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TELEGRAM RECEIVED

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EO

London

1-1228

FROM

Dated July 1, 1939

Rec'd 10:43 a.m.

Secretary of State

Washington

931, July 1, 2 p.m.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

DIVISION OF  
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS  
JUL 5 1939  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

7600.62  
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7600.62/670

A short article in the TIMES this morning by the diplomatic correspondent was directly inspired last night by the Foreign Office at the urgent request of the French Premier who felt that the fullest publicity should be given in both countries to the menacing rumors of the last few days of German intentions to bring off an early coup in Danzig, presumably by encouragement of an apparently spontaneous movement for union with the Reich. There is no doubt, according to this article, that there have been large infiltrations of German Nazis in the guise of "tourists" in civilian clothes into the Free City as well as extensive military preparations, building of barracks, throwing of bridges and arrival of German field guns. If the suspicions of German intentions are well founded, there would probably be no forestalling in securing the development of the movement within Danzig for union with the Reich. If Poland felt forced to take action it could then be represented in

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CONFIDENTIAL

Germany

GML

ML -2- London July 1, 1939 10:43 a.m. #931

Germany as an act of aggression against a German city. As the inspired article points out the maneuver is fairly obvious and circumstantial details of its projected execution have been impressed for some time reaching their head within the last few hours. According to these circumstantial stories, action will begin with a visit by Hitler to Danzig, and reports from Berlin suggest that there may be something in this which is more substantial than rumor.

Whatever the procedure adopted, it is plain that any attempt to incorporate Danzig in the Reich in violation of existing treaties would at once create a most dangerous situation. The French and British Governments are keeping the closest contact and both have had occasion during the past few days to make their attitude clear. They are ready for common action if and when the moment calls for it.

The British Ambassador at Warsaw returned to London yesterday ostensibly on leave, and the Foreign Office states this morning that the time of his return is uncertain.

In the face of the situation which appears to be developing rapidly at Danzig, the British Charge d'Affaires at Warsaw was instructed yesterday to ask Colonel Beck precisely what his Government intended to do in the event of a German move and to point out that the British expect him to consult with them fully on any contemplated action.

IN

ML -3- London July 1, 1939 10:43 a.m. #931

In the British Foreign Office view, Beck's attitude is somewhat ambiguous; he is stated to have expressed his disbelief that Germany would use Danzig as the starting point of a general war. No reply has been reported by the Charge d'Affaires at Warsaw to the query of yesterday and the Foreign Office is considering the possibility of going over ~~his~~ <sup>Beck's</sup> head for a more precise and concrete indication of Polish policy and plans.

Whether there is any justification for the excitement <sup>any</sup> regarding/immediate prospective difficulty in Danzig, as far as London is concerned is still very uncertain. However, a section of the Cabinet and important public opinion believe that Hitler is not yet convinced that the British will fight if he attempts to pull off a Danzig coup.

Considering ways and means of getting this opinion over to Hitler, the latest thought is that possibly Churchill and Eden may be added to the Cabinet in the attempt to convey to Hitler the conviction that Great Britain has made up its mind that no other policy except one of firmness towards Germany will be considered by the British people. Whether anything will actually result from this idea is still a matter of conjecture.

KENNEDY

WWC:PEG

TO

GRAY  
**TELEGRAM RECEIVED**

LONDON

Dated July 10, 1939

FROM

Rec'd 2:40 p.m.

Secretary of State

Washington

966, July 10, 7 p.m.

My 955, July 8, 5 p.m. and despatch Number 2011, June 24, 1939.



In answer to a series of questions in the House of Commons this afternoon on Danzig the Prime Minister stated "I have previously stated His Majesty's Government are maintaining close contact with the Polish and French Governments on the question of Danzig. I have nothing at present to add to the information which has already been given to the House about the local situation but I may perhaps usefully review the elements of this question as they appear to His Majesty's Government".

After reviewing in considerable detail the economic inter-dependence between Danzig and Poland, Danzig's strategic position, its present Germanic character of administration and the critical position which Polish-German relations had reached in March, the Prime Minister continued: "We have guaranteed to give our assistance to Poland in the case of a clear threat to her independence which she considers is vital to resist with her national forces, and we are firmly resolved to carry out this undertaking

11

GML

NC -2- #966 from London, July 10, 1939 7 p.m.

undertaking. I have said that while the present settlement is neither basically unjust nor illogical, it may be capable of improvement.

It may be that in a clearer atmosphere possible improvements could be discussed. Indeed, Colonel Beck has himself said in his speech on May 5th that if the Government of the Reich is guided by two conditions, namely peace intentions and peaceful method of procedure, all conversations are possible. In his speech before the Reichstag on April 28th the German Chancellor said that if the Polish Government wished to come to fresh contractual arrangements governing its relations with Germany he could but welcome such an idea. He added that any future arrangements would have to be based on an absolutely clear obligation equally binding on both parties (\*\*\*).

Meanwhile, I trust that all concerned will declare and show determination not to allow any incidents in connection with Danzig to assume such a character as might constitute a menace to the peace of Europe."

KENNEDY.

ALC  
KLP

UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE  
JUL 11 1939  
MR. WELLES

**TELEGRAM RECEIVED**

JR  
This telegram must be  
closely paraphrased be-  
fore being communicated  
to anyone. (C)

London  
Dated July 11, 1939  
Rec'd 12:55 p.m.

FROM

Secretary of State,  
Washington.

1939, July 11, 4 p.m.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE.

NY 95, July 8, 5 p.m.

I saw the Polish Ambassador Count Raczynski last night. He has just returned from a conference with Beck. He told me that Beck was very calm about the entire Danzig-Polish situation; that up to date he had no direct evidence (repeat direct evidence) that Germany contemplated an absolute break with Poland and therefore he had no direct evidence that would make him believe that war was in the offing. He realized that there have been many times that they could have stirred the Poles to action, but he has made up his mind that there is not going to be any move on the part of Poland until there is definite action on the part of Germany. He told me that Beck intended to have the Polish newspapers calm down in their attacks on Germany. He believed that it was the Jewish influence in the Polish newspapers that had caused the bitterness against Germany and he was going to have that stopped as far as possible.

7600.62/700

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CONFIDENTIAL FILE

GHR

-2- #969, July 11, 4 p.m., from London.

I asked him what Beck thought about the Russian situation and he said he has not changed his mind and he does not believe that Russia will be of the slightest help to Britain or Poland but that he is not attempting to influence Britain in the slightest degree if Britain wants to make the deal.

The Ambassador felt that unless Germany really wanted to provoke trouble, Poland would lean over backwards to avoid it.

KENNEDY

KLP:CSB

# TELEGRAM RECEIVED

ML  
This message must be closely  
paraphrased before being com-  
municated to anyone. (C) FROM

London

Dated July 19, 1939

Rec'd 1:10 p.m.

Secretary of State

Washington

1022, July 19, 5 p.m.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE.

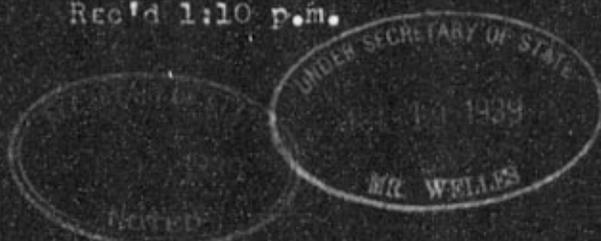
I just saw Halifax. He said that their final word to the Russians now is that they will accept the military pact but will not accept the Russians' definition of indirect aggression and, if the Russians insist on it, the English are going to call the whole deal off.

Craigie again started discussions in Japan this morning but Halifax is not at all hopeful.

They are getting undercurrent confidence that Hitler's next move, instead of against Danzig, is to be against Hungary. However, Halifax said that Beck told him last week that he did not anticipate any real trouble, but a state of jitters for the next twelve months.

I asked Halifax whether he thought the situation might become acute in the near future. He said he had no definite information but in the next breath asked me how long it would take me to get back. I told him about five hours and he said he would keep my office informed and would call on me

to



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CORP. GMB

ML -2- London July 19, 1939 Rec'd 1:10 p.m. #1023

to come back if he saw the situation tightening.

I am seeing the Prime Minister at 12 o'clock tomorrow.

KENNEDY

RR

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

ADVISER ON POLITICAL RELATIONS  
MR. DUNN  
JUL 24 1939  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

JR  
This telegram must be  
closely paraphrased be-  
fore being communicated  
to anyone. (C)

FROM London  
Dated July 21, 1939  
Rec'd 7:55 a.m.

Secretary of State,  
Washington.

SECRETARY OF STATE  
1939  
NOTED

UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE  
JUL 21 1939  
MR. WELLES

1941, July 21, 10 a.m.

PERSONAL AND STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL FOR THE SECRETARY.

Knew Prime Minister of Yugoslavia last night. He is  
very bearish of the entire outlook. He said on his visit  
to Hitler he was impressed with three things: first of  
all, Ribbentrop convinced that the British Empire was  
insolent and therefore would not be able to fight very  
obviously even though their dispositions were courageous;  
secondly, he found the same condition that he has in  
London and Paris; then he asked Hitler what they knew  
about Russia they told him "nothing" third, he found  
Ribbentrop a very decent fellow, very polite, and with a real  
willingness to be constructive; Ribbentrop however at that  
time was definitely no longer top.

He also told me that he received a wire from  
Berlin last night that Hitler had told his friends that  
on his visit to Hitler, Hitler had told him that German  
opinion on Denzler's visit was good in his approach to  
the

740.00/1937

Confidential File GE

-2- #1041, July 21, 10 a.m., from London.

the Reich but that he was in no hurry and thought the Poles and Germans should play down all discussions of agitation in their newspapers and see whether anything might automatically work itself out. Halifax was pleased but Prince Paul was very distrustful.

Halifax also said that he has not given up hope of getting out of the Chinese situation with some face saving. I said "do you mean by making all concessions and withdrawing from Tientsin?" He said "not by withdrawing from Tientsin and not giving too much in concessions." I think he was a little bit carried away with the good report from Danzig because he wanted to assure me that he was not definitely hopeful of China, but just a bit.

KENNEDY

CSB



EMBASSY OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

LONDON, August 2, 1939.

~~FILE~~  
~~PAID~~  
~~FILE~~  
~~FILE~~

No. 3156

SUBJECT: Debate on Foreign Affairs in the  
House of Commons

741.00  
741.00  
740.00

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DIVISION OF  
FOR EASTERN AFFAIRS  
AUG 2 1939  
W.A.G.

DIVISION OF  
AFFAIRS  
AUG 5 1939  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

1939 AUG 14 PM 1 50

DIVISION OF  
COMMUNICATIONS  
AND RECORDS

Rating Grade For	Distribution
	ONI MID CP

741.00/250

The Honorable  
The Secretary of State,  
Washington, D.C.

Sir:

AUG 26 1939

I have the honor to report that a debate on foreign affairs took place in the House of Commons on July 31 and that in the course of it Mr. Chamberlain presented an account of the position of the British Government with regard to the more pressing problems confronting it.

While the debate revealed a marked measure of agreement on the main trend of the Government's policy, there were definite differences of opinion as to methods for obtaining desired objectives and a continuing tendency to question the Government's firmness of will.

In

ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
OF STATE  
741.00

AUG 29 1939

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In his speech, Mr. Chamberlain sketched the efforts of the Government since last March to build up the "Peace Front" and then described at some length the negotiations with Russia.

There was, of course, no secret, he said, about the fact that the Soviet, the French and the British Governments had not hitherto found it possible to agree upon a satisfactory definition of "indirect aggression", although they realized that indirect aggression might be just as dangerous as direct aggression, and although all three of them desired to find a satisfactory method of providing against it. At the same time, he said, the British Government was extremely anxious not even to appear to be desirous of encroaching upon the independence of other States, and if it had not agreed so far with the Soviet Government upon a definition of indirect aggression, it was because the formula which the latter favored appeared to the British Government to carry that precise implication.

With regard to the Opposition's charge that the Government was guilty of "dawdling diplomacy without precedent," Mr. Chamberlain said that the precedents did not support that accusation. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, he pointed out, had taken six months to negotiate; the Anglo-French Entente of 1904 had taken nine months; the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 had taken fifteen months; and

the negotiations which led up to the Treaty of Locarno had taken eight months. He admitted that it would perhaps have been possible to make a provisional agreement at an early date with the Soviet Government, referring to a late date the conclusion of a detailed treaty. Such a course, he said, had been pursued with Poland and with Turkey, and the British and the French Governments were quite ready to follow that course in the present case, but the Soviet Government thought otherwise. They preferred to sign nothing, to initial nothing until a complete agreement had been obtained, and as a result they had not been able to present the world, as he (Mr. Chamberlain) would have liked, with even a provisional agreement at an earlier stage.

Mr. Chamberlain then referred to the announcement that he had made earlier in the day regarding the decision of the British and French Governments to send military missions to Moscow to engage in Staff conversations, although a political agreement had not been concluded, and stated that he thought this step represented something which was almost without precedent in negotiations of this kind. The Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Chamberlain explained, had expressed the view that if they began military conversations, to which he attached very great importance, the political difficulties should

not

not prove insuperable. It was this expression of views, he continued, which had weighed with the British Government in taking this very unusual decision and it was the sincere hope of both the French and the British Governments that this anticipation of M. Molotov would be realized and that they should find it possible to agree, not only in substance but also in form, upon the remaining outstanding political difficulties.

Turning to Danzig, Mr. Chamberlain said that he felt that it was unnecessary to add to the statement which he had made on July 10 (reported in my telegram No. 966 of July 10 7:00 p.m.) which expressed in clear and unmistakeable terms the determination of the British Government. "I feel," he said, "that to add to that statement today would do nothing to strengthen it, and I do not wish to do anything to weaken it."

As regarded the Tientsin negotiations, Mr. Chamberlain said that the formula which had recently been agreed on with Japan dealt with the general background against which the later negotiations would proceed; that it was a statement of fact; that it did not denote any change of policy; that it did not denote the recognition of any belligerent rights on the part of Japan; that it did not betray any British interests in China; and that it did not purport or intend to surrender

any

493.102 Tientsin

any rights belonging to third parties. The British Government, he insisted, would not reverse its policy in the Far East at the request of another Power, nor, he might add, had it been asked by Japan to do so.

Referring to the persistence of anti-British agitation in North China, Mr. Chamberlain said that this was carried on by people who were influenced, instigated and controlled by Japanese and he was bound to say that if this agitation continued, if these attacks upon British interests and British rights in China were to go on unchecked, the British Government would be obliged to take a very serious view of the situation. It was quite clear, he said, that it would make a successful outcome of the negotiations extremely difficult if not impossible.

He had been asked a number of questions about particular items, such as the handing over of silver in the Concession and support for the Chinese currency.

"These are questions", he said, "which are not confined to Tientsin, they are larger questions, and they are questions which do not affect only this country. It is perfectly certain, therefore, that we could not discuss questions of that character without the fullest communication with other countries whose interests are equally involved with our own."

Mr. Chamberlain then referred to the recent action of the United States in abrogating the 1911 Commercial Treaty with Japan and discussed suggestions that had been advanced regarding Anglo-American collaboration in the Far East.

"Allusion has been made, not unnaturally," Mr. Chamberlain said, "to recent action on the part of the American Government. As I have said

said earlier, I believe that the general objectives and aims of the Government of the United States and the British Government are closely similar but it does not follow that each of us must necessarily do exactly the same thing as the other. We may find that different methods are appropriate in different cases. The House may rest assured that this Government places the utmost importance upon collaboration where collaboration is possible and desirable with the United States Government, and that we never fail to keep that Government informed of all that we are doing or are about to do."

In conclusion, Mr. Chamberlain stated that one had to admit that the situation in which the accumulation of the weapons of war was going on on so many sides and at such a pace was one which could not but be regarded with anxiety; indeed, it was difficult to see what the resolution of this problem could be unless it was to be resolved by war itself. Unhappily that feeling between nations was fomented daily by poisonous propaganda in the press and by other means, and he could not help feeling that if only one could halt this war of words and if, in addition, some action could be taken which would tend to restore the confidence of the peoples of the peaceful intentions of all States in Europe, there was no question that could not and should be solved by peaceful discussion. On the other hand, if war came, nothing was more certain than that victor and vanquished alike would glean a gruesome harvest of human suffering and misery. He believed that this great and fundamental truth was beginning to get down into the minds of

rulers

rulers and peoples alike, and it was on that belief that he based his hope that they might yet find a way of escape from the present nightmare.

A notable feature of the general debate was the recurrent advocacy of the idea of sending a leading political personality to Russia to advance the current negotiations. Sir Archibald Sinclair said that while he had heard with pleasure that the British military mission to Russia was to be headed by so distinguished an officer as Admiral Sir Reginald Plunkett-Ernie-Erle Drax, he wished to urge the Government to send, if only for a few days, in order to give an impulse to the negotiations at this new stage, a man of the highest political standing in Great Britain, a man who, on account of his personal status and perhaps because of the dignity of his office, would have access to the most powerful authorities in the Kremlin.

Mr. Dalton (Socialist) took a similar view. He admitted that Mr. Strang was a very able Foreign Office official but he was "not exactly the opposite number of M. Molotov." Russians, he said, were not less proud than the people of other countries and it was a little infra dig to be left to talk for weeks with Mr. Strang without any attempt having been made for a British Cabinet Minister to make personal contact, since the rather awkward incident at Geneva when M. Potemkin was to have met Lord Halifax, but failed to do so.

Mr.

Mr. Eden likewise held that while a decision to send a military mission to Moscow was calculated to help remove distrust, he would have wished that two months ago the Government had made up its mind to send the most authoritative man possible to Moscow and that it had put at the head of that mission some political personality who could negotiate directly with the Head of the Russian Government. There were times, he thought, when an hour's talk might be worth a month of writing.

There was even more general support in the debate for the idea of maintaining a firm policy and resorting to concrete measures with respect to Japan. Sir Archibald Sinclair referred to the action of the United States in abrogating its Commercial Treaty with Japan and to the Prime Minister's statement at Question Time earlier in the day that before Great Britain could take similar action consultation with the Dominions would be necessary and urged that the Government undertake that consultation with despatch so that appropriate action could be taken as early as possible. "Do not," he said, "let us lose another chance of cooperation with the United States Government." Mr. Eden also discussed this possibility. The Prime Minister, he said, had made it plain that any friendship between Japan and England depended upon the cessation of the anti-British activities which were at present being stimulated by Japan in

China,

China, and upon a reversal of the present attitude of Japan.

"If that does not take place," he said, "we in this country do not lack action that we can take. The United States have shown us what form that action might take. There are some of us who wish that the action which the United States had taken had been taken on our part when the Tientsin blockade began. That is a matter for argument, but what is certain is that the Government will receive the support of every section of opinion in this country if they find it necessary to speak in those plain terms to the Japanese Government."

As regarded the question of the Chinese currency, Mr. Eden stated that there was one question he should like to put. The Prime Minister had made it plain that the Government stood firm in its intention not to assist in any attempt to weaken the Chinese currency. He hoped the Government would go a little further than that and make it plain, perhaps when the debate was wound up, that not only would the Government not connive to weaken the Chinese currency but it would continue the policy on which it had been engaged of doing all it could to support the Chinese currency itself. Sir J. Wardlaw-Milne, Conservative, echoed this point of view. He was delighted, he said, with the very clear statement which the Prime Minister had made on that point. It was extremely satisfactory. He wished, however, to ask the Prime Minister to reconsider whether he could not go even a little further and indicate that the Government would not only do nothing to

support

support the Japanese in this attempt but that it would do something to prevent them from bringing it about.

Mr. R. A. Butler, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in winding up the debate added little that was new or significant. He expressed the opinion that there appeared to be general agreement about the direction of the Government's foreign policy although there was criticism because some wished to go faster and some wished to go more slowly.

As regarded the Tientsin formula, many different interpretations had been placed on it. On the one hand there was the extreme view that the Government seemed to expect to help Japan in establishing a new order in the Far East. At the other extreme were those who would pretend that there was no war going on and that there was no dislocation and no occupation of certain areas by Japanese troops, nor any alteration of life, trade or normal conditions. It was somewhere between these two extremes, he said, that the British Government's policy stood. The Government had agreed to maintain an attitude of impartiality in certain day-to-day contacts in a definite area and in certain circumstances. That was an attitude of recognizing a situation of fact in the areas occupied by Japanese troops.

"In the matter of the Chinese currency," he said,

"we

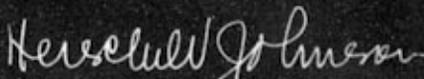
"we are continuing our interest. I would remind the Committee that His Majesty's Government have done more, I think I can safely say, for the Chinese currency, which is a matter of international interest and of interest to the Japanese Government as well, than any other Government that I can think of."

As regards Russia, the Government had proceeded with the utmost vigor to discuss the outstanding difficulties. Now, with what the Government had achieved over the last few months, with the growing strength of the country, with the determination the Government had shown, and with the success of its diplomatic efforts, he trusted that they could face the summer prepared for any eventuality.

The full text of the debate and an excerpt from Hansard embodying various Parliamentary questions and answers regarding the Far East are enclosed.

1-2/

Respectfully yours,



Herschel V. Johnson  
Chargé d'Affaires ad interim

Enclosures:

1. Parliamentary Debates, July 31, Cols. 1922-1928, in quintuplicate.
2. Parliamentary Debates, July 31, Cols. 1992-2102, in quintuplicate.

RES:WMC



EMBASSY OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

POLITICAL RELATIONS  
MR. DUNN  
AUG 30 1939  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

~~EA~~  
PAID  
BATE  
~~FE~~

No. 3170.

LONDON, August 5, 1939

SUBJECT: Debate on Foreign Affairs in the House  
of Lords August 3.

Division of  
EASTERN AFFAIRS  
AUG 2 4 1939

Division of  
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS  
AUG 6 1939  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

741.00  
740.00

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51  
AUG 1939

Rating Grade for	Distribution Instructions
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741.00/251

AM  
AUG 23 1939

The Honorable  
The Secretary of State,  
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

Referring to my despatch No. 3156 of August  
2, 1939, reporting on the debate on foreign affairs  
which took place in the House of Commons on July 31,  
I have the honor to report that foreign affairs  
was also the subject of a debate in the House of  
Lords on August 3 and that Lord Halifax in stating  
the Government's position adhered closely to the  
manner in which the Prime Minister had presented  
an account of that position three days previously.

*[Handwritten initials]*

Being

FILED  
AUG 30 1939

GML

Being the eve of the Parliamentary recess, however, Lord Halifax in his concluding remarks prescribed a formula of conduct to be followed by the people of this country for the period immediately ahead. He called upon them to keep calm and as far as possible "to keep united, to avoid exaggerated attention to rumor and to be neither over-confident nor over-pessimistic". He added:

"For I suggest that a united nation which both knows exactly where it stands and knows itself to be strong can meet the future, whatever it may hold, with confidence."

While the Opposition Leaders made critical comments or inquiries with respect to the Russian negotiations - to the desirability of having a political figure of Cabinet rank proceed to Moscow - and to the issues involved at Danzig, the main emphasis of the remarks of the Opposition speakers and of Lord Halifax's replies was directed towards the situation in the Far East and its attendant problems, including the Tokyo conversations, collaboration with the United States and support of the Chinese currency.

In reply to Lord Cecil's expressed fear that Great Britain had no means at its disposal to conciliate Japan except through abject surrender,

and

and that the declaration agreed upon at Tokyo might be inconsistent with the obligations to which this country was bound in respect to China and Japan and to other countries which had interests in the Far East, Lord Halifax said that he was not unmindful of any of these obligations and stated:

"There is no intention in the mind of His Majesty's Government either of disregarding British interests in China or of disregarding our obligations to third Powers. All that we have done by this formula is to state the facts, as they seem to us to exist, and to attempt in practical fashion to deal with the background against which the situation in Tientsin has actually arisen. It will be difficult enough to reach agreement on the Tientsin issues without placing misconstruction on the formula; and we must, I suggest, be on our guard that we do not unnecessarily complicate the task of our Ambassador at Tokyo, who is handling a very delicate situation with both firmness and understanding; in the efforts that he is making to reach a solution."

In respect to the matter of collaboration with the United States which had been raised in the debate by Viscount Samuel, Lord Halifax stated that the British Government was acutely alive to its importance, as indeed that with France, wherever collaboration was possible. He assured the House of Lords that the Government had never failed to keep the American and French Governments closely informed both as to its intent and as to its

actions,

actions, but that it must be recognized that this did not necessarily signify that all three Governments would do the same thing in the same way at the same time. He indicated that the denunciation by the United States of the 1911 Commercial Treaty was a case in point. He then added:

"I can very well conceive circumstances in which His Majesty's Government might also wish to give notice of their intention to denounce their Commercial Treaty, but, as my right honourable friend the Prime Minister said on Monday in another place, that is a matter which would require most careful consideration, and in regard to which close exchange of view with His Majesty's Dominions would anyhow be necessary. I would not wish at this stage to say more in regard to that subject than I have already said."

In commenting upon the questions which Lord Elibank had put to him regarding the Chinese currency and the disposal of the silver stocks of Tientsin and Peking, Lord Halifax assured the House that in considering these matters the British Government would certainly not lose sight of its obligations towards the Chinese Government or towards the other signatories of the Nine-Power Treaty.

Lord Halifax then dealt briefly with the questions of the Russian negotiations and the

Sanzig

Danzig situation. In reference to the Russian negotiations he stated that the object of these negotiations, namely, the strengthening of the forces against possible aggression, had, in the already complicated task of attempting to meet every contingency, been further complicated by the necessity of trying to provide for the new technique of indirect aggression. While these complications, he stated, gave justification for the length of time expended to date, the dispatch of military missions to Russia, both by Great Britain and by France, should be taken as concrete evidence of the interest of the British Government in bringing these negotiations to an early and successful conclusion.

In reference to Danzig, Lord Halifax directed his remarks solely to the suggestion made by Lord Davies that its authority be placed in the hands of an international force. He expressed the view that he did not believe that the installation of such a force, all circumstances considered, would at this moment be a practical and useful step. He took pains to emphasize,

however,

however, that the belief which he held did not mean that the British Government was not watching the situation most closely or that it was not fully alive to the possible repercussions or developments in that quarter upon the future of European peace.

1/ Copies of the full text of the debate as reproduced in Hansard are enclosed herewith.

Respectfully yours,

*Herschel V. Johnson*  
Herschel V. Johnson  
Chargé d'Affaires ad interim

✓  
Enclosure:

1. Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, August 3, 1939.

VC/alc

# TELEGRAM RECEIVED

1-1330

CJ  
This telegram must be  
closely paraphrased be-  
fore being communicated  
to anyone. (C)

FROM

LONDON

Dated August 8, 1939

Rec'd 2:30 p.m.

Secretary of State,

Washington.

1139, August 8, 8 p.m.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.



Apprehension that the British Government may be preparing to make terms with Germany over the Danzig issue along the lines of the Munich agreement continues to be voiced by the Prime Minister's opponents and by certain sections of the press. Public opinion was of course acutely focussed on this issue by the widely publicized conversations of <sup>Mr.</sup> R. H. Hudson and Herr Wohlthat, and by the drive made in the press to have Mr. Winston Churchill included in the Cabinet. Official quarters are sensitive to this situation and it seems to me of interest that an informing and responsible official told me in the course of a conversation that no negotiations are now under way between Great Britain and Germany nor are any overtures to this end being made by the British Government.

AUG 10 1939

FILED

JOHNSON

CSB

# TELEGRAM RECEIVED

CJ

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (C)

LONDON

FROM Dated August 9, 1939

Rec'd 6:09 p.m.

Secretary of State,

Washington.

1146, August 9, 9 p.m.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

The following is a resume of a conversation I had this afternoon with Sir Alexander Cadogan. He said that in his personal opinion, which might better be described as his "feeling" the situation in Europe was very slowly taking a better shape. He did not in any way try to minimize the existing tension nor its potentialities but he said that he had not yet seen any evidence that Hitler wants war as such and he is sure Hitler now realizes that the forces which would be arrayed against Germany in a war are of formidable proportions. He spoke with confidence of the high level which British and French re-  
armament and organization for war purposes both offensive and defensive have reached in the last six months.

I may add that this confidence is not only manifested in responsible official circles generally, but is becoming increasingly reflected in the press and in talk  
of

*file* *B*

*VA* *m*

DIVISION OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS AUG 10 1939 DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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740.00/2035

AUG 14 1939

ATTACHED

GMB

-2- #1146, August 9, 9 p.m., from London

of ordinary people. There is no evidence of panic here and the general impression is that the public is psychologically ready for war if one comes. There is little to show that the present "war of nerves" has effected any other end than to stiffen the country's morale.

With respect to the Danzig situation, the Undersecretary said he believed that if Germany would only allow the artificially created tension now existing, to relax there was, in his opinion, no reason why the issue could not be amicably settled directly between Poland and Germany. He referred to the excellent relations between Poland and Germany after the conclusion of the Polish-German non-aggression agreement of 1934 when during a long period there were no material difficulties with respect to Danzig. This, in his opinion, evidences the unreality of present German grievances. He had endeavored, he said, to stress these views to the German Ambassador, who left yesterday for a visit to Germany although there is no question of Great Britain injecting herself into what is at present stage a German-Polish issue. Ambassador Dirksen spoke of the necessity for the return of Danzig to the Reich, which would then give suitable guarantees to Poland. Sir Alexander however told him he did not see how this could be acceptable to

Poland

CA

--3--1146 From London..

Poland; that a final settlement, he felt, would have to be more or less along the line of the present territorial set up and he reminded the Ambassador that there were no difficulties in the years immediately following the agreement of 1934 between Germany and Poland.

I referred to a statement made by Lord Halifax in a recent foreign affairs debate in the House of Lords in which he had said Great Britain was ready to negotiate a settlement of all differences with Germany on a peaceful basis and asked Sir Alexander if they had any indication from Germany that she might be willing to sit down at the table and work out a peaceful international settlement. He said that as far as he knew no indication had come from Germany and he confirmed the statement made in my 1139, August 8, 8 p.m., that there are no overtures with a view to negotiations being made to Germany by the British Government, although the way had been made clear on repeated occasions in recent months by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary in Parliament. I mentioned the interest which has been aroused by the publicity given to recent private conversations between Herr Wohlthat and Mr. R. S. Hudson, and the Undersecretary remarked that there was an opportunity which the German Government might have

used

CA

--4--1146 from London..

used for making a conciliatory gesture. He spoke with some feeling of the unfairness of the critics of the Government who accuse it of a policy of "appeasement" toward Germany; if these people do not want to wage a "preventive war" what do they expect the Government to do but to build up the country's defenses to the strongest point possible and to leave the door wide open to Germany for a peaceful settlement.

Just before we parted he mentioned the Far East and gave me a feeling of his uncertainty as to the outcome of the Tokyo negotiations. I expressed my interest in the Prime Minister's statement on the closing day of Parliament to the effect that under certain conditions a fleet might be sent to the Far East and that this should be taken not as a threat but as a warning. Sir Alexander said that actually on a paper lineup of the navy it would be possible to send a fleet to the Far East. This naturally would be highly undesirable from the British point of view as it would mean that both the Asiatic and the European fleets would be pared down to the bone, but in case of necessity the risk could be taken. (See Embassy's 1074, July 27, 5 p.m., paragraph two, and 905, June 27, 7 p.m.)

JOHNSON

NK NPL

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

CJ  
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to anyone. (C)

LONDON  
FROM Dated August 16, 1939  
Rec'd 2:45 p.m.

Secretary of State,  
Washington.

1172, August 16, 6 p.m.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

My 1116, August 9, 9 p.m.

*Paraphrase in Ed. L. Reardon*  
DIVISION OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS  
AUG 17 1939  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Through the courtesy of the Foreign Office I was shown  
this afternoon a resume of the conversation between Herr  
Hitler and Burchardt as well as an instruction to the  
British Ambassador at Warsaw, both of which were tele-  
graphed to the Ambassador last night. I understood that  
both texts have likewise been telegraphed to the British  
Ambassador at Washington for communication to you. From  
the instruction to the British Ambassador at Warsaw will be  
seen the official British view of the present situation and  
the nature of the pressure which they are endeavoring to  
bring to bear on the Polish authorities. I also understand  
that the British Ambassador has been instructed to make  
clear to Colonel Beck the great importance which this  
Government attaches to a full and frank exchange of views  
and intentions before Poland takes the initiative in re-  
plying

CONFIDENTIAL

-2- #1172, August 16, 6 p.m., from London

plying to various forms of German pressure by any act which could be represented in Germany as Polish aggression. The Foreign Office has been at pains through background press conferences to discuss current speculations that Dr. Burckhardt had acted as an agent in communicating messages to Hitler from the British Government or that he had conveyed any message to the British Government from Hitler.

Dr. Burckhardt, in whom Foreign Office officials express confidence, has given a clear cut account of his interview with Hitler. Officials here however do not feel that it has thrown any additional light on what Hitler's real intentions are as to the issue of peace or war.

JOHNSON

WWC

**TELEGRAM RECEIVED**

CJ

GRAY

LONDON

FROM

Dated August 17, 1939

Rec'd 6:55 p.m.

*Handwritten notes:*  
~~SECRET~~  
DUC  
SA

Secretary of State,  
Washington.

1183, August 17, 10 p.m.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

DIVISION OF  
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS  
AUG 18 1939  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

I understand that the Foreign Office gave out this afternoon to press correspondents a statement which is to be attributed to "Whitehall" to the effect that Great Britain will not participate in any international conference for settlement of existing European difficulties unless Russia and Poland are included. This statement probably owes its inspiration to rumors that a four power conference is being worked up by the Axis powers and is an indication that the military conversations at Moscow are getting along.

I had a talk this afternoon with Sir Alexander Cadogan on the general European situation. He says that the government here simply has no information on which to base a calculation as to where the present crisis is heading. They have good reason to believe that Mussolini is making real efforts to bring Hitler to moderation but have no indication

AUG 19 1939

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-2- #1183, August 17, 10 p.m., from London

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dication as to the effect on Hitler. Best-informed opinion, Cadogan said, believes that if there is to be a war the turning point will be either on the anniversary of the battle of Tannenberg at the end of this month or at the annual Nuremberg Congress on September 3. Whether or not a war results they believe that the crisis will certainly reach its climax at that time. They have no information as to the substance or results of the conversations at Salzburg between Ribbentrop and Ciano nor have they any reliable information which would lend color to speculative reports that Hitler is using the Danzig issue as a feint to conceal intentions for a surprise attack in the direction of Hungary and Rumania. Cadogan said that yesterday he told the Rumanian Minister, who was nervous, that British secret reports of the movements and disposition of German military forces do not indicate that there is any immediate military move contemplated in that direction; however with 2,000,000 Germans under arms it would be folly to proceed on the assumption that they could not be switched to any objective. The Government here is convinced apparently that Mussolini does not want a war and that Hitler probably does not want one, but what worries them is what Hitler can do if he does not go to war as they see no alternative open to him except one of receding from what he has declared to be unalterable objectives. The Under Secretary again

emphasized

74662  
-3- #1183, August 17, 10 p.m., from London

emphasized to me what he has several times said before, that the British Government is making no proposals to Hitler and that no unofficial communications are being exchanged.

The position of the service departments is that they are "standing by" in readiness for action on the basis of a war being possible at any moment. Many of the top men are out of London on holiday but in a position to return on a few hours' notice. Most of the leading political personalities are also away but in constant touch with their offices. The Prime Minister, however, is returning to London on Monday and there will be a cabinet meeting on Tuesday. The Prime Minister may then resume his holiday, depending on the situation at the time.

As indicated in recent instructions sent to the British Ambassador in Warsaw (my 1172, August 16, 6 p.m.) every effort is being made to keep the Poles in line and the Under Secretary said that they are particularly emphasizing to Colonel Beck the absolute necessity for prior consultation with the British Government before Poland commits herself to any action. He said incidentally that he thought that, considering everything, Beck and the Poles had behaved extremely well.

From my own conversations with British officials, well-informed diplomatic colleagues and others, I am convinced

-4- #1183, August 17, 10 p.m., from London

convinced that what Cadogan has said to me represents the consensus of sober and informed opinion. Press correspondents uniformly express the opinion that they are up against a "stone wall". Many of these men are extremely active and ordinarily well-informed. After reciting the obvious dangers of the present emotional and physical set up, with nearly 2,000,000 men under arms in Germany, they are unwilling in private conversation to speculate on what is going to happen. This has not, however, prevented the London press in the past fortnight from giving vent to every sort of rumor as to German and Italian intentions. Many of these articles have been wrong on facts and indicate a tendency to speculation which overrides the real opinion of the writers. Cadogan spoke today of press reports that Mussolini and Hitler had made an approach to the Vatican, and said that the British Minister to the Holy See received yesterday a categorical denial from the Vatican itself that any such approach had been made.

(END SECTION ONE).

JOHNSON

NPL

# TELEGRAM RECEIVED

PAP  
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closely paraphrased be-  
fore being communicated  
to anyone. (A)

LONDON

Dated August 19, 1939

FROM  
Rec'd 9:25 a.m.

Secretary of State

Washington

1197, August 19, 2 p.m.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL PERSONAL FOR THE ACTING SECRETARY

The following information has I know been telegraphed  
to Sir Ronald Lindsay and may be known to you. It seems  
to me however too important to take any chance.

Pressed by the British Ambassador at Berlin to make  
Great Britain's determination clear to Mussolini, the  
Italian Ambassador there, who is shortly to see Mussolini,  
emphasized (a) that Italy is bound hand and foot to Germany;  
(b) the position of both sides being clear, the British and  
Italian Governments must work together for peace; (c)  
Great Britain must realize that Hitler is not to be intimi-  
dated by the peace front. He feels humiliated by having  
to watch its negotiations and would not wait indefinitely.  
The Italian Ambassador further asked, speaking privately,  
whether if approached by Mussolini the Prime Minister would  
feel able to make a move in conjunction with him.

Lord Halifax is returning to London on Monday and I  
have an appointment to see him.

JOHNSON

# TELEGRAM RECEIVED

RFP

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (A)

London

FROM Dated August 23, 1939

Rec'd 6:19 p.m.

Secretary of State

Washington

RUSH.

1219, August 23, 7 p.m.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Embassy's 1211, August 22, 7 p.m.

I have just seen Halifax. He told me of Seeds' report received this morning regarding his visit to Molotov. Molotov admitted that agreement had been reached to sign a nonaggression pact with Germany and said that their communique represented the facts. When Seeds asked him whether the agreement would contain the usual clause in Russia nonaggression pacts, that is that if one of the parties committed an act of aggression on another country the pact would automatically be dissolved, Molotov seemed very embarrassed and said, "We will have to wait and see what happens later on." Halifax told me that Vansittart believes there is a provision in the agreement providing for the fourth division of Poland.

A point which Molotov raised with considerable bitterness was that the British and French had rejected the repeated



*FILE W/PM E...*

761.6211/82

SEC. 1

FILED

AUG 23 1939

CONFIDENTIAL FILE

GML

RFP -2- #1219, August 23, 7 p.m. from London

rejected the repeated Russian request regarding the passage of Russian troops through Polish and Rumanian territory. Halifax says that whether this is really a valid excuse on the part of Molotov or not, it serves to give Russia a righteous feeling of indignation against Poland who so far has been adamant in refusing this permission to Russia.

The Russian reply could hardly be more unsatisfactory. Molotov rejected the British accusation of bad faith, refusing to admit their right to use such an expression or to stand in judgment on the Soviet Government. He also repudiated any suggestion that Russia was under obligation to have warned the British Government and said the British Government did not inform the Soviet Government of modifications in its own policy. The Ambassador's reply was that he was not talking of changes in general policy in normal times but of a change at the very height of negotiations. Molotov reminded the Ambassador that he himself had reproached the British throughout the negotiations with a lack of sincerity and argued that the height of this insincerity had been reached when the Anglo-French military mission arrived in Moscow without anything concrete to offer and not ready to deal with basic points on which the question of reciprocal assistance depended. He referred in particular

to

RFP -3- #1219, August 23, 7 p.m. from London

to the passage of Russian troops through Polish and Rumanian territory and pointed out that the Soviet delegation had asked this question again and again and had always been put off. Finally he said the Soviet Government had made up its mind that it was being played with and accepted the proposals made to them by the German Government.

The British Ambassador rebutted the accusation that the military mission had arrived emptyhanded but denied that they were competent to deal with any question of the passage of troops through the territory of a third state. Molotov waived the point aside and said that the French Government at least knew that the point at issue was of capital importance; it had been raised on many occasions in the past by the restrictions imposed, in particular at the time of the Czechoslovakia crisis, and that the French Government and military authorities had never thought fit to give a clear answer. (END SECTION ONE.)

KENNEDY

NPL

REB

**TELEGRAM RECEIVED**

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fore being communicated  
to anyone. (A)

LONDON

FROM Dated August 23, 1939

Rec'd 7:38 p. m.

Secretary of State,  
Washington.

1219, August 23, 7 p. m. (SECTION TWO)



Molotov apparently reiterated the foregoing statement several times. The British Ambassador then asked him just what the German proposal amounted to and Molotov pointed to the Tass communique. The Ambassador observed that there was more than one form of non-aggression treaty and inquired if the one now proposed was designed to allow the Soviet Government to continue the policy which the British Government had always considered to be the Russian policy, that is the protection of victims of aggression; and he asked if it would mean that Russia would stand by and allow Poland to be overrun. Molotov showed his dislike of this questioning and said only that the British must wait and see how things worked out. Sir William Seeds continued his questioning, however, and asked whether all that had been achieved in the way of setting up a system of general defense against aggression was now to be of no account and

whether

REB

2-#1219, From London, Aug. 23, 7p.m.  
(Sec. Two)

whether it were possible to continue along that line? Molotov said that everything depended upon the German negotiations and that perhaps after a week or so we might see.

The Ambassador observed that he greatly regretted the report which he would be compelled to send to his Government but above all the aspersions made on British sincerity and on the military missions. He referred to the long series of concessions on the part of the British and French which had been made during the past months to meet the Soviet point of view, ending up with the really great concession of agreeing to send military missions before the negotiations for a political agreement had been concluded. Molotov then said that he was not so much interested in the past as in the all-important display of insincerity, that is in the failure to answer the Soviet question in regard to the passage of troops. The Ambassador refused to admit this point and pointing out that the acknowledged negotiators had not asked for any assistance beyond the Soviet power to give and that in actual fact the Anglo-French suggestions had always been that Russian troops should stand by on the frontier ready for action if necessary; that in fact they had

REB

3-#1219, From London, Aug. 23, 7p.m.  
(Sec. Two)

had asked for less than Russia had been prepared to give. The Ambassador reminded Molotov of his having spoken of "seeing in a week's time" and said he expected that the answer would most probably be known by then. Molotov said we will see and the interview terminated.

As to the Polish situation, Halifax yesterday conveyed to Beck Mussolini's statement of the night before to the effect that it was absolutely essential for the Poles to get in touch with the Germans at once even if they were not ready to discuss Danzig at the moment, to start a discussion on minorities or on some other subject that would provide scope for talk. Halifax, however, is of the belief that the Poles are not inclined to do this. He says that England will definitely go to war if Poland starts to fight. However, I have a distinct feeling that they do not want to be more Polish than the Poles and that they are praying the Poles will find some way of adjusting their differences with the Germans at once.

Halifax is definitely of opinion that Mussolini is working for peace and goes so far as to say he does not believe Mussolini will get in the fight when it starts.

Summing

REB

4-#1219, From London, Aug. 23, 7p.m.  
(Sec. Two)

Summing all this up, I asked Halifax what he thought of the situation. He said, "My reason shows me no way out but war, but my instincts still give me hope."

(END OF MESSAGE)

KENNEDY

NPL

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

DIVISION OF  
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS  
AUG 25 1939  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

*E. P. M.*

FROM

LONDON

Dated August 24, 1939

Rec'd 5:55 a.m.

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone (D)

Secretary of State

Washington

RUSH

1223, August 24, 11 a.m.

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL FOR THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY OF STATE.

Sir Horace Wilson called me this morning and told me he saw no hope of avoiding war unless the Poles were willing to negotiate with the Germans. As things stand now that is the place to apply pressure. The British are in no position to press the Poles strongly, but if anything is to be accomplished action must be taken at once, as the Prime Minister feels the blow is fairly near.

KENNEDY

CPW CA

SECRETARY OF STATE  
AUG 24 1939  
NOTED

1000-62/945

FILED

Confidential File G/HC

**TELEGRAM RECEIVED**

*File w/PM*  
*Ed. p...*

CJ  
This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (D)

LONDON  
FROM  
Dated August 24, 1939  
Rec'd 11:05 a.m.

*(Circular stamp)*

Secretary of State,  
Washington.

1229, August 24, 2 p.m.

FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE.

*841.2271/31*

Referring to Undersecretary Welles letter of August 14 to Mr. Johnson, I talked personally to Sir Kingsley-Wood this morning and explained the situation to him and he thoroughly understands. I will not put an answer in writing unless you authorize it but I do not think it is necessary.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL. Incidentally, he is very pessimistic about the situation. He said they called up all their air-force last night and everybody is standing by. I asked him what he proposed to do from the air point of view to help the Poles and he said that as far as he could see the only thing they could do would be to bomb the Ruhr at once. I asked if that were likely and he said no; that they would try to keep away from bombing that might affect civilians, if it is at all possible. My own belief is that a lot of plans will be made when war is declared;

that

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CONFIDENTIAL FILE  
A/H/C

-2- #1229, August 24, 2 p.m., from London

that now they talk about what they might do but have not come down to really making it definite, always with the hope in their hearts that somehow war will be averted.

KENNEDY

PEG

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

CA

GRAY

FROM LONDON  
Dated August 25, 1939  
Rec'd 7:37 a.m.

Secretary of State

Washington

WIRE PRIORITY

1939, August 25, 1 p.m.

CONFIDENTIAL

DIVISION OF  
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS  
AUG 25 1939  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

We have just learned from the Foreign Office that Herr  
Hitler has summoned Ambassador Henderson to see him at 1:30.  
We have no idea what is the reason for the summons. It may  
be of importance.

KENNEDY

CA

FILED

**TELEGRAM RECEIVED**

DIVISION OF  
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS  
AUG 25 1939  
*[Handwritten signature]*

GRAY  
LONDON DEPARTMENT OF STATE

FROM DATED August 25, 1939  
REC'D 11:05 a.m.

Secretary of State  
Washington

*[Handwritten signature]*

*[Handwritten initials]*

12:11, August 25, 2 p.m.

While the text of the German Soviet pact became available yesterday morning, the first editorial comment appears in this morning's press. It is recognized that the text of the pact is more unfavorable than was at first imagined and that it contains none of the redeeming features which the hopeful had assumed. The TIMES diplomatic correspondent refers to the pact as "an unparalleled example of international duplicity".

As regards its immediate effects, it is the consensus of opinion that Germany has been left a complete free hand against Poland, that the pact signifies the end of any Anglo-Soviet agreement, and that it implies the demise of the existing French Soviet treaty.

Commentators are convinced that Russia must have obtained a substantial quid pro quo. Speculation on this point ranges from a belief that a partition of Poland has been agreed upon to the assumption that an agreement has been reached under which the Baltic states are to be a Russian sphere of influence, Germany renounces all interest in the Ukraine,

and

NC -2- #1244 from London, August 25, 1939

and Bessarabia is to be returned to Russia.

The press finds some solace in the belief that the anti-Comintern pact is now disclosed even to its lesser collaborators Japan, Spain, and Hungary, as a mask for axis, particularly German, designs; that the pact cannot be agreeable to Japan and that it may lead to a realignment of forces in the Orient. The press suggests that as clause 2 of the pact, apparently deprives Poland of Russian help in the event of war with Germany, it equally deprives Japan of German help in the event of armed conflict with Russia.

There is no doubt that the pact has been a severe disillusionment to British opinion. The press however notes, as though it were a hopeful sign, that the British and French missions have postponed their departure from Moscow which was fixed for last night.

KENNEDY

OSB

CJ

**TELEGRAM RECEIVED**

PLAIN

LONDON

FROM Dated August 25 1939

Rec'd 12:22 p.m.

DIVISION OF  
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS  
AUG 25 1939  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Secretary of State,

Washington.

1252, August 25, 5 p.m.

The united support given by all parties yesterday to the Prime Minister's speech in the House of Commons, in which he emphasized that Great Britain, while still hoping that sanity and reason might prevail, would immediately fulfil her pledges to Poland if she were attacked by Germany, is fully reflected in the press today. While there is undivided support for the Government's position that the country could not with honor go back on its repeated pledges to help the Poles defend their independence, there is also unrelieved pessimism regarding the situation.

The press finds that the debit side of the ledger extremely heavy; that the Berchtesgaden conversations between the British Ambassador and Hitler offered no hope of compromise; that the illegal transformation of the Danzig Government yesterday portends its early incorporation in the Reich; that the Russo-German Pact can only increase Germany's freedom of movement and confidence; and that Germany's military dispositions are dangerously complete. It finds no corresponding entries on the credit side though it still

clings

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AUG 26 1939

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-2- #1252, August 25, 5 p.m., from London

clings to the hope that a way out may be found.

Typical comment is found in the NEWS CHRONICLE which states: Black though the prospect is, there is still a possibility of discussion on the matters in dispute provided that the threat of force is removed. The world has not yet abandoned itself to the cataclysm. The Prime Minister and Lord Halifax have made it clear that the door is still open; abroad President Roosevelt, King Leopold and the Pope have all made efforts for a peaceful settlement. But if all attempts at conciliation fail Britain is now quietly resolved to do its duty.

KENNEDY

ALC

NC

**TELEGRAM RECEIVED**

50/PA  
8/26/39  
L.S.P. (A)

LONDON

Dated August 25, 1939

FROM

Rec'd 2 p.m.

Secretary of State

Washington

TRIPLE PRIORITY.

1259, August 25, 8 p.m.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE.

My 1245 August 25, 1 p.m. I have just seen Grogan who told me he would let me know within the next couple of hours what he could of Henserson's report.

He did tell me, however, that they have received message from Beck by which Beck gives the assurance that even if Danzig should attempt to become part of the Reich, Poland would not attempt military measures until they had discussed the situation with the British Government.

KENNEDY

QSP

7/HC

# TELEGRAM RECEIVED

NC  
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closely paraphrased  
before being communicated  
to anyone. (T)

LONDON

FROM Dated August 25, 1939

Rec'd 8:15 p.m.

Secretary of State  
Washington

RHSV

1262, August 25, midnight.



I have just been at 10 Downing Street with Prime Minister Halifax, Cudogan, and Horace Wilson. They have discussed with me the Henderson interview.

Hitler seemed calm and earnest. He pointed out that he always wanted a deal with Great Britain but he was not deterred by Great Britain's actions of yesterday. He was indignant with the Poles for their persecutions of his people, firing on airplanes, et cetera, and if they said they did not, it showed they had no control over their subordinates. He was going to have his rights in Poland even if it meant a great war, from which England would suffer much more than Germany. He now had Russia to back him up with supplies and therefore he could go on.

If, however, he could get straightened out in this Polish business he would make a deal with England that would guarantee the British Empire forever. He would limit armaments and then Germany and England could proceed to economic satisfaction. Henderson kept pointing out that  
England

FILED

Confidential File G/HC

NC -2- #1262 from London, August 25, 1939

England could not make any deal that the Poles did not want, and Hitler said he did not want England to break her word and in the next breath said that Poland had no future anyway because Russia and Germany would settle Poland. This last remark was said to Henderson but was left out of report of meeting which Hitler sent to Henderson after the meeting which purported to be the gist of the conversation. Hitler urged Henderson to fly home to persuade Britain to accept his proposition which was:

One. That Poland adjust her differences with Germany at once. Two. England agree and urge this and in return Germany would agree to respect and even fight to preserve the British Empire.

Three. Hitler would limit armaments, go back to peaceful pursuits, and become an artist, which is what he wanted to be. (Aside by Kennedy, he is now but I would not care to say what kind).

Four. If this was not agreed it was going to be a war worse than fourteen-eighteen.

Writing this out it looks like a ridiculous proposition to make Great Britain quit or cut away from the Poles but to hear the text as read it seems much more reasonable.

Chamberlain and others do not know just whether the proposition is (one) throw sand in their eye while he marches

in

NC -3- #1262 from London, August 25, 1939

in or (two) whether he really does not want a fight with England or (three) whether it is a proposition on which something can be done. They are going to listen to Henderson in the morning and then probably say.

We certainly will not agree to permit Poland to be carved up by you and Russia.

Nor are we willing to force Poland to make concessions based on these probably ridiculous charges of cruelty but we are willing to help negotiate a fair deal and perhaps with all other powers work out some economic future for the world.

Incidentally Hitler asked for a settlement from Britain on the colonies but on a time basis and as he said by fair negotiation.

They are not going to give this message to either (?) or French until they have thought it out very carefully and have heard Henderson.

During the conversation Wilson asked whether the President had received any answer from Hitler. I said I had not heard of any.

Chamberlain held up Henderson's wire and said "This is the answer".

KENNEDY

NFL

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

CJ

PLAIN

FROM

LONDON

Undated

Rec'd August 26, 1939

2:35 p.m.



Secretary of State,  
Washington.

PERSONAL FOR THE UNDERSECRETARY.

Following is Joe's account of his visit to Germany that I spoke to you about:

"I have just come back from a trip to Munich, Berlin and Hamburg. I am sure that the German people do not want a war and are pretty well convinced that there will be no war. Firstly they think that the signing of the Russian Pact will make England back down and that a war with Poland will be just a question of a week or ten days. Some of the told me that before the signing of the Pact with Russia they thought that a general war might result now they were sure that it wouldn't. It is hard to believe that they are so confident that there will be no war. I think that the mounting of anti-aircraft guns in Berlin made some impression upon the people-but on the whole they don't realize the seriousness of the situation. In Hamburg where connections with the outside are much closer the fact that the British

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ships steamed out and the constant influx of Danish papers which are widely read has made them fully conscious of the danger but I did not meet one who believed that war would result. They felt that even if British stood behind Poland that the Fuhrer would find some other way out of it. The Russian Pact has had a terrific psychological effect in that now they are confident that England and France can do nothing. Most of them are baffled, but they feel that it was a very clever diplomatic move. Many of them ridicule it and I have seen the closed fist given in salute quite openly amongst friends. The press have done a complete about face and are now praising the scenery in the Crimea and the immense potential business with the Soviets. All of this yet they have not caught up with it in time to stop a moving picture disclosing the Russian element in Spain which is being shown in some of the theatres as propaganda against the Red Government. It has been such a turn about that I don't think that the Germans will swallow it whole. However it is so important strategically that for the time being they are accepting it on this basis and shaking their heads. The anti-Polish campaign is beyond description. Every edition of the newspapers has a more gruesome tale to tell of Polish outrages against the Germans, of planes being attacked and of German soldiers tortured. In the news reel  
about

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about ten minutes was given over to showing the real German background of the city of Danzig. The Nazi banners, the Fascist salute and the goose stepping soldiers were all featured. After this they showed the women and children who had been turned out of their homes by the Poles. With tears streaming down their cheeks they bawled into the microphone their tales of grief. Even children told theirs. In the middle of their speech they would break down in a flood of tears and the effect of this must be most powerful. Hitler has gone so far with his people now that it is impossible for him to back down. The people are behind him and I don't think there will be any reaction against him even though he leads them into war at least for some time. They dislike the Poles anyway, they feel that Danzig is a German town, they have Russian backing, and they have faith that Hitler won't lead them on the wrong course. This is supported by the most powerful propaganda I have seen anywhere, and you may be sure that if war breaks out the Poles will be shown to be the aggressors, and it will be the duty of every German to stop them."

KENNEDY

DDM

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

DIVISION OF  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
AUG 26 1939  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

*Sutton*  
*PA*

FROM

SECRETARY OF STATE  
*fre*  
1939  
NOTED

This telegram must be  
closely paraphrased be-  
fore being communicated  
to anyone (D)

LONDON

Dated August 26, 1939

Rec'd 6:25 a.m.

Secretary of State

Washington

URGENT

1263, August 26, noon.

*AC*  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
AUG 26 1939

EXPLICITLY CONFIDENTIAL FOR THE SECRETARY

Office of the Secretary number 1262, August 25, midnight, was  
the important item that Henderson's message stated Hitler  
and the only one to benefit from a war between Germany and  
England would be Japan the right very well become the domi-  
nant power in the world.

KENNEDY

Confidential File G/HC

FILLED

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**TELEGRAM RECEIVED**

DIVISION OF  
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS  
AUG 29 1939  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

11  
D-1  
L

VM  
This message must be  
closely paraphrased be-  
fore being communicated  
to anyone. (D-1)

London

Dated

August 27, 1939

FROM Rec'd 2:55 p.m.

Secretary of State.

Washington.

1278, August 27, 8 p.m.

SECTION ONE

PERSONAL AND STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL FOR THE SECRETARY.

I just saw Halifax. Henderson returns tomorrow. They received advice last night from Berlin that there was no need to hurry him back because they wanted the British Cabinet to give their propositions full consideration. That coupled with the fact that the British wanted to play for time made it acceptable all around. The British propose to answer Hitler and tell him that they were glad to receive his communication; that they are very anxious, as well as to have good relations between Germany and England, and necessity that they cannot compromise with any terms that do not protect their commitments to Poland. Therefore they ask Hitler just what he has in mind for a formula to work out the Polish situation, because this will increase the delay besides making Hitler say what he will do. Halifax hopes we will reiterate the offer to Poland that was refused by the Poles before and perhaps it could be dressed up with these international

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VM -2- 1278, August 27, 8 p.m., from London.

international agreements and save face all around. If a plan could be worked out that would be agreeable to Poland, England would be happy to participate in an international agreement. They have also had a good deal to say in the reply to Hitler about the treatment of minorities.

(END SECTION ONE)

KENNEDY

KLP:CSB

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

FROM LONDON

Dated August 27, 1939.

Rec'd. 3:25 p. m.

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (D)

Secretary of State,  
Washington.

1278, August 27, 8 p. m. (SECTION TWO)

The success of the answer and negotiations Halifax feels is based on one of two things: Does Hitler dislike the prospect of a world war sufficiently to give Poland a square deal. The information they have received from very good and confidential sources in the last 26 hours indicates that there are two different schools of thought in the Hitler group. Halifax feels that this is caused by the fact that Hitler finds himself for the first time up against a new proposition--that there is a real prospect of a world war.

(END SECTION TWO.)

KENNEDY

HPD

*Perfo*

*[Handwritten signature]*

11059 DEC. 3

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION

G/H/C

**TELEGRAM RECEIVED**

London

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (D)

FROM

Dated August 27, 1939.

Rec'd. 3:50 p. m.

Secretary of State,  
Washington.

Triple priority.

1939, August 27, 8 p. m. (SECTION THREE)

There are three factors that give him some hopefulness. Very confidentially Ciano telephoned at 3:30 this afternoon and Mussolini was very grateful to the British for keeping him posted on Hitler's proposals and he hastened to add that the Germans had advised him also as to the proposals. But what he hung up particularly to say was that Mussolini wants the British not to make a flat repudiation of Hitler's operations. Halifax assured him that the British had no intention of turning down Hitler's proposition but rather indicated that they wanted Hitler to advise them on what basis they could settle their differences. Halifax said there is no doubt in his mind that Mussolini intends to stay neutral and Halifax said he has no objection to that provided Mussolini is not planning at a later date to enter the struggle on the wrong side and this would be a matter to be looked into very completely. But he said no advantage in

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*File*

15710.62/1055  
W.E.O. (W)

Continued

2/H/O

MJD -2- No. 1278, August 27, from London,

pressing that at this time. The second hopeful sign is that Spain has advised France they will remain neutral. The third and the one to which he attaches a great deal of importance is that the Far Eastern situation is coming along beautifully and there is reason to believe that tomorrow the Cabinet will be thrown out in Japan and a Cabinet more partial to England and the United States put in power. He thinks all of these things will have a definite effect on Hitler. Summing it all up Halifax said "I think things look a little less hopeless (repeat hopeless)!" but again it depends on which Hitler wants most--friendship with England, fair deal for Poland and no general war on the one side or on the other to get what he wanted, the destruction of Poland and a world war. This reply will be sent to the Poles tomorrow and Halifax does not anticipate there will be any objections on their part.

I drove Halifax to his home--going to bed for two hours and figures tomorrow will be a very quiet day and Tuesday will get the reactions.

(END OF MESSAGE)

KENNEDY

HPD