diplomatic impasse continuing through late summer and into autumn. Then, during the fall, Hitler sent a message to Budapest and requested that both Kánya and Darányi come to visit him at Berchtesgaden. Upon their arrival, they were informed that decisions had been made to annex Austria and intervene militarily in Czechoslovakia, to which neither man offered any objections. In an effort to entice the Hungarians, Hitler offered an undefined portion of Czechoslovakia in exchange for participation in the attack and improvement in Budapest's relations with Romania and Yugoslavia. Even in the absence of firm compensation for their participation, the two leaders left satisfied and, upon returning to Budapest, related the information to Horthy, who later wrote a letter to Hitler expressing his satisfaction with the plan, emphatically noting that Austria was a part of Germany.²⁸ However, despite being aware of German intentions, Budapest did not anticipate the speed with which Berlin was prepared to move. Foreign Minister Kánya had expected that Czechoslovakia would be the Reich's first victim, with both it and Austria being swallowed sometime in 1940, and the messages received throughout the close of 1937 and into 1938 seemed to only confirm this assumption.²⁹ Thus, the *Anschluss* with Austria on March 12, 1938, came as a mild surprise to the Hungarian government due to its timing, although its leadership was aware of its imminence and had already resigned the country to its fate.³⁰ When official word was communicated to Sztójay from Göring, the Hungarian minister did not even mention Austria in his reply.

Rather, he asked when Czechoslovakia's turn would come.

II

The remilitarization of the Rhineland thoroughly impressed the Lithuanian government, and its hopes for improved relations with the Reich were buoyed by Hitler's peace speech that same day, March 7, 1936. In his address to the Reichstag, Hitler applauded the conciliatory steps taken by the Lithuanian government regarding the Memel-Germans, specifically citing the government's allowing of an autonomous legislature and easement of restrictions on the minority. As a consequence of these measures, German opposition to the future treaties with Lithuania was ostensibly dropped and a non-aggression pact offered.³¹ However, this apparent rising tide of goodwill was as shallow as Hitler's words were hollow.

Given Lithuania's relatively weak international position and poor relations with its powerful neighbors, Kaunas took the proposition seriously and, when no official extension was forthcoming, contacted the Wilhelmstrasse in May to explore the matter further. A meeting on the fifteenth between von Neurath and Jurgis Šaulys, the Lithuanian minister in Berlin, highlighted the disingenuity of Hitler's offer. The German foreign minister side-stepped the matter, focusing instead on issues related to the supposedly resolved Memel dispute from the previous September. According to von Neurath, "all kinds of disagreeable things" had resurfaced in the region, which had led the German government to believe that Lithuania was not serious about rapprochement. Although the statement was likely intended to remain vague, the matter of lingering German resentment from espionage conducted by Lithuanian governmental agencies on

Reinhold von Saucken, Berlin's Consul General in Memel, was brought up to provide something substantive at a time when, in the wake of British mediation of the dispute during the previous autumn, affairs in the region were corrected. The tactic worked and the entire conversation devolved into a tit-for-tat exchange of grievances that, upon parting, each minister promised to work towards remedying.³²

In truth, the Germans did not want a non-aggression pact with Lithuania, as a treaty would inhibit Hitler's freedom of action in the Baltic region.³³ However, they were interested in the conclusion of an economic treaty with Lithuania, for which negotiations had been ongoing since the Memel elections in September 1935. At issue was what the Lithuanians viewed as an advantageous slant in the German proposal in favor of the Reich pertaining to the purchase of pigs, an issue on which Berlin refused to budge. The remilitarization of the Rhineland and Hitler's offers of a non-aggression pact inadvertently provided the Germans new leverage in the resumption of those negotiations. They were now able to make the finalization of that agreement requisite for the general improvement of relations deemed necessary to the non-aggression treaty. The Lithuanian government did not see the link between the two issues as the Germans did, but, without recourse, could force neither. Finally, after nearly a year of intermittent negotiations, in early August the Lithuanians relented and signed the economic treaty with the understanding that the agreement was the first step towards a *détente* and would ultimately lead to the conclusion of the non-aggression pact offered in March.³⁴

There is no indication that the Lithuanians were deceived into signing the trade treaty on August 5, but the entire episode exemplifies the manner in which, due to its increased strength abroad, Germany was able to exert pressure on Lithuania to bring

about its own ends. The traditional Lithuanian strategy of utilizing good, or at least amicable, relations with either Germany, Poland, or the Soviet Union as a balance to encroachment by the other powers had broken down to such a degree that Kaunas was forced into a purely dichotomic relationship with the Third Reich, exposing its inherent weakness and leaving the country with little room to maneuver. With no other options and a desperate need for security, the government could only sign the treaty with the hope that it would inspire a magnanimous German gesture. The German government understood this, realizing that with the West increasingly uninterested in the region, it now had a free hand to conduct its affairs as it pleased as long as it refrained from violence. British mediation in the Memel dispute brought an international eye to a technically resolved but still irresolute situation that was only further complicated by the reoccupation of the Rhineland. This tempered Germany's conduct of its relations with Lithuania. For the time being, tact and restraint were necessary, but Hitler's aims were set and required only a more opportune moment to be acted upon. The Lithuanians could be strung along until then.

For the remainder of the year and into 1937, German-Lithuanian relations saw no further improvement, with direct contact between the governments limited to a single meeting that occurred on March 9. The Lithuanian Foreign Minister Stasys Lozoraitis, on his way to the French Riviera, stopped in Berlin and, accompanied by Kaunas' envoy to Berlin, Jurgis Šaulys, called on von Neurath to discuss the state of relations between the two countries. While all parties agreed that relations had seen a steady improvement since the signing of the economic treaty the previous August, there were still matters that the German government considered outstanding and in need of redress before any further

rapprochement could proceed. In particular, von Neurath noted that the continued imprisonment of pro-Nazi German Memellanders was a hindrance to reconciliation, and he made their release a new precondition for better relations. Judging by Lozoraitis' evasion of the issue during the ensuing conversation, he was surprised by this demand and, rather than address it further, sought instead to probe the German foreign minister for the German government's stance on broader European matters. Specifically, Lozoraitis was interested in Germany's relations with Spain, Austria, the Little Entente and Great Britain. He was particularly interested in the impact British rearmament would have on Berlin's relations with London. For his efforts, Lozoraitis received little more than a restatement of the official German position regarding each matter and departed with only the new German demand for the release of its political prisoners.³⁵

Again, just as the Germans the previous year had forced the economic treaty, they were now utilizing the same tactic to pressure the Lithuanians into meeting their demands in exchange for vague promises with little concrete value. Although Hitler had no intention of signing a non-aggression pact with Lithuania and, over the past year, that idea had almost entirely disappeared from their discourse, as a theoretical end it remained on the table. This contributed to an easing of what had previously been tense relations, with the Lithuanian government eventually yielding, though not without considerable chagrin, to all of Germany's demands. Considering the worsening of Lithuania's already poor relations with both Poland and the Soviet Union and an increasingly distanced affiliation with the Baltic Entente, Lozoraitis and Smetona had few options.³⁶ The Germans were able to take advantage of this and treat the Lithuanians casually for the remainder of 1937 and into 1938, offering no concessions as a counter to their increased

pressure, while content to string the Smetona government along until circumstances were favorable for action. Following the events of March 12, 1938, such a situation presented itself.

III

In Bucharest, the government of King Carol II reacted to Hitler's reoccupation of the Rhineland in a necessarily duplicitous manner. Nicolae Titulescu, the foreign minister, expressed his congratulations to Hitler through Berlin's *charge d'affaires*, Wilhelm von Pochhammer, praising him on the ostensibly peaceful content of his accompanying speech, while at the same time expressing regret over the decision. So as to not offend Hitler, Titulescu couched Romanian security concerns amid the trappings of international law, subtly reprimanding the German leader for acting without the consent of the Locarno Powers or the League of Nations and indicating that his government would staunchly support the ultimate decisions of the latter body in the interest of preserving its legitimacy. As diplomatically as possible, he even went so far as to question the German justification for the move, noting that unilateral action was premature and that it demonstrated to the international community an unwillingness to work with arbitral bodies. Given the diplomatic storm he believed to be rising against Germany, Titulescu announced his desire to move closer to the Reich, but noted that, as a result of Hitler's aggressiveness, he was forced to follow a different path.³⁷

Confident that he had balanced the need to warn Berlin of the consequences of its actions while not burning any bridges, he later related his true beliefs and intentions to the American minister in Bucharest, Leland Harrison. Titulescu felt assured that there would be repercussions from the League, likely in the form of economic sanctions similar

to those imposed upon Italy following Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia in 1935. There might even be a call for the forceful expulsion of the Wehrmacht from the Rhineland, although he believed the time for the latter had already passed. The sanctions, though, were of great necessity, for if there were none and Hitler learned from this experience that international order could be flaunted, then the entire system upon which European security was based would shortly see its end. This would inevitably lead to conflict, "not today, not to-morrow, perhaps – but, if the situation is allowed to continue, war is bound to come."³⁸

While making this assessment, Titulescu had not only collective security, which he had spent his entire career championing, but his own eroding grip on power in mind, for the two were intrinsically linked. Failure for the League would be his downfall, a proposition he understood. To prevent this, he took affirmative measures to prolong his relevance. Though ill, he traveled to Geneva for a summit of representatives from both the Little and Balkan Ententes and, under the auspices of speaking for the alliances as a whole, issued a hastily conceived dispatch imploring the League of Nations to strictly interpret the relevant treaties that Germany had violated. He threatened an official distancing of the Entente member states from the League should no punitive action be forthcoming. Even before the hollow condemnation of the League Council that he feared, his scheming with the powers of both Ententes began the end of his political career. The dispatch he had issued came before any of the representatives of the two alliances had an opportunity to consult with their governments on the matter and, shortly thereafter, Belgrade, Ankara, and Athens each issued communiqués repudiating Titulescu's, labeling it unrepresentative of their views, and each privately informed

Berlin of their intent to remain neutral in the event of any international dispute.

Previously, the Romanian foreign minister had been able to speak with authority for five nations. Now only Czechoslovakia remained loyal to him. This left him virtually discredited and, along with him, Danubian faith in collective security. So began the region's slide away from that concept and towards the pre-1914 international order.³⁹

Caught up in his own idealism and world-view, Titulescu underestimated the impact of German economic penetration in Danubian Europe, which greatly contributed to his being jettisoned as regional spokesman in international affairs. By this time Turkey had accommodated its economy to the Third Reich and, in the aftermath of the remilitarization of the Rhineland, moved to further that process, accepting German goods to the detriment of trade with other nations, while providing Hitler's expanding war-machine with vital chrome and other resources. Yugoslavia and Greece were equally under the German sway, with the Reich representing the majority market for their exports and an equally significant source of capital. Siding with Titulescu's combative communiqué would have been tantamount to economic suicide should Germany have sought new, more politically friendly partners. The lack of a direct perceived threat, coupled with a weak regional economy based primarily on agriculture and a few raw materials for which the Germans were willing to pay handsomely, made siding with Titulescu dangerous and unnecessary.⁴⁰

Despite this particular failure, Titulescu was able to extend his tenure in office until August 1936, when a confluence of factors precipitated his downfall. Most significant was his controversial policy of rapprochement with the Soviet Union, which was unpopular both at home and abroad. Domestically, his diplomatic style and

perceived sacrificing of Romania's traditional international friendships created numerous critics, who viewed him as little more than a Soviet agent. It was feared that should the country move closer to communist Russia as the foreign minister desired, the territorial gains Romania had made following the First World War might be jeopardized, possibly along with national independence. Certainly, Germany would be alienated and, with its growing power, many Romanian moderates like Gheorghe Brătianu and Grigore Gafencu feared that this would draw Romania into the conflict they believed to be brewing between fascism and communism. There was also domestic concern that extreme-right organizations like the Iron Guard would threaten the government if provided with such an impetus. Although economic reforms enacted in the 1920s had held off widespread communist agitation, the continued poor state of the Romanian peasantry ensured that concern about its influence remained. The fascism of the green-shirts was equally undesirable, but, if the current balance were maintained, the Iron Guard could be utilized as bulwarks against communism's further spread. This would have the added benefit of directing extreme-right attention away from the government.⁴¹

Internationally, Titulescu's policy of shifting Romania towards the Soviet Union created as much enmity abroad as it did at home. The Germans were particularly concerned about the growing intimacy they perceived between Bucharest and Moscow, as they feared that should even the permission to fly over Romanian territory for military purposes be given, French encirclement of the Reich would be completed. As long as Titulescu still held influence over Romanian policy, Berlin believed that grandiose political promises would be ineffectual. Consequently, another strategy had to be employed to ensure that Germany was "more seen and felt."⁴² What this meant were

veiled threats and a subtle assertion of the country's growing power. To avoid alienating its desired partner, these came piecemeal and concurrent with overtures of friendship, but the intent was to present stark black or white alternatives. Germany was willing to forego an alliance with Hungary and recognize the current status of Transylvania as final if Romania accepted Berlin's friendship. However, the German government was equally content to align with countries that harbored revisionist aspirations towards Romania, should these advances be rejected.⁴³ At the very least, Berlin wanted Bucharest to remain neutral in the brewing German-Soviet conflict. No guarantees or incentives would be offered to entice the Romanians, only the express understanding of what the consequences were for choosing wrongly.⁴⁴

By the end of the summer of 1936, Romania was at a crossroads. Following either path was fraught with uncertainties and, in his first decisive act as king, Carol chose the one that led to Germany. In a tactical move intended to discredit Titulescu and prevent his expected future criticism of the government from holding any merit, he was dismissed rather than being allowed to resign.⁴⁵ Although there were reasons that made the move desirable on a purely domestic level, the manner in which Titulescu was relieved of his duties was also intended to be a symbolic gesture to Germany, indicating the future direction of Romanian foreign policy. The decision was momentous, as it was the beginning of what would eventually develop into a total alignment with Hitler and the Third Reich. However, at the time, none of this was apparent. Caught between Germany and the Soviet Union, Romania viewed Germany as the less dangerous power and, with the placement of sufficient safeguards and astute diplomatic maneuvering, the government of King Carol believed that Romania would be able to resist any mounting

pressure from Berlin.⁴⁶

To replace Titulescu, Carol elevated his finance minister Victor Antonescu to the post of foreign minister, although in reality it was the king who was now in charge of Romania's foreign policy. Realizing the dangers inherent in aligning his country with either power, Carol attempted to maintain friendly but uninvolved relations with both Germany and the Soviet Union. Such a course was believed to be the only way in which Romania could avoid becoming a "theater of war" in the conflict towards which he feared the current political climate was moving. To safeguard the country from this potentiality, Romania would, in addition to limiting its dealings with both Germany and the Soviet Union, take a less active role in European affairs so as to prevent the possibility of being indirectly drawn into a conflict.⁴⁷ In order to accomplish this, it was necessary to undo much of what Titulescu had achieved during his tenure.

The first step was to bring the burgeoning rapprochement with the Soviet Union to a halt, a task only complicated by Carol's desire to do so without torpedoing the friendly atmosphere Titulescu had fostered. This was accomplished by sinking the discussions pertaining to a mutual-assistance pact the former foreign minister had begun the previous year. However, in doing so, by mid-1937 the Romanians quickly returned relations between the two countries to the same simmering hostility that had characterized their intercourse during the 1920s.⁴⁸ Though unintended to the degree that the retrogression eventually reached, this crumbling of Romania's Eastern policy was buoyed by an improvement in Bucharest's relations with Germany.

On September 24, 1937, three economic treaties were signed with the Reich and, during an October 6 meeting between Carol and Wilhelm Fabricius, the new German

minister in Bucharest, the king expressed his desire to build upon those agreements and have closer, friendlier relations with Berlin. However, despite this wish, he related numerous concerns that prevented the adoption of a policy that would move Romania in that direction. Of all the factors prohibiting such realignment, Germany's friendship with Hungary was the most disturbing, for as a power that had a vital interest in maintaining the current territorial integrity of Europe, it was difficult for Romania to reach out to a nation that support revisionism, let alone revision directed against itself. In an attempt to allay the king's fears, Fabricus noted that despite Germany's own truncation as a result of the post-war settlements, the Reich had never put forth a claim for the restoration of Hungary's former dominions. The friendship was one of sympathy and, given Budapest's anti-Bolshevik stance, common purpose. In that fight Europe needed to be united regardless of whether a nation was irredentist or not, for the only true division of any importance was Bolshevism and those governments that were aligned against it. To this end, other considerations must not be viewed as impediments to the cultivation of relations between states. Such an argument may as well have come from Hitler's own mouth based upon the manner in which Fabricus juxtaposed the two unrelated strategic considerations. However, it resonated with the king. Carol emphatically put forth his own anti-Bolshevik stance, but because of Titulescu's policies, related that he was unable to "put about the helm and steer a different course forthwith." Placing the onus of shifting his country's foreign policy on Germany, he warned Fabricus that Berlin needed to pursue its agenda with Romania cautiously – a subtle indication that threats could potentially have the opposite effect Hitler sought – lest the Reich ruin what both it and Carol wished to see come to fruition. The king also made it clear that while Romania

wanted to improve its relations with Germany, it would do so on its own terms and any rapprochement was to fit within the tenets of a Romano-centric policy. This entailed maintaining Bucharest's alliances with France, Poland, and the Little Entente. The easiest way for Germany to bring about closer relations with Romania would be to establish good relations with France and work towards reconciliation with Czechoslovakia. Such a demonstration of good faith would enable the Romanian government to come forward more openly.⁴⁹

Although the king was speaking honestly from his own considerations about the best way in which both his and what he believed German goals to be could be achieved, he inadvertently committed a tactical blunder. By explicitly outlining his foreign policy strategy, he gave the Germans an advantage. Berlin now knew the lynchpin of Romanian strategy – the Little Entente – but also recognized how delicate a business it would be to implement it. If the Little Entente were wrenched apart and Romania's confidence in France shaken, ends which the Reich had already been working towards in its efforts to isolate Czechoslovakia, then the country could easily be drawn into the German sphere. There was no need to conduct affairs gently. As long as Romania was not treated too roughly, it was unlikely that the country would be pushed towards the Soviet Union. Until the moment was ripe to pounce on Czechoslovakia and snatch its ally, Romania could be brought closer to Germany through slow, gradual, economic dependence.⁵⁰

To accomplish this, Germany needed to prevent Romania from becoming part of the Franco-Czech-Soviet alliance, a plan originally forwarded by Titulescu and now resurrected by the Czechoslovaks with French support. Little assistance was needed, as widespread public abhorrence to the proposal had, by mid-November, forced the new

foreign minister Brătianu to abandon the plan.⁵¹ However, the vague promises offered by the Romanian government that the proposed alliance was dead did not satisfy Hitler, as Germany had nothing to use as leverage against Bucharest to prevent another reorientation of its policy. In an effort to gain such insurance, in December Göring called upon Bucharest's minister in Berlin, and during a conversation with Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen, reiterated his October proposal. This time, the exchange of a security guarantee for long-term economic agreements and a prohibition on entering into arrangements directed against Germany was given an underlying threat. If the Reich were refused, the German government would be compelled to enter into friendship with Romania's revisionist enemies.⁵²

In the short term, Göring's meddling backfired and drove the Romanians to consider a secondary French proposal, which entailed reorganizing the Little Entente into a defensive alliance that included France within its framework. This placed Bucharest in a temporarily advantageous position. The French offers forced Germany to relax its tone and focus its efforts on bringing the Romanians into the fold through economic means with promises of even more lucrative trade deals. This in turn tempered mounting French pressure to harangue the Romanian government into its new conception of the Little Entente for fear of driving it towards Germany. In the end, economic considerations won out over security, and by April 1937, Brătianu related to the Germans that the French proposal was dead. This was all the Germans needed to hear and, with the threat of Romania aligning with the Reich's enemies removed, all further discussion of a security agreement was dropped.⁵³

Although Hitler wanted Romanian friendship, amicable relations were secondary

to his desire for the country's resources. It was only this motive that dictated German policy towards Romania. When it appeared that Bucharest might turn in another direction, generous offers were made to entice Carol and his government, but when that threat passed they were rescinded because the situation no longer required such beneficence. The result was that for the remainder of 1937 and into the early part of 1938, there was little movement on relations between the two countries. There was no need. Economically, trade was at the largest volume Bucharest would allow without further guarantees from Berlin, which would only be forthcoming if there was a threat to the *status quo*. With France mired in its own problems and the British uninterested in the region, the danger of that occurring was minimal. With German affairs in the Danubian region stabilized, Hitler was free to turn his attention closer to home.

IV

To the Polish government, the remilitarization of the Rhineland was a test of strength that its foreign minister Colonel Józef Beck understood was to have far-reaching consequences, although it was a situation that he knew could not be indefinitely sustained. The move should have come as no surprise, as Józef Lipski, Warsaw's minister in Berlin, had been informed of Hitler's intent to violate the Versailles treaty several days earlier by the Italian ambassador to Germany, Bernardo Attolico. However, due to illness, Lipski did not transmit a report of this conversation before March 7, which, though allowing Hitler to catch Beck and the Polish government unprepared, did not have any negative impact on Warsaw's immediate response.⁵⁴

The Polish government, which until this point had been pursuing a subtle dual-policy both domestically and abroad, had prepared a carefully thought-out response in

case Hitler made precisely this move. Beck privately thought that, if presented with a *fait accompli*, the French response would be limited. In this case it would be necessary to demonstrate to Paris that Poland still held its alliance obligations seriously.

Consequently, before any official word on the French reaction had been received, Beck summoned Léon Noël, the new French ambassador in Warsaw, to the Raczynski Palace and informed him that he might communicate to his government that, “should it come to any clash under conditions in accordance with the spirit of the alliance, Poland would not hesitate to carry out her obligations as an ally.” Noël’s account of the meeting presents Beck quite differently, appearing anxious that morning and, in the communiqué issued to the Quai d’Orsay, he couched this declaration in vague language. In either case, it seems that the official Polish line was dictated in part by a statement made by André François-Poncet, the French ambassador to Germany, who, just days before the remilitarization of the Rhineland, assured Lipski that if the Rhineland Pact resolutions of the Locarno treaties were violated, “ce sera la mobilization générale, ce sera la guerre.”⁵⁵

However, Poland was not prepared to participate in any conflict, even if it were in conjunction with the French and, presumably, Great Britain and Belgium. Hedging his bets that, unlike in 1923 when Paris had sent its forces in alone to occupy the Ruhr to ensure the payment of reparations, the government of Pierre Laval would not act without support, Beck played both sides. Following his audience with Noël, he personally drafted a contradictory statement for both German and Polish consumption. In it, he indicated that Poland had no interest in the matter and, consequently, would abide by its 1934 agreement with Germany. This incited a flurry of remonstrances from Noël, who felt betrayed by the policy discrepancies between what he had related to Paris and the true

Polish position. The French Ambassador blasted Beck and his justifications, noting that the matter was directly related to Polish security, as now, without France able to quickly penetrate into Germany's industrial heartland, it would be less able to come to Warsaw's aid. Embarrassed, Beck could only respond by stating that the situation had not worked itself out when he had issued his press statement. Coming to the Foreign Minister's aid and defending his own institution's honor, Marshal Edward Rydz-Śmigły, the head of Poland's military, later contacted Noël and argued that the reason Poland was not able to stand by France was Paris' refusal to grant Warsaw desperately needed credit to rebuild its military. Rydz-Śmigły insinuated that France was directly responsible for Poland's consequent policy line through the violation of the moral tenets of the two countries' alliance by hindering Polish rearmament, absolving Warsaw of French scorn.⁵⁶

If Beck's objective was to test the French alliance, then he achieved his goal, although at the cost of generating discord between the two allies.⁵⁷ It is doubtful that Polish actions during this time had any substantive effect upon the crisis before Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939. In the wake of Czechoslovakia's dismemberment, a move which confirmed Hitler's disregard for the agreement signed in Munich, French action was all but guaranteed. For the moment, the only real damage was to Beck's pride. France had called upon Poland to act the part of the power Beck pretended his country to be, and Poland had failed.

While dealing with the various aspects of Poland's French commitments, Beck sought to maintain amicable relations with the German government, permitting the reoccupation of the Rhineland to pass without incident. The only concern he lodged that day with Hans Adolf von Moltke, Germany's ambassador to Poland, pertained to the

twenty-five year duration of the non-aggression pacts Hitler offered in his Reichstag speech. He feared that the difference between those proposals and the length of the 1934 German-Polish agreement might lead to public mistrust of the German government. Concerns over outstanding trade issues were also broached, although for the moment the matter was put on hold. Following a subsequent meeting with von Moltke on March 12 when he promised to represent Germany's views to the upcoming Council of the League of Nations in London, Beck traveled to the British capital for what he expected was to be a toothless recrimination of Hitler's actions. On March 13, the Locarno Powers, the supposed guarantors of Western security, had already balked in response to the German challenge and offered only a weak resolution that, while finding Germany in violation of Articles 42 and 43 of the Versailles treaty, deferred the matter to the League Council for adjudication.⁵⁸

At the conference, differences of opinion and political realities helped to assure Hitler that the German success would be complete. Despite recognizing the dangers highlighted by the French, the British were unwilling to risk war over the affair. Economic sanctions were also ruled out, as many of the smaller powers relied heavily upon German trade for the maintenance of their own economies. Even if such punitive measures had been adopted, it was unlikely that many would have adhered to the resolutions anyway.⁵⁹ To a degree, Poland fit into this latter category, but political considerations were of equal importance. Beck was primarily interested in gaining an extension of the existing German-Polish agreement and sought to do so by overrepresenting Warsaw's interest in the affair so as to be in a position to temper the Council's declaration, gambling that his beneficence would be reciprocated by Hitler.⁶⁰

In the end, it is unlikely that the Polish delegation had any significant impact upon the course of events, as backing either Germany or France too openly risked alienating Warsaw from either power. All that could be done was to ensure the situation did not escalate into an armed conflict, for war would have brought Beck's policy crashing down. When it came time to vote on the resolution, Poland abstained.⁶¹

In the following months, the Polish government sought more earnestly to ensure its own security, particularly in the face of weakening French resistance to German aggression. Over the summer, Warsaw began receiving subsidies from Paris for rearmament, and the two governments provided each other with mutual reassurances that their alliance was strong and still viable. However, despite French pressure, the Polish government refused to move away from its cautious friendship with Germany or be drawn closer to Czechoslovakia.⁶² Doing so would have contradicted the underlying principles of the policy Beck had been pursuing, along with casting serious doubt upon Warsaw's Great Power posturing. It also would have required Poland to make amends with the very nation against which its irredentism was directed against. In the end, the French need to produce a show of strength in the face of a foreign policy defeat prevailed over any serious policy reorientation, and the Poles were able to walk away from the negotiations gaining much while giving little.

Concurrently with those negotiations, Beck approached the Germans about the possibility of including the Reich in a larger collective security scheme, with the 1934 non-aggression pact being worked into such a system. The idea of an "Eastern Locarno" treaty had resurfaced in Geneva and, in light of a perceived British and Italian hesitancy to act as guarantors for such an arrangement, he may have been probing whether the

Reich, in conjunction with Poland, would assume that role. Aside from the inclusion of Germany, the formation of a regional collective security bloc would have been a shortcut to Beck's pet "Third Europe" project, making use of the German Peace Plan framework forwarded at the end of March, which, according to the Polish foreign minister, had aroused much interest. If this was Beck's intent, it would have provided an additional measure of security against both Germany and the Soviet Union. However, for it to be viable, the Soviets would need to be included unless it were specified that defense against Soviet attack was a principle tenet of the agreement. The latter sentiment may have had broad regional ideological sympathy, but as a practical measure, it was impossible. This is all, of course, speculation. Beck never clarified his strangely abrupt, short-lived change of heart regarding collective security, and by the end of May he had again taken an unfavorable disposition to both the concept and an Eastern Pact.⁶³ The lack of German interest in his proposal certainly contributed to its quick abandonment, as did Berlin's cold-shoulder to similar British inquiries. With the fervor over the remilitarization of the Rhineland dissipating and it becoming clear that the move would be allowed to stand, the Germans no longer needed to maintain the façade of commitment to an ideal that they had no intent of honoring. By June Berlin had resumed its more aggressive stance.

This entailed a resumption of the Danzig issue, instigated this time by an international slight to the League of Nations High Commissioner to the city, Sean Lester, when the German cruiser *Leipzig* put into port and failed to call upon the League representative. Ostensibly, Captain Schenk was ordered to refrain from calling upon Lester to prevent a recurrence of what the German government considered the "tactless"

invitation of Danzig opposition party members to the officer's reception as had happened when the *Admiral Scheer* visited the city the previous August. In reality, the indignity was part of a calculated scheme designed to precipitate Lester's downfall and test Polish resolve. Coinciding with the formal affront, a scathing article by Albert Forster, the Nazi *Gauleiter* in the city, was published in both the German and Danzig press. The piece was intended to incite Lester to refer the matter to the League Council in Geneva, which he did. A hearing was scheduled for July 4 and, to take advantage of the international stage with which he was presented, Hitler sent Arthur Greiser, the hotheaded President of the Danzig Senate, to deliver a well-coached tirade against not only Lester but also the superfluous position of the High Commissioner and League itself.⁶⁴

Greiser's inflammatory and highly theatrical performance made it clear that the episode was less about Lester and more about German dissatisfaction with the administrative character of the city. Although Poland's interest in Danzig was limited to the safeguarding of its own interests, such a threat to the governmental structure that ensured Polish rights were respected was too great a risk to Poland's fundamental position in the city. The consequences would certainly have been dire, for without the presence of the League and High Commissioner, Germany would have a free rein to Nazify the area, which would have amounted to virtual annexation. However, championing the League carried the risk for Poland of becoming a defender of the Danzig-German minority that opposed National Socialism, a group Warsaw had no interest in protecting. Though in many ways the two were aspects of the same issue that Beck tried to separate, they were too intrinsically linked to be dealt with separately.⁶⁵

The delicacy of the situation mandated a careful and measured response. Beck

desired a compromise, but in seeking one was encumbered by the need to demonstrate firmness in dealing with what he viewed as a violent German attack on the foundation of Danzig's political structure. Too resolute a defense of the existing *status quo* risked inciting a political conflict within the German population of the city that Poland had no hope of winning. On the other extreme, conflict between Berlin and Warsaw in Danzig could lead to war. However, Lester was negotiable. It was not the person but the position that Poland wished to preserve. After a month of negotiations between the two governments, it was finally agreed that both sides would be satisfied with a new face in the same role, and the crisis was resolved.⁶⁶

Germany had pushed and Poland pushed back. Based upon the Polish response, it quickly became evident to Hitler and the German government that only a slight modification to the *status quo* in Danzig was acceptable to the Poles, although that was itself a success. By disposing of Lester, the last authority that was expressly concerned with the political independence of the Danzig-Germans had been eliminated, and coupled with a lack of Polish interest on that facet of the issue, it was now possible for Berlin to exercise complete tactical control over the domestic situation in the city. Further changes would have to wait for circumstances that were more favorable. Such opportunities were bound to occur, as the Polish government was now the body charged with the management of Danzig-German relations according to the deal that resolved the crisis. As long as the city's bureaucratic structure maintained intact, Polish objections to German activities were likely to remain negotiable. With the office of High Commissioner preserved, Beck could also claim success, although his was a pyrrhic victory. The charge given to Poland could certainly be viewed positively in terms of

prestige, as Warsaw now, in Beck's own words, was to "screen the League" and, through this responsibility, could prevent it from "fleeing the battlefield in Danzig before some new form of additional guarantee for Polish interests had been found." Whether this could be translated from theory to practice remained to be seen. Screening the League required that Poland deal directly with Germany over matters relating to Danzig, which advantaged the Reich, as Hitler was able to treat the situation more aggressively and with the understanding that any deterioration in relations could only reflect upon the German and Polish governments.⁶⁷

Following a brief respite during August for the Berlin Olympics, Danzig continued to be the flashpoint of German-Polish relations throughout the autumn of 1936 and into 1937. The German government alternatively ordered Forster to instigate an incident and then, when Polish resistance to the challenge became firm, restrain his activities. The difference in character following the remilitarization of the Rhineland from previous incidents was that, with Germany's consolidation of continental power, it could afford to be more aggressive in working towards its objectives and make attempts at real gains rather than simply test Polish resolve.⁶⁸ For the moment, these were modest successes. The League presence in the city had been effectively marginalized and, as a consequence, Hitler was able to dismantle the remaining political opposition to National Socialism. However, Warsaw would let Berlin go no further, insisting that the High Commissioner remain, if only to retain an alternative outlet of protest should the two governments be unable to resolve disputes. Assurances from the German government that it had no desire to violate Poland's interests in the city helped to prevent such an impasse from occurring and resulted, by September 1937, in a *détente* that placated

Warsaw and afforded Hitler the time needed to prepare for other foreign policy actions.⁶⁹

V

The alteration of the European political landscape following the remilitarization of the Rhineland, in addition to changing the dynamic between Germany and its eastern neighbors, changed their relations with each other as well. The move was not an imminent threat that needed to be countered, but the statesmen of East Central Europe were perceptive enough to realize the balance of power was shifting in favor of Germany and away from the Western Allies. Britain and, more importantly, France had failed to act decisively and, though there were numerous factors that contributed to their mutual decision to allow Hitler's *fait accompli* to stand, the signal sent to the other side of Europe did not include the details that resulted in that decision. Reliance upon either power now carried risks similar to those that trusting Hitler did. Additional measures would be required to ensure peace and security in the region. Fear of the Soviet Union and a hesitancy to completely trust Mussolini's government limited the options available to the governments in Warsaw, Kaunas, Budapest, and Bucharest, forcing them to look to each other in order to prevent Germany from completely filling the vacuum left by the Western departure from the region's affairs.

This occurred haphazardly among the national leaders and reflected more of an attempt, from March 1936 until March 1938, at collusion to maximize potential gains in response to the impetus provided by Hitler's foreign policy. Following the Rhineland reoccupation, the Polish and Hungarian governments initiated discussions that built upon the groundwork laid by Gömbös and Piłsudski in late 1934. During a state visit by

representatives of the Polish government to Budapest in 1936, it was agreed that the creation of a common border would be greatly beneficial to future relations, although there was no concrete resolution. Still, the foundation for a coordinated policy had been laid, and during a conference in February 1938, discussions were held in Warsaw that expanded upon these points. An ascendant Germany that was rearming and exerting what Beck described as “maximalist pressure” in Danubian Europe prompted him to pursue his “Third Europe” project more vigorously and, with Horthy and Kánya as week-long guests, he broached the subject for the first time.⁷⁰

The Hungarians were receptive to the idea, agreeing that in order to counter the threat of German and Soviet expansion, the governments of Poland, Hungary, Italy, Romania, and Yugoslavia needed to align together and oppose the Third Reich. In previous talks with the Italians, they had indicated an interest in the proposal, noting with chilling accuracy that unless such a non-aligned bloc came into being, Italy would shortly become the lesser power in the Rome-Berlin Axis. The first step then was achieving a common border between Poland and Hungary, an idea that Count Galeazzo Ciano, the Italian Foreign Minister, echoed during his visit to Budapest shortly after the conference in Warsaw. Although there were differences of opinion in exactly how the proposed bloc would posture itself – either German friendly but not dominated by Berlin or explicitly united in opposition to Hitler – it was significant that all sides saw the need for an alternative to the existing European polemics.⁷¹

In order to accomplish this prerequisite for the “Third Europe” bloc as it was conceived, Czechoslovak territory needed to be acquired. Both the Polish and Hungarian governments saw an opportunity for this in what they expected to be Hitler’s

next foreign policy conquest, as since the late summer of 1936, Berlin had been exerting varying degrees of pressure on Prague for resolution of the Sudeten-German minority question.⁷² Signals from Germany, particularly those directed at Budapest, led to the belief that action was imminent and, rather than oppose a move both the Hungarian and Polish governments viewed as inevitable and positive, they chose to take advantage of it instead. They only disagreed as how to approach the situation so as to serve both individual and mutual interests simultaneously and justify their activities to the international community.

At this early stage of their collaboration on Czechoslovakia's dismemberment, both governments harbored ambitious and contradictory aims. As the Slovak lands were a portion of Hungary's historic territory, Budapest naturally wished to reincorporate them into its expanded realm. Beck had other designs on the eastern portion of Czechoslovakia, wishing to transform it into a Polish-dominated protectorate to serve as a buffer between Germany and Poland and an exploitable economic dependent. On this particular issue, neither side was able to come to an agreement. However, rather than deal with the issue directly, Beck persuaded Horthy and Kánya to make contacts with the Slovakian separatists, ostensibly so that any future action could be coordinated with the groups there. This was a ruse. From his own sources in Slovakia, Beck was aware that there was little desire to return to Magyar domination and, since Budapest preferred to have its forces invited rather than invade, knew that this would prevent any Hungarian move until a more profitable situation was presented.⁷³

While collaborating with Hungary, Beck also took steps to reinvigorate Poland's waning relationship with Romania. The process was begun shortly after the reoccupation

of the Rhineland, with negotiations that eventually produced a warming of the waning alliance between Warsaw and Bucharest. However, this was limited to no more than a reaffirmation of the existing alliance due to the constraints placed on Romanian policy by Soviet threats and Carol's own policy on non-alignment.⁷⁴ This was sufficient for the moment and with the two governments' attention directed elsewhere, strengthening an arrangement that neither side desired to be more than defensive was unnecessary. The perceived threat of growing German power prompted each government to action in 1937, with an exchange of official visits that led to renewed discussion of collective security issues, but nothing concrete. Divergent views on how best to effect that end prohibited any agreement, with Beck's initial proposal of the formulation of a new Entente consisting of Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia, working in concert with Germany being received warmly by Victor Antonescu, the Romanian foreign minister, but rejected by Carol. The latter, wishing to preserve freedom of action in Romanian policy, viewed the arrangement as restrictive of that principle and, as Beck's plan did not include Czechoslovakia, a violation of Bucharest's existing alliance system. Carol eventually let himself be persuaded by Beck and agreed to consider loosening Romania's relations with the Little Entente and France, although still he would not push the country firmly in the direction the Polish foreign minister wished.⁷⁵

Beck's attempts at gaining support for his "Third Europe" concept during this time were met with modest success. As a response to the political threat that both Hungary and Romania thought Germany to be, the idea was certainly attractive. It required no surrender of national independence and, as Beck presented it, was defensive in nature, involving no foreign policy risks that held the potential for detrimental results.

Inherent in the arrangement, though, was a moratorium on revisionism between the potential member states, which was a bitter pill to swallow for Hungary, as the possibility of Transylvania's recovery in the short term would rely entirely upon Romanian beneficence. Although a suspension of irredentism was unlikely to raise objections in Bucharest, the addition of Bulgaria, another power with eyes on Romanian territory, in exchange for Czechoslovakia, did not sit well. As an extension of Piłsudski's *Międzymorze* doctrine, Beck's "Third Europe" was designed to serve Polish interests first and foremost. A large, fairly powerful regional bloc would accomplish this primary goal of security for Warsaw and, by association, afford the same protection to the other nations. However, in working towards this one particular goal, Beck failed to account for the myriad of differing ambitions that needed to be accounted for in order to even begin moving the project forward.

During the period of March 1936 until March 1938, this was complicated by the poor state of Hungarian-Romanian relations, which, despite German suggestions of rapprochement, failed to develop. Berlin's interest in fostering a temporary *détente* was ulteriorly motivated, but even those attempts proved insufficient to alleviate the root causes of Hungary and Romania's differences. This left affairs between the two countries much as they were before German troops entered the Rhineland. To an extent, this mutual mistrust was beneficial to Hitler, as it enabled him to execute a policy of divide and conquer, easing the long-term strategic German objective of economic domination of Southeastern Europe and delaying a choosing of sides. Although this was a desultory method of managing foreign policy in a region of such importance to his greater European designs, it was entirely consistent with Hitler's tendencies, and allowed

both sides to come to him.⁷⁶ The Hungarians were already moving in this direction and, though there was some Romanian resistance to German overtures, the Germans continued to make steady inroads with the latter as well.

Lithuania continued to remain diplomatically isolated from the rest of Europe. The *de facto* state of war still existed between it and Poland, and despite secret negotiations between the two, no progress was made to break the deadlock that would allow the resumption of normal relations. At issue was still the status of Vilnius, as the desire for its return had not dissipated. However, the Polish government refused to consider relenting in its official cold-shouldering of its Baltic neighbor unless the existing status of the city was recognized by the Smetona regime. For domestic reasons, this was impossible, and consequently, by the beginning of March 1938, the conflict remained unresolved.⁷⁷ This was shortly to have severe consequences for the Lithuanian government, which despite its best efforts over the preceding two years, had failed to develop the relationships with Germany and Poland that it desired. Partly because of both governments' lack of need and partly due to the Smetona regime's unwillingness to remove the historic capital from its conditions, no movement was possible and this resulted in Lithuania being stuck in much the same position it was before.

As it had been prior to March 1936, regional scheming remained paramount to the foreign policy designs of East Central Europe, although with the additional impetus of an increasingly aggressive Germany, grandiloquence tended to give way to pragmatism. Beck's "Third Europe" concept, in each of its proposed forms, specifically had collective security as a counter to the menace presented by both Germany and the Soviet Union, although he broke from Piłsudski's *Międzymorze* design by tactically setting aside overt

Polish dominance of the alliance system for the short term in an effort to generate interest. However, Beck's belief in his nation's ability to hold its own in an increasingly antagonistic relationship with the Third Reich lessened the vigor with which he pursued constructing the bloc, resulting in limited progress towards that end.

Hungary, faced with increased German hegemony in Danubian Europe, found its "Free Hand" policy limited by a lack of options. Germany's growing domination of the country's economy made moving against Berlin's wishes a serious gamble, as Germany's reach ensured that there would be consequences for any intransigence. Hitler had in the past pledged not to instigate "swastika propaganda" directed at the Hungarian government, although this gesture could be reversed to the detriment of Hungary's nationalistic government.⁷⁸ The lack of a land border with the Reich afforded the Hungarian regime a degree of freedom to maneuver and entertain alternatives to following the German path, although the possibility of being rewarded for loyalty was equally persuasive. Hitler's vague promises of assisting in the repatriation of foreign-ruled Magyars and the recovery of former Hungarian lands resonated with the core of the regime's desires, making them too tempting to pass upon.

Titulescu's dismissal ushered in a new phase of Romanian diplomacy that was primarily concerned with undoing the perceived damage that the former foreign minister's policies had wrought. This entailed a near total reversal of the government's policies, although a complete reorientation was stopped just short. Even after souring Romania's relations with the Soviet Union, King Carol and his new foreign minister, Victor Antonescu, refused to move affirmatively towards Germany, instead choosing to follow a path similar to Poland. The two had faith in the collective security offered by

the Little Entente, and the reinvigoration of the Polish alliance served as further support in the quest to pursue non-alignment. In accordance with this policy, the improvement of relations with Germany was considered requisite, but with material resources to barter with, the Romanians were able to dictate somewhat their own terms. However, this advantage was tenuous, as it was predicated upon the maintenance of a *status quo* that Romania was only partly able to influence. Were the Entente to crack, Bucharest's insulation from German pressure would evaporate, leaving the country exposed with little recourse other than submission. Measures were taken to buttress the nation against this possibility, but, in the wake of the remilitarization of the Rhineland, they bore more resemblance to the intricate alliances of pre-Great War Europe than reinforcements of collective security. For the moment, they were enough.

CHAPTER 3: TOWARDS GERMANY

The events of March 11-12, 1938, shattered the calm that had descended upon Europe following the reoccupation of the Rhineland by German troops in 1936. In response to Austrian Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg's call for a plebiscite to determine whether Austria was to remain independent of Germany, Hitler issued an ultimatum on March 11 demanding that governmental power be transferred to the Austrian National Socialists by noon the next day or the country would be invaded. Faced with no prospects of international assistance, Schuschnigg resigned his post and left President Wilhelm Miklas the unenviable responsibility for relinquishing governmental power to the Nazis, which he finally did at midnight. Acceptance of Arthur Seyß-Inquart as Schuschnigg's replacement was, by this point, irrelevant, as Hitler had already signed the order directing the Wehrmacht to march on Vienna two hours earlier. The next day German troops crossed the border, initiating the *Anschluss*.

In little over twelve heated and confused hours, one of Hitler's fundamental foreign policy initiatives was realized in a bold stroke that was a watershed for both the German dictator and his Third Reich. Again, he had moved in violation of Versailles, and again the democracies of Western Europe had failed to challenge him, allowing the move to stand uncontested. All of Central Europe was now under the dominion of the Rome-Berlin Axis, separating one side of Europe from the other behind a fascist curtain. Emboldened by the relative ease with which he had initiated and consolidated Germany's first expansionist move, Hitler began to believe that the process he had once thought might require another "great leader" such as himself to complete could be realized in his

own lifetime.¹ He, and not a successor, could be master of the Great German Reich. All that was left now was to initiate the end game, for with the Danubian basin cracked, the board was set. Only the pieces remained to be propelled into motion.

Following the *Anschluss*, the diplomatic activity of East Central Europe accelerated in response to German foreign policy aggression. What resulted was a regional grab for gains either in conjunction with or in the wake of Hitler's expansionism. This fomented greater intimacy between the governments of Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, and Romania as they attempted to fulfill their irredentist desires than had previously existed. However, the consequence of this change was a loss of focus on collective security. The Third Reich also became an omnipresent force, acting as either puppet-master or regional arbiter. For this reason, it is necessary to analyze the events following the German take-over of Austria until the beginning of war collectively so as to illustrate the particular facets of this phase accurately and in the proper context.

I

The *Anschluss* had not surprised the Polish government, as the move had been expected for some time. However, the timing of the event caught Beck off-guard as, on March 11, the foreign minister was in Rome attempting to gain support for his latest permutation of the "Third Europe" project and was forced to witness events from the Italian capital. When he was informed of the events transpiring in Austria, news of a border incident between Polish and Lithuanian security forces that had resulted in the shooting death of a Polish soldier, Stanisław Serafin, near the village of Trasninkai was also reported. Beck decided to use the *Anschluss* as cover to force the reestablishment of normal relations with Lithuania and, during his return to Warsaw, began formulating a

plan to that end. At a conference at the Royal Castle between himself, the head of the Polish military Marshal Edward Rydz-Śmigły, the president, and other cabinet members, Beck forwarded a proposal for an ultimatum to be delivered to the Lithuanian government. It was moderate in its aims, only requiring that affairs between the two Baltic neighbors be normalized. All mention of Vilnius was excluded in the hope that this would result in its acceptance by the Lithuanian government. Any demands too severe were likely to be rejected and, with collective security in mind, Beck wanted to prevent that possibility. The failure of negotiations over the past five years had stalled his Baltic policy, since without Lithuania, Beck believed that Estonia and Latvia could not be brought into the fold. To accomplish this broader aim, if forceful methods had to be utilized, then the ends would justify that means.²

On March 17, the ultimatum was issued to the Lithuanian government. In it, Poland rejected the Lithuanian position that a commission be created to look into the Trasninkai incident. Instead, the Poles required that an envoy be dispatched to Warsaw and one be accredited in the Lithuanian capital by March 31, in addition to the restoration of normal diplomatic relations. The Smetona government was given forty-eight hours to reply. Silence would be interpreted as a negative response. Explicit or implicit rejection of the Polish demands would be followed by military action. As further incentive, the Polish army was put on a state of high alert and four divisions (fifty thousand troops) were massed along the Polish-Lithuanian border. About one hundred planes from the air-force were concentrated outside of Vilnius and Lyda, and the Polish fleet was ordered to assume positions close to the Lithuanian shore.³

This sparked a flurry of calm, deliberate activity in Kaunas as the Smetona

government scrambled to discern the best course of action. Inborn patriotism demanded that Lithuania resist the Polish affront, and internal surveillance confirmed that, should armed conflict result, the public overwhelmingly supported an aggressive defense of the country. General Stasys Raštikis informed Smetona that mobilization of the army could take place in as little as twenty-four to seventy-two hours, offering 250,000 troops for a decentralized deployment. However, diplomatic feelers put out by the Lithuanian government did not register the same positive prognosis, as international support was not forthcoming. Both Great Britain and France urged Lithuania to accept the ultimatum as, in their view, the conflict between Warsaw and Kaunas did not warrant the risking of an already tenuous European peace due to their belief that the situation had arisen from German-Polish collusion. Even Lithuania's allies in the Baltic Entente abandoned the country, declining to take action in what both the Latvian and Estonian governments considered a strictly Polish-Lithuanian affair. Smetona also turned to Germany for advice, but rather than the traditional anti-Polish support usually offered by Berlin, Foreign Minister Juozas Urbšys was informed by Joachim von Ribbentrop, von Neurath's replacement as Reich Foreign Minister, that, in light of the current political realities, unconditional acceptance of Polish demands was the only prudent course of action. The consequences of refusal were unforeseeable. In the reply, von Ribbentrop also indicated that following the settlement of this conflict, a settling of German-Lithuanian issues would be next on Lithuania's agenda.⁴

The German response was dictated in part by Hitler's goal of reincorporating the Memelland into the Reich, as any conflict between Poland and Lithuania could result in that region being occupied by the Poles. To counter this possibility, on March 18, Hitler

ordered German forces in East Prussia to be ready, in the event that Poland invaded Lithuania, to immediately enter the Klaipėda region to prevent it from falling into Polish hands. This position was also made clear to Warsaw, likely in a bid to dissuade the Polish government from taking military action that would swallow the entire country. To a degree, German fears were unnecessary, as Polish plans called only for a one-kilometer violation of the border should the deadline for the ultimatum expire as a show of force, with deeper incursions to follow should the Lithuanians fight. Such resistance was still under consideration as an option as late as the evening of March 18, although at the final cabinet meeting, General Raštikis was the deciding figure that averted war. He told the Lithuanian government that, despite the vigor and exuberance of the soldiers and citizenry, the ultimate outcome of the conflict could not be in doubt. Ringed by enemies with far superior numbers and material, Lithuania would fall. The next morning an exchange of notes between Polish and Lithuanian envoys took place, followed by acting Prime Minister Jokubas Stanisauskis reading the official government reply before the Siemas. The Lithuanian parliament accepted the government's settlement of the issue with only one adjustment to the language of the official response, adding "that we accepted because of force" to the end of the document.⁵

Poland had flexed its muscle and Lithuania bent under the pressure. Partly inspired by Hitler's tactics with Austria and partly relying upon Berlin's need for a period of calm following the annexation of Austria to achieve his ends, Beck again played the role of a statesman representative of a Great Power. As had been the case with Hitler, his target was weak and without international support, virtually guaranteeing the success of his action, although Polish aims were more limited in scope than German objectives.

This made the ultimatum palatable to the international community, though it was not excused. Poland appeared no better than the Nazi regime and, despite the incidental nature of the two governments' collaboration, the stigma endured. As architect of the scheme, Beck was, for the moment, free to revel in his personal glory.

The Polish ultimatum to Lithuania was significant beyond the change in the political relationship of two of the region's nations, for in this instance Hitler reacted to an East Central European government rather than the reverse. To a degree, a German precedent had been followed by another power in an effort to effect its own ends that, though limited at the outset, held the potential to develop into something far larger, as had happened with the *Anschluss*.⁶ Had Lithuania chosen to fight, total absorption of the country, either through direct annexation or, more likely, the establishment of a puppet-government similar to Beck's designs for Slovakia, was possible, and it was this fear that spurred the Germans into action. Although the Reich's own interests in the Memelland were paramount, Berlin wished to keep Lithuania independent so as to retain the possibility of exchanging its annexation for the Polish Corridor.⁷ However, now was not a fortuitous time for such action, and, consequently, subtle indications were made that Germany would take the necessary precautions to ensure that its interests were protected. Without the Danzig issue settled and Beck afraid of bringing the country into direct conflict with the Third Reich over a purely Polish political aim, he was forced to respect Berlin's position. As the boldness of Hitler's plans increased, this microcosm would be repeated.

The impact of the Polish ultimatum was minimal. The quick resolution ensured that the entire episode was merely a ripple in the water within the scope of continent-

wide diplomacy, as larger events soon resumed the place of international importance. Though relations were now normalized, Lithuanian policy towards Poland failed to change in any substantial way.⁸ As the Polish government sidestepped the Vilnius issue, this implicitly meant that no resolution to the situation technically existed, keeping the potential for its return alive, even if remote. At its core, Polish policy towards Lithuania remained equally unchanged, although now Beck was able to pursue his agenda in a more concrete manner. However, the way in which ties were established limited the usefulness of what he had forged, as the animosity it bred did not rapidly dissipate, even in the shadow of a mutual threat.⁹

Shortly after the acceptance of the Polish ultimatum, the Lithuanian government was struck with a similar demand from Berlin. The German ultimatum required Lithuania to adhere to a detailed, eleven-point memorandum that provided for absolute freedom of action for the pro-Nazi elements in the Klaipėda region. The language of the memorandum was vague, a measure taken by the Germans to ensure that no matter how diligently the Smetona regime observed the barely disguised *dikat*, at a later point it could be claimed that the Lithuanians failed to abide by its tenets and thus justify any subsequent action. Technically, the presentation of the memorandum violated the Memel Statute, although in light of the international community's failure to act in Lithuania's defense during the Polish crisis, the country's government had little faith that the signatory powers would intervene in any meaningful way. To ward off German pressure, the Lithuanian government chose delaying tactics as its primary defense, promising to concede most of Berlin's demands in exchange for guarantees on border security and a non-aggression pact. Neither Lithuanian proposal interested the Germans, and both were

ignored. Hitler preferred to let the situation in Klaipėda deteriorate on its own, though with substantial support for the National Socialist elements, rather than force the issue. He did not have to wait long. By December the pro-German parties had gained a crushing majority over the Lithuanian groups in the Memel parliament and quickly presented Kaunas with another list of demands, this time requiring that the secret state police apparatus within Memel be dismantled, which the Smetona government did.¹⁰

To the Lithuanians, it appeared that following the presentation of both memorandums in March and December, the Reich inexplicably lost interest in delivering the final blow when the opportunity to do so was within easy reach. This temporary reprieve that spared Kaunas from the full potential of a concerted German onslaught was ephemeral and came at the expense of German interest being directed elsewhere. In March 1938, shortly after the *Anschluss*, Hitler turned his full attention to Czechoslovakia, the country he considered a “cancerous tumor,” and *Saisonstaat*, which had been integral to his expansionist foreign policy designs since 1937.¹¹ German agitation over the treatment of the Sudeten-Germans had been fairly consistent throughout 1937 and into 1938. Following the conclusion of the Austrian affair, the pressure on Prague was again to be ramped up, though now with the objective of forcing a resolution.

Integral to Hitler’s strategy for dismantling Czechoslovakia was its isolation from the rest of the European community. In this endeavor, Germany could not act alone. The nations of East Central Europe were needed to play an active role in encircling Hitler’s victim to prevent outside interference by assisting in the *kurtz und vives* military operation envisioned for Czechoslovakia’s dismemberment. This would enable Germany

to present a *fait accompli* to the international community before aid could be rendered. Such absolute and brutal rejection of the “artificial” state’s existence by all of its neighbors would also inherently justify Hitler’s long-standing negative conception of the country.¹² Aspects of this plan had already been central to Berlin’s discourse with the Hungarian government for quite some time. Since Gömbös had first visited Hitler in June 1933, the Germans had attempted to focus Hungarian revisionism northward. Now Hitler would call on the Magyars to act.

Despite previous assurances from Budapest that the Hungarian government would be a willing participant in Czechoslovakia’s destruction, the resoluteness of Britain and France in response to the breaking-off of negotiations between the Sudeten- German party and the Czechoslovak government in mid-May had weakened its determination. Horthy in particular was fearful of being harangued into a conflict that he believed Germany had no hope of winning, but with the Third Reich now far less remote than it had previously been, he was forced to tread carefully. Flatly rejecting Hitler held the potential for disaster; Hitler’s annexation of Austria had put Hungary’s only other major trading partner under German control, and offending Berlin could result in serious economic consequences. Still, the need for Hungarian participation in Hitler’s planned action against Czechoslovakia ensured that alternative options to becoming completely subservient to Germany remained open.¹³

In an effort to demonstrate this independence, in late August representatives of the Hungarian government and member nations of the Little Entente met at Bled, Yugoslavia, ostensibly for the purpose of settling long-standing differences. Kálmán de Kánya, the Hungarian foreign minister, approached the conference with this objective in

mind. However, the change in Europe's political climate since March 1936, and the deteriorating internal dynamic of the Little Entente indicated to him that an appropriate moment to wrench concessions from the alliance had arrived. To this end, he presented the Romanian and Yugoslav representatives with three Hungarian demands calling for a mutual declaration renouncing war as a means to conflict resolution, an unconditional recognition of Hungary's right to rearm and the conclusion of separate agreements for the protection of Magyar minorities. Of critical importance was the last demand, which, due to the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia already receiving the best treatment in any Entente state, Kánya required that Prague extend even further guarantees than he was asking of the Romanians and Yugoslavs. He did this in the hope that this would cause the Czechoslovak government to reject the proposal and isolate itself from its alliance partners. The plan worked and, contrary to earlier promises by the Entente to negotiate collectively, Belgrade and Bucharest abandoned their ally and concluded individual agreements with Budapest on August 23.¹⁴

Later that same day a communiqué was issued that stated an accord had been reached between Hungary and the Little Entente on the first two points of the agreement, but Kánya withheld the fact that its activation was contingent upon acceptance of the entire document. The rationale for this is unclear, although it appears that this was done to indicate to Germany that despite Hungarian reliance upon the Reich, it could and would pursue independent action in to its own interests. However, the timing of the announcement could not have been less opportune, as it came during a state visit by Horthy to Kiel to witness the launching of the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen* the previous day. During political discussions, the Hungarian regent had pushed Hitler to delay his

planned operations against Czechoslovakia until the next spring so that Hungary would be able to fully participate. When news of the agreement reached the German dictator, he launched into a tirade, blasting Horthy and the Hungarians for attempting to move away from Germany and renouncing the use of force against Czechoslovakia just when military action against Prague was imminent, a sentiment echoed by von Ribbentrop. Calmly enduring the tantrum, the Admiral related to Hitler that his government's actions were dictated by the low state of the army's readiness, exacerbated by a lack of large-caliber guns, few planes, and shortage of ammunition. Further, any action against a member state of the Little Entente would be impossible without Germany guaranteeing Hungary's border with Yugoslavia, as any commitment of Budapest's forces in a Czechoslovak campaign would necessitate leaving the country's southern border minimally defended.¹⁵

With the Bled Agreement, the Hungarian government attempted to satisfy two divergent aims, and with the exception of the short upset it caused in relations between Berlin and Budapest, the result was a success. It demonstrated to both the international community and the Hungarian government itself that the regime was not a German vassal and could conduct its own affairs as dictated by its own interests. The technical language of the accords and the fact that an agreement had not been reached with Prague also kept open the option of pursuing a revisionist agenda against Czechoslovakia, thereby ameliorating German concerns as well. Though the will to resist becoming too closely aligned with Germany was strong, the need to give expression to the nation's irredentist desires was an equally powerful force. In a limited way, the Hungarian government had successfully managed to balance both prerogatives simultaneously, and empowered by this demonstration of political acumen, pursued this dual line further.

The next opportunity to do so came shortly after the Kiel conference when, on September 8, the Hungarian representative in Warsaw suggested to Beck that the two countries conclude a gentlemen's agreement concerning policy coordination in light of the Czechoslovak situation that was likely to soon erupt. Such an arrangement would build upon the already existing policy framework that Beck and Kánya had worked out in February, although meaningful collaboration was hindered by conflicting Hungarian desires. On the one hand, Budapest was willing to collude with Warsaw and Berlin to regain its lost territories and achieve a common border with Poland in the interest of Beck's "Third Europe" bloc. On the other, it would not risk war to satisfy those aims.¹⁶ Still, the allure of bringing Slovakia back to the "motherland" and acquiring sub-Carpathian Ruthenia proved to be incentive enough and, pressured by both Poland and Germany to act, Hungary became a conspirator in Czechoslovakia's demise.¹⁷

Although both Warsaw and Berlin viewed Hungarian participation as essential to dealing with Czechoslovakia, their underlying motivations were essentially different. Beck had decided to use Hitler's reckoning with Prague as an opportunity to settle Poland's long-standing dispute with the Czechoslovak government over the Teschen district, which, during the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Poles had claimed on historic and ethnic grounds, but were denied in the redrawing of Europe at the peace conference in 1919. Understanding that Czechoslovakia's days as an independent nation were numbered, Beck also wanted to use the situation to advance his "Third Europe" concept and finally achieve the common border with Hungary he believed to be essential to the project. If this objective was accomplished and a Hungarian rapprochement with Romania and Yugoslavia realized, the structural aspects of the plan

would be in place, leaving the remaining political aspects to diplomacy. The method Beck had chosen to pursue this scheme was also theoretically beneficial to the objective. Accusations of conspiracy could be disavowed once the dust had settled, as there was no true German-Polish collaboration over Czechoslovakia's demise.¹⁸ Warsaw, limiting its argument to equal treatment for the Polish minority in Czechoslovakia, would not appear as a conspirator, leaving Germany fully responsible for the aggression. If Hungary made similar claims based upon the same justification, this would inherently lend credence to the Polish position, and assuming the territorial readjustments went according to plan, result in a doubly favorable outcome. Beck's confidence in the scheme was dictated by his belief that the western powers would not act to save Czechoslovakia, and though he tried to impart this to Kánya, it was not enough to overcome the Hungarian foreign minister's timidity.¹⁹

The subtlety of Beck's machinations were completely absent from Hitler's attempts to persuade Budapest to act, as the German argument revolved around the need for the operation to be swift and decisive. Berlin had become aware of Polish intentions earlier in the summer and, though not orchestrated or conceived by the German government, the additional pressure offered by Warsaw's independent scheming fit within the larger scope of Hitler's plans. Consequently, it was given approval. With two of Czechoslovakia's frontiers threatened, all that was needed was to close the door on the third. If Budapest could be enticed into taking military action against Prague, the resulting conflict would be decided too quickly for British and French intervention to take place. This would leave the western powers with the difficult choice of fighting for a country that no longer existed or accepting the *fait accompli*. Faced with these

alternatives, the German dictator felt assured that the pacifist elements in Paris and London would prevail and there would be no war. Thus, the potential rewards for Hungary's participation were great in exchange for what were believed to be minimal risks, as Hitler was prepared to offer the Hungarians the Magyar areas of Czechoslovakia and possibly even the whole of Slovakia if Budapest would march when called upon.²⁰

Despite these promises and reassurances from both the Germans and the Poles, when events reached their climax following Hitler's rejection of his agreement with British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain at Berchtesgaden on September 16, 1938, Hungarian resolve began to crumble. Hitler wanted war in order to be able to swallow Czechoslovakia all at once, and with the British and French willing to negotiate, it was clear that the psychological moment to act had arrived. There would be no defense of the republic. Polish offers of assistance to Romania in the event that the Soviet Union attempted to deliver aid to Czechoslovakia across Romania's frontier stiffened Bucharest's resolve to deny the Red Army transit, preventing aid from reaching Prague from the east.²¹ The Germans had also done their part to keep Romania a spectator, having penetrated the country so thoroughly in the economic sphere during the spring and summer of 1938 that honoring the government's commitments to its ally would have risked severe consequences for the nation's heavily German-funded industrialization and rearmament programs. Intimidation alone was likely enough to prevent any Romanian involvement, although in exchange for complicity, Hitler related that he was prepared to guarantee the Hungarian-Romanian border, providing further incentive for the neutrality that Carol and his ministers were already inclined towards anyway.²² In the end, it was not enough to assuage Hungarian fears, and ultimately the government only offered to

send troops into Czechoslovakia after the Wehrmacht commenced its operations.²³

With Budapest's refusal to march, Hitler felt that the opportunity for a quick and decisive military resolution to the Czechoslovak issue was untenable. Deprived of the concentric attack he envisioned, he accepted Chamberlain's eleventh-hour proposal for a four-power conference to decide Czechoslovakia's fate.²⁴ On September 29, Hitler, Chamberlain, Mussolini, and the French Prime Minister Édouard Daladier, met at the newly constructed Führerbau in Munich, and after thirteen hours of negotiation, signed an agreement that handed over the Sudetenland to Germany and provided for its occupation by the Wehrmacht over the next ten days. The Czechoslovak government was not invited to the conference and, when presented with the accord, was given the option of accepting or rejecting it. If the resolution were declined, Prague would face Berlin alone.

Reluctantly, it was accepted. Though denied his war, Hitler left Czechoslovakia a rump of its former self. His mood had been exuberant in the hours immediately following the Munich Agreement, but it soured quickly.²⁵ The French and British had forced Prague to make concessions and the Hungarians and Poles had backed out of his plans, in his mind giving the Western Powers the breathing room necessary to impose arbitration upon the Czechoslovak government. As punishment for this perceived betrayal, Hitler ignored Warsaw and Budapest's revisionist interests that he had promised to represent at Munich, leaving the task of standing with his co-conspirators to Mussolini, who managed only to gain the promise that these issues would be sorted out at a later date through four-power arbitration. With the Czechoslovakia crisis apparently resolved, Paris and London soon lost all interest in pursuing any resolution of their claims.²⁶

With a favorable set of circumstances for a quick settlement of the Czechoslovak

issue to the benefit of both Poland and Hungary, their inaction during the crisis demands further inquiry. Certainly the German plan as Hitler had conceived it was feasible. The gains to be had as a reward for participation were significant, but to attain the territories promised by Berlin, a very large gamble was required. Germany could risk war. Its rearmament program had provided the country with a menacing “big stick,” one that Hitler was eager to use.²⁷ Hungary could not take that risk. Budapest’s army was small, and an invasion of Czechoslovakia, even if coordinated with the Wehrmacht, would leave the country vulnerable to threats from another power. During the Czechoslovak crisis, the primary Hungarian fear was that any military aggression directed against Czechoslovakia would trigger the mutual assistance of the Little Entente, resulting in military action from Yugoslavia and Romania. With the border only lightly defended, it would be a short march to Budapest, resulting in unforeseeable, but undoubtedly negative, consequences. A public announcement from Hitler that the German government guaranteed Hungary’s borders would have done a great deal to assuage that fear, though, for his own reasons, Hitler refused to offer one.²⁸ Without this assurance, the likelihood of Budapest’s active participation in Czechoslovakia’s dismemberment was minimal, as the excuse to follow the peaceful revisionist path Kánya favored was too convenient to pass upon. Forces within Germany also conspired to keep the Hungarians from participating as well. Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, the head of the *Abwehr*, the Reich intelligence organization, and General Ludwig Beck warned Horthy and Kánya via a secret envoy that, although Hitler was immovable in his desire for war, they and others in the Wehrmacht had little faith in the plan.²⁹ Also significant was a reluctance to be aligned, even if only due to a commonality of interest, with the Reich. This would have

ended Kánya's "Free Hand" policy and left the Hungarian government with no other recourse than to move completely into the German orbit, a proposition that, despite the drive to see its irredentist desires fulfilled, Budapest was not yet willing to embrace.

Poland chose not to participate for much the same reason, and while Beck harbored no moral compunctions about benefiting from Czechoslovakia's demise, he did not wish to be caught on the same side as Germany, should there be war.³⁰ This factor determined the course Warsaw followed, which entailed remaining aloof from direct involvement with Berlin and limiting its objective to the recovery of Teschen based upon the same ethnic minority justification that Hitler used with the Sudetenland. In this way, Beck believed it would be possible to settle the border dispute without appearing as an aggressor.³¹ However, Hitler's failure to raise the issue of Polish and Hungarian interests at Munich and the fear that German designs now included the strip of territory he desired forced Beck to act. On September 30, 1938, he issued an ultimatum to the Czechoslovak government demanding that the region be ceded to Poland.³² Fresh from the Munich settlement and abandoned by its former Little Entente allies, Prague acquiesced. The next day Polish troops began to occupy the territory. In an eerily prophetic exchange between the incoming General Władysław Bortnowski and his departing Czechoslovak counterpart, the latter noted that, although Poland was now taking the territory from Czechoslovakia, it would not be long before it was ceded again, this time to Germany from Poland.³³ In the confusion of events, Beck hoped that this action to prevent the Germans from controlling a strategically important rail-hub in the town of Bohumín would go unnoticed. It did not, and the aggressive methods used by Warsaw to gain the district helped to foster exactly the international sentiments that Beck had sought to

avoid.³⁴

During the entire episode, Romania remained a vitally important factor in the calculations of all parties, exerting enormous influence on the eventual course of events without raising a finger in the process. Both Germany and Poland attempted to keep the country passive with promises that were designed to assuage Bucharest's specific security concerns: the Poles by bolstering Carol's position in regard to the Soviet Union and the Germans by guaranteeing Romania's continued possession of Transylvania. Though Beck's actions pertained more to his "Third Europe" concept than they did to the Czechoslovakia issue, his bolstering of the Romanian alliance ensured that the only road to Prague went through Poland. To deliver aid to its ally, Russia would have to violate its 1932 non-aggression pact with Warsaw. This would trigger Poland's defensive alliance with Romania, leading to an uncertain series of events that held the potential to ignite another world war. However, concern about the Soviet Union was eliminated with the sacrificial offering of Czechoslovakia at Munich, alleviating Polish and Romanian concerns on that particular front. The Reich also based its Romanian policy on security, as its offer to guarantee the country's border with Hungary was an effective cure-all for nearly two decades of anxiety. All that Hitler required of Carol was a pledge to remain neutral should events lead to war. This was immensely important to the German dictator's conception of the operation, to which, before his meeting with Chamberlain at Bad Godesberg, Hungarian involvement had been integral. Without this guarantee to stay uninvolved, Budapest's fears of becoming embroiled in a conflict with the Little Entente could not be allayed, limiting Hungarian usefulness to the entire endeavor. On this issue, the Romanian government could not be swayed. While Carol wished to avoid

being forced into conflict with Germany, he also felt compelled to honor Bucharest's commitment to Czechoslovakia. Technically, this made a resolution of the situation simple, for as long as there was no Hungarian aggression against Czechoslovakia, Romania would not be obliged to come to her defense.³⁵ Although this position allowed Carol to wash his hands of culpability in the crisis, it complicated both German and Polish designs, and by eliminating the possibility of Hungarian participation, prolonged Czechoslovakia's existence another five and a half months.

This result was not a consequence of any particular desire to provide assistance to the Czechoslovaks, as foremost in Romanian decision-making was the power-dynamic between Romania and Hungary. Were Hungary to gain the whole of Slovakia and Ruthenia, Carol feared that this would extend Hungarian influence into the sub-Carpathian region and threaten Romania's hold on Transylvania, setting a revisionist precedent that could have severe consequences for Romania, were the trend allowed to continue. This would also upset the geopolitical balance of the region, as with increased territory and manpower reserves, Hungary would be able to compete for influence in East Central Europe and the protection of the Great Powers that Romania currently enjoyed. Though Hitler would not provide assurance that Budapest would be restrained as events reached their culmination, Mussolini's Italy was willing to do so. Foreign minister Count Galeazzo Ciano provided assurances to the Romanian ambassador in Rome that the Hungarian government "would not commit any imprudence" and limit itself to ethnic revision.³⁶ This vague promise was enough, and Carol resigned his former ally to his fate.

The decision to abandon Czechoslovakia following Munich proved to be the final

death-knell for the Little Entente. It finalized a process begun shortly after the remilitarization of the Rhineland, when both Bucharest and Belgrade dismissed Czechoslovak suggestions that would have transformed the alliance from a limited arrangement directed against Hungarian revisionism to one of general mutual assistance, and continued with the separate treaties resulting from the Bled conference. Fear of becoming entangled in the conflict brewing between Germany and Czechoslovakia dictated that response, with the events of September 1938 retroactively proving that decision to be correct. As long as the Hungarians did not become involved, there was no technical aspect of the agreement that would draw Romania or Yugoslavia into the fray, unless moral sympathies prevailed. However, such sentiments were in short supply and restrained by an even greater desire to preserve national independence, which, if they were drawn into a regional conflict, there was no guarantee of ensuring. To further distance the remainder of the Little Entente from the rump (renamed Czecho-Slovakia), Carol and the Yugoslavian Prime Minister Milan Stojadinović renounced all obligations to Prague, justifying the act based upon the flimsy argument that, since Czechoslovakia had compromised its territorial integrity, the nation with which they had entered into alliance no longer existed. This absolved Bucharest and Belgrade of their commitments. Though a weak case, it was little more than a confirmation of their previous September 26 decision when they privately agreed, along with a double-dealing Beck, that it was better to feed Czechoslovakia to the wolves and preserve their own security than become victims of another nation's aggression.³⁷

The feast commenced shortly after the ink had dried on the Munich Agreement. On October 9, in Komárom, a city on the Hungarian-Slovak border, the Hungarian and

Czechoslovak governments entered into negotiations to settle their border dispute as dictated by the relevant provisions of the accord.³⁸ Warsaw was required to do so as well but had instead decided that negotiations and possible arbitration might result in the Teschen region being denied to Poland and claimed by Germany, prompting the government to move unilaterally and annex the territory on October 1.³⁹ Without a military option, Budapest was forced to the table. However, after the Czechoslovak delegation rejected Kánya's demands that would have ceded the Magyar majority areas in southern Slovakia and Ruthenia to Hungary and provided for self-determinant plebiscites in the remainder of those regions, the discussions broke down and he was compelled to seek out an alternative course. The possibility of gaining the whole of Slovakia seemed remote, and conceding that, he abandoned the idea of pursuing it further. Instead, Kánya focused on regaining the ethnic Hungarian areas and pushed for the creation of a common Polish-Hungarian border via annexation of sub-Carpathian Ruthenia. This met with German opposition, as Hitler viewed a mutual Polish-Hungarian frontier as a threat to Berlin's interests with its potential to facilitate the creation of an anti-German bloc.⁴⁰ To counter this dual Polish and Hungarian threat, the Germans increased their support for the now dependent Czechoslovaks, utilizing the same ethnic minority principle they had previously used to wrench the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia, in the country's defense of its continued possession of Ruthenia. When the Hungarians, through their envoy in Berlin, Kálmán Darányi, informed Hitler that they were prepared to fight for their claims, the German dictator replied that if Budapest chose that path, they would do so without the support of the Reich.⁴¹ Taking the cue, the Hungarians resumed negotiations on October 22, rejecting a proposal from Czechoslovakia that would have

given Hungary roughly half of what had originally been asked for and, after Kánya declared that the discussions had again failed, the two sides decided to seek arbitration.⁴²

By asking for arbitration, it was understood that the judgment was final. The Hungarian government was confident, though, that the parallel diplomacy it had conducted with the Italians would enable them to net greater gains than through direct negotiations with Prague. On that front, Count István Csáky had been sent to Rome to convince Ciano and Mussolini that Italian support for Hungary's claims was a strategic necessity to counter increased German influence as a result of the Munich settlement. A strong Hungary, he argued, would better be able to resist German pressure and thereby be able to align itself more closely to Rome, buttressing Italy's faltering position in the Axis. Ciano agreed to this in principle but warned Csáky that, by proceeding with arbitration, all Hungarian hopes of regaining sub-Carpathian Ruthenia would be extinguished. Since Budapest, working with Warsaw, had already begun instigating an alternative plan for acquiring the region, the Hungarians acquiesced, and a date for the adjudication was shortly set for November 2, 1938, in Vienna.⁴³

Originally intended to be a four-power arbitration similar to the Munich conference, Britain and France had little interest in the issue and relieved themselves of the burden of further parceling out Czechoslovak territory, leaving that duty to the Germans and Italians. Ribbentrop and Ciano, after hearing arguments from Prague and the autonomous Slovak and Hungarian delegations, retired behind closed doors. After wrangling over the final border that had more to do with the interests of their own governments than those of the Czechs, Slovaks, or Magyars, they returned with a decision. A line drawn from Kassa (Košice), Csua, Losonc (Lučenec), Ungvár

(Uzhorod), and Munkals was to be the new border, with all the Slovak and sub-Carpathian Ruthenian lands south of the line to be annexed to Hungary. The subsequent agreement was to be final, and both von Ribbentrop and Ciano warned the Hungarians that they were to go no further than the award, implying that the judgment was an act of benevolence. Budapest's designs for acquiring sub-Carpathian Ruthenia to forge a common border with Poland would not be tolerated.⁴⁴

The Vienna Award satisfied a portion of Hungary's revisionist aims and, though the government had not achieved the decision on its own, resulted in the first true "success" that the Horthy regime could claim. However, it came at a price. Hungary was now fully culpable in Czechoslovakia's dismemberment, and this guilt was noticed throughout the international community. This limited Hungary's options for friendship to the Axis or the German dominated bloc's collaborators. The era of Kánya's "Free Hand" policy was at an end. Although there was still some room for maneuver, Hungary was now bound to Germany.

Though not a part of the negotiation and arbitration process, Poland, guided by Beck's increasingly active diplomacy, still played an integral role in the events surrounding the settlement. Following the breaking-off of the original talks between the Czechoslovak and Hungarian governments at Komárom on October 13, Kánya began discussions with Beck to formulate an alternative method by which to gain possession of sub-Carpathian Ruthenia. The two eventually decided upon a course of action that involved instigating a popular uprising in the region and, once an appropriate level of violence had been achieved, sending in troops under the auspice of restoring order. Annexation would be subsequent upon request by the Polish- and Hungarian-controlled

leaders of the revolt. In a bid to ensure the operation went according to plan, Beck traveled to Galați, on the Romanian Black Sea coast, to discuss the situation with Carol. During their meeting, Beck emphasized the importance of linking the Polish and Hungarian frontiers as a barrier to further German expansion in the Danubian region. Although understanding the king's reluctance to see Hungary aggrandized at Czechoslovakia's expense, he stressed the need to deal with the realities of the new European landscape and to acquiesce in Budapest's control of the area. To soften the blow, Beck suggested that Romania take possession of the very eastern portion of sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, which, in addition to the compensatory value, would also provide a strategically important second rail-link between Poland and Romania. Further, Beck offered to act as mediator in all disputes between Budapest and Bucharest, noting that dialogue was the only constructive path to a general *détente* in their relations. This would have numerous benefits, the most important being the implied result that would have the three East Central European neighbors becoming the foundation of an anti-German defensive bloc.⁴⁵

Although interested in the framework presented by Beck, Carol was reluctant to commit himself or his country to such a radical proposition, particularly in light of foreign and domestic sentiments to the contrary. The Germans had made their position on the matter clear and, faced with an ascendant Germany and weakening West, divided opinion both inside and out of the Romanian government prohibited any action. Equally important to Carol were the lingering scruples he still harbored concerning Romania's former ally. While he and Stojadinović had abandoned Czechoslovakia, participating in its dismemberment was not morally permissible. Even in its diminished form,

Czechoslovakia was still useful to Romania, especially regarding armaments. The railway used to ship them from the Škoda factories to the depots in Romania traversed sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, and for this reason it was important to maintain a semi-independent Czechoslovak state. This ensured that Czechoslovakia would continue to have access to the Black Sea and the Balkan markets for its goods, which Bucharest considered vital to the country's longevity. Were Czechoslovakia to collapse politically and economically, the Romanian government feared that Hungary would waste no time in seizing the remainder of Slovakia, altering the regional power-dynamic to Romania's detriment.⁴⁶

This setback did not deter Beck, and on his return from Galați he wired Lipski with instructions to sound out the scheme to Göring, who, from the information gathered in the course of the conversation with Carol and Petrescu-Comnen, was identified as the Romanian source on German regional policy.⁴⁷ The next day, Lipski met Göring at Karinhall, relating to him the essence of the Polish argument for returning sub-Carpathian Ruthenia to Hungary, although couched in pre-Trianon terms. After explaining to the Field Marshal that the Romanian government believed Berlin to be opposed to a common Polish-Hungarian frontier, Göring exploded. He calmed down after subjecting Lipski to a lengthy tirade decrying Petrescu-Comnen's limited understanding of the situation in Central Europe, and admitted that, as he had not been in contact with Hitler for a few days, he was not himself sure if the official German policy had changed. Göring was not against the idea of a Polish-Hungarian border, believing the danger to Germany from the incorporation of sub-Carpathian Ruthenia into Hungary to be a creation of Western propaganda.⁴⁸ However, without the authority to speak conclusively regarding the true

German position, Göring's opinions were of little use. This forced Lipski to search elsewhere for the information he sought, and in light of decisions made by Hitler unknown to his Luftwaffe head, he temporarily delayed the dropping of a diplomatic bombshell.

On October 24, Lipski met with von Ribbentrop in Berchtesgaden to discuss the matters raised with Göring, but rather than substantive dialogue on the Polish-Hungarian border issue, the German foreign minister instead presented the Polish ambassador with a list of demands for the settlement of outstanding German-Polish differences. This included the reunion of Danzig with the Reich, the construction of the oft-suggested extraterritorial railway across the Corridor, and Warsaw's adherence to the anti-Comintern pact. In exchange, Germany would offer guarantees of Polish rights and access to the city. Poland's frontiers would be similarly insured. The Germans also offered to extend the 1934 non-aggression pact to a term of twenty-five years and to acquiesce to Hungarian possession of sub-Carpathian Ruthenia.⁴⁹ This caught Lipski off-guard, as there had been no indication from the German government that a policy shift away from the *détente* that had characterized relations between the two governments was nearing its end. Ribbentrop's words were that signal. The future of German-Polish relations now hinged upon Warsaw's subservience to Hitler's will.

Once related to Beck, these revelations brought the Polish government and its foreign policy to a crossroad. On the one hand, Warsaw could accept the German proposal, as there were benefits both practical and exploitable. Hitler's consent to a common Polish-Hungarian border would have fulfilled a portion of Beck's "Third Europe" concept without any risk. It also would have provided for a tactical outflanking

of the Reich in sub-Carpathian Ruthenia should relations deteriorate in the future.⁵⁰ This would be traded for nothing that Warsaw had not previously offered, as the Poles had already suggested the idea of an extraterritorial corridor across the Corridor, making that demand acceptable. Even the question of Danzig's continued status as a free city was not inviolable, as within government circles, there had been some thought given to the matter. At various junctures, Beck had contemplated allowing for the return of the city to Germany as long as special privileges were retained. Following subsequent conferences with Hitler and von Ribbentrop in Berchtesgaden, Munich, and Warsaw, respectively, during late December and early January 1939, he began to consider the feasibility of dividing the city between the two countries, giving Germany the eastern two-thirds of Danzig and Poland the remaining western portion. This latter scheme would have potentially forestalled any immediate armed conflict with Berlin, affording Poland more time to complete its rearmament and work towards building a regional security bloc. It would also have the benefit of widening the Corridor and, with the construction of a canal linking the city to Gdynia, reduced Polish dependence upon Danzig as the nation's primary harbor.⁵¹

However, there were aspects of the German overtures that were dangerous. None of these potential benefits could be derived without a reorientation of Polish foreign policy along German lines. Though Warsaw had previously demonstrated a willingness to work with Berlin on initiatives that were complimentary to Polish designs, Beck harbored no illusions as to what abject subservience to Hitler's aims entailed. The original demands forwarded by von Ribbentrop on October 24 had indicated to both Beck and Lipski that in Danzig, a situation that had once been finalized could become subject

to further revision. This made the promised border guarantee little more than an olive-branch concealing a dagger. Adherence to the Anti-Comintern pact was equally hazardous, as aside from placing Poland in the German orbit, it carried the possibility of realizing one of Warsaw's greatest fears: placing the country in the center of a conflict between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union. Such a move was, in Beck's mind, almost certain to incur Moscow's wrath and likely alienate Poland from France, leaving servile friendship with Germany the only option left available.

Maintaining the *status quo* carried with it an entirely different set of risks, foremost among them the possibility of war with Germany. However, Beck believed that in having to choose between the lesser of two evils, this second choice offered the better chance for continued national independence by keeping all options on the table. With that in mind, he countered German pressure throughout the winter and into the spring with stubborn but polite refusal of Hitler's demands, hoping that firm rejection devoid of inflammatory rhetoric would prevent any action being contemplated in Berlin.⁵² In this endeavor, Beck was aided by Hitler's attention being focused elsewhere, since before Hitler could deal with Poland, he had to attend to other issues first.

For the Germans, the presentation of demands on October 24 not only inaugurated a new Polish policy but served in a tactical capacity as well. During the negotiations preceding the Vienna Award, the Hungarian and Polish governments had both been searching for a workable method to bring about Budapest's acquisition of sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, and with the option of arbitration available, they privately agreed that the region could be annexed by Hungary with Warsaw's support during the adjudication. The German government was aware of this collusion, and as Hitler was still opposed to

the creation of a common Polish-Hungarian border in early October, used the situation to remove Warsaw's influence from events and initiate a policy that had long been at the heart of German aims. By forwarding demands that Berlin knew the Polish government would, at least initially, not accept, Hitler placed the Poles in a position that held the potential for conflict, and with the negative international perception of the regime still fresh from the Sudeten crisis, limited its recourse, forcing them to back down. Without support from Poland, the Hungarians were hesitant to press for further gains beyond what the Germans would allow and accepted the arbitration as it was.

The effects of this were temporary and impacted only the official policies pursued by the Polish and Hungarian governments. As has been previously stated, plans to instigate a popular uprising through the infiltration of sub-Carpathian Ruthenia with Polish and Hungarian agents had already been discussed. In November, that scheme was initiated. Taking a page out of Hitler's tactical manual, both Warsaw and Budapest launched their own propaganda campaigns against the Czechoslovak administration of sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, which, combined with the effects of the agitators, resulted in an orchestrated chaos that awaited only the request for Hungarian troops to quell. Preparations for the move had already been undertaken. Logistical and material support from both the Polish and Italian governments had been secured.⁵³ All that remained was the order to march. However, on the eve of the operation, Horthy and Kánya's resolve wavered as it had previously during the Czechoslovak crisis in September, and the invasion was postponed.

At the heart of the eleventh-hour stay was the Hungarian concern over the potential German reaction to the move that carried with it the possibility of incurring a

wrath that would be disastrous for the regime. Horthy's and Kánya's anxiety was not unjustified. With the annexation of Austria, the Wehrmacht was poised to smash through the Hungarian border with little opposition and would be within easy striking distance of Budapest in a matter of hours. The Hungarian army was in no condition to match its German counterpart, and, according to the Hungarian government's assessment, neither were the Polish or Italian militaries.⁵⁴ Support from Romania or Yugoslavia was also discounted as a possibility, as Berlin's dismemberment of their former ally had instilled a fear of the Reich within both governments that had reoriented their policies towards Germany with emphasis on non-confrontation and accommodation. A healthy mistrust of Hungarian intentions and trepidation over Budapest's irredentist aspirations to the south and east further guaranteed their inaction.

Faced with this nightmare scenario, Kánya decided that Hungary was in no position to present Hitler with a *fait accompli* and, on November 18, contacted Berlin to probe the Germans on the plan. Without divulging that the entire operation was dependent upon their consent, Kánya related only that a crisis had developed in the Carpatho-Ukraine and that Budapest had received requests from the local administration to send in troops to subdue the violence and, in accordance with wishes of the populace, annex the area. The reply he received the next day was negative but vague, stating only that "if Hungarian action gave rise to difficulties, Germany could not support Hungary," and that Hitler considered the moment for action "inopportune."⁵⁵ The intent of the message, unequivocally a warning to abort the invasion, was not lost upon Kánya. However, he saw opportunity in the obscure wording. He purposefully misinterpreted it to mean that Germany would not come to Hungary's aid if the invasion became mired in

difficulties, but that otherwise Hitler had no objections to Hungarian occupation of sub-Carpathian Ruthenia. Subsequently, he informed Rome and Warsaw that Hitler had given his approval of the scheme according to this misleading interpretation. Whether Kánya knew his intrigue was sustainable is doubtful. It appears he intended it only to serve the immediate need of acquiring Italian aircraft for the operation and hoped that, even if Hitler's true position on the subject became apparent, there would be a continuation of the anti-German collaboration similar to that between Ciano and Csáky prior to the Vienna arbitration. This would allow for gains to be made even if confronted with opposition from the Reich. In hedging his bets on this set of developments, Kánya misjudged the situation. Once the actual German position became known to the Italians, Mussolini became livid, reproaching the Hungarians for their duplicity and canceling the planes he had previously promised. The plan and any further notion of independent action was put to an end on November 21 following the joint issuing of a strongly worded German-Italian *démarche* warning the Hungarian government of the consequences of moving against sub-Carpathian Ruthenia.⁵⁶

The stalling of Hungarian designs to annex the Carpatho-Ukraine halted all further regional revision for the next four months. German power and Berlin's ability to project that strength was a significant factor in this moratorium on revision. Without a challenge to his burgeoning hegemony, Hitler was able to impose his will upon East Central Europe and shape events according to his own concepts. This was the beginning of the end of independence. Though the Polish, Hungarian, Lithuanian, and Romanian governments did not know this, each was aware of the force that was to be integral in the reshaping of the region. The Third Reich did not yet have the ability to dictate the terms

of the region's various national prerogatives, but its power made German policy an omnipresent consideration for all future decisions. However, the gravity of this development was temporarily alleviated by Hitler's need for international quiet in the wake of the Czechoslovak affair and its chaotic aftermath. Quiet, though, did not entail inaction, and Berlin maintained a steady pressure on East Central Europe that kept German interests at the fore of regional intrigue and national considerations.

Throughout the winter and into the spring of 1939, both the Polish and Lithuanian governments were subjected to subtle but stern warnings that a continuation of their current relationships with Germany were no longer adequate. Following the conclusion of the Czechoslovakia issue, the Memelland and Danzig questions were to be addressed with allusions to a final settlement.⁵⁷ However, the language and tone of the messages to each government was different in character. Those related to Kaunas were more akin to threats of inevitable action, whereas the firm but subdued "negotiations" with Warsaw reflected Hitler's still wavering conceptions of how Poland was to fit into his reorganization of East Central Europe. As in September 1938, the German dictator still believed that Polish action against the rump Czechoslovak state would be beneficial to a quick resolution of the affair, and the tone of the diplomatic exchanges over the winter and early spring of 1939 reflected this position. The restraint, misinterpreted by Beck, was intended to preserve the possibility of Polish participation in Czechoslovakia's final demise until Hitler finalized his decisions regarding the ultimate fate of both countries. However, contingents both for Warsaw's participation in and exclusion from events existed.

The Hungarian government, in the aftermath of its attempt to annex sub-

Carpathian Ruthenia, was also required to confront a new set of political realities. Indirect pressure exercised through political organization and domestic agitation by the country's German minority, in addition to clamoring by the homegrown Hungarian fascist Arrow Cross Party for closer cooperation with Germany and the Axis, resulted in a reshuffling of the government.⁵⁸ Horthy, in an attempt both to appease Hitler and subdue the Magyar pro-Nazi political elements, replaced the unpopular Kánya with Csáky as foreign minister, as he was more favorably disposed to and received by Berlin. To further cement this new relationship and signal Hitler that Hungary was, in the future, to be a more cooperative partner in foreign policy initiatives, in January 1939 Csáky promised Hitler that he would sign the Anti-Comintern Pact and terminate Hungary's membership in the League of Nations.⁵⁹

Although prompted by German pressure, there were specific Hungarian concerns that also dictated moving into closer alignment with Berlin. Foremost among these were the subtle signs that Germany and Romania were working towards a rapprochement.⁶⁰ Were this to occur, Budapest feared that without any improvement of its relations with the Reich, Hungarian revisionist aims would be compromised in favor of the maintenance of Romania's current borders or, worse, a truncation of the country's frontiers. Shifting headlong into the German orbit provided the only apparent security against such a possibility, and it was hoped that by virtue of the political gestures and an expressed willingness to participate in Hitler's future endeavors, Hungary's revisionist interests would be given priority over that of other nations.

Though binding the country to the Third Reich was dangerous in the long-term, the potential for significant, immediate gains was alluring. Certainly, the fear of such

gains being made at Hungary's own expense was an integral factor in the underlying motivations for the decision, but there were domestic considerations as well. The acquisition of Slovak lands provided Hungarian extreme-right political parties with a taste of revisionist success. Because, in their view, Hungary's territorial acquisitions were the result of fascist power, groups like the Arrow Cross and the German-endorsed National Socialist Party of Hungary viewed alignment with the Reich as the only way that a *Nagy-Magyarország*, or Greater Hungary, could be realized. Appeasing those parties and promising government expression of their desires bought the Horthy regime political capital that also secured its position against the domestic threat they posed. It also purchased the Hungarian government renewed credit with Hitler, who despite having been forced into arbitration at Munich because of Budapest's hesitancy, now decided that the Magyars should be granted another opportunity to demonstrate their newly professed obeisance. However, for Budapest to be allowed to share in the final destruction of Czechoslovakia, the Hungarians would be required to follow precisely his timing and work according to his designs.⁶¹

This meant no acceleration of the timetable in an effort to seize sub-Carpathian Ruthenia before Hitler was ready to strike. Such action would be resented by Berlin and result in German, rather than Hungarian, occupation of the region.⁶² Budapest was also to restrain its relations with Romania, restricting itself to efforts that held the potential for positive ends, even if these were only limited in scope.⁶³ More important to Hitler than any meaningful rapprochement between Hungary and Romania was achieving quiet on his southern front. This would prevent any interruption in the delivery of oil and grains, both vital supplies for his military machine. Economic deals that secured these had

already been worked out during November and December of 1938, although mistrust between Hitler and King Carol of Romania resulted in a tense situation that could quickly become unsettled. Any Hungarian agitation for revision was enough to negate the inroads Berlin had made with the Romanian government. It was also possible that such rhetoric could drive Bucharest towards the West, upsetting both Hitler's timetable and strategic framework. In an effort to keep the Hungarians quiet, Hitler sweetened his offer of the Carpatho-Ukraine in its entirety with a further promise that none of the region would have to be shared with hated Romania.⁶⁴ This promise, along with subtle intimidation, proved to be an effective combination that reined the Hungarians in and ensured that they would follow Hitler's plan.

To gain Romanian acquiescence to his plans for Czechoslovakia's final dismantling, Hitler relied upon indirect methods. At the heart of his policy was economic domination of Romania, which, with varying degrees of success, Carol and his government had resisted. This kept Germany's market penetration at a manageable level of twenty-five percent. This number and, by extension, economic dependence upon the Reich increased to nearly forty percent as a result of the trade agreements signed between Bucharest and Berlin, although this was tempered through favorable agreement language and trade balances that provided more material benefit to Romania than was received by Germany.⁶⁵ The arrangements, however, had an effect that was incalculably more valuable to the Reich, for they contributed to the further eroding of ties between Romania and the Western Great Powers. The arms for oil deal signed in November 1938 particularly had this as a consequence, with Germany replacing France as the primary armaments supplier for the Romanian military. By picking up the French deficit in return

for petroleum and a promise that Germany's arms not be used against the Reich, the little confidence that remained in France's continued commitment to the country was severely shaken. Despite this success, further attempts to force a reorientation of the Romanian economy towards German needs were blocked, as Carol understood that allowing Berlin any greater influence upon his kingdom would threaten independence. With Hitler's policy based upon material need, the king believed that this afforded him an advantage in dealing with the Germans and enabled him to maintain positive relations without becoming subservient to the Reich.⁶⁶ This policy was, though, contingent upon alternative outlets for Romanian goods and the insurance provided by collective security, rendering it untenable if either of its foundations were threatened. A turn of events in November 1938 offered Hitler the opportunity he needed to expose and exploit the weakness in Carol's foreign policy of balance, and begin the process of drawing Romania tighter into the German sphere.

The murder of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, the imprisoned, charismatic head of the Iron Guard, on November 30, 1938, offered Hitler exactly the excuse he needed to launch an aggressive propaganda campaign against the Romanian government, in the hopes of bullying Bucharest into submission where negotiation and subtle influence had failed. Hitler had no particular sympathies for Codreanu and the Iron Guard, preferring the official regime and dealing with the traditional institutions of power over a group of politically unstable fascist adherents. However, the German dictator was willing to utilize such revolutionaries as an expedient when necessary, only to cast them aside when his particular objective had been realized. He had already demonstrated a willingness to do this during the Röhm affair with the SA and now, as he had with his brown-shirts, the

green-shirted Iron Guard was to be exploited for political gain.

Hitler portrayed the murder as a personal affront against him by Carol and used it as a demonstration of Romanian malicious intent towards Germany despite having remained vague and non-committal regarding Codreanu's fate when the king had broached the subject with him personally the week before. Carol had suspected that the Germans desired to retain the Iron Guard's leader as a form of political blackmail, unleashing him and the movement to exercise influence on Romanian internal affairs and pulling the organization back when those objectives had been realized. Hitler's inquiries as to Codreanu's whereabouts and the conditions of his confinement, coupled with a sudden, violent increase in Iron Guard terrorism during Carol's state visit, seemed to confirm such a relationship. The subsequent execution was intended both to decapitate the Iron Guard and eliminate a means for Berlin to influence Romanian policy. However, no program coordination existed between the Iron Guard and the German government, rendering Codreanu's bullet-riddled, acid-dissolved, concrete-encased corpse little more than a convenient excuse for Hitler to forward his existing agenda.⁶⁷

The Germans did this with considerable vigor, portraying Carol as they had Edvard Beneš, the former President of Czechoslovakia, during the September crisis, and discreetly indicating to the Romanian government that an acceptable replacement had already been designated. Though the occupation of Romania and the installation of a new, potentially Iron Guard-dominated regime was beyond the extent of German aims, the fear of military intervention and removal of the monarchy forced Carol to reexamine his foreign policy and determine what assistance his government could expect from the international community. The prognosis was poor. Diplomatic feelers extended to the

British and French confirmed a lack of interest in Romania and the region. Both London and Paris urged that Bucharest concede to Germany's demands, explaining that economic incursion was not a serious enough issue over which to start a war, and as conciliation, offered the Romanians limited economic assistance packages to mitigate Bucharest's dependence upon German trade. Though accepted, these deals did little to alleviate Romania's predicament and confirmed that the west had abandoned the country to the Reich in the interest of peace. Even Italy, previously the intra-Axis counterbalance to Germany, was hesitant to engage the situation in any meaningful way, deferring to Berlin's view. Poland was encumbered with its own difficulties with the Germans, negating any possibility of aid from that quarter as well. Going into 1939, Romania had to face Hitler alone.⁶⁸

The one advantage that Romania had during the crisis was the understanding that economic need was the motivation for German action, and as long as Bucharest kept this issue central to its diplomacy, the storm could be weathered. Consequently, Carol made personnel moves at the foreign ministry reflecting his change of policy, replacing the collective security advocate Petrescu-Comnen with the more realistic Grigore Gafencu. Gafencu, after assessing Romania's geopolitical position, believed in the necessity of making certain economic concessions to the Reich. The country's independence did not need to be compromised, as he thought that, contrary to the intelligence being received from the state secret service, conquest was not an immediate German aim.⁶⁹

With this in mind, both he and Carol worked to resolve the crisis. The first step they took was to extend preferential treatment to Romania's German minority. Later, they appointed many of the minority's political leaders into positions of authority in the

new Front for National Rebirth, a government-invented, state-controlled political “mass movement.” This offered Germany an approved alternative to the Iron Guard. The gesture was ignored, and it was not until January 1939 that Berlin responded to the overtures. The Germans demanded that a long-term, all-inclusive economic plan be arranged between the two countries. Such an agreement was the only way in which Romania could convince those in Berlin who still doubted the usefulness of friendship with Bucharest otherwise. As further incentive, Wilhelm Fabricius, the German minister to Romania, informed Carol that although no specific offer of support for Hungarian revisionism had been given to Budapest, the only way in which Romania could ensure that its borders would not become subject to readjustment was to strive for relations as good as, or better than, those Germany shared with Hungary.⁷⁰

The threat was not lost on Carol, and in response to the German “suggestions,” he replaced his pro-Western economics minister Mitiță Constantinescu with Ion Bujoiu, who was more acceptable to Berlin. Together with Gafencu, Bujoiu formulated an economic collaboration program that was designed to enable Germany to regain its pre-World War I position of economic preponderance in Romania, presenting it without details or specifics. Bucharest’s tradition of promising much while offering little resulted in confusion as to the intent of the Romanian program, which the Germans believed to be a capitulation to their demands. However, when their delegation presented its own formal proposal, which included a comprehensive restructuring of Romania’s economy and gave Germany full responsibility for developing nearly all its sectors, the true gulf that existed between the two sides became evident. Though not explicit in the German arrangement, Gafencu and Bujoiu were apprehensive about the implied political and economic control

the proposal granted Berlin. In an effort to secure protection against any such overt predominance, they demanded that the accord be linked to specific guarantees for the security of Romania's frontiers and Carol's regime.⁷¹ This stalled the negotiations but, more importantly, alleviated some of the pressure being applied by the Germans.

The calm was illusory. Hitler had not abandoned his objective of forcing an economic arrangement upon Romania, but he was now considering alternative methods to achieve about his desired end. Direct negotiations had resulted in stalemate, and any further pressure threatened to drive Bucharest towards the West. However, there were alternative approaches available. A demonstration of force that played upon Romanian fears in connection with a firm restatement of Germany's demands was one such possibility, although for the moment, the situation was not opportune. However, the time to settle the Romanian issue, as well as Hitler's other outstanding foreign policy objectives, would soon be at hand. With this in mind, he was prepared to act swiftly and decisively when that hour arrived.

II

On March 15, 1939, the Wehrmacht crossed the Czech border, finalizing the process that Hitler had initiated five months previously. In one swift action that drew only verbal protests from Great Britain and France, Czechoslovakia was crushed. However, this triumph was entirely different than his previous conquests. Upon his arrival in Prague the next day, the only adoring crowds greeting him were the columns of German soldiers his motorcade overtook on its journey to Hradschin Castle, the traditional seat of the Bohemian kings. The local population had deserted the streets, and the only Czechs who responded to his outstretched arm with a reciprocal gesture did so

with a defiant clenched fist. Back in Germany, the jubilant crowds that had once celebrated Hitler's prior victories were as reticent as the Czechs. Hitler's justification for destroying the remainder of Czechoslovakia as part of his program to restore Germany's historic living space in an area relatively devoid of ethnic Germans was utterly lost upon the average German. The prestige boost was, however, undeniable, allowing all objections and criticism to be cast aside. For the moment, at least, Hitler was the "greatest German in history."⁷²

In addition to satisfying German strategic aims, the final dismemberment of Czechoslovakia also served to propel Hitler's broader foreign policy agenda in East Central Europe and was representative of the manner in which he planned to execute his designs. The Czechs had been crushed through the delivery of an ultimatum that had threatened violence as the only alternative to accepting Hitler's demands. Though it was the most visible policy action undertaken by the Reich, it was not the first in what was a two-week succession of similar *démarches* that initiated a final phase of German diplomacy. In the past, Hitler had vacillated considerably on his methodology, usually acting out of convenience when a fortuitous set of circumstances was presented to him. Now, as indicated by his demeanor in the ultimatum he had presented to the Romanians and those he was to shortly present to the Polish and Lithuanian governments, he had firmly settled upon a course of action. In East Central Europe, Hitler was going for broke in his bid to establish German hegemony over region.

The first ultimatum presented by the German government came, in fact, five days earlier than the one delivered to Emil Hácha on March 12, although it was far more subtle than the chaotic scene played out in the Reich Chancellery that evening. With the

Romanian economic negotiations deadlocked since the end of February, Hitler and Helmuth Wohlthat, the chief of the German delegation to Bucharest, had been searching for a way in which to bring about Germany's desired ends without compromising Berlin's Hungarian policy. With the settling of the Czechoslovak issue scheduled for mid-March, any gesture towards Romania carried the possibility of upsetting Budapest's commitment to the operation.⁷³

Although not integral from a military aspect, Hungarian participation and seizure of the Carpatho-Ukraine would almost completely bind the country to the Reich, making its contribution useful politically. Consequently, the Germans decided to achieve both ends simultaneously and, on March 10, submitted a new proposal that was a hardening of their original position, amounting to the total submission of Romanian agriculture, forestry, and industry to German requirements.⁷⁴ While the deal was still being considered in Bucharest, Czechoslovakia disappeared. The message was clear: stand against the Reich and share Czechoslovakia's fate. Even without that message, Romania's previously manageable problems were now complicated by the new regional realities. Germany, following the occupation of its puppet-state Slovakia, was now within striking distance of the country's frontiers, with the only barrier being Hungary, which, in light of Budapest's recent behavior, seemed to have no compunctions about acting upon its revisionist aspirations. Were these to be given expression, naturally bolstered by German support, then a compromise of Romania's territorial integrity was a very real possibility, leaving Bucharest with little recourse.

These considerations brought the Romanians to the negotiating table in March 1939, with the fear of open German support for Hungary providing the necessary

motivation. An eleventh-hour plea to Britain and France for investment capital and material support to mitigate the substantial German economic penetration of the country, in an effort to bolster Bucharest's bargaining position, resulted in renewed promises of Western commitment to Romania and Southeastern Europe. However, very little of the promised economic assistance was actually delivered.⁷⁵ The confidence Carol and his government had previously placed in London and Paris was dramatically shaken as a consequence of their inaction during the events on March 15. In light of the altered European landscape, the king made the choice to cast Romania's lot with Germany.

On March 23, 1939, the Treaty for the Promotion of Economic Relations between Germany and Romania was signed. This effectively handed the keys to the kingdom, both figuratively and literally, to the Reich. Due to the language of the agreement, each government was able to claim victory in the aftermath of the affair. Bucharest had weathered the storm and, from its perspective, come through no worse for the wear. The treaty only provided for general guidelines of economic coordination, which were to be mutually consulted upon during periodic meetings between German and Romanian commissions. This was intended to offset most of Berlin's more drastic demands and led the Romanian government to believe that those could be favorably negotiated in the future from a position of greater strength. On other issues that arose during the agreement talks, such as devaluing the leu against the Reichsmark to enable Germany to purchase a greater amount of Romanian oil and agricultural surplus, along with Berlin's promise to respect Romania's right to maintain economic relations with other nations, the Romanians held firm in their resistance to German pressure for their acceptance. As a reward for their perseverance, they were granted those concessions.⁷⁶ However, such

technical victories deluded Bucharest into a false sense of security. While the vagueness and loose framework that characterized much of the accord was viewed as beneficial, the Germans were equally capable of utilizing those same aspects of the treaty to force their own conceptions of economic coordination upon Romania. All that was required was an increase in pressure in conjunction with the removal of Romania's economic alternatives, leaving Bucharest no other options than those offered by Berlin. Such a policy could be conducted indirectly and at Germany's convenience, as the foundations of Romania's market-dependence had already been set. For all intents and purposes, the economic conquest long desired by Hitler was now complete.⁷⁷

Hungary's transformation into a German satellite came as a byproduct of the Romanian and Czechoslovak ultimatums. Although Budapest had not received categorical threats as had both Bucharest and Prague, the warnings that any deviation from Berlin's plan would not be tolerated were no less ominous.⁷⁸ Fear of Hitler choosing Romania as his new primary collaborator in Danubian Europe worked to ensure Budapest's adherence to his conceptions of the region's reorganization, although the restructuring of the Hungarian national economy as part of the price for participation in Czechoslovakia's demise was equally significant.⁷⁹ Imposed economic coordination with the Reich deepened Budapest's dependence upon Berlin and, as a result of the increasing scale of German investment, led to a virtual conquest of the country. This, in addition to the debt the Hungarian government owed Hitler for his allowing of Hungary to annex sub-Carpathian Ruthenia and select districts of eastern Slovakia, inexorably tied the two countries together politically. These two factors provided Berlin with an almost unlimited amount of influence in the country's domestic affairs and firmly anchored

Hungary's place in orbit around the Third Reich. As was the case with Romania, there was still some room for maneuver, although it was extremely limited and of little consolation. In one fell swoop, Hitler had seized Danubian Europe and brought it under his sway. Now only affairs in the north needed to be attended to.

Since December 1938 Hitler had largely ignored Lithuania, having satisfied himself with the domination of the Memelland parliament and a thorough Nazification of the local German population. With the more pressing matter of Czechoslovakia's liquidation completed, he returned his attention to the Baltic republic. Throughout the winter and early spring of 1939, the Germans kept a steady pressure on the Lithuanian government, reminding it that the loss of the Klaipėda region was inevitable and that, despite this lull, Berlin had not forgotten about its promised settlement of the issue amid the general European upheaval. These threats were enough to elicit a conciliatory attitude from the Lithuanians for most of the winter, although Hitler's delay on any action directed at the republic may have deceived Smetona and his cabinet into believing that, as a consequence of the international impact of the Munich settlement, the following calm would be of significant duration.

Taking the gamble, the Lithuanians reversed their policy of accommodation towards Germany, rescinded their previously announced deference to Berlin's interpretation of the Memel Statute, and informed the Germans that if the document were violated, Kaunas would in the future use all means at its disposal to defend both the region and the country. As a demonstration of resolve, in early March, a portion of Lithuania's armored forces were deployed in Klaipėda and the surrounding territory.⁸⁰

Hitler's focus on destroying Czechoslovakia required the affront to be temporarily

ignored, although once that issue was resolved, the Germans were free to act. As they had with Romania, Hitler used Prague's fall as leverage in effecting his foreign policy initiatives. On March 20, the German government issued its third ultimatum, presenting the Lithuanian Foreign Minister, Juozas Urbšys, with two stark alternatives: surrender the Memelland to Germany or face an invasion. Ribbentrop warned that if Lithuania chose the latter option there could be no guarantee as to where the Wehrmacht would halt. The threat posed to his country's independence was not lost on Urbšys and, in an effort to buy time, he informed von Ribbentrop that his government had not authorized him to discuss Klaipėda in this context, necessitating his return to Kaunas to deliver the German demand in person. Just before Urbšys's departure, he was informed that Hitler had set March 22 as the deadline for a decision, and he would be expected back in Berlin with a reply on that date. He was also instructed not to consult with any other governments, possibly as a result of German anxiety over a second territorial grab coming so quickly after Czechoslovakia's disappearance, and fear that this would spur the Western Powers into action.⁸¹

Upon learning of the German ultimatum later that evening, the Smetona government was faced with a dilemma. Public opinion was in favor of accepting the challenge, partly as a consequence of the humiliation endured at the hands of Poland the previous year.⁸² That embarrassment had cost the government credibility and now, faced with this new demand, it was expected that the regime would stand firm against Germany and united with the people. However, the situation required prudence. The Lithuanian military was no match for the Wehrmacht, and with inquiries as to the possibility of receiving assistance from Britain, France, Poland, and the Soviet Union given a negative

reply, Smetona had no options available to him. With units of the German military already taking up positions for an attack, the Lithuanian government accepted the necessity of acquiescing to Hitler's ultimatum and dispatched Urbšys to Berlin to sign the documents, completing the transfer of territory to the Reich. To soften the blow domestically, news of the decision was characterized as a temporary retreat in the face of an incredibly volatile international situation in which Lithuania was overwhelmingly disadvantaged. Kaunas would recover the region when the Third Reich fell.⁸³

By the time Urbšys arrived in Berlin to sign the accord, Hitler had already left aboard the battleship *Deutschland* along with a small armada of vessels in anticipation of the annexation, leaving von Ribbentrop to conduct affairs with the Lithuanian envoy. On March 23, the agreement was signed just hours before Hitler set foot on the soil of his newest acquisition. The dictator spent a little under three hours in the city, departing as quickly as he came, and was back in Berlin by noon the next day. No fanfare welcomed him. Not only were most Germans uninterested in the tiny Baltic port, but the regime had expressly forbidden a triumphal return. Hitler did not want such events to become routine.⁸⁴ Certainly, he expected celebrations of far greater importance and magnitude to be in Germany's future, although those would require sacrifice that had not yet been asked for. Besides the minor propaganda value, the act was not particularly worth celebrating anyway. The strategic value was limited to securing another Baltic port for the Kriegsmarine, and if Lithuania could be converted into a satellite, a slight extension of the already existing border on Poland's flank. In any event, with the addition of this territory and the newly available frontier offered through control of the Slovak puppet-state, this acquisition permitted Germany to exert only a slightly greater degree of

pressure on Warsaw than Berlin was already able to apply in the negotiations for the return of Danzig and the Corridor. However, the use of Slovakia's territory for any potential offensive operation was far more valuable.

For Lithuania, the surrender of Klaipėda was devastating. Though only six percent of the national territory and five percent of the population, more than a third of the country's industry was located in the region and seventy percent of its trade passed through the port.⁸⁵ Monetarily, Kaunas lost more than 42.28 million Litai from banks and credit institutions.⁸⁶ This unbalanced Lithuania economically and resulted in a loss of the substantial investments the government had put into the region's industry and infrastructure. The strategic situation of the country was also jeopardized, leaving Kaunas far more susceptible to German and Polish influence, although the pressure from the latter was alleviated by Hitler's subsequent foreign policy focus. In a bitter twist, Lithuania did receive some marginal benefit from the loss of Klaipėda in the form of amicable relations with Germany, though there was nothing genuine about Berlin's change of demeanor. Hitler, as part of his shifting focus to Lithuania's southern neighbor, sought, if possible, to bring Kaunas into the fold as part of his encirclement of Poland. If the Smetona regime played according to his rules, similar to Hungary during the Czechoslovak affair, then it would be rewarded with the realization of Lithuania's primary foreign policy objective: the return of Vilnius.⁸⁷ The Lithuanians were initially reluctant to take the bait, and consequently the German government continued to present overtures to them throughout the summer, eventually reaching a point where a decision on the issue would have to be made.

The fourth and final ultimatum came as rapidly as the previous three, coinciding

with the finalization of the agreement that transferred the Klaipėda region from Lithuania to Germany. On March 21, von Ribbentrop met with Lipski in Berlin and reiterated the routine “suggestion” of returning Danzig to the Reich and agreeing to the construction of a highway and railroad across the Corridor. As he had before, Lipski respectfully declined to discuss the issue, instead redirecting the conversation towards the Polish government’s concern over the Reich’s occupation of Slovakia and the anti-Polish aspects of this move. Despite this polite and tactical diversion, the German foreign minister was dogged in his determination to bring about a resolution of the question. Unexpectedly, he insisted that Lipski personally deliver a message to Beck indicating that Hitler wished the Polish foreign minister to come to Berlin, as Hácha had, to sign a treaty. Although silent on the exact nature of the document, von Ribbentrop was explicit as to the consequences of refusing the invitation: the end of Poland through partition by Germany and the Soviet Union.⁸⁸

The next day Lipski returned to Warsaw in a dejected mood, one that was further exacerbated by the inexplicable optimism of several officials at the foreign ministry. However, Beck, to his ambassador’s relief, shared with Lipski the realization that the policy Poland had until now been conducting towards Germany was at an end. After reviewing the situation over the evening, Beck, in an internal memorandum, outlined what he believed to be the problems facing Poland regarding Germany and forwarded his new strategy for confronting those issues. First was the question of calculability, a quality that the Polish foreign minister thought the Third Reich and its leader had lost. In the realm of foreign policy, this created numerous difficulties and prohibited the formulation of a cohesive agenda that Warsaw could pursue. The solution to this

problem was, Beck stated, to define the limits of accommodation. These he held to be the inviolability of Poland's frontiers and the acceptance of the country's right to exist. Danzig was integral to both aspects of this limit, as its reunion with Germany would place Poland among the number of eastern states that had bowed to Hitler's will and allowed the rules of the game to be dictated to them. Giving in on this issue would invite Berlin to make further demands and, if Hitler was still not satisfied, would bring about even more requirements in a cycle that could potentially end with Poland's disappearance from the map of Europe. For this reason, Danzig was to become symbolic of Warsaw's will to resist Germany's "nine division" march across the continent. Only a firm demonstration of strength was necessary. If Hitler escalated the situation to the brink of war, Beck believed that Poland entered the arena "with all the trump cards in our hands."⁸⁹

In accordance with this new policy directive, Warsaw responded to the German ultimatum by partly mobilizing the army and deploying it for maneuvers in the Corridor as a show of strength, while officially offering a polite refusal to the German government. Lipski also reminded von Ribbentrop that Hitler had promised to respect Poland's interests in the Free City. This sent the German foreign minister into a rage and, exceeding his instructions from Hitler, he angrily indicated to Lipski that any aggression against Danzig, possibly referring to the Pomeranian exercises being conducted by the Polish military, would be viewed as if it were directed at the Reich. Lipski responded by calmly stating that any further attempts by Germany to bring about the return of Danzig would result in war. This position was confirmed by Beck during a conversation with von Moltke on March 28.⁹⁰ Poland had drawn its line in the sand.

This set the tone for German-Polish relations for the remainder of the spring and throughout the summer, although Beck sought to prevent conflict by issuing further policy outlines that belied the unyielding rhetoric of the late March exchanges. On April 1, he informed Polish diplomats at home and abroad that, unless Germany landed troops in Danzig, necessitating a military response in kind, all matters pertaining to the city were to be kept localized and as peaceable as possible. The entry of the Kriegsmarine into the harbor was to be treated as a strictly isolated diplomatic incident, as was any popular uprising not directly involving the Wehrmacht. If any situation arose, it would be Germany, not Poland, that escalated it beyond the realm of diplomacy. All the while, Beck kept the possibility of reaching an understanding with Hitler open, but would only negotiate if the Germans did so with “peaceful intentions” and according to “peaceful methods of procedure.”⁹¹ Peace had a definite price.

Hitler was not prepared to pay such a cost. At the end of March, Hitler told General Walther von Brauchitsch, Commander in Chief of the Army, that if diplomatic methods failed to yield results with the Poles, he was prepared to use force to achieve his ends. He simultaneously ordered the General Staff to initiate operational planning for an invasion of Poland. By April 3, the army had generated *Fall Weiß*, or Case White. From this point on, there was no turning back. The opposition to the military solution that had permeated the upper echelons of the high command during the Czechoslovakia crisis in 1938 was virtually non-existent. Now, the vast majority of the officer corps relished the opportunity to smash Poland in a *kurtz und vives*, or short and lively, campaign. This was due in part to Case White giving expression to the more traditional “Prussian” sentiments of the General Staff that were absent from the Czechoslovak *Fall Grün*, or Case Green.⁹²

Indications that Berlin had largely abandoned any ideas of a diplomatic resolution to the crisis became apparent in May when, as per orders from the Wilhelmstrasse, German diplomats in both Poland and abroad became more aloof and evasive towards their Polish counterparts. This resulted in a virtual moratorium on the exchange of view between the two governments.⁹³

This development was not lost upon Beck, and as the summer waned, he abandoned his strategy of foreign policy independence and Great Power posturing. In a reversal of orientation, he threw Warsaw back towards alignment with Great Britain and France as completely as his own reading of the situation permitted. With assurances from Paris that the alliance between the two countries was still effective, he opened discussions to forge a military alliance with Britain during the summer. These, however, became stalled by Beck's belief that war could be averted simply by bringing London to the table. To actually follow through with the finalization of an agreement was viewed as too provocative a measure, and Beck feared that an alliance might actually force Hitler to act impetuously rather than serve as a deterrent.⁹⁴ Partly due to this rationale and partly due to the Polish foreign minister's own bloated ego, he delayed the conclusion of the military arrangement by several days through insistence upon Britain's recognition of Poland's right to colonies for "prestige, materials and immigration," even as Germany increasingly set itself on a war footing.⁹⁵ Although these demands seem ludicrous in retrospect, they are indicative of Beck's confidence that Hitler was bluffing and, in accordance with his diplomatic style, were attempts to maximize gains on both ends of the spectrum.

It was not until mid-August that, as a consequence of increased German military

activity on Poland's borders, Beck began to accept the possibility of a very real German threat.⁹⁶ Since May, he had understood that concessions of some sort would be required to alleviate the situation, and his negotiations to form an alliance with the Western Powers had been conducted with that in mind. His objective was to place the Polish government in a position of increased strength for that process.⁹⁷ This would offset some of the expected economic pressure from Berlin while preventing any German attempt to achieve its goals via a *fait accompli*.⁹⁸ However, Hitler was not interested in bargaining and had chosen war as the only means of recourse. In a further weakening of Warsaw's already tenuous position, on August 24, Poland's greatest fear was realized: the coming together of the nation's two traditional enemies, Germany and Russia. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, ostensibly a non-aggression treaty that secured the Reich's eastern front, also contained a secret protocol that divided East Central Europe into respective spheres of influence and, as it pertained to Poland, divided up the country between Germany and the Soviet Union. This event signaled to Beck that British and French efforts to conclude an agreement of their own with the Soviets had failed. The next day Warsaw formally entered into an alliance with Great Britain.

The German invasion had originally been set to commence on August 26, but at the last minute, partly due to the circumstances surrounding von Ribbentrop's journey to Moscow to work out the details of the non-aggression treaty and partly to provide Berlin with one last opportunity to further isolate Poland diplomatically, Hitler called off the attack.⁹⁹ It was rescheduled for September 1. The German government acted at a frenzied pace and even made a weak attempt to wrench Britain from its new ally.¹⁰⁰ On the other side of Europe, the Germans were far more successful, although not exactly in

the manner that they had planned.

Throughout the summer, in conjunction with the pressure the Third Reich was applying to Poland, equal treatment was being delivered to the governments of Hungary, Romania, and Lithuania so as to secure their participation in Poland's liquidation. This time, Hitler's overtures fell upon deaf ears. Lithuania, the most recent victim of German expansionism, was offered the opportunity to realize its fundamental foreign policy objective of the past two decades, the return of its historic capital Vilnius and possibly more, if it would march when called upon. Though an alluring proposition, Berlin's advances were declined on the grounds that the issue of Vilnius was a diplomatic rather than a military question and that the acquisition of the city through forceful methods was an unacceptable course of action. Perhaps more important to the Lithuanian decision was the explicit fear of becoming a *de facto* German ally as a result of aggressive action against Poland. Kaunas had no faith in Germany's chances for victory in the war Hitler was intent on launching and was loathe to sit beside the Reich during what Smetona and his regime viewed as an inevitable final judgment. This resulted in a declaration of firm neutrality, which the government hoped would exclude Lithuania from the increasingly complicated situation developing to the south.¹⁰¹

Neutrality was not an easy course to maintain. Although the Lithuanians had given Warsaw assurances in May that it need not worry about any aggression from its quarter and that Poland could redeploy troops stationed along its border without fear of aggression in order to concentrate its forces against Germany, this failed to remove the small Baltic country from both German and Polish machinations.¹⁰² As the date for which Hitler planned his attack approached, proposals from both the German and Polish

governments attempting to sway Lithuania to actively participate in the coming conflict increased. Berlin repeated its standing offer but included the entire region surrounding Vilnius and possibly more as part of Kaunas' potential territorial gains. The Poles countered by hinting that Lithuania's support could result in the recovery of Klaipėda and its environs, in addition to portions of East Prussia.¹⁰³ Though both lucrative offers, each was filled with danger that was dependent upon the decisions of the other powers involved in the crisis.

Aligning with Germany risked retribution from Britain and France, as each was capable of indirectly inflicting damage to the country. A march on Vilnius, even if fears of inciting Poland's Western allies could be allayed, was made hazardous by the unknown quality of the Soviet reaction to such a move. Moscow harbored its own designs towards the region and, even after August 24, the obscure nature of Stalin's disposition to the German proposal made such an endeavor perilous. Before and especially after the conclusion of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, siding with Poland ran the risk of providing an opportunity and, later, a pretext for a Soviet invasion which, with the memory of imperialist Russian domination still fresh, proved to be an effective deterrent. These geopolitical considerations, in addition to sympathy for Warsaw's predicament, or, perhaps more likely, antipathy towards Germany as a consequence of Poland's prior handling of relations with Kaunas, mandated that Lithuania preserve its own vital interests, the foremost of which was the maintenance of national independence. The prudent course and, given the dangers of the various hypothetical scenarios, the only viable policy decision was strict neutrality. However, unknown to the Lithuanian government, this pragmatic choice ultimately sealed Lithuania's fate, although it would

be some months before the full ramifications were felt.¹⁰⁴

The Hungarians were equally hesitant to participate in offensive operations against a nation with which Budapest had shared a long and historic friendship. Despite German pressure and the promise of great rewards, Horthy and Count Pál Teleki, the new prime minister, diplomatically maneuvered themselves out of the order of battle, affirming to Hitler Hungary's continued commitment to the Axis, but declining the Reich's offer on moral grounds. This angered Hitler, who was quick to remind Budapest who its friends really were: a reminder to Horthy of who had allowed Hungarian revisionism to occur.¹⁰⁵ The threat, coupled with Berlin's subsequent offers of the small, oil-rich southeastern portion of Poland in exchange only for the passage of troops and the use of the Kassa (Košice) railway, steeled Horthy and Teleki's resolve to deny their support to Hitler. On this issue, Hungary held the advantage. In a meager attempt to render assistance to Poland, Budapest denied the Germans use of its territory and, as a result, shortened the front of opposition that the Poles would initially be forced to face. This was a gamble. However, if Hitler decided to press the issue and impose his will upon Hungary, Horthy and Teleki had made preparations for a last act of defiance in order to uphold the national honor. Bridges and railways near the Polish border were mined, and the Hungarian army was instructed to destroy them if the Wehrmacht violated the frontier. Plans were also made to create a government in exile, either in the United States or Great Britain, in the event that Germany occupied the country as punishment for Budapest's intransigence.¹⁰⁶

Such a sudden outburst of previously dormant moral compunction is conspicuous as a motivating factor in Horthy's rationale, although it is lent some credence given the

admiral's propensity for traditional chivalric values pertaining to honor. The Regent had demonstrated this behavior before, perhaps most notably when, in a drafted but unsent letter, he challenged Czechoslovakia's President Hácha to a sword duel, with the two leaders acting as champions of their nations, as a means of settling their governments' differences. Within this context, Horthy also felt betrayed by Germany's non-aggression, mutual-assistance pact with Soviet Russia, which, through his personal litmus-test of anti-communism in practice, indicated to him that Hitler was not truly the "right" thinking statesman he presented himself to be.¹⁰⁷ Coupled with his belief in Germany's inability to triumph in any protracted conflict against the Western Powers, especially Great Britain, he solidified his resolve to keep Hungary out of the brewing conflict.

Though limited in its ability to influence events, Hungary acted in the capacity that it could.¹⁰⁸ Although this altruism was tempered by the opportunistic, irredentist character of Budapest's policies towards other countries – Romania and Yugoslavia in particular – the restraint exhibited towards Poland forced Germany to react and, by the very nature of the Wehrmacht's desire to utilize Hungarian territory for its attack, alter its plans. The significance of this, though minimal in the grand scheme of Germany's military preparations for the Polish operation, was to become evident later in the waning days of the Polish Second Republic.

The Romanian government also sought to abstain from involvement in the Polish crisis. In the months preceding the final climax of the conflict between Germany and Poland, Bucharest acted according to the tenets of its policy of balance between the European Great Powers. At its core, the policy formulated by Carol and Armand Călinescu, his new prime minister, mandated the maintenance of Romania's non-

alignment with any nation for as long as possible. Only when the situation had developed fortuitously and the army, which was in a pitiful state of readiness, achieved an adequate level of rearmament would Romania participate in the war its government viewed as inevitable.¹⁰⁹ Until then, Carol felt compelled to limit his diplomatic entanglements so as not to provoke Germany, the one power that he feared would act against him unprovoked. This required careful diplomacy with the British and French, as both governments believed Romania to be an essential component of regional security and attempted to solicit Bucharest as a partner in a revived alliance system with German encirclement as its aim. A first and necessary step in that process was the expansion of Romania's existing defensive arrangement with Poland. However, gaining Bucharest's acquiescence to this proved to be exceedingly difficult, as the Romanians were hesitant to violate the policy that they viewed as the only viable defense against aggression in an increasingly unstable Europe.

The issue that stalled the negotiations was Bucharest's insistence upon linking the widening of its defensive accord with Warsaw to include an unconditional security guarantee from both Paris and London. The Romanian government believed this to be a fair price for aligning the country against the Third Reich. However, as Romania was not threatened in the same way as Poland, the British and French were hesitant to offer such a far-reaching promise to Carol. Their goal was to build an anti-German coalition, not to singularly act as the guardians of Europe. They saw no need to offer any such commitment as, from their perspective, they thought it to be implicit as part of collective security and incumbent with that obligation. To the Romanians, this was not nearly as evident, and it was precisely this differing view that prevented movement on the issue.

Whereas the British and French were thinking in the long term and implementing their policies accordingly, Romania, by virtue of its limitations and regional encumbrances, held a shorter perspective. With virtually no offensive military capability and an economy permeated by German investment, a unilateral alignment with the Western Powers risked instigating a conflict with the Reich for which the country was not prepared.¹¹⁰ Time to rearm and mitigate the influence of Germany's economic domination was essential for enabling an open declaration of allegiance to the West. Consequently, this required – at least for the interim – that equilibrium be pursued as official policy.¹¹¹ The extension of an unconditional guarantee would have alleviated some of the pressure from Germany, but it did not ensure that the entire endeavor would be worthwhile.¹¹²

This the British were unable to guarantee, as the value of their collective security scheme was dependent upon the perceived mutual benefit of widening Poland's and Romania's defensive alliance by those two governments, which both failed to see. In exchange for security, each was being asked to take on the problems of the other. But just as the Romanian government wanted no part of Poland's conflict with Germany, neither did Warsaw wish to encumber itself with Romania's complicated and antagonistic Hungarian relationship. In early April, Beck still believed Hitler's threat of a military solution to the Danzig question was a bluff, and he was hesitant to burden his government with any additional commitments following the expected conclusions of the crisis, particularly when the impetus to do so would later be revealed to be of little importance.¹¹³ Working under this assumption, he was purposefully vague, elusive, and mercurial towards the British during his conference with Chamberlain and Lord Halifax

in London. With the extension of Britain's unconditional guarantee to Poland two weeks earlier and no pressure from London to expand Warsaw's existing agreement with Bucharest a condition for a formal alliance, Beck was under no obligation to act, so he remained inert.¹¹⁴

Where Western diplomacy had failed, Axis action succeeded, although not in the manner expected by the British. On April 7, Mussolini ordered the invasion and annexation of Albania, a move that prompted Britain to extend a guarantee of independence to Greece, as that country was now exposed to the Rome-Berlin threat. The French government, traditionally more interested in Southeastern Europe than the British, was perplexed by Romania's exclusion. Paris viewed Romania as an equally important case with which to demonstrate the determination of the Western Powers to resist German ambitions within the region. To protect Greece and abandon Romania would have indicated to Hitler that Bucharest had been abandoned, a move that would have sent exactly the wrong message, signaling to Berlin that the Western Powers were discordant. On April 12, the day before Great Britain planned to announce its guarantee of independence to Greece, the French government communicated to London its intent to issue a similar extension of protection to Romania, with or without the British. Aware of the developing rift between the two allies, Gafencu, the Romanian foreign minister, decided to use the circumstance to his advantage. During a meeting the same day with Sir Reginald Hoare, London's ambassador to Bucharest, he pressed the British representative to tell his government that he had recently received confirmation from the Germans that Hitler was now ready to extend the political guarantee he had long dangled before Romania. The details were to be worked out shortly in Berlin, on April 18. To

prevent any extortion of further economic concessions, he extolled to Hoare during the negotiations the great benefit a guarantee from Britain and France would be, as it would allow Gafencu to resist the inevitable German pressure.¹¹⁵ It was all a lie. It was also ineffective.

By chance, a spontaneous Hungarian *démarche* provided the impetus that Gafencu and his fabrications could not. In response to the mobilized status of Romanian divisions along the Carpatho-Ukrainian border, Budapest announced that it was forced to counter this threat with military measures of its own. Though the Hungarians intended to draw attention to their own concerns, the move had exactly the opposite effect and inadvertently focused international attention on Romanian security. This enabled Gafencu to use the situation as further leverage with the British and, in conjunction with French pressure, finally gain London's acquiescence to granting the coveted security guarantee without the required expansion of Bucharest's alliance with Warsaw.¹¹⁶

After receiving the Anglo-French guarantee, Bucharest's interest in developing more intimate relations with the Western Powers waned. There was no need to pursue that avenue further. An explicit warning from Berlin indicated the guarantee would be tolerated but also made clear that any attempts to expand its scope or move towards alignment with the West would have detrimental consequences. This ensured that similar dealings were at an end. The point was reiterated when Gafencu visited Hitler and Göring in mid-April. Now, however, the threat was tempered with a conditional guarantee promising equitable relations as long as Romania maintained its neutrality and remained a strong trading partner for the Reich. Any deviation from that course could direct Germany's hunger for territory in a southeasterly direction.¹¹⁷ Although

technically a setback to German aims, the impact of the Anglo-French guarantee was limited. Though it satisfied Bucharest's objectives, it did not impede Berlin's. A minimal outlay of force, restricted to an oral threat, kept the Romanians in line and served to enforce the neutrality Bucharest had adopted as official policy. With the complacency of Poland's last neighbor attained, Hitler was free to initiate his end game.

On August 30 all the preparations for Poland's liquidation were in place. Direct contact between Berlin and Warsaw had been non-existent for some time. The previous evening, Hitler had requested that a Polish plenipotentiary be dispatched to Berlin by the next day to negotiate or, more accurately, to accept Germany's demands for the return of Danzig and a plebiscite to be held regarding the fate of the Corridor. This was impossible. Predictably, none arrived. The task of receiving Hitler's ultimatum fell to Neville Henderson, the British ambassador to Germany. What ensued upon his arrival at the meeting with von Ribbentrop would have been comical were it not for the gravity of the situation. The German Foreign Minister read aloud Hitler's demands in German too quickly for Henderson, who was not fluent in the language. This prevented him from making any notes. When he asked to be allowed to read the document, von Ribbentrop refused and then tossed it on the table, stating that it was now out of date, as no Polish emissary had arrived by midnight in accordance with Hitler's communiqué from the previous evening.¹¹⁸ There was no turning back. The die had been cast.

The last day of European peace passed with a deceptive normality that belied the tension brewing on both sides of the German-Polish border. The Wehrmacht was ready, in position and poised to strike when the order to march was given. In Poland, the army was in the midst of its mobilization, although the process begun three days before was

nearing completion.¹¹⁹ The delay had been deliberate, as Warsaw had sought to balance political, defense, and economic concerns until the last possible moment. Yet with war now only a question of when, there was no need for prudence. Even amid this calamitous backdrop, however, the Poles still harbored hope of averting disaster and achieving a *détente* with Germany through negotiation and concession. During the evening, Lipski met with von Ribbentrop in a final effort to maintain peace, but without authorization from Warsaw to do anything more than receive Hitler's demands and promise to relate them directly to the Polish government, the eleventh-hour bid failed.¹²⁰ Even if Beck had granted Lipski plenipotentiary powers, it is unlikely that at this late stage it would have mattered. Whether von Ribbentrop even informed Hitler that the Poles were ready to deal was irrelevant. By the time Lipski arrived in Berlin, the orders to commence offensive operations had already been signed. Border incidents rather than diplomacy foreshadowed what was to come. A staged "Polish attack" on a German radio station in Gleiwitz carried out by the SS in Polish military guise provided the necessary pretext. At 4:45 a.m., *Fall Weiß* commenced with an opening salvo from the German battleship *Schleswig-Holstein* in the Danzig harbor that struck the Polish garrison on the Westerplatte and coincided with the general advance of the Wehrmacht as it rolled across the frontier into Poland. The Luftwaffe had struck minutes earlier, destroying the town of Wielun. Hitler's war had begun. Beck received the official German declaration as the first wave of He 111 bombers delivered their payloads upon Warsaw.

THE END

Shortly before the German declaration of war on Poland, Lipski met with Göring in Berlin. Over the years, the Polish Ambassador had developed a working relationship with the German. During their discussion, Göring expressed regret that the policy of friendship he had advocated and pursued towards Poland was now at an end. With the coming of war, he was required to lead his Luftwaffe against Germany's eastern neighbor. Without missing a beat, Lipski replied that he was also upset at this development, as he was forced to respond to the call of duty and join the Polish army so he could shoot down the invading planes. Though he would not see action on his home soil, Lipski, as an enlisted man, fought with distinction against the Wehrmacht throughout the war.¹

The diplomat became a soldier, an act as symbolic as it was patriotic. In a microcosm, this was reflective of the wider changes imposed upon Poland by Hitler and the Third Reich, as with the onset of war, Polish diplomacy came to an end. Though caught by surprise, Warsaw carried on its defense valiantly for over a month, only succumbing to the Wehrmacht and the Red Army on October 6, when the last operational Polish units under General Franciszek Kleeberg surrendered near Lublin after expending all their ammunition.² With their capitulation, so fell the Second Republic.

In defiance of Hitler, the governments of Lithuania, Romania, and Hungary each refused to participate in the liquidation of Poland. Although officially neutral, each offered Warsaw an escape avenue, so that even with the totality of Polish territory conquered, the nation's prosecution of its war effort could continue. The Lithuanians

allowed several thousand Polish troops to flee from the Wehrmacht through its territory, as did Budapest, which permitted 70,000 soldiers to escape and resume fighting in France.³ The Romanians, despite breaking their defensive alliance with Poland, restored their honor by enabling thousands of Polish civilians and most of the government to seek refuge from the bloodshed and acted as a supply depot and staging ground for British arms and relief forces.⁴ These gestures and declarations of neutrality were the region's last meaningful acts of defiance to Hitler.

With Poland's liquidation, Germany finalized a process Hitler began with the *Anschluss* in 1938, achieving total dominance over East Central Europe and ending the independence of Lithuanian, Hungarian, and Romanian foreign policy. The fates of those governments subsequently rested upon the German dictator's whims and their ability to remain in his good graces. This entailed accommodation of, and subservience to, Berlin's policy directives. The cost of failing to comply, with Poland and Czechoslovakia as examples, was evident. One by one, each nation paid the price.

Lithuania was the first. As punishment for refusing to assist Hitler in destroying Poland, on September 25 he transferred the Baltic nation from Germany's sphere of influence to the Soviet Union's, trading the country to Stalin for a greater slice of occupied Polish territory. As Moscow harbored more immediate and direct interests in Lithuania, this act accelerated the pace of an already rapidly dwindling clock on the country's continued independence. It ran out sooner than expected. On October 10, 1939, the Lithuanian government was forced to sign a mutual-assistance treaty with the Soviet Union. With no international recourse, acceptance was the only option. Vilnius was returned, fulfilling Kaunas' twenty-year ambition, but the price for that success was

the stationing of Soviet troops on Lithuanian soil. This shadow independence lasted until June 15, 1940, when, following another ultimatum from Stalin, the Red Army crossed the border and formalized the process of annexation. It was finalized on July 21, with the inclusion of the new Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic into the Soviet Union.⁵

Romania was next to fall. King Carol's policy of non-alignment proved to be untenable when confronted with the realities of German hegemony in Danubian Europe, and throughout the remainder of 1939 and into 1940, Bucharest moved into the German sphere. Economic domination, intimidation, and a limiting of the country's options in both trade and alignment had, without firing a shot, indirectly brought about the conquest of Romania exactly as Hitler had envisioned.⁶ The subjugation of the country through economic means afforded the Germans nearly unlimited influence in Romanian domestic affairs, which Berlin utilized to great effect in the latter half of 1940. Carol was compelled to include the Iron Guard in the government, and most pro-Western ministers were sacked in favor of pro-German counterparts. Revision was also imposed upon Romania, which, as a result of the Secret Protocol to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and Second Vienna Award, marked the end of *România Mare* and precipitated Carol's fall.⁷ With Carol forced to abdicate in the face of massive public outrage at the humiliation and political maneuverings of his pro-German prime minister, Genral Ion Antonescu, who invited German troops into the country, the final curtain closed on Romanian independence.⁸

Hungary fared the best of all these four East Central European nations, retaining nominal independence until March 19, 1944, when it was overrun by the Wehrmacht in Operation Margarethe I to prevent the government from concluding an armistice with the

Allies. However, during the interim, Budapest greatly benefited from continued collaboration with Hitler, gaining the northern portion of Transylvania from Romania and the Vojvodina region from Yugoslavia. Though these acquisitions anchored Hungary in the German orbit, the circumstances of war afforded the government room to maneuver, which it exploited to procure those particular spoils.⁹ Such a policy was fraught with peril, however, as the maintenance of Hungary's revisionist acquisitions became inexorably tied to Hitler's ultimate triumph. When the tide of the war turned against Germany, it also turned against the fortunes of Hungary's foreign policy gamble, resulting in its abject failure.

To accredit the failure of Polish, Hungarian, Lithuanian, and Romanian foreign policy from 1933 to 1939 entirely to the malevolent character of Hitler's aggressive policy tells only part of the tale. The German dictator and the Third Reich were contributory factors, but if sole responsibility for the region's failings is attributed to Hitler, then the leadership of those nations is given an undeserved pass on their own culpability. Warsaw, Budapest, Kaunas, and Bucharest each were instrumental in their own downfalls. On an individual basis, they all made the decision to use the revisionist opportunities provided by Hitler and Germany as a vehicle for the realization of their own nationalist regional aspirations. In doing so they collectively sacrificed the unity each government recognized as essential for checking German irredentism and ensuring their continued independence. This resulted in a chronically myopic implementation of foreign policy moves that ultimately served Hitler's long-term strategic goals. By enabling Berlin, particularly after the remilitarization of the Rhineland in 1936, to capitalize on the various rivalries between the regional governments, Germany was able

to achieve its ends with the assistance of one regime or another to the detriment of the region as a whole.

Though an old strategy, Hitler's policy of divide and conquer that he pursued towards the region was highly effective, simply because it undermined the weak regional commitment to collective security and exacerbated precisely the weakness the region's governments understood to be essential to their own national security, by offering the potential for the rapid realization of national aims. Without solidarity, expressed either through the League of Nations or a broad, regional bloc, Hitler was able to slowly isolate each nation and impose upon their governments a new international paradigm, one that they could either profit from or be destroyed by. A strong League of Nations and greater commitment to that institution and collective security on the part of Europe's Great Powers would have mitigated Germany's power over Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, and Romania by providing a legitimate alternative for alignment. However, the reluctance of those powers to act as guarantors of a fledgling system or offer an alternate type of support forced the regional governments to revert to the old European order and ensure their own security as best they could. In the end, as a result of these four nation's inability to set aside their rivalries to face a common threat, it was a charge in which they all failed. With that failure came the realization of the nightmare scenario shared by each of the various national leaderships: the end of independence and subjection to the rule of the Soviet Union.

NOTES

Notes to Introduction

¹ The true number may never be known. The number presented here is an average of the numbers given in Gerhard Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 894 and John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York: Penguin, 1990) p. 590-591.

² The intentionalist and functionalist debate is centered on two competing ideas of how German foreign policy was directed. Intentionalists hold that Hitler planned, orchestrated, and prosecuted a foreign policy that was designed to ultimately result in war and, consequently, bears much of the responsibility for instigating the Second World War. Documents like the Hossbach Memorandum, a note from 1937 that outlines “contingencies” for Hitler’s future foreign policy, are used to demonstrate that there was a “plan” that the German dictator working from. However, functionalist historians argue that, because the foreign policy Hitler carried out was unlike that detailed in the memorandum, there was no “plan,” with A.J.P. Taylor personifying the argument. Critics of Taylor and other functionalists, a camp that distributes blame for the Second World War broadly and attributes the conflagration to endemic and systematic faults and failures in general European diplomacy, have refuted such argumentation and point to the memorandum as clearly displaying intent for an aggressive foreign policy and an explicit desire by Hitler to add Poland, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, and Austria to the Third Reich. Recently, there has been a general push to synthesize the two arguments, resulting in a consensus that holds Hitler harbored specific foreign policy goals but was flexible in his methods of achieving them.

³ Weinberg, *Hitler’s Foreign Policy*, p. 125.

⁴ Thomas Sakmyster, *Hungary, the Great Powers and the Danubian Crisis, 1936-1939* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980) p. 187.

⁵ Thomas Sakmyster, *Hungary’s Admiral on Horseback, Miklos Horthy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) p. 214.

⁶ This is demonstrated in several sources, including: Weinberg, *Hitler’s Foreign Policy*, p. 544, 545; Anita J. Prazmowska, *Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Second World War* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000) p. 177; and Sakmyster, *Hungary, the Great Powers and the Danubian Crisis, 1936-1939*, p. 156. Budapest and Warsaw had sent feelers to each other as early as autumn 1937 and discussed the mutual desirability of a common border. This could only be achieved at the expense of Czechoslovakia and, although little in the end came of their collusion, demonstrates that the gears were turning independently of German intentions. Specific issues were discussed, namely which of the two would receive Slovakia and Ruthenia as well as the proper methods to effecting such ends.

⁷ Weinberg, *Hitler’s Foreign Policy*, p. 545.

⁸ Endre B. Gastony, “Foreign Minister Kalman Kanya, Hitler and Peace in Europe, Aug. – Sept., 1938,” in *Hungary in the Age of Total War, 1938-1948*, ed. Nadnor Dreiziger (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) p. 221. Here, Gastony argues that Poland, marching in conjunction with German and Hungarian armies, would have produced such a quick victory that any intervention by the western powers would have been too late and they would have accepted the situation. This scenario bears some merit, as, to effect a tangible defense of its borders, the Czechoslovak army would have had to deal with all threats simultaneously, splitting its force concentration and significantly easing the potential German invasion through the difficult terrain along its border with Czechoslovakia. Gastony makes the case that this weighed in Hitler’s mind and contributed to his decision to entertain and, eventually, go along with western arbitration at Munich.

Notes to Chapter 1: Away From the West

¹ See Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris* (New York: Norton, 1999) p. 422, 423 and Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler*, (New York: Harcourt, 1974) p. 367.

² Theodore Abel, *Why Hitler Came Into Power* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1986) p. 111, 120.

³ von Riekhoff, *German-Polish Relations*, p. 379.

⁴ Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1990) p. 5, 9.

⁵ von Riekhoff, *German-Polish Relations*, p. 331. This refers specifically to an incident in 1930 when Gottfried Treviranus, the German Minister of Transport, gave a speech on the steps of the Reichstag that declared his optimism for a future day when all the lands separated from the Reich would be returned to Germany. Poland lodged a formal complaint and, in his subsequent apology, Treviranus alluded to the fact that peaceful resolution of the issue was only being pursued due to the lack of a viable military option.

⁶ von Riekhoff, *German-Polish Relations*, p. 333, 340.

⁷ Peter Krüger, "Das doppelte Dilemma: Die Außenpolitik der Republik von Weimar zwischen Staatensystem und Innenpolitik," *German Studies Review*, 22/2 (1999): p. 254.

⁸ Von Riekhoff, *German-Polish Relations*, p. 330. These demands came from both the extremist circles as well as the general public.

⁹ Krüger, "Das doppelte Dilemma: Die Außenpolitik der Republik von Weimar zwischen Staatensystem und Innenpolitik," *German Studies Review*, p. 252 and von Riekhoff, *German-Polish Relations*, p. 341, 342.

¹⁰ Rothschild, *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars*, p. 66.

¹¹ Anita J. Prazmowska, *A History of Poland* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) p. 170 and M. B. Biskupski, *A History of Poland* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000) p. 88.

¹² Zygmunt J. Gasiorowski, "Did Piłsudski Attempt to Initiate a Preventative War in 1933?," *The Journal of Modern History*, 27/2 (1955): p. 141.

¹³ Adolf Hitler, "Letter from Hitler to Colonel Reichenau, 4 Dec 1932," in *The Lost Peace: International Relations in Europe, 1918-1939*, ed. Anthony Adamthwaite (New York: St. Martin's, 1981) p. 131-132.

¹⁴ Jozef Beck, *Final Report* (New York: R. Speller, 1957) p. 21.

¹⁵ Gasiorowski, "Did Piłsudski Attempt to Initiate a Preventative War in 1933?," *The Journal of Modern History*, p. 142.

¹⁶ Jozef Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin, 1933-1939: Papers and Memoirs of Jozef Lipski, Ambassador of Poland*, ed. Waclaw Jedrejewicz (New York: Columbia, 1968) p. 53.

¹⁷ See Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, p. 57-59, for an account of the meetings that eventually resolved the issue. According to Lipski, it was at these negotiations to resolve the Westerplatte incident that the Polish government began to seriously doubt French and British resolve in confronting Hitler. In addition, he indicates that it was here that Warsaw confirmed its suspicions that Hitler, for the moment, was all rhetoric and bluff and that Germany was, again for the moment, incapable of directly challenging Polish action.

¹⁸ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 75.

¹⁹ See Beck, *Final Report*, p. 22 and Gasiorowski, "Did Piłsudski Attempt to Initiate a Preventative War in 1933?," *The Journal of Modern History*, p. 142.

²⁰ Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, p. 53.

²¹ Gasiorowski, "Did Piłsudski Attempt to Initiate a Preventative War in 1933?," *The Journal of Modern History*, p. 138, 145. Poland was outraged at being excluded from the Four-Powers Pact talks as it did not regard Italy as a true power and was specifically irritated that the possibility of border revision was being used as a lure for German participation in the agreement. Equally, Poland had no desire to end its alliance with France, but in lieu of defensive French posturing and open consideration of German-Polish border revision, Poland decided that it could no longer rely upon France for security and chose instead to assert itself independently to ensure its own national security.

²² Beck, *Final Report*, p. 19.

²³ Almost every work that references German-Polish relations in some detail acknowledges that a preventative war with Germany was a part of Polish foreign policy in some capacity. For examples, see Zamoyski, *The Polish Way*, p. 353, Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 76, Beck, *Final Report*, p. 62, von Riekhoff, *German-Polish Relations*, p. 371-374, John Wheeler-Bennett, *Munich: Prologue to Tragedy* (London: Macmillan, 1948) p. 282-284, Stanislaw Mackiewicz, *Colonel Beck and his Policy* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1944) p. 15, Gasiorowski, "Did Piłsudski Attempt to Initiate a Preventative War in 1933?," *The Journal of Modern History*, p. 135-151.

²⁴ Beck, *Final Report*, p. 62. It is not clear how extensive the survey of opinion was, as Beck's wife did not indicate if it was internal or external.

²⁵ See Alexandra Piłsudska, *Piłsudski: A Biography* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co. 1941) p. 340, 342 and Gasiorowski, "Did Piłsudski Attempt to Initiate a Preventative War in 1933?," *The Journal of Modern History*, p. 137 and 149.

²⁶ Jules Laroche, *La Pologne de Piłsudski: souvenirs d'une ambassade, 1926-1935* (Paris : Flammarion, 1953) p. 118, 194 and Gasiorowski, "Did Piłsudski Attempt to Initiate a Preventative War in 1933?," *The Journal of Modern History*, p. 147.

²⁷ Piłsudska, *Piłsudski: A Biography*, p. 341.

²⁸ Beck, *Final Report*, p. 61. This conclusion was based on a report that Piłsudski asked Beck to produce for him in late 1933. Specifically, Piłsudski wanted Beck to ascertain which country, Germany or the Soviet Union, posed the greater threat to Polish national security. Beck concluded that at the time, neither Russia nor Germany was capable of undertaking military action against Poland, and thus circumstances were favorable for Warsaw. Between the two, Beck felt that the Soviet Union posed the greater threat.

²⁹ Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris*, p. 501.

³⁰ See Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris*, p. 504. By late January and early February 1934, Hitler was forced to choose between the SA and the Reichswehr, a decision he wavered on until events came to a head on February 2, 1934, when General Werner von Blomberg presented Hitler with a memorandum of Röhm's demands on the army. This list included the surrendering of national defense to the SA and reducing the role of the military to only supplying trained men for the SA. To persuade Hitler to side with the Reichswehr, Blomberg voluntarily incorporated the Nazi emblem into the army and accepted the party's position that only Aryans could be members of the officer corps, dismissing 70 members of the military. The issue was, for the time, resolved at a meeting attended by Hitler, SA, SS and Reichswehr leadership on

February 28, 1934. At the meeting, Hitler flatly rejected Röhm's plans and ordered him to confine the SA's activities to political, not military matters.

³¹ Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (New York: Viking, 2006) p. 48. See figure 1. Unemployment in Germany, pre-1938 territory.

³² Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction*, p. 45.

³³ Gasiorowski, "Did Piłsudski Attempt to Initiate a Preventative War in 1933?," *The Journal of Modern History*, p. 149.

³⁴ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 79.

³⁵ See Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris*, p. 492 and Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 80. Both Kershaw and Weinberg agree that the speech was aimed directly at the Polish government.

³⁶ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 80.

³⁷ See Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 78 and 81. According to Weinberg, both were under the assumption that Hitler was working towards restoring Germany's pre-1914 borders.

³⁸ Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, p. 96-97. These remarks are from an undated, handwritten memorandum among Lipski's personal papers that was collected and reprinted in this volume. Although no date is given, it was written sometime between his arrival in Berlin, which was on November 6, and before his meeting with Hitler on November 15.

³⁹ See Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, p. 9 and 99 and U.S. State Department, *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945* (Washington D.C., GPO: 1958) Series C, Vol. 2, Nos. 69 and 70. These comments were produced by the volumes editor, Waclaw Jędrzejewicz, and are based on statements made by Hitler not included in the *White Book* detailing the minutes of the meeting. No explanation of how or where Jędrzejewicz discovered the omissions is given, although due to Jędrzejewicz's previous employment in the Polish Foreign Office, he may have been working from memory. This speculation is unsubstantiated. The Germans, specifically the Wolff Agency, had issued a communiqué about Lipski and Hitler's meeting, stating that an agreement had been reached when, in fact, the Polish government had not yet even officially received the proposal agreed to in principle.

⁴⁰ Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, Doc. 15, p. 102.

⁴¹ Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, Doc. 15, p. 103. When writing to Beck to November 30, 1933, Lipski pointed out these facts and drew special attention to the use of the word "schwebende Probleme," which he believed, if accepted in the text of the treaty, would provide Germany with a legal loophole to demand and possibly effect territorial revision. If Poland did not abide by the arbitration, then theoretically Germany would have justified recourse to arms.

⁴² Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, p. 117. According to Jędrzejewicz, Piłsudski spent much of the interim deliberating on whether France would stand against Hitler over Germany's leaving the league of Nations and fledgling rearmament program, the latter of which violated Versailles.

⁴³ Beck, *Final Report*, p. 28.

⁴⁴ Beck, *Final Report*, p. 34, 57.

⁴⁵ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 123.

⁴⁶ Tibor Hajdu and Zsuzsa L. Nagy, “Revolution, Counterrevolution, Consolidation,” in *A History of Hungary*, ed. Peter F. Sugar, Peter Hanak, Tibor Frank. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) p. 314.

⁴⁷ Rothschild, *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars*, p. 155. See Table 23, Trianon Losses and Residues (Per 1910 Data). Romania, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia received the lion’s share of Hungarian territory, although Austria, Poland, and Italy were awarded districts as well.

⁴⁸ Rothschild, *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars*, p. 156. Hungary lost 84 percent of its timber resources, 43 percent of its arable land, 83 percent of its iron ore, and 27 percent of its coal.

⁴⁹ Rothschild, *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars*, p. 156.

⁵⁰ Hajdu and Nagy, “Revolution, Counterrevolution, Consolidation,” in *A History of Hungary*, p. 314. Mostly in Romania and Czechoslovakia.

⁵¹ Hajdu and Nagy, “Revolution, Counterrevolution, Consolidation,” in *A History of Hungary*, p. 314.

⁵² The World War I Document Archive, “Treaty of Trianon,” wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Treaty_of_Trianon. See part V, Military, Naval and Air Clauses. The treaty went so far as to specifically designate the force compositions of Hungarian divisions and their offensive potential, see Tables No. I, II, III, IV.

⁵³ Maria Ormos, “The Early Interwar Years, 1921-1938,” in *A History of Hungary*, p. 322. According to Ormos, this process began in the mid 1920s and persisted throughout the 1930s.

⁵⁴ Prazmowska, *Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Second World War*, p. 169. Although Hungary’s economy was delicate and very much subject to fluctuations in the world market, Prazmowska argues that an influx of international loans and credit stimulated it enough to provide for stability. This was negated when the crash occurred, spiraling the economy downward, and evidences the chronic problems that plagued Hungary during this period. Before appointing Gömbös prime minister, Horthy had already taken affirmative steps in this direction, making him defense minister in 1929.

⁵⁵ This refers to the period that Count István Bethlen was Prime Minister of Hungary. His role in shaping Hungarian politics and policies during the 1920s was enormous, although his methods were questionable. Bethlen was a member of the peace delegation to Paris in 1919, but, when the Hungarian Soviet Republic under the leadership of Béla Kun was declared in March of that year, he returned to Hungary to form a counterrevolutionary government in Szeged with Admiral Horthy and, with the assistance of the Romanian army, overthrew Kun’s government and was instrumental in instituting the “white terror” that purged Hungarian society of socialistic trends, leaving thousands dead. After the failed attempt by Charles IV to regain the Habsburg throne in Hungary, Horthy invited Bethlen to form a strong government. Bethlen did so, creating an almost unstoppable political machine that dominated Hungarian politics until the end of the decade, when the depression and an increase in extreme-right agitation forced Horthy to bring those elements into the government. See Rothschild, *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars*, p. 158-162, Ormos, “The Early Interwar Years, 1921-1938,” in *A History of Hungary*, p. 319-320, 323-325, 327-330, 332, and Sakmyster, *Hungary’s Admiral on Horseback*, p. 167.

⁵⁶ Rothschild, *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars*, p. 173.

⁵⁷ See Miklós Molnár, *A Concise History of Hungary*, trans. Anna Magyar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) p. 279 and Ormos, “The Early Interwar Years, 1921-1938,” in *A History of Hungary*, p. 332.

⁵⁸ Ormos, “The Early Interwar Years, 1921-1938,” in *A History of Hungary*, p. 332. This was in November of 1932.

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- ⁵⁹ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 124.
- ⁶⁰ Paul N. Hehn, *A Low, Dishonest Decade: The Great Powers, Eastern Europe and the Economic Origins of World War II, 1930-1941* (New York: Continuum, 2002) This is the general tract of Hehn's thesis in which he forwards the notion that Nazi Germany attempted to economically colonize Eastern Europe in four distinct stages. This specific trade agreement does not appear in his text, although, based on the argument and where it concludes in 1941, it is natural to see how it lends itself to such a schema.
- ⁶¹ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 125. It can only be assumed that here, Hitler was referring to Versailles and Trianon, the treaties that bound Germany and Hungary to their respective conditions in 1933.
- ⁶² Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 125.
- ⁶³ Gastony, "Foreign Minister Kalman Kanya, Hitler and Peace in Europe, Aug. – Sept., 1938," in *Hungary in the Age of Total War*, p. 214.
- ⁶⁴ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 125.
- ⁶⁵ Ormos, "The Early Interwar Years, 1921-1938," in *A History of Hungary*, p. 332.
- ⁶⁶ Gabor Baross, *Hungary and Hitler* (Astor: Danubian Press, 1970) p. 12.
- ⁶⁷ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 126.
- ⁶⁸ Baross, *Hungary and Hitler*, p. 12.
- ⁶⁹ Ormos, "The Early Interwar Years, 1921-1938," in *A History of Hungary*, p. 332.
- ⁷⁰ Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris*, p. 523. Habicht had promised Hitler that the Austrian military was planning to act against Dollfuß on July 25 and that it would be imperative to act in conjunction with the military, which would be the most opportune moment. However, such plans were never concocted by the Austrian military and it appears as though Habicht may have invented this to gain Hitler's support for the move.
- ⁷¹ Steven Bela-Vardy, "The Impact of Trianon on the Hungarian Mind: Irredentism and Hungary's Path to War," in *Hungary in the Age of Total War*, p. 34.
- ⁷² Vytautas Zalys, "The Era of Ultimatums," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 150.
- ⁷³ Zalys, "The Era of Ultimatums," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 148, 149.
- ⁷⁴ Alfonsas Eidintas, "The Nation Creates Its State," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 55, 56.
- ⁷⁵ In a strictly technical sense, the appointment actually came from the deposed Grinius. This was orchestrated to retain a sense of legitimacy for the new government to the international community and made with the understanding that Voldemaras would uphold the 1922 Lithuanian Constitution, which he did not.
- ⁷⁶ See Thorsten Kalijarvi, "The Problem of Memel," *American Journal of International Law* 30/2 (1936): p. 205 and Leonas Sabaliunas, *Lithuania in Crisis: Nationalism to Communism, 1939-1940* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972) p. 12.
- ⁷⁷ Kalijarvi, "The Problem of Memel," *American Journal of International Law*, p. 205.

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- ⁷⁸ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 96.
- ⁷⁹ Kalijarvi, "The Problem of Memel," *American Journal of International Law*, p. 206.
- ⁸⁰ Alvydas Nikzentaitis, "Germany and the Memel Germans in the 1930s (On the Basis of Trials of Lithuanian Agents Before the *Volksgerichtshof*, 1934-1945)," *The Historical Journal*, 39/3 (1996): p. 774.
- ⁸¹ See Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 96 and Nikzentaitis, "Germany and the Memel Germans in the 1930s (On the Basis of Trials of Lithuanian Agents Before the *Volksgerichtshof*, 1934-1945)," *The Historical Journal*, p. 774 for further discussion.
- ⁸² The "Voldemaras Course" was named after its principle architect, Augustinas Voldemaras.
- ⁸³ Zalys, "The Return of Lithuania to the European Stage," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 62.
- ⁸⁴ Nikzentaitis, "Germany and the Memel Germans in the 1930s (On the Basis of Trials of Lithuanian Agents Before the *Volksgerichtshof*, 1934-1945)," *The Historical Journal*, p. 771.
- ⁸⁵ Zalys, "The Return of Lithuania to the European Stage," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 61, 64.
- ⁸⁶ Kristina Vaicikonis, "Augustinas Voldemaras," *Lituanus: Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences* 30/3 (1984). Voldemaras had a strong appeal to nationalists, particularly in the army, and Smetona feared that if they were to become radicalized along fascist lines his position would be directly threatened.
- ⁸⁷ Zalys, "The Return of Lithuania to the European Stage," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 61.
- ⁸⁸ Zalys, "The Return of Lithuania to the European State," and "The Era of Ultimatums," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 61, 140.
- ⁸⁹ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 96.
- ⁹⁰ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 98.
- ⁹¹ Kalijarvi, "The Problem of Memel," *American Journal of International Law*, p. 210.
- ⁹² It should be noted that they were not charged with any crime pertaining to their ideology.
- ⁹³ Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris*, p. 553. This was certainly not a major contributing factor, as Hitler's real motivation for abstaining from an "Eastern Locarno" was his absolute aversion to any multilateral agreements that could encumber Germany and limit his freedom of action. Hitler never really had any desire for such an agreement in any case, and the Lithuanian trial of the Memel-Germans was merely one of any number of reasons he could use to deflect and kill the issue. The inclusion of Lithuania in such an arrangement and Germany's ongoing conflict with Kaunas was one of convenience.
- ⁹⁴ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 297.
- ⁹⁵ Kalijarvi, "The Problem of Memel," *American Journal of International Law*, p. 210.
- ⁹⁶ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 98. The most severe of these came from Great Britain.
- ⁹⁷ Dov B. Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers, 1933-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989) p. 20.

⁹⁸ First World War Primary Documents, "Treaty of Bucharest, 7 May 1918," www.firstworldwar.com/source/bucharest1918.htm. See Articles 10 and 11.

⁹⁹ Robert A. Kahn, *A History of the Habsburg Empire, 1526-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974) p. 511.

¹⁰⁰ Laszlo Kürti, *The Remote Borderland: Transylvania in the Hungarian Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001) p. 31. Transylvania was not annexed outright. The matter was put to a plebiscite, with the overwhelming majority of ethnic Romanians desiring to become joined with Romania. Much of the Hungarian aristocracy also voted for union with Romania, although their decision was tactical and largely influenced by the uncertain political climate within Hungary, which was, at the time of the plebiscite, in the throes of a communist revolution and conservative counterrevolution.

¹⁰¹ Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and his Regime, Romania 1940-44* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) p. 9.

¹⁰² The final agreement in what was to be the Little Entente was not actually signed until August 31, 1922, between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, although Romania had concluded agreements with both countries in 1921. France was not a member of the entente but signed treaties with each country individually.

¹⁰³ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 428. No treaty was ever signed between Romania and the Soviet Union acknowledging the transfer, although the two countries had made pledges in the 1928 Kellogg-Briand Pact to resolve their differences without resorting to violence.

¹⁰⁴ Rothschild, *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars*, p. 290-291. See Table 44: Structure of Land Distribution (1930). The statistics themselves may be suspect, although they do demonstrate a generally accepted pattern of redistribution among the landless and dwarf-sized holders and, later in the 1920s, the small landholders as well.

¹⁰⁵ Derek H. Aldcroft, *Europe's Third World: The European Periphery in the Interwar Years* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006) p. 87, 88.

¹⁰⁶ Aldcroft, *Europe's Third World*, p. 86-87. The specific process by which the land was acquired by the state was through a massive buyout of the large and medium sized landholders and the redistribution ensuing afterwards. Recipients of land were able to pay 20 percent of the value of the land immediately upon receiving it and 45 percent of its value of a period of twenty years. The state picked up the remaining 35 percent.

¹⁰⁷ Rothschild, *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars*, p. 288-289. Specifically, leaders in the Jewish minority threatened to protest what they considered to be anti-Semitic legislation to international bodies as a violation of the 1919 Minorities Protection Treaty. The younger generations of Romanians made their presence felt through groups such as the Iron Guard, although the poorer peasantry was equally active in its xenophobic expression. The Iron Guard was the most extreme, violent, and politically active group of all the nationalistic parties and organizations that existed. Peasant discriminatory practices against the country's Jewish population was not particular driven by ideological anti-Semitism, but rather an expression of tradition versus modernity.

¹⁰⁸ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 232. Specifically, the organization headed by Gregor Strasser attempted to forge contacts with Romanian right-wing and pro-Nazi groups within Romania.

¹⁰⁹ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 20, 21.

¹¹⁰ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 20.

¹¹¹ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 428.

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- ¹¹² Pierre Goubert, *The Course of French History*, trans. Maarten Ultee (New York: Routledge, 1991) p. 292.
- ¹¹³ See Prazmowska, *Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Second World War*, p. 115 and Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 232.
- ¹¹⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 3, No. 284.
- ¹¹⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 3, No. 285. The German and Romanian ministers were each doubtful about the successful completion of the deal but agreed to forward it to Bucharest.
- ¹¹⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 3, No. 295.
- ¹¹⁷ See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 3, Nos. 302 and 543. From the course of the negotiations, it can be seen that both sides agreed to the idea in principle and that discussions centered primarily on how German capital was to be fixed for proportions of Romanian goods and repayment for lost German assets following defeat in World War I.
- ¹¹⁸ The amount of currency came out to roughly 20 million Reichsmarks, with the vast majority of the treaty working on a goods-based barter system. See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 3, Nos. 387 and 543. It should be noted that German purchases of Romanian grain was done explicitly for political considerations, as prices from other markets were better. See Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 46.
- ¹¹⁹ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 46.
- ¹²⁰ Prazmowska, *Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Second World War*, p. 108.
- ¹²¹ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 35.
- ¹²² William A. Hoisington Jr., "The Struggle for Economic Influence in Southeastern Europe: The French Failure in Romania, 1940," *Journal of Modern History* 43/3 (1971): p. 469. The figures given are for 1934 to 1938, with German imports from Romania growing from 15.5 percent to 36.8 percent. The process was reciprocal, with Romanian imports from Germany increasing from 16.6 percent to 25.6 percent over the same period.
- ¹²³ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 61.
- ¹²⁴ See Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 317 and Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 60.
- ¹²⁵ See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 4, Nos. 160, 175, 339, 353, 362, 385, 393, 401 and 405.
- ¹²⁶ See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 4, Nos. 353, 393 and Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 65.
- ¹²⁷ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 191.
- ¹²⁸ Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, Doc. 25, p. 128.
- ¹²⁹ See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 2, No. 287 and Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, Doc. 25, p. 128. Both documents show that careful consideration was given by each government as to the timing of when the information would be distributed to the public. The Poles

were anxious to release news of the agreement quickly, whereas the Germans wanted to wait until it went into effect on March 15 before making a general statement and requested that Warsaw do the same.

¹³⁰ Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, Doc. 25, p. 128.

¹³¹ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 2, Nos. 340, 352, 372 and Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 192.

¹³² U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 3, No. 259.

¹³³ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 221.

¹³⁴ Beck, *Final Report*, p. 68.

¹³⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 3, Nos. 339, 379, 392 and 397.

¹³⁶ Beck, *Final Report*, p. 69.

¹³⁷ Beck, *Final Report*, p. 81 and Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 195.

¹³⁸ Hehn, *A Low, Dishonest Decade*, p. 76 and Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 212. Beck had, in March of 1933, made a statement to the French ambassador in Warsaw, Jules Laroche, that Poland intended to act like a Great Power in European affairs and reaffirmed that position through both words and actions in the future.

¹³⁹ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 249. There was internal pressure in Poland that called for more cooperation with France and a moving away from collaboration with Germany.

¹⁴⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 4, Nos. 8, 11 and Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 212.

¹⁴¹ See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 4, Nos. 65, 92, 103, 123, 126, 130, 133, 134, 143, 149, 158, 192, 204, 214, 215, 217, 224, 245, 247, 250, 251, 254, 258, 272, 301, 302, 390, 392, 436, 455, 470, 521, 528, 537, 551, 567 and Series C, Vol. 5, Nos. 22, 62, 107, 151, 261, 264, 276 and 356 for full discussion. The German decision to suspend subsidies for Danzig precipitated a currency crisis, and when the Danzig Senate began mulling over the introduction of the zloty as the primary means of exchange for the city, Berlin became even more anxious, as this had the potential to increase Polish influence on the city. It also precipitated the clearing out of long-standing economic issues, which snowballed into a drawn-out dispute over German rail-transit debts across the Polish Corridor and into East Prussia. This all occurred amid the backdrop of German remilitarization of the Rhineland and subsequent offers of a new 25-year non-aggression treaty, which, due to their gravitas, put the trade issue on hold. An agreement was finally signed on August 31, 1936.

¹⁴² U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 4, No. 75.

¹⁴³ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5, No. 214.

¹⁴⁴ See Beck, *Final Report*, p. 91 and Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 212.

¹⁴⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 4, No. 271.

¹⁴⁶ See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 4, Nos. 302 and 492. The constitution itself was not being rewritten or revised, but, under NSDAP leadership in the Danzig Senate, its spirit was becoming decidedly eroded.

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- ¹⁴⁷ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 198.
- ¹⁴⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 3, No. 150.
- ¹⁴⁹ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 229.
- ¹⁵⁰ See Ormos, "The Early Interwar Years, 1921-1938," in *A History of Hungary*, p. 333, 334 and Thomas Sakmyster, *Hungary, the Great Powers and the Danubian Crisis*, p. 66. Several prominent members of the Ustaše, right-wing Croatian separatists, lived in Hungary both before and after the murders, and the group had even operated two camps within the kingdom.
- ¹⁵¹ Ormos, "The Early Interwar Years, 1921-1938," in *A History of Hungary*, p. 335.
- ¹⁵² No official communiqué was ever sent to that effect, but Hitler had received a letter from Gömbös in February 1934 and never replied, rebuffing all inquiries by the Hungarians until the end of the year. See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 3, Nos. 400 and 426.
- ¹⁵³ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 229.
- ¹⁵⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 4, No. 311.
- ¹⁵⁵ Ormos, "The Early Interwar Years, 1921-1938," in *A History of Hungary*, p. 335.
- ¹⁵⁶ Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback*, p. 184.
- ¹⁵⁷ Stephen D. Kertesz, *Diplomacy in a Whirlpool: Hungary Between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1953) p. 31.
- ¹⁵⁸ Sabaliunas, *Lithuania in Crisis*, p. 14.
- ¹⁵⁹ Zaly, "The Era of Ultimatums," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 150 and 153. The overture was originally made by the Lithuanian army's General Stasys Raštikis for a Baltic military alliance.
- ¹⁶⁰ Beck, *Final Report*, p. 47, 53.
- ¹⁶¹ Zaly, "The Era of Ultimatums," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 151, 152, 153.
- ¹⁶² Sabaliunas, *Lithuania in Crisis*, p. 13. No indication of who these "leading Poles" were, although it might be assumed that they constituted old *szlachta*, or landed aristocracy, families.
- ¹⁶³ Tadeusz Marczak, "Międzymorze wczoraj i dziś," www.ism.uni.wroc.pl/publikacje/polonia/marczak_miedzymorze_wczoraj_idzis.pdf p. 3.
- ¹⁶⁴ Richard Woytak, "The Promethean Movement in Interwar Poland," *East European Quarterly* 18/3 (1984): p. 273.
- ¹⁶⁵ Edmund Charaszkiwicz, *Zbiór dokumentów pplk. Edmunda Charaszkiwicza*. eds. Andrzej Grzywacz, Marcin Kwiecien, Grzegorz Mazur (Krakow: Akademia, 2000) p. 78-79.
- ¹⁶⁶ Zaly, "The Era of Ultimatums," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 153.
- ¹⁶⁷ Marczak, "Międzymorze wczoraj i dziś," www.ism.uni.wroc.pl/publikacje/polonia/marczak_miedzymorze_wczoraj_i_dzis.pdf p. 4.

¹⁶⁸ See Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, Doc. 9, p. 66, Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 190 and Beck, *Final Report*, p. 69. Beck was displeased with what he perceived as a Czech bowing to the wills of the Great Powers during the Four-Power Pact and Eastern Locarno talks, leaving the Polish Foreign Minister ill-disposed to Prague. For this and specific territorial claims and regional rivalry, Beck chose to exclude Czechoslovakia from his "Third Europe" concept.

¹⁶⁹ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 87.

¹⁷⁰ Hitchins, *Rumania: 1866-1947*, p. 430.

¹⁷¹ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 87.

¹⁷² See Hitchins, *Rumania: 1866-1947*, p. 430 and Beck, *Final Report*, p. 72. Beck noted that this was not essential to Polish foreign policy, although the opportunity could not be passed up if offered.

¹⁷³ See Gastony, "Foreign Minister Kálmán Kánya, Hitler, and Peace in Europe, Aug.-Sept. 1938," in *A History of Hungary*, p. 215, Kertesz, *Diplomacy in a Whirlpool*, p. 28 and Prazmowska, *Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Second World War*, p. 174, 175.

¹⁷⁴ Kürti, *The Remote Borderland*, p. 15.

¹⁷⁵ Hitchins, *Rumania: 1866-1947*, p. 430.

Notes to Chapter 2: In the Middle

¹ Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris*, p. 588.

² Fest, *Hitler*, p. 497 and Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris*, p. 588. This number includes Polish and Czechoslovak divisions but does not include Soviet forces. Although Fest includes the Red Army as among those that would actively participate in any resistance to the reoccupation of the Rhineland, this seems improbable, as it would require Poland to offer transit to the Russians, which Warsaw was loathe to even consider, let alone allow.

³ Paul Schmidt, *Statist auf diplomatischer Bühne 1923-1945: Erlebnisse eines Chefdolmetschers im Auswärtiges Amt mit den Staatsmännern Europas* (Bonn: Athenäum-Verlag, 1950) p. 320. Quoted in Fest, *Hitler*, p. 497.

⁴ Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris*, p. 588.

⁵ See Stephen A. Schuker, "France and the Remilitarization of the Rhineland, 1936," *French Historical Studies* 14/3 (1986): p. 303, 304, 316, Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 224, Fest, *Hitler*, p. 496 and Ulrich von Hassell, "Hitler Considers Reoccupation of the Rhineland, 1936: Memorandum by von Hassell, German Ambassador in Italy 14 Feb 1936," in *The Lost Peace*, ed. Adamthwaite, p. 172 for full discussion. A myriad of factors precluded any French response to the German reoccupation of the Rhineland. The military was in the midst of a massive reorganization and dedicated to its Maginot mentality, making it content to sit and wait for the German army to invade rather than take up the offensive. Schuker further argues that, due to the state of French finances, a mobilization of the army would have exposed just how broke the French treasury truly was and led to a destabilization of the franc and possibly may have led to its being taken off the gold standard. Also, Hitler launched the operation only six days before French general elections, forcing the government to take domestic political considerations into account when charting its international response.

⁶ Baross, *Hungary and Hitler*, p. 13.

⁷ Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback*, p. 186, 189 and *Hungary, The Great Powers and the Danubian Crisis*, p. 68, Bela-Vardy, "The Impacts of Trianon upon the Hungarian Mind: Irredentism and Hungary's Path to War," in *Hungary in the Age of Total War*, p. 31, Fest, *Hitler*, p. 497 and U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5, No. 36. Hitler launched most of his major foreign policy initiatives on Saturdays for tactical reasons. The relevant governmental bodies in London and Paris were adjourned for the weekend and it provided him with a full day to consolidate his gains and present his case before any cohesive Western response could be formulated, presenting the British and French government with a *fait accompli* that could either be challenged or accepted. Kánya was informed of the impending action on March 6 by Döme Sztójay, Hungary's minister in Berlin.

⁸ Gastony, "Foreign Minister Kalman Kanya, Hitler, and Peace in Europe, Aug.-Sept. 1938," in *Hungary in the Age of Total War*, p. 215.

⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5, No. 36.

¹⁰ Gastony, "Foreign Minister Kalman Kanya, Hitler, and Peace in Europe, Aug.-Sept. 1938," in *Hungary in the Age of Total War*, p. 215.

¹¹ Baross, *Hungary and Hitler*, p. 215.

¹² Gastony, "Foreign Minister Kalman Kanya, Hitler, and Peace in Europe, Aug.-Sept. 1938," in *Hungary in the Age of Total War*, p. 215.

¹³ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5, Nos. 36, 63, 130 and 296. The inquiries began arriving on March 9.

¹⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5, No. 296. Kánya was desperate enough for such an expression that he even flatly related to the Germans that the document need not be serious or meaningful.

¹⁵ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 315.

¹⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5, No. 516.

¹⁷ Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback*, p. 190.

¹⁸ See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5, No. 589 and Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 316 and 317 for full discussion.

¹⁹ Ormos, "The Early Interwar Years, 1921-1938," in *A History of Hungary*, p. 336.

²⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 6, p. 1. Only the section of the speech pertaining to Hungary is offered in the volume. The speech itself dealt with disarmament and the League of Nations, summarized Italy's relations with its four neighbors, and also addressed German relations.

²¹ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 6, Nos. 38 and 53.

²² U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 6, Nos. 38 and 53. This document is a recounting of the conversation between Sztójay and von Neurath written by the foreign minister.

²³ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 6, Nos. 22, 51, 60, 70, 71, 131, 257, Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 559 and Ormos, "The Early Interwar Years, 1921-

1938,” in *A History of Hungary*, p. 336. All the German documents, excluding No. 71, show the progress of economic negotiations. Economic discussions about an increase in Hungarian agricultural produce to be exchanged for German armaments were ongoing throughout late 1936 and into 1937, with an agreement signed on March 9.

²⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 6, No. 97.

²⁵ See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 6, No. 98. Although many issues were discussed at the meeting described in this document, Hitler related to the Hungarian Minister of the Interior Miklós Kozma that further press controls would prove to be beneficial for the Hungarian government, providing a measure of public control over unpopular but necessary strategic moves. This meeting occurred in December of 1936 and, given Hitler’s adamancy on the need for governmental regulation of the press, by the time von Neurath had discussed the Czechoslovakia issue with Sztójay in mid-January, the German position was abundantly clear to the Hungarians.

²⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 6, No. 145. Von Neurath had become equally tired of answering Hungarian requests for a status update of German-Hungarian relations, which, despite the minority issue, remained unchanged due to German strategic interest. Although von Neurath’s exposition was not so detailed, his response to this specific inquiry was cumulative of prior inquests and an attempt to further influence the Hungarians to move in ways that were within Germany’s flexible yet clearly conceptualized Danubian strategy.

²⁷ See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 6, Nos. 181, 238, 423 and 443 for full discussion. Although the offers were obviously rejected due to their inherent lack of strategic value, in No. 423 Kánya’s relation of Hungarian activities since January is almost verbatim the strategy outlined by von Neurath to Sztójay.

²⁸ Ormos, “The Early Interwar Years, 1921-1938,” in *A History of Hungary*, p. 337.

²⁹ Sakmyster, *Hungary, the Great Powers and the Danubian Crisis*, p. 98, 106, 117. Von Papen had been relating messages from his post in Vienna throughout 1937 that the *Anschluss* was an eventuality that needed to be soon planned for, although time discrepancies in, to borrow a military term, “operational conception,” and an explicit attempt to focus Budapest on Czechoslovakia, had led Kánya to believe that action would come in 1940 when, by the government’s own expectations, Hungary’s military would be sufficiently rearmed and able to participate as had been discussed.

³⁰ See Betty Jo Winchester, “Hungary and the “Third Europe” in 1938,” *Slavic Review* 32/4 (1973): p. 743. The Italian Foreign Minister, Count Galeazzo Ciano, had informed Horthy to such effect upon the latter’s return from a meeting with Beck in Warsaw on February 10. This was also discussed at the meeting itself, with all parties agreeing that the *Anschluss* would occur soon.

³¹ Weinberg, *Hitler’s Foreign Policy*, p. 297. The pact offered was similar to those offered to all Germany’s neighbors.

³² U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5, No. 329.

³³ Weinberg, *Hitler’s Foreign Policy*, p. 548.

³⁴ See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5, Nos. 329, 441 and 512 for full discussion.

³⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 6, No. 256.

³⁶ See Zalys, “The Era of Ultimatums,” in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 161. Just as the Lithuanian government eventually relented in regard to the economic treaty, the same pro-Nazi agitators they

imprisoned following the widely publicized trials in Kaunas from 1934-1935 were eventually released due to German political pressure.

³⁷ See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5, No. 39 for full discussion of the meeting on March 9 in Bucharest. Von Pochhammer's assessment of Titulescu's position was somewhat dismissive, relegating the Romanian concern for the respect of international law as a concern of smaller, weaker nations, which had little other recourse.

³⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States diplomatic papers, 1936. General, British Commonwealth* (Washington D.C., GPO: 1936) Vol. 1, No. 70.

³⁹ See Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 70-71, A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (New York: Touchstone, 1996) p. 95-96, 98 and U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5, No. 78 for full discussion. Lungu argues that it was the distancing of the other Entente governments from Titulescu that contributed to his eventual downfall, with No. 78 providing the substance of the dispatch issued. Taylor makes the argument that, with the failure of the League in 1935, inaction in March of 1936 was a death-knell. These arguments combined provide an accurate picture of events and greater thematic meaning, particularly when U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States diplomatic papers, 1936, General, British Commonwealth*, Vol. 1, No. 70, is taken into account, as there, Titulescu outlined his concept of what needed to occur for the continuance of the collective security system and, based upon his personal stake and role in subsequent events, his political career.

⁴⁰ See Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936-1945: Nemesis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000) p. 194 and U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5, Nos. 56, 114, 224, 287, 376, 383 and 592. As has been stated, Turkey was providing chrome, which was of principle German interest and, following economic discussions in April, sought to further align its economy to the Reich's. Yugoslavia exported copper and other raw materials to Germany at trade balances favorable to Belgrade while Greece had a significant enough trade balance with the Third Reich to have accumulated over a 30 million Reichsmark credit in its favor while, at the same time, Germany represented the country's largest export market.

⁴¹ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 90-92.

⁴² U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 4, No. 561.

⁴³ See Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 317 and Prince Michel Sturdza, *The Suicide of Europe: The Memoirs of Prince Michel Sturdza, Former Foreign Minister of Rumania* (Boston: Western Islands, 1968) p. 74.

⁴⁴ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 85.

⁴⁵ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 94.

⁴⁶ See Hitchens, *Rumania: 1866-1947*, p. 437 and Hehn, *A Low, Dishonest Decade*, p. 235. Romania was able to resist German economic domination better than other Danubian countries, managing to keep German exports below 25 percent of the national market, allowing for some freedom of action in the event the Reich attempted to exert pressure economically.

⁴⁷ See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5, No. 528 for details of the meeting between Antonescu and Wilhelm Fabricius, the new German minister to Bucharest. The policy discussed by the two state representatives is an extension of what Carol had been formulating since July, nearly verbatim. See Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 95, 102 for further discussion.

⁴⁸ See Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 99-102 for full discussion.

⁴⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5, No. 576 and p. 1003-1004. The trade agreements were centered on the delivery of oil to Germany. Although, as is highlighted in the course of Carol and Faricus' discussion on October 6, the Romanians had specific political concerns about moving towards Germany, the deals they signed at the end of September indicate that, aside from these concerns, the King was not dishonest about his desire. The trade agreements allowed Germany to pay only a quarter of the cost of the deliveries on a monthly basis, and such deliveries would continue unless Germany failed to meet that minimum payment for two months. After that, all subsequent deliveries would be subject to special negotiation.

⁵⁰ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 103.

⁵¹ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 6, No. 38. Brătianu explicitly related to Hitler that domestic political considerations had necessitated this. He had made the same statement to von Neurath earlier in the day as well. See No. 36.

⁵² See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 6, No. 80. Sturdza, *The Suicide of Europe*, p. 74 and Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 104 for full discussion. After word of Göring's offer was received in Bucharest, the Foreign Ministry was left confused, as his proposal went farther than what Hitler had offered Brătianu in November. Göring did not have the authority to make such a proposal, although it was effective in forcing the Romanians to act.

⁵³ See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 6, Nos. 42, 83, 142, 197, 210, 270 and 305 for full discussion. Concurrently with the French proposal, Germany worked towards increasing its trade with Romania, which was effective. Lodgings of protests over Romanian participation in a reorganized Little Entente and an indication that such an eventuality could only be viewed as hostile towards the Reich contributed to the Romanian abandonment of the idea, for the ongoing trade with Germany offered to yield more tangible results than the French alliance. Romania's attempts at fulfilling the requirements highlighted by Göring, specifically the prohibition on entering into any alliance directed against Germany, complicated negotiations with the French and effectively killed the arrangement. See Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 106-112, for a detailed discussion of French and Romanian negotiations.

⁵⁴ See Beck, *Final Report*, p. 109 and Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, p. 251-252. Lipski's recollection of the conversation with Attolico is recorded in an undated personal note. Specifically, Lipski believed the Italians to have some inside information as to the move and suspected, correctly, that Mussolini's acquiescence was sought. See Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 248, 249 for further discussion.

⁵⁵ See Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, p. 253-254, Beck, *Final Report*, p. 109-110, Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 298, Prazmowska, *Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Second World War*, p. 148 for full discussion. Lipski had been informed by François-Poncet that the French intended to fight and had communicated this to Beck, who in turn forwarded the information to Marshal Edward Rydz-Śmigły, the head of the Polish military. Rydz-Śmigły took this seriously enough to order Poland's military attaché in France to investigate the precise level of German preparations in the event that military action was required. In the interim, Hitler made his move and, flatly confronted by the duplicity of the policy he had pursued, Beck was forced to make a show of face to the French despite the fact that personally he was convinced there would not be any French action. Prazmowska has interpreted this declaration as an indication that some offer of preventative war, similar to the one Piłsudski made in 1933, was made. This is an erroneous reading of the documentation, as following his meeting with Noël, Beck issued a completely contradictory statement for the Polish press that indicated Poland would consider itself bound by the 1934 non-aggression pact. She is correct, though, in the fact that the official statement made to Noël was test of the French alliance. See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5, No. 106 for details on the differences between Beck's statement to the French ambassador and what appeared that same day in the Polish press. Lipski's account was originally published as "Blomberg's Directive of June 24, 1937," in *Sprawy Międzynarodowe* (London, 1947): No. 2-3.

⁵⁶ See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5, No. 106 for full discussion and the German interpretation of events.

⁵⁷ Beck, *Final Report*, p. 109.

⁵⁸ See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5, No. 19, 22, 82 and 264 for full discussion. The trade issue pertained to German non-payment of duties and fees for cross-Corridor rail-transit of goods. After several abrupt breaks in the negotiations and personal involvement by Göring, the matter was eventually resolved in early April.

⁵⁹ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 254-255.

⁶⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5, No. 173. This is partly the German interpretation of Beck's actions, although it carries some merit. Von Moltke believed that Beck's attempt to insert Poland into major decisions pertaining to European security, ostensibly as a German advocate, was a calculated move to receive some sort of positive benefit. The extension of the pact to a twenty-five year duration was figured as the most likely impetus following comments made by Lipski to the Italian Ambassador in Berlin.

⁶¹ Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*, p. 99.

⁶² Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 299.

⁶³ See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5, Nos. 242, 293, and 332. This is the only instance of Beck forwarding the notion of collective security to the Germans in what appears to have been a serious manner. He did not provide many details on his ideas, only that both Germany and Poland needed to be incorporated into such a framework based upon the principle of non-aggression. Beck also made it a point to highlight his preference for the German Peace Plan over the French proposal, which would have mandated a one-step resolution to the myriad of problems facing Europe. The German plan ostensibly sought to achieve the same ends through a more gradual process, with bilateral treaties forming the basis of peace. This aspect of the German plan fit with Beck's preference for international dealings and was exploitable in the sense that Poland could more easily approach nations it wished to align itself with under the guise of collective security. German participation would validate the scheme and strengthen the cautious friendship between Berlin and Warsaw. At the same time, the small powers could act as a strength augmentation for Poland that would deter German agitation and, over time, become susceptible to slow Polish foreign policy domination.

⁶⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5, Nos. 419 and 429. Forster's piece actually appeared in the German press before the incident.

⁶⁵ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 300-301.

⁶⁶ See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5, Nos. 430, 434, 438, 443, 467, 476 and Beck, *Final Report*, p. 118-121 for full discussion. The German government repeatedly stressed that they were not interested in infringing upon Polish rights to the city during discussions, only that Lester's policies were intolerable. A successor to Lester was not agreed upon until February 1937.

⁶⁷ See Beck, *Final Report*, p. 119-121 and Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 301 for full discussion.

⁶⁸ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 304.

⁶⁹ For a full discussion of German-Polish relations and Danzig negotiations during the fall of 1936 and throughout 1937, see U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5,

Nos. 476, 513, 524, 557, 566, 573, 575, 579, 584, 594, 605, 609, 623, 628, 635, 636, 639 and Vol. 6, Nos. 4, 5, 12, 13, 28, 30, 43, 59, 61, 77, 100, 112, 117, 125, 140, 148, 158, 163, 165, 208, 227, 322, 327, 331, 392, 393, 394, 408, 411, 432, 433, 439, 501, 513, 515, 540, 548 and Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, Docs. 64, 65, 67, 73, 76, and 77. The matter of Danzig as it pertained to German-Polish relations went through distinct phases centered on the various issues that were raised in conjunction with the slow but eventual resolution of the conflict. Following the agreement on the replacing of Lester and the installation of Carl Jakob Burckhardt as his successor, the question of minority rights protection was raised, as Burckhardt was more complicit than Lester in tolerating overt constitutional infringements. After lengthy discussions, it was eventually agreed that a non-binding oral statement would be issued in autumn 1937, a compromise from the original Polish position of a bilateral treaty. The entire year was characterized by a continuation of the German policy of pushing the Polish government until it stood resolute on a particular issue and making small but important political gains that had overt implications on the future dynamic of the two country's relations.

⁷⁰ Beck, *Final Report*, p. 129.

⁷¹ See Winchester, "Hungary and the "Third Europe" in 1938," *Slavic Review*, p. 741-744 for further discussion.

⁷² See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Vol. 5, Nos. 284, 364, 372, 480, 508 and Series C, Vol. 6, Nos. 62, 96, 151, 153, 204, 224, 240, 288, and 318 for full discussion of the German exercising of pressure of Czechoslovakia in relation to the Sudeten-German minority question.

⁷³ Sakmyster, *Hungary, the Great Powers and the Danubian Crisis*, p. 153-155 and Prazmowska, *Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Second World War*, p. 177.

⁷⁴ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 99-100.

⁷⁵ See Hitchens, *Rumania: 1866-1947*, p. 438, 439 and Prazmowska, *Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Second World War*, p. 117.

⁷⁶ This is the essence of Kershaw's biography of the Hitler and the Nazi state, which he describes as a lazy dictatorship. This behavior translated itself into all aspects of the Third Reich, particularly in foreign policy, of which Hitler was the final authority.

⁷⁷ See Eidintas, "Ultimatums, the President, and the Public," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 177-178 and Robert A. Vitas, "The Polish-Lithuanian Crisis of 1938: Events Surrounding the Ultimatum," *Lituanus: Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences* 30/2 (1984): http://www.lituanus.org/1984_2/84_2_03.htm.

⁷⁸ Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback*, p. 201.

Notes to Chapter 3: Towards Germany

¹ Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936-1945: Nemesis*, p. 84.

² Beck, *Final Report*, p. 145-146, Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 543, Vitas, "The Polish-Lithuanian Crisis of 1938: Events Surrounding the Ultimatum," *Lituanus: Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences*, http://www.lituanus.org/1984_2/84_2_03.htm. , Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, Undated Personal Note, p. 352.

³ Vitas, "The Polish-Lithuania Crisis of 1938: events Surrounding the Ultimatum," *Lituanus: Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences*, http://www.lituanus.org/1984_2/84_2_03.htm.

⁴ Zaly, "The Era of Ultimatums," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 156, 157, Vital, "The Polish-Lithuanian Crisis of 1938: Events Surrounding the Ultimatum," *Lituanus: Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences*, http://www.lituanus.org/1984_2/84_2_03.htm., Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, Undated Personal Note, p. 352 and Alan Palmer, *The Baltic: A New History of the Region and its People* (New York: The Overlook Press, 2005) p. 315. Ribbentrop replaced von Neurath in February 1938.

⁵ Vitas, "The Polish-Lithuanian Crisis of 1938: Events Surrounding the Ultimatum," *Lituanus: Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences*, http://www.lituanus.org/1984_2/84_2_03.htm. and Zaly, "The Era of Ultimatums," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 157.

⁶ Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936-1945: Nemesis*, p. 78-79, 80. Kershaw argues that Hitler originally envisaged the takeover of Austria as more akin to an international *Gleichschaltung*, or coordination with Germany, and that only after a period of time would *Anschluss* occur. The rapidity of events and the exuberant reception he received in Austria changed his mind and caused him to declare that he wanted "no half-measures" (p. 80) on the evening of March 12. By the next day, he had fully decided to push immediately for the union, expressing to a British journalist that Austria was to become a German province like Bavaria or Saxony.

⁷ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 543.

⁸ Sabulionas, *Lithuania in Crisis*, p. 15.

⁹ Zaly, "The Era of Ultimatums," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 158.

¹⁰ Zaly, "The Era of Ultimatums," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 162-164.

¹¹ Hossbach Memorandum, November 5, 1937 in Adamthwaite, *The Lost Peace*, p. 190-191. Hitler had been conceptualizing the disappearance of Czechoslovakia before this time, but it was now, as related in this document, particularly in Cases 2 and 3, that concrete ideas about how and when this would occur were expressed.

¹² Gastony, "Foreign Minister Kalman Kanya, Hitler, and Peace in Europe, Aug.-Sept. 1938," in *Hungary in the Age of Total War*, p. 219-221.

¹³ See Sakmyster, *Hungary, the Great Powers and the Danubian Crisis*, p. 136 and *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback*, p. 212, Lorand Tilkovszky, "the Late Interwar Years and World War II," in *A History of Hungary*, p. 339 and Gerhard L. Weinberg, "The May Crisis, 1938," *The Journal of Modern History* 29/3 (1957): p. 214 and *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 630.

¹⁴ See Winchester, "Hungary and the "Third Europe" in 1938," *Slavic Review*, p. 746 and Gastony, "Foreign Minister Kalman Kanya, Hitler, and Peace in Europe, Aug.-Sept. 1938," in *Hungary in the Age of Total War*, p. 226 for full discussion.

¹⁵ See Kertesz, *Diplomacy in a Whirlpool*, p. 34-35, Gastony, "Foreign Minister Kalman Kanya, Hitler, and Peace in Europe, Aug.-Sept. 1938," in *Hungary in the Age of Total War*, p. 221-222, Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback*, p. 214, 216, Winchester, "Hungary and the "Third Europe" in 1938," *Slavic Review*, p. 747 and U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. 5, Nos. 141 and 216 for full discussion.

¹⁶ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 723.

¹⁷ Baross, *Hungary and Hitler*, p. 19 and Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 567.

¹⁸ Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, Doc. 91.

¹⁹ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 544-545, 721, 723.

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- ²⁰ See Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 543, 544, 566 and 726 for full discussion.
- ²¹ Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, Docs. 87, 91, 98 and Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 545.
- ²² Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 118, 120, 131. Economically, the Romanian government was acutely sensitive to German attempts at gaining a position of dominance and sought to balance trade with the Reich with increased trade with Great Britain and France. However, neither of the two Western Powers was interested in expanding their share of the Romanian market. The British saw no mutual benefit from an economic deal that would have been entirely political in character and the French were encumbered by their own economic difficulties. This left Romania in a precarious position, as Germany was very much willing to trade with Bucharest, but Berlin naturally expected acquiescence to its political machinations as part of a quid pro quo.
- ²³ Gastony, "Foreign Minister Kalman Kanya, Hitler, and Peace in Europe, Aug.-Sept. 1938," in *Hungary in the Age of Total War*, p. 228. Kánya indicated to Hitler that the Hungarian army would only be ready to march 14 days after hostilities began.
- ²⁴ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 726, 782 and Gastony, "Foreign Minister Kalman Kanya, Hitler, and Peace in Europe, Aug.-Sept. 1938," in *Hungary in the Age of Total War*, p. 233. Gastony argues that Budapest's refusal to march played a decisive role in preventing the outbreak of war by upsetting Hitler's conception of the attack, which was to be concentric explicitly for the purpose of effecting a decision quickly and localizing the conflict. Hitler's later behavior and attitude towards the Hungarian government support this position.
- ²⁵ Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936-1945: Nemesis*, p. 123.
- ²⁶ Tilkovszky, "The Late Interwar Years and World War II," in *A History of Hungary*, pl 340 and Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 770.
- ²⁷ See Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 746-747 for full discussion.
- ²⁸ Hitler preferred the Yugoslav Prime Minister Milan Stojadinović for his "strong man" personality and approach to governance. The German dictator also feared that any commitment to Hungary would have a negative effect on his policy towards the Little Entente and that any guarantee would push the alliance closer when he was trying to break it apart. See Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 566 for further discussion on that point and p. 724-725, Gastony, "Foreign Minister Kalman Kanya, Hitler, and Peace in Europe, Aug.-Sept. 1938," in *Hungary in the Age of Total War*, p. 218 and 221 for a discussion of Hungarian military capabilities and Budapest's various fears of retribution.
- ²⁹ Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback*, p. 214.
- ³⁰ Beck, *Final Report*, p. 157 and Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 721.
- ³¹ Winchester, "Hungary and the "Third Europe" in 1938," *Slavic Review*, p. 749.
- ³² U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. 4, Nos. 5 and 6.
- ³³ Richard M. Watt, *Bitter Glory: Poland and its Fate, 1918-1939* (New York: Hippocrene, 1998) p. 386.
- ³⁴ Zamoyski, *The Polish Way*, p. 354 and Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 790.
- ³⁵ Hitchens, *Rumania: 1866-1947*, p. 439-440.

³⁶ Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen, *Anarchie, Dictature ou Organisation Internationale?* (Geneva, 1936) p. 121-122. Quoted in Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 134. See p. 132 as well for details pertaining to Romania's strategic concerns.

³⁷ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 134-135. The Polish government was pursuing a dual policy between Romania and Hungary, urging Budapest to march to create a common border with Poland and restraining Bucharest so that plan could be brought to fruition with minimal conflict.

³⁸ The provision of the Munich Agreement stipulated that both Poland and Hungary settle their claims with Czechoslovakia within three months of its signing.

³⁹ Beck, *Final Report*, p. 160. Though not explicit, Beck's rationale that Poland must march "against the decision of Munich" to safeguard territorial interests that were threatened by "a conference not based on any law or international order" implies that he did not believe, particularly in light now of how Poland's claims were disregarded at Munich, that such a conference would result in his desired outcome. Action was the only method of securing Poland's claims.

⁴⁰ Winchester, "Hungary and the "Third Europe" in 1938," *Slavic Review*, p. 751.

⁴¹ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. 4, No. 62.

⁴² Edward Chaszar, *Decision in Vienna: The Czechoslovak-Hungarian Border Dispute of 1938* (Astor: Danubian Press, 1978) p. 39-41.

⁴³ Winchester, "Hungary and the "Third Europe" in 1938," *Slavic Review*, p. 752.

⁴⁴ See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. 4, No. 99 and Chaszar, *Decision in Vienna*, p. 53-54.

⁴⁵ Beck, *Final Report*, p. 165-167 and Winchester, "Hungary and the "Third Europe" in 1938," *Slavic Review*, p. 751-754.

⁴⁶ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 137.

⁴⁷ Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, Docs. 119, 120 and p. 445.

⁴⁸ Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, Doc. 121 and transcription from Göring's personal notebook printed originally in July 11, 1945 edition of the *Daily Herald* (London).

⁴⁹ Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, Doc. 124.

⁵⁰ Zamoyski, *The Polish Way*, p. 354.

⁵¹ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 811.

⁵² Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 845.

⁵³ Winchester, "Hungary and the "Third Europe" in 1938," *Slavic Review*, p. 753-754.

⁵⁴ Winchester, "Hungary and the "Third Europe" in 1938," *Slavic Review*, p. 754.

⁵⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. 4, No. 122.

⁵⁶ See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. 4, Nos. 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133 and 134.

⁵⁷ Zaly, "The Era of Ultimatums," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 163, Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 548, Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, Doc. 133 and 134.

⁵⁸ Prazmowska, *Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Second World War*, p. 180.

⁵⁹ Tilkovszky, "The Late Interwar Years and World War II," in *A History of Hungary*, p. 340 and Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 805.

⁶⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. 4, No. 163, 165, 166, 167 and 179 for full discussion of German-Hungarian exchanges pertaining to the Carpatho-Ukraine. Berlin was never explicit in that German seizure of the territory would result if Hungary moved before Hitler was ready, but it was implied that the Wehrmacht need not particularly stop at the Slovak border.

⁶¹ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 806.

⁶² See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. 4, Nos. 163, 165, 166, 167 and 179 for full course of German-Hungarian exchanges pertaining to the Carpatho-Ukraine. Berlin was never explicit in that German seizure of the territory would result if Hungary moved before Hitler was ready, but it was implied that the Wehrmacht need not particularly stop at the Slovak border.

⁶³ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 807.

⁶⁴ See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. 6, Nos. 2, 4, 6, 13, 29 and 39 for full discussion.

⁶⁵ See Aldcroft, *Europe's Third World*, p. 92 and Hehn, *A Low, Dishonest Decade*, p. 238. Hehn, accounting for the Czechoslovak and Austrian trade that, through absorption of those markets, Germany now controlled, places the figure of German economic dominance at fifty percent of the Romanian market.

⁶⁶ For a complete discussion of German-Romanian economic relations and the political undertones associated with those talks, see Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 139-141.

⁶⁷ See Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, Doc. 129, Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 144-145 and Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) p. 968 for further discussion of the German reactions to Codreanu's death, both actual and as how the murder was used to effect political gain. Lipski did not personally believe that there was any actual threat to Hitler's blustering, as he thought that economically, good relations with Romania were too valuable to sacrifice over the Codreanu affair.

⁶⁸ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 145-146, 151.

⁶⁹ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, 147.

⁷⁰ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Power*, p. 148-149.

⁷¹ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 149-150.

⁷² See Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936-1945: Nemesis*, p. 171-172 for a detail of events surrounding Hitler's arrival in Prague and further discussion of the popular reaction to the foreign policy actions. The quote can be found in Christa Schroeder, *Er war mein Chef. Aus dem Nachlaß der Sekretärin von Adolf Hitler*, 4th edn, ed. Anton Joachimsthaler (Munich: Verlag, 1989) p. 88.

⁷³ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 807 and Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 150.

⁷⁴ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 153.

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- ⁷⁵ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 156.
- ⁷⁶ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 159.
- ⁷⁷ Prazmowska, *Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Second World War*, p. 118 and Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 890.
- ⁷⁸ See U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. 4, Nos. 122, 132, 163, 165, 167, 179 and Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 806 for further discussion. As it became clearer to Budapest that the final reckoning with Czechoslovakia was to be soon at hand, the Hungarians began to increase their agitation for a final decision from Berlin regarding the Carpatho-Ukraine. Though unstated, it was evident from the demeanor of the German responses to these queries that should the region be forcibly taken, its continued possession would not be tolerated. No mention of which nation would expel the Hungarians was given, although it can be assumed that Berlin intended for that force to be either German or backed by the Reich.
- ⁷⁹ Prazmowska, *Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Second World War*, p. 179 and Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 807.
- ⁸⁰ Zalys, "The Era of Ultimatums," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 163, 164.
- ⁸¹ Zalys, "The Era of Ultimatums," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 164-165.
- ⁸² Sabaliunas, *Lithuania in Crisis*, p. 114 and Eidintas, "Ultimatums, the President, and the Public," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 179.
- ⁸³ Zalys, "The Era of Ultimatums," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 165.
- ⁸⁴ Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936-1945: Nemesis*, p. 176 and Zalys, "The Era of Ultimatums," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 165.
- ⁸⁵ Zalys, "The Era of Ultimatums," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 165. These are approximate figures, Sabaliunas places them more specifically at 75.5% of export trade and 68.2% of imports.
- ⁸⁶ Sabaliunas, *Lithuania in Crisis*, p. 116.
- ⁸⁷ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 797 and Zalys, "The Era of Ultimatums," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 167.
- ⁸⁸ See Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, undated personal papers, p. 502, U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. 4, No. 61.
- ⁸⁹ Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, p. 502. Jedrzejewicz has pieced together the specific details of Lipski's movements and conversations from various short notes the ambassador made to himself and from the journal of Count Jan Szembek. The details of Lipski's meeting can be found in the Szembek Journal on p. 433. Beck's memorandum is included as Doc. 138 in the Lipski papers and can also be found in Adamthwaite, *The Lost Peace*, on p. 214-215.
- ⁹⁰ Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936-1945: Nemesis*, p. 177.
- ⁹¹ Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, Doc. 140 and p. 536. The quotes are from Jedrzejewicz's summation of Beck's May 5, 1939 speech to the Polish Sejm.

⁹² Rothschild, *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars*, p. 5 and Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936-1945: Nemesis*, p. 179.

⁹³ See Foreign Office, *Documents Concerning German-Polish Relations and the Outbreak of Hostilities between Great Britain and Germany on September 3, 1939* (London: H.M. Stationary Office: 1939) No. 15 and Beck, *Final Report*, p. 195 for further discussion.

⁹⁴ See Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 845 and 853.

⁹⁵ Hehn, *A Low, Dishonest Decade*, p. 94-95.

⁹⁶ Foreign Office, *Documents Concerning German-Polish Relations*, No. 51.

⁹⁷ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 864. Beck hoped that his trip to London for talks with the British government would lead Berlin to believe there was a deeper relationship between the British and Polish governments than actually existed and that this would encourage the Germans to keep negotiations as a method of resolving the crisis open indefinitely.

⁹⁸ Foreign Office, *Documents Concerning German-Polish Relations*, Nos. 28 and 72.

⁹⁹ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 937.

¹⁰⁰ Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936-1945: Nemesis*, p. 213. The attempt was half-hearted insofar as, according to Hitler's original concepts of *Fall Weiß*, while the British were supposed to be considering his "offer," the invasion of Poland was to be underway and he would have, in effect, presented London with another *fait accompli*.

¹⁰¹ Eidintas, "Ultimatums, the President, and the Public," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 168-169, 179.

¹⁰² Sabaliunas, *Lithuania in Crisis*, p. 149.

¹⁰³ Zaly, "The Era of Ultimatums," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 167.

¹⁰⁴ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 797, Sabaliunas, *Lithuania in Crisis*, p. 147 and U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. 6, No. 328. Although the modification to the "Secret Protocol" was not formalized until September 25, there are indications that Hitler had considered this prior to the outbreak of war and, as the campaign in Poland raged, solidified his decision when it became clear that Lithuania would not march.

¹⁰⁵ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 888, 889 and Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback*, p. 235.

¹⁰⁶ Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback*, p. 238.

¹⁰⁷ Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback*, p. 235.

¹⁰⁸ See Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback*, p. 234 and Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, p. 550. The information is offered in an article Lipski wrote for the Polish newspaper *Balcona* in 1950 in London entitled "New premises on the Outbreak of the Polish-German war in 1939." He also indicated that Horthy had approached the Polish government about the possibility of mediating the dispute and using his influence with Hitler to limit the concession that would be required of Warsaw, but the Regent's advances were rebuffed.

¹⁰⁹ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 177.

¹¹⁰ Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, p. 891. These were banking ventures.

¹¹¹ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 167.

¹¹² Hehn, *A Low, Dishonest Decade*, p. 240.

¹¹³ Beck, *Final Report*, p. 176-177. Some surgery is required to discern Beck's true feelings. In his memoir, he relates that, by the gravity of the situation Hitler presented Poland with, he was forced to take the threat seriously. He continues by recalling a previous conversation he had with Hitler in 1935, when Hitler stated that good relations with Poland and Great Britain were requisite for Germany's favorable development on the continent and that, because the German dictator was most sincere in his declarations at that time, such lines of policy still carried substantial merit. Although not explicit, it can be inferred from his words and later actions that the Polish minister believed, in early April, that Hitler was bluffing.

¹¹⁴ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 167-168.

¹¹⁵ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 170-171.

¹¹⁶ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 172.

¹¹⁷ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 175-176.

¹¹⁸ See Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936-1945: Hubris*, p. 220 and Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, p. 606. Lipski's account is reprinted from a 1947 article he wrote for *Sprawy Międzynarodowe*, under the title "Stosunki polski-niemieckie w swietle aktow norymberskich." In *Diplomat in Berlin*, it has been given the title "The Last Month Before the Outbreak of War."

¹¹⁹ Beck, *Final Report*, p. 205. According to Beck, the Polish army was seventy-five percent mobilized by the time of the German attack.

¹²⁰ Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, p. 609-610.

Notes to The End

¹ Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, p. xi.

² Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin*, Doc. 157. The British had warned the Polish government of Hitler's intent to launch a surprise attack "in the next few days" on August 29. Warsaw had ordered a general mobilization the day before.

³ V. Stanley Vardy and Judith B. Sedaitis, *Lithuania: The Rebel Nation* (Boulder: Westview, 1997) p. 46 and Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback*, p. 238.

⁴ Prazmowska, *Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Second World War*, p. 121 and *A History of Poland*, p. 174.

⁵ See Zalys, "The Era of Ultimatums," in *Lithuania in European Politics*, p. 172-176 for full discussion.

⁶ Deletante, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally*, p. 12. According to Deletante, the fall of France and the Low Countries confirmed to Carol that the decisions he had made based upon economic considerations were correct.

⁷ Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 230. On June 30, the Romanian government was presented with an ultimatum from the Soviet Union that demanded the return of Bessarabia. Carol turned to the

Germans for support, but as the region had been assigned to the Soviets as part of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, none was forthcoming. In a surprise to the Romanian government, Berlin, rather than support Bucharest, pressed the Romanians into accepting the ultimatum.

⁸ See Lungu, *Romania and the Great Powers*, p. 233.

⁹ Nandor Dreisziger, "Hungary and the Second World War," in *Hungary in the Age of Total War*, p. 8.

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