

**SECRET**

16 Mar 49

Summary of Gustav Hilger's ~~SECRET~~ "Diplomatic and Economic relations between Germany and the USSR, 1922 to 1941" dated October 15, 1946, enclosure to Despatch No. 7576, November 5, 1946 from LBR:LL for Germany to the Department of State.

*WOLU*

From the Treaty of Rapallo, 1920 to Hitler's ascent, relations between Germany and Russia were cordial. Germany sought her resurgence as a world power through Russian friendship - diplomatically and militarily - and sensibly sought economic advantage in Russian markets.

The bad relations between the two countries was initiated by Hitler's politics rather than sound diplomatic and economic considerations. Wide circles in Germany were opposed to Hitler's anti-Soviet propaganda - particularly in the Wehrmacht, industry, and liberal intellectual circles.

By 1938 the Russian defense reactions to Hitler's anti-Sovietism were (1) her entry into the League of Nations, (2) her proclamation of the thesis of an indivisible peace, (3) her support of popular front governments, and (4) her agreements with France and Czechoslovakia. This year was the nadir in Russo-German relations prior to the war.

Stalin sought a rapprochement in March 1939 but Hitler did not heed his appeal until the summer, by which time he desired Russian neutrality in the coming invasion of Poland. Thus, in August Hitler proposed that Von Ribbentrop go to Moscow to draw up a Russo-German non-aggression pact. The pact was concluded, along with its secret protocol, in August 1939. As a result, Hitler felt secure in the projected Polish invasion, believing that the West would not rally to Poland's aid without Russian assistance. Russia broke her encirclement and was assured, by the secret protocol, that her interest in the Baltic region would be respected. The USSR needed that assurance as a result of the failure of the West to stand up to Hitler - the Munich Conference.

After Germany's invasion of Poland, Russia held back until the Polish Government withdrew. Then the Red Army moved into its designated part of Poland. In late September 1939 Von Ribbentrop again came to Moscow to modify the earlier designated spheres of influence. By a new agreement Russia gained Lithuania in exchange for part of Poland. On her own initiative Russia forced the Baltic states to cede sea bases to her. It was Finland's recalcitrance that precipitated the Russo-Finnish war in November of 1939. The secret protocol enabled Russia, in early 1940, to annex Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania without German disapproval.

In the course of 1940 Russo-German sweetness and light was dissipated rapidly. Russia violated the pact in Lithuania and was overly ambitious in Rumania. Final pre-war diplomatic discussions were held in Berlin in November, 1940. Molotov sought agreement on an extension and clarification of the Soviet sphere of influence into Finland, Bulgaria, Iran and Sakhalin Island. Germany never replied. Ambassador Schulenburg, upon Hitler's order, reluctantly presented the last German note to Molotov on

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23 June 1941. It announced that German counter measures would be taken against intolerable Soviet troop concentration at the border. Molotov asked, "Is this supposed to be a declaration of war?" Schulenburg made a helpless gesture with his hands. Molotov concluded, saying that it could be nothing else since German aircraft had been bombing Odessa, Kiev and Minsk for the past hour and a half.

(Comment: Hilger's writing is eminently readable and his intimate relationship with the history adds great interest. ICM)

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