

GERMAN-SOVIET MILITARY RELATIONS IN THE ERA OF RAPALLO

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ABSTRACT

This study examines German-Soviet military relations between 1917 and 1922 and demonstrates the involvement of the Reichswehr in the Treaty of Rapallo. Since early 1919, the Reichswehr cultivated entente with the Soviet Union in opposition to the German government and in violation of the Treaty of Versailles, both to regain its military preeminence and to recapture Germany's power-political position in Europe. The Reichswehr attempted to draw German industry into relations with the Soviet state in order to secure the manufacture of military machinery and support troop training. By 1922, the foundation for collaboration between German industry, the Reichswehr and the Soviet Union/Red Army had been laid. The Treaty of Rapallo, concluded by government officials that were privy to the activities of the Reichswehr, removed the threat of a western consortium against the Soviet Union, and ensured the growth of the Reichswehr's alliance with the Soviet state.

RESUME

Cette étude examine les relations Germano-Soviétiques entre 1917-1922, et démontre la parenté entre la Reichswehr et le Traité de Rapallo. Depuis le début de 1919, la Reichswehr cultivait une entente avec l'Union Soviétique en opposition au gouvernement Allemand et en violation du Traité de Versailles, les deux, pour reprendre son pouvoir militaire et pour rétablir sa position de pouvoir-politique en Europe. La Reichswehr a essayé d'attirer l'Industrie Allemande dans l'économie Soviétique pour fabriquer des armes et supporter l'entraînement des troupes. Les fondations de la collaboration entre l'Industrie Allemande, la Reichswehr, l'Armée Rouge et l'Union Soviétique étaient établies dès 1922. Le Traité de Rapallo, conclu par les officiels du gouvernement Allemand qui était au courant des activités de la Reichswehr, a enlevé la menace d'un consortium de l'Ouest contre l'Union Soviétique et a assuré l'agrandissement de l'alliance de la Reichswehr avec l'état Soviétique.

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of German-Soviet military relations in the interwar period has attracted the interest of a number of investigators. Many studies have been published concerning the build-up of German arms in the Soviet Union, the technical cooperation in the war industry between the Reichswehr and the Red Army, and the exchange of military manpower between the two nations.¹ Most of these efforts dealt with German-Soviet military relations in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the years when it was undisputedly known that Germany was training troops, building facilities and arms, and improving the technical ability of her war industry in the Soviet Union. Thus far, however, no major work has thoroughly dealt with the relationship between the German and Soviet military establishments from the inception of the Soviet state in October 1917 to the Treaty of Rapallo in April 1922.²

The deficiency in the literature on early German-Soviet military relations can be attributed, at least in part, to two factors: i) a dearth of primary documentation³ and ii) that a military connection to the Treaty of Rapallo has been either overlooked or dismissed.

¹ The most recent studies on this subject are Rolf-Dieter Müller, *Das Tor zur Weltmacht* (Boppard am Rhein, 1984) and Barton Whaley, *Covert German Rearmament: Deception and Misperception* (Frederick Md., 1984). Earlier discussions on this topic include: Georges Castellan, *Le Réarmement Clandestin du Reich* (Paris, 1954); the oft quoted English work, Gerald Freund, *Unholy Alliance: Russian-German Relations from the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk to the Treaty of Berlin* (London, 1957); and Georg Thomas, *Geschichte der deutschen Wehr- und Rüstungswirtschaft 1918-1943/45* (Boppard am Rhein, 1966). E. H. Carr, *German-Soviet Relations between the two World Wars, 1919-1939* (Baltimore, 1951) and John Erickson, *The Soviet High Command* (London, 1962) are written from the Soviet perspective.

² Several historians specifically deal with the years before the Treaty of Rapallo, but their accounts are primarily concerned with economics or foreign policy in these years. See Wipert von Blücher, *Deutschlands Weg nach Rapallo* (Wiesbaden, 1951) and Horst Günther Linke, *Deutsch-sowjetische Beziehungen bis Rapallo* (Cologne, 1970) for diplomatic relations. Consult Günther Rosenfeld, *Sowjetrussland und Deutschland 1917-1922* (East Berlin, 1960) for economic relations.

³ Reports by participants in covert military relations have not been discovered for the early period of German-Soviet relations as they have for the late 1920s and 1930s. See the account of

The Treaty of Rapallo between Germany and the Soviet Union was signed on April 16, 1922 during the Genoa Economic Conference.⁴ While the treaty was an economic and political agreement, rumours after the conference suggested that it had included a covert military accord.⁵ Although the allegations were not taken seriously at the time, the Reichstag exposé in December 1926 confirming that German industry, the Reichswehr, and the Soviet Union had been collaborating for some years,⁶ raised latent suspicions about military involvement in the treaty. In subsequent years, pamphlet-style books on the military relations between the Reichswehr and the Soviet Union and their connection to the Treaty of Rapallo were published.⁷ The

Helm Speidel, an instructor at the German-built flying school in Lipetsk, Soviet Union, from 1927-1933 entitled "Reichswehr und Rote Armee", *Vierteljahrshäfte für Zeitgeschichte* 1 (1953): 9-45. See also Francis L. Carsten, "Reports by Two German Officers on the Red Army", *Slavic and East European Studies* XLI (1962): 217-244. The first report in Carsten is by Major General Werner von Blomberg, head of the Truppenamt in 1927, and written in 1928 on a visit to the Soviet Union's German-Soviet Army training facilities. An English summary is in Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, pp. 263-68. The other report is dated June 30, 1928 from a Major General Hans Halm, but is less pertinent for German-Soviet military relations as he writes on the effects of forced collectivisation on the Red Army.

⁴ The treaty marked the *de jure* recognition of the Soviet government by Germany, and the resumption of full consular, as well as economic relations between the two powers. See pages 69 and 70 of this thesis.

⁵ At the end of April 1922, a Riga newspaper published an alleged military addendum to the Treaty of Rapallo and on 6 May it was reprinted in the *London Times*. The addendum is discussed in I. K. Koblaikow, "Neue Materialien über den Rapallo-Vertrag", Alfred Anderle (ed.), *Rapallo und die friedliche Koexistenz* (Berlin, 1963), pp. 172-173. The text of the alleged 12 articles of the military treaty is reproduced in English in Gordon H. Mueller, "Rapallo Reexamined: A New Look at Germany's Secret Military Collaboration with Russia in 1922", *Military Affairs* 40 (1976), pp. 113-114. Germany was apparently obliged under the treaty to provide ammunition and arms for 180 infantry divisions of the Red Army. The existence of such a document or a military alliance between the Soviet Union and Germany was emphatically denied by both countries' delegations at the Genoa Conference, as well as their respective governments.

⁶ At the beginning of December 1926, Junkers distributed copies of a memorandum on their activities in the Soviet Union to prominent members of the Reichstag. On December 16, Philip Scheidemann passed on the information to the other members of the Reichstag. Freund, pp. 211-212.

⁷ Principal among these is Cecil F. Melville, *The Russian Face of Germany* (London, 1932). J. H. Morgan, *Assize of Arms* (London, 1945), describes the author's experience as a member of the Inter-Allied Disarmament Commission; although a second, more pertinent volume to discuss rearmament in the Soviet Union was promised, its publication was abandoned. Several other publications were released in the 1930s, but they were written with such glaring vehemence against the Germans that they cannot be taken as serious scholarship. Among these is H.

release of documents after the Second World War, however, yielded nothing to support the hypothesis that a military convention accompanied the treaty and, as a result, historians rejected the supposition.⁸ In doing so, they dismissed outright any connection between the Reichswehr and the Treaty of Rapallo. This conclusion has been echoed by virtually all major historians of the Rapallo era. German-Soviet military relations and the Treaty of Rapallo are treated as two separate areas of historical study,⁹ and specific discussions of the early years of German-Soviet collaboration attach no military significance to the treaty signed during the Genoa Conference.¹⁰ While it is accepted that no secret military accord was included in the Treaty of Rapallo, this dissertation questions the rejection of a military connection to the Treaty of Rapallo. The treaty was distinctly beneficial to the Reichswehr and, thus, their involvement in the Treaty of Rapallo must be taken into consideration when examining early German-Soviet military relations.

By its nature as an economic agreement, the Treaty of Rapallo supported closer trade relations between Germany and the Soviet Union. After the conclusion of the First World War, trade between Germany and the new Soviet state advanced sluggishly. Industrialists were reluctant to revive former Russian markets because of the perceived instability of a socialist state. Moreover, the Western powers prohibited economic relations between the two states and, consequently, the German government could not support business interests in the Soviet Union.¹¹

Klotz, *Germany's Secret Armaments*, trans. H. J. Stennings (London, 1934) and Pierre M. G. Malleterre, "Germany Is not Disarmed" in *New York Times Current History* 19 (1926): 32-38.

⁸ E. H. Carr, Francis Carsten, John Erickson, Hans Gatzke, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Hans Rothfels in his introduction to Helm Speidel's account, and Theodor Schieder concur on the non-existence of a secret military document.

⁹ Rolf-Dieter Müller, *Das Tor zur Weltmacht*, p. 98, devotes one sentence to the Treaty of Rapallo in his study of the German military and the Soviet Union.

¹⁰ Only G. H. Mueller sees a possibility for the existence of a military connection to the treaty, although he feels that there actually was a secret military accord. He supports this theory in his article, "Rapallo Reexamined", and in his unpublished thesis: *The Road to Rapallo: Germany's Relations with Russia 1919-1922* (Chapel Hill, 1970).

¹¹ Article 258 of the Treaty of Versailles dictated that Germany could not exercise any economic control in the Russian Empire, or participate in her economy. The Treaty of Versailles is reprinted in Fred L. Israel (ed.), *Major Peace Treaties of Modern History 1648-1967*, Vol. II (New York, 1967): 1265-1533. Article 258 can be found on page 1424.

The prosperity of German industry, in particular heavy industry, was of vital importance to the Reichswehr. The Peace of Versailles minimised German military force and neutralised her future military potential by prohibiting the production of war materials.¹² Unwilling to accept the restrictions of the military clauses of the peace, the Reichswehr sought to circumvent the stipulations of Versailles. Schemes were developed to evade the peaces' military decrees within Germany,¹³ but the intervention of the Inter-Allied Disarmament Commission rendered the task difficult.¹⁴ Cooperation with the Soviet Union, a state outside the Versailles family and the jurisdiction of the Commission,¹⁵ could facilitate the renovation of the German Army. But, since its acceptance of the Treaty of Versailles, the German government had focused on a western orientation in diplomacy.¹⁶ Seeking to regain Germany's political position in Europe, Weimar leaders attempted to cooperate with the Western powers in order to renegotiate and revise the Treaty of Versailles. The German government vacillated in their western orientation at times and flirted with Soviet entente, but their shifts were designed to counter the intractability of Great Britain, France and Belgium. Before the signing of the Treaty of Rapallo, the German government never seriously followed an eastern course in foreign diplomacy. In order to establish the collaborative relationship with the Soviet Union that the Reichswehr desired, the German military had to deviate from the

¹² Articles 159-201 of the Treaty of Versailles pertain to the military limitations of the German Army. Israel, pp. 1363-1380.

¹³ See Chapter IV of this thesis for the manner in which these clauses were evaded in Germany.

¹⁴ Articles 203-210 provided for the establishment of a group of Western officials whose job it was to oversee the successful German observance of the stipulations of Versailles. Israel, pp. 1381-1383.

¹⁵ The Soviet Union had not been invited to participate in the peace discussions at Paris, and were kept separate from European affairs because of their submission to socialism. See note 1 on page 7.

¹⁶ Although it was not explicitly stated in the Treaty of Versailles, the Soviet Union and Germany were prohibited from concluding an alliance. Article 433, Israel, p. 1525, stipulated that German troops had to evacuate the Eastern border and were forbidden readmittance to that area, and Article 258 prohibited economic contact. See note 11 above.

government's position and cultivate their own entente with the Soviet state.¹⁷ Moreover, they had to persuade German industrialists to venture in the Soviet Union without the support of the German government. In 1921, several companies, among them Krupp, Siemens, Stinnes, and Junkerswerke, were persuaded by the Reichswehr to engage in economic relations with the Soviets, but they did so only cautiously and with substantial financial guarantees from the German military.¹⁸ After the ratification of the Treaty of Rapallo, however, the Western interdict on German activities in the Soviet Union was supplanted, and the industrialists gained the government support and incentives they lacked. The April 1922 agreement with the Soviet Union was an important success for the efforts of the Reichswehr. The treaty ensured the revival of heavy industry and engendered the possibility that military arms and equipment could be constructed outside Germany.

It is surprising that no correlation has previously been drawn between the incentives that the Treaty of Rapallo allowed German industry and the desire of the Reichswehr to evade the military limitations of the Treaty of Versailles through the construction of arms and equipment in the Soviet Union. The agreement signed with the Soviets during the Genoa Conference has been described as a spontaneous diplomatic move against Western intransigence.¹⁹ Yet, the harmony between the treaty and the aims of the German military establishment cannot be discounted, and the role of the Reichswehr in the creation of the treaty should be addressed. Is it not possible that the treaty signed during the Genoa Conference was fashioned at the behest of the German army? Circumstantial evidence points to the fact that certain Reichswehr personnel, including General Hans von Seeckt, Chef der Heeresleitung, informed members of the government and the foreign office of German military objectives, and persuaded them to support a treaty

¹⁷ The precedent had been set by the High Command during the war. See page 33 of this thesis. Studies of the Weimar era distinguish between the activities of official diplomatic channels of the foreign ministry and those of the Reichswehr. Principal among these is Francis L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics* (Harvard, 1966) and Harold Gordon, *The Reichswehr and the German Republic, 1919-1926* (Princeton, 1957).

¹⁸ See pages 57 and 58 of this thesis.

¹⁹ See note 9 on page 65.

between Germany and the Soviet Union.²⁰ Seeckt's government accomplices subsequently participated in the negotiations leading to the Treaty of Rapallo at the Genoa Conference. Although German accounts of the events at Genoa present the treaty as an extemporaneous result of Western rebuke, this was not the case. Prevailing scholarship accepts these accounts and maintains that the treaty was merely a defensive manoeuvre,²¹ but this is not an accurate evaluation. The German military establishment played a decisive role in the creation of the Treaty of Rapallo, and their relationship to the treaty was more significant than heretofore realised.

In Chapter One, the course of German foreign policy between the Soviet withdrawal from the First World War in November 1917 and the signing of the Treaty of Rapallo in April 1922 is described. Chapter Two traces the early, independent efforts of German industrialists in the Soviet Union. In Chapter Three, the relationship between the Reichswehr and the Soviet Union from 1917 to the autumn of 1920 is investigated. Chapter Four discusses the Soviet-German military relationship from 1920 to the Treaty of Rapallo and encompasses the activities of the industrialists from 1921 to 1922. Finally, Chapter Five focuses on the Genoa conference in 1922 and analyses the respective and mutual relationships of the government, industrial concerns, and the Reichswehr, to the Treaty of Rapallo.

²⁰ See pages 53 and 54 of this thesis.

²¹ Pogge von Strandmann discusses the offensive nature of the Treaty of Rapallo in "Rapallo: Strategy in Preventative Diplomacy: New Sources, New Interpretations", Martin Kitchen and Volker Berghahn (eds.), *Germany in the Age of Total War* (London, 1981): 119-132. He states however, that the treaty was a creation of German industrialists.

CHAPTER ONE: THE DIPLOMATS

The course of German-Soviet foreign relations between 1917 and 1922 underwent dramatic changes. Following the withdrawal of the Soviet state from the war in October 1917, Germany dictated foreign policy to the Soviet Union, forcing her to sign the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918.¹ After the armistice,² the relationship between the two states was altered by

¹ The terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk are in John Wheeler-Bennett, *Brest-Litovsk: The Forgotten Peace* (London, 1938), p. 269, as is a discussion of their ramifications. In the treaty, Germany gained 34% of Russia's population, 32% of her agricultural land, 85% of her sugar beet land, 54% of her industrial undertakings, and 89% of her coal mines. Germany's flagrant renouncement of the terms of the armistice (namely, a treaty with no indemnities nor annexations upon which the Soviets entered into the negotiations) was vehemently condemned by the Soviet delegation. Trotskii stated to the Western powers on March 5, 1918 that "the all Russian congress of the Soviets refuses to ratify the peace treaty with Germany." Jane Degras, *Soviet Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Vol. 1, 1917-1924 (Oxford, 1951), p. 56. Germany's aims at the onset of the war had not been so ambitious. In September 1914, Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg devised the aim of a *Mitteuropa*; a German economic domination of the continent. (A controversy raged about the theses of A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (London, 1961) and Fritz Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War* (New York, 1963) and later *War of Illusions: German Policies from 1911 to 1914* (New York, 1975). The scholars maintained that Hitler's expansionist dreams were similar to those of Germany before the First World War, specifically embodied in the September Program of Bethmann-Hollweg. In W. C. Thompson, "The September Program: Reflections on the Evidence", *Central European History* XI (1978): 348-354, the author states that Bethmann-Hollweg's wishes were the maximum demands, not necessarily the actual demands.) Once the Russian front collapsed, however, the militarists who shaped the war effort extended the *Mitteuropa* plan to a *Grossraum*; a domination of the east as well as the European continent. The *Grossraum* is discussed in Andreas Hillgruber, *Germany and the Two World Wars*, trans. by William C. Kirby (Cambridge, 1981), p. 64. Field Marshall von Hindenburg saw that the extension of German boundaries and the acquisition of Russian resources could propel Germany into a position of global preeminence. It was largely due to Hindenburg that the terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk were so severe. Freund, p. 13, and Erich Eyck, *A History of the Weimar Republic*, trans. by H. P. Hansen & R. G. L. Waite. Vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1962), p. 26.

² The German Supreme Command urged the government to sign the armistice, forcing them to submit to conditions far more harsh than the German planners expected. Much like the Soviets in 1917 and 1918, the Germans were in no position to resist the demands of the victorious powers. The armistice of November 11, 1918, called for the evacuation of all occupied territory within 15 days; the left bank of the Rhine and 3 bridges were to be occupied by Western forces; Germany agreed to release all prisoners of war, without reciprocity; and, Germany renounced the treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest. Marshall Lee and Wolfgang Michalka, *German Foreign Policy, 1917-1933; Continuity or Break* (New York, 1987), p. 18.

Germany's desire to avoid a punitive peace. Making every effort to demonstrate its willingness to cooperate in a post-war settlement, the German government emulated the West in their censure of the new socialist state, and ceased diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in November 1918.³

Domestic considerations reinforced the need for the German establishment to sever relations with the Soviet state. Inherent within socialist philosophy was the global dominance of the working class and, for Lenin, Russia was merely the first step.⁴ When the Soviets came to power in

³ Konrad Romberg, German ambassador to Switzerland, wrote to the foreign office on November 9, 1918, approving the government's decision to abrogate relations with the Soviet Union. *Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik 1918-1945* (hereafter cited as *ADAP*), A I (Göttingen, 1982), p. 4. Soviet-Entente relations soured with the advent of the Russian revolution, though the creation of a Russian socialist state was not at first a cause for concern. The Maximalists, as the Bolshevik party was known, was seen as the most recent in a series of aspirants to power in a country where control had failed. Their seizure of power was viewed with pessimism: "no sane man would give them as much as a month to live", declared the *Daily Telegraph* in January 1918. Stephen White, *The Origins of Detente: The Genoa Conference and Soviet-Western Relations* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 17-18. However, the initiation of a new socialist programme whereby all Tsarist debts were cancelled and foreign trade nationalised was viewed with apprehension. The decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of February 3, 1918 obliterated all state loans that had been contracted by the Imperial and Provisional governments effective from December 1917. Foreign loans were annulled unconditionally and without exceptions. White, p.26. In a decree of April 22, 1918 all foreign trade was nationalised. Degras, Vol. 1, p. 71. British and French pre-war economic interests in the Soviet Union were extensive. According to a report given by the British Financial Secretary to the Treasury on February 20, 1922, Russian indebtedness to the United Kingdom as of March 31, 1921 was 561.4 million pounds and to private investors, 180 million pounds. Also in February 1922, in a report prepared by the French Foreign Ministry, France held 43% of all Russian foreign debts; by comparison, Great Britain held 33%, Belgium and Germany 6%, and the United States 3.4%. A French report of 1920 suggested that 18 billion francs were lost to the French government and 7 billion to individuals. White, pp. 26-27. Despite a western outcry against blanket erasure of debts, the Soviet state remained committed to pursuing their socialist programme. Consequently, the Western powers severed ties with the Soviet state and entered the Civil War against the Bolsheviks. The Western powers had not necessarily intended to join the civil war. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk had led to some concern that the Germans might be able to access Western military equipment, food, and raw materials in the country. To prevent this, British troops were sent to Murmansk in March 1918 and a contingent of Japanese and British occupied Vladivostok in April 1918. By the end of the war, however, the Western powers had a large army in the Soviet Union whose mission was to oust the Bolshevik element. The last British troops left in October 1919, French in March 1920, and in April 1920 the last U.S. troops were evacuated from the Soviet Union. White, pp. 19-20.

⁴ "The Soviet government builds its entire foreign policy on the prospects of social revolution in both imperialist camps." (terms referred to Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.) Resolution of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee on the International situation, October 4, 1918. Degras, Vol. I, pp. 127-128.

October 1917, the eastern borders were promptly flooded with pamphlets on world revolution⁵ and, despite Lenin's vow to remove Russia from the war,⁶ the Soviet leader counselled his delegates at the German-Soviet peace talks at Brest to stall for time,⁷ confident that a German revolution would follow the Bolshevik one.⁸ However, by February 1918, Germany had not fallen to socialism and Lenin was confronted with the threat of a German reentry into Soviet borders.⁹

The resulting Treaty of Brest-Litovsk of March 3, 1918 provided for the reestablishment of full consular relations between the two nations. Lenin, undaunted by the failure of his tactics at Brest, conspired to use the consular channel to foment revolution in Germany. On April 23, 1918, ambassadors were exchanged: Adolf Joffe was sent to Berlin and Count Mirbach-Harff to Moscow. From the moment he arrived in Berlin, Joffe used his position to

⁵ Freund, p. 2.

⁶ Since 1915, Lenin had been raging against the western Social Democrats refusal to oppose the war and his April Theses of 1917 stated, among other things, that if the Soviets gained power, the war would be ended. Donald Treadgold, *Twentieth Century Russia* (University of Washington, 1976), pp. 129-130. Although official Soviet historiography refused to acknowledge that the Russian revolution had been influenced by Germany, it was indeed true. In George Katkov, "German Foreign Office Documents on Financial Support to the Bolsheviks in 1917", *International Affairs* 32 (1956): 181-190, the author reproduces a dispatch by Baron R. von Kühlmann, Prussian Minister of Foreign Affairs, dated December 3, 1917, to Wilhelm II which states that the German foreign office conspired to undermine the power of Russia. "This was the purpose of our subversive activity... we caused to be carried out in Russia behind the front; in the first place vigorous promotion of separatist tendencies and support of the Bolshevikii...the Bolshevikii [received] from us a steady flow of funds through various channels and under varying labels." P. 189. At the same time, Ludendorff and Hindenburg, conducting their own brand of German foreign policy, arranged for the transport of Lenin and his entourage from Switzerland through Germany and to Finland. See Werner Hahlweg, *Lenins Rückkehr nach Russland 1917* (Leiden, 1957).

⁷ Wheeler-Bennett, *Brest-Litovsk*, p. 139, writes that a delay policy was put into practice. "Set against the might of German militarism was the incalculable capacity of the Slav for interminable conversation." Trotsky, who was renowned for his lengthy speeches, was sent to Brest for this purpose.

⁸ "We are doomed if the German revolution does not break out," Lenin stated to the Seventh Congress of the Russian Communist Party on the Brest-Litovsk Peace. Degras, Vol. 1, p. 57.

⁹ The German High Command was displeased with the Soviet stalling tactics. On February 14, 1918 they sent Lenin a note stating that if the treaty were not signed, Germany would invade the Soviet Union. Freund, p. 8.

incite revolution;¹⁰ money was channelled to Berlin from Moscow specifically for this purpose.¹¹

Although relations progressed in a fairly natural fashion (economic talks were held between the two powers in June 1918 and a trade treaty was signed on August 27, 1918) the assassination of Mirbach-Harff by Left Social Revolutionaries on July 6, 1918 strained the German-Soviet entente.¹² The Soviet government was profusely apologetic,¹³ yet certain factions within the German political establishment suggested that the consul be removed from Moscow.¹⁴

With the defeat of the German Army, the formation of a coalition government under Prince Max von Baden on October 4, 1918, and the subsequent domestic unrest, Lenin saw the efforts of his work coming to fruition and counselled Joffe to increase his subsidies to the German Left.¹⁵ The effect that Joffe's presence in Berlin had on the following November days is questionable, but the German government viewed the spread of Soviet-sponsored socialist propaganda as an act of direct intervention. On November 5, 1918, the German government expelled Joffe,¹⁶ recalled Karl

¹⁰ E. H. Carr, *German-Soviet Relations*, pp. 2-3; Lionel Kochan, *Russia and the Weimar Republic* (Cambridge, 1954), p. 12; Freund, p. 15.

¹¹ By his later admission, Joffe expended over 10,000,000 rubles to bring about revolution in Germany. Degras, Vol. 1, pp. 111-112; 127-128.

¹² Gustav Hilger and A. G. Meyer, *The Incompatible Allies* (New York, 1971), pp. 3-5, gives a fairly detailed account of the assassination of Mirbach-Harff. Hilger was later a German official in the Soviet Union for the exchange of German prisoners-of-war, and wrote this account of his experiences.

¹³ Lenin appeared personally at the German mission to express his sympathy, as did Chicherin, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. Lenin was, however, unwilling to attend the funeral, although he sent Chicherin, who arrived late. Hilger, pp. 6-7.

¹⁴ Freund, p. 21. The German military attaché in Moscow, Colonel von Schubert, maintained that the situation was too dangerous for adequate protection, but the Emperor insisted that the consul remain since the liaison was necessary in order to secure Russian deliveries of Brest-Litovsk reparations. As a result, Helfferich, who replaced Mirbach-Harff, never ventured out to the German embassy. Hilger, p. 18.

¹⁵ Carr, *German-Soviet Relations*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁶ Carr, *German-Soviet Relations*, pp. 2-3, states that the Germans arranged for Joffe to be caught at the train station with incriminating evidence in order to have an excuse to expel him. The German police planted Communist pamphlets in his suitcase and purposely jarred Joffe to

Helffferich who had replaced Mirbach-Harff and, as their Western counterparts had done, abrogated relations with the Soviets.¹⁷

Although Germany's demonstration of resistance to Bolshevism may have mitigated the victorious powers, Germany's further attempt to garner favourable peace terms by joining the Russian Civil War as allies of the West in January 1919, backfired.¹⁸ General von der Goltz, who arrived in the Baltic to lead a regiment against the Bolsheviks, made no secret of his aim to use the Baltic campaign as an attempt to restore a White Russia that would support German defiance of the peace settlement.¹⁹ Some soldiers, displaced and unemployable after the armistice, accepted the opportunity to do battle once again with enthusiasm and, as a result, Goltz quickly penetrated the Baltikum. The general's success caught the Western Entente by surprise and in February 1919 they demanded the removal of his troops. But, the general's victories had sparked admiration from the German people and, although the government ordered his recall in compliance with the London and Paris'

have the suitcase open. Carr does not cite evidence for this. Kurt Rosenbaum, *Community of Fate* (Syracuse, 1965), p. 3, states without reservation (and without citing evidence) that the blatant activities of the Russian diplomatic mission led the German government to consider ways and means to remove Joffe...porters "accidentally" (author's quotations) dropped a few boxes of the Russian diplomat's property. Most historians simply question the possibility of German intrigue.

¹⁷ One month later a team of Soviets tried to enter Germany to attend the Pan German Party Congress and were refused permission. Even Russian Red Cross workers were forbidden entry into Germany because the government was concerned that agitators would slip into the country. Chicherin protested this action in a telegram to the foreign office on December 28, 1918. *ADAP*, A I, p. 129. Lenin was aware of the German government's desire to sever relations with the Soviet Union and expel Joffe, as he was the link to continued agitation for revolution. Lenin continued to honour the Soviet reparation payments to Brest-Litovsk even after the German surrender to the Western powers to precipitate any German pretense to suspend relations. Freund, p. 32.

¹⁸ Although the Germans had been initially forbidden entrance into the Civil War and her troops ordered out of the eastern boundaries, the success of the Red forces spurred France and Great Britain to request Germany's participation. Eager to please the Western powers who were presently preparing the peace settlement, the Germans complied. Prince Max von Baden felt that there would be advantages in siding with the West against Bolshevism. *ADAP*, A I, p. 165.

¹⁹ John Hiden, *The Baltic States and Weimar Ostpolitik* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 17, describes Goltz as an "individual who ignored or refused to accept the underlying shift in international power brought about by Germany's resounding military defeat."

requests, private funds flowed to his command post.²⁰ Only after the Reichswehr managed to cut his supply line in August 1919, was Goltz forced to resign his mission²¹ and it was not until December 1919 that the last German detachments were removed from the Baltikum.

Although it was unlikely that Goltz's zeal influenced the Treaty of Versailles, the incident may have nullified Germany's attempts to temper the victorious powers' intent to neutralise the German nation and helped to legitimise the West's commitment to deliver a harsh peace. Indeed, the severity of the treaty left the German establishment stunned, particularly when the German delegation's rebuttals to the clauses of the peace were resolutely ignored. Even Germany's use of the fear that the spread of socialism aroused in the Western powers was ineffective.²² The Germans argued that their state, emasculated and powerless, could not hope to thwart the onslaught of socialism. A stronger, and subsequently more stable, Germany could be an effective bulwark against the spread of Bolshevism. The West was not unaware that the labour and working class movements had become more radical since October 1917, and that a network of communist parties had come into existence under the auspices of the Communist International. Nor were they unaware that the nearly calamitous success of the German revolution in November 1918, and Hungary's flirtation with communism in the spring of 1919, were testimony to the power of the Comintern. But, the French fashioned the Little Entente expressly for the purpose of checking the development of socialism and, therefore, remained uncompelled to amend the treaty to benefit Germany.²³

In response to the Treaty of Versailles and Western intractability, the German foreign office revised its position on Soviet relations, and opened a

²⁰ German industrialists, who were wary about the trading prospects of a Bolshevik Russia, channelled funds to Goltz to ensure the reinstatement of the Whites. E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, Vol. III (London, 1966), p. 310.

²¹ General Groener subsequently ordered that Goltz avoid further action without the approval of the Reichswehr. *ADAP*, A I, pp. 354-355.

²² During the peace negotiations, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, German delegation leader to Paris, made every effort to convince the Western powers that Bolshevism would find an ideal breeding ground in the political and economic collapse of Germany. Lee and Michalka, p. 20.

²³ See pages 36 and 37 for a discussion of the Little Entente.

line of communication with the socialist state. In October 1919, Germany refused to join the blockade against Russia²⁴ and asked the Soviets to exchange representatives to arrange for the return of civilian and military prisoners of war. In November, Vigdor Kopp arrived in Berlin as the Soviet Plenipotentiary for the expatriation of Soviet prisoners-of-war.²⁵ On April 19, 1920, Kopp signed the first of two agreements with the German government whereby: 1) both Germany and the Soviet Union agreed to establish prisoner relief agencies in the other's territory, and 2) these agencies had the right to maintain courier communication, utilise codes, and exercise consular functions. Three days later, on April 22, 1920, Gustav Hilger was sent to Moscow as the German counterpart to Kopp.²⁶

Germany's decision to revive German-Soviet relations was not undertaken without consideration. The Treaty of Versailles and German acceptance of its terms, precluded a renewal of a Russian orientation in the foreign office.²⁷ The guarantors of the peace forbade a German-Soviet alliance, and demonstrated, by their erection of a *cordon sanitaire* against Soviet Russia, that affinity with the eastern nation conflicted with cordial relations with the West. But, political realities necessitated a resumption of diplomatic relations.²⁸ Notwithstanding their commitment to the Western

²⁴ On October 20, 1919, Chicherin wrote to the German foreign office, "It has come to the knowledge of the Russian Soviet Government that the Allied powers have asked the German government to take an active part in the blockade against Russia...Should the German government also take an active part in this blockade, the Russian Soviet government and the mass of the Russian people will regard this as a deliberately hostile act...The Soviet government hopes that the German government will reply to the wholly unjust request of the Allied powers with a firm refusal." Degras, Vol. I, pp. 170-171. Edgar Haniel, a member of the German delegation at the peace talks, advised that Germany should not join the blockade, since German minorities would also be affected. *ADAP*, A II, pp. 347-348.

²⁵ Freund, p. 51. He was not given official status until February, 1920.

²⁶ Freund, p. 51.

²⁷ See footnotes 11 and 16 of the introduction. Lloyd George of Great Britain expressed his concern at a possible alliance between a Bolshevik Russia and Germany, through which he feared they might control the world. Louis Fischer, *The Soviets in World Affairs*, Vol. 1 (London, 1930), p. 323.

²⁸ As early as April 1919, Franz Zitelmann, a counsel in the political department in the foreign office, wrote that the resumption of relations with the Soviets would be economically and politically beneficial, but he feared western repercussions. *ADAP*, A I, pp. 437-438. The Soviets, on their part, had misgivings about renewing relations with Germany. They were aware of the success of the Goltz penetration into the Baltikum and by the spirit that his

powers, the successive governments of Germany were under strong economic pressure to develop ties with the Soviet state. Germany had been Russia's principal trading partner in the pre-war years and heavy industry, such as Siemens and Krupp, were eager to revive this trade.²⁹ German light industry was generally less preoccupied with the Russian market, but they too felt the loss of their eastern trading colleagues.³⁰ Although political and public opinion was divided,³¹ two considerations negated opposition to German-Soviet entente. First, if Germany was to attempt to honour the Treaty of Versailles and the imminent reparations bill to the letter,³² then closer economic ties with the Soviet Union could ostensibly simplify matters. Intimate economic relations between Germany and the Soviet Union would create an outlet for German manufactured goods and a market for excess and

conquest had aroused in Germany. It had been evident from the terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk that Germany had the desire to make Russia a weak and powerless state, and Goltz's mission demonstrated that this ambition had not been buried at the Entente-German armistice table. Since the Treaty of Versailles stripped Germany of her industry-rich lands and slapped her with a reparations bill, the Soviets realised that the reacquisition of the territory lost from the nullification of Brest-Litovsk would be a substantial aid to Germany's ability to not only honour the Versailles Treaty, but recover her economic power. Leonid Krassin, later an economic liaison person between Germany and the Soviet Union, would write that Russia's relationship to Germany was "semi-colonial." Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, Vol. III, p. 365. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union realised that the viability of a state depended upon the number and strength of her allies.

²⁹ See Werner Beitel and Jurgen Notzold, "Les Relations économiques entre l'Allemagne et l'U.R.S.S. au cours de la période 1918-1933, considérées sous l'angle de transferts de technologie" in *Revue d'études comparatives est-ouest* 8 (1977): 97-134, for the trade possibilities with the Soviet Union.

³⁰ Strandmann, "Rapallo", pp. 124-126; Freund, pp. 100-102.

³¹ White, p. 148. A substantial segment, most notably the Centre party, favoured closer relations with the Soviets. The Social Democrats were less disposed toward relations with a government which associated with their political rivals, and more conservative political and diplomatic circles objected to closer relations with a power that sequestered German private property and who was actively promoting communist propaganda.

³² The Treaty of Versailles stipulated that Germany would have to pay reparations, but at the presentation of the treaty in June 1919, the total sum was not given. The Germans were ordered, however, to commence payment toward the reparations bill. The exact amount was not presented to the Germans until January 1921. It was crippling high in the opinion of the Germans, as well as others. The most influential of the critics was Cambridge economist, John Maynard Keynes. In his book, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (London, 1919), he stated that whatever the moral arguments might be, a Carthaginian peace was not practically right or possible. White, pp. 8-9.

unused German manpower. Consequently, the German state would be in a healthier financial condition to make reparation payments. Secondly, and alternatively, since Germany's erstwhile attempts to comply with the armistice were unrewarded and efforts to revise the treaty unsuccessful, the foreign office reasoned that the West's fear of a Soviet-German alliance might be a more effective tool for obtaining treaty amendments.

The Soviet card, however, was used with little acumen or enthusiasm. Importantly, Germany, powerless in the face of Western interdict, was afraid of Western reprisals. Moreover, the victorious powers held the German government in check by convening a series of post-war meetings designed to discuss the problems of the peace and in particular the reparations bill.³³ The meetings fuelled Germany's hopes that treaty revision was possible. Although the results were consistently unfavourable, policy makers allowed themselves to believe that at the next meeting a respite might be attained. Through until April 1922, the scenario for German-Soviet relations followed a particular sequence: 1) the Western powers would convene a conference to discuss the problem of the peace and Germany; 2) this would prompt the German government to assume the possibility of treaty revision; 3) then, when Germany's pleas for revision were rebuffed or their defaults of the peace's fiats punished, the foreign office would open a channel to the Soviet Union and hope for a change in Western intractability; 4) finally, the convocation of another Western meeting would revive Germany's notions that revision was attainable and interrupt German-Soviet relations, causing their severance. In July 1920, December 1920, March 1921 and January/February 1922, German-Soviet diplomatic relations followed this pattern; opening and then closing for fear of Western repercussions and/or hope for Western compromise.

In July 1920, the Soviets, near defeat in the Russo-Polish War, were gaining the advantage and pressing toward Warsaw. Poland's defeat would drastically change the face of Versailles' Europe and necessitate a complete reorientation of foreign policy concerns and a subsequent revision of the

³³ White, p. 1, describes the period after the First World War as a time of "conference diplomacy."

borders.³⁴ Ago von Maltzan, head of the Eastern Division of the foreign office and an unwavering proponent of closer ties to the Soviet Union,³⁵ was enthusiastic about the prospect of a Soviet victory over Poland and pressed Foreign Minister Simons to make concrete diplomatic offers to the Soviets. A diplomatic commitment to the Soviets before the conclusion of the war would ensure benefits for Germany following a Soviet victory. But the German government, although aware of the implications of a Soviet victory over Poland, considered it prudent to await the outcome of the war before making foreign policy decisions. Concurrently, the Spa Conference concluded by obliging Germany to comply with the military fiats of the Treaty of Versailles.³⁶ On 20 July, the German government declared itself neutral in the war and Simons sent a letter to Peoples Commissar for Foreign Affairs Chicherin, raising the possibility of restoring diplomatic relations.³⁷ Although Germany's overture was accepted, the Germans withdrew their offer of entente after the miracle of Warsaw,³⁸ fearful of Western rebuke.³⁹

³⁴ Poland, as a pillar of the Versailles settlement, stood at the center of French foreign policy. See pages 35 and 36 of this thesis.

³⁵ Maltzan had numerous talks with Vigdor Kopp about the possibilities for a resumption of normal economic and diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Germany. See Maltzan's reports in *ADAP*, A IV, pp. 122-124, and 415-416. Maltzan had also contacted Russian aristocrats and White generals taking refuge in Berlin. Blücher, pp. 53; 56. Blücher was a junior officer in the Eastern Division of the foreign office at the time. As a matter of course, the presence of Maltzan in the Eastern Chair of the foreign office was a signal that the ministry was inclined toward cooperation with the Soviet Union.

³⁶ The Spa Conference was held in July 1920, and the Western powers were unwavering in the face of German requests for treaty amendments. Indeed after the Spa Conference, Chancellor Fehrenbach said to Lord D'Abernon, British Ambassador to Germany, "I am perfectly honest in my desire and undertaking to execute the treaty, but I cannot achieve the impossible." Lord D'Abernon, *An Ambassador of Peace*, Vol. III (New York, 1929), p. 67. This spurred the Germans to renew relations with the Soviets.

³⁷ The letter is discussed in Freund, p. 71, but taken from Hilger, p. 50. The letter contained the condition that Mirbach-Harff's death had to be officially honoured (he recommended that a contingent of Soviet troops could march in front of the former German embassy in Moscow) before negotiations could be resumed. Freund, p. 71, insists that this was stipulated because a fairly substantial faction of the German establishment was opposed to renewed contact with the Soviet Union. Simons knew that the Soviets would never honour the ambassador's death, and therefore this allowed Simons an excuse to withdraw from more intimate entente if it did not prove politically expedient at the time.

³⁸ The successful counterattack of the Soviets was indeed so successful that the West was forced to give aid to the Polish forces in Warsaw. Led by French General Weygand, the

In December 1920, the Soviets proposed renewed relations with the Germans.⁴⁰ Simons initially accepted the Soviet's offer and sent Moritz Schlesinger, head of the prisoner-of-war exchange and superior to Hilger, to Moscow to explore the resumption of economic and diplomatic relations.⁴¹ Talks led to the draft of a 19 February agreement, whereby the two nations vowed to maintain closer relations.⁴² However, the Germans abruptly broke off relations in March 1921, as a result of the convocation of the London Conference.⁴³ On 17 March, the French occupied three Rhine ports,⁴⁴ and on 21 March, the British concluded a trade treaty with the Soviets.⁴⁵ Because of the edge that the British were afforded in the east by their agreement with the Soviets, German industrialists pressed the government to emulate the British-Soviet accord.⁴⁶ The French penetration in the Rhine convinced

combined Allied-Polish forces managed to push back the Soviets who were deemed almost certain victors in the war. Although much praise has been given to Weygand for his military tactics during the Soviet offensive, the mastermind behind the defeat of the Soviets was Josef Pilsudski, Poland's chief of state. See Piotr Wandycz, "General Weygand and the Battle of Warsaw 1920", *Journal of Central European Affairs* 19 (1960): 357-365.

³⁹ As a result, Kopp's position was lowered to that of a minor official. Freund, p. 78.

⁴⁰ On the 21st of that month, at the 12th Party Congress, Lenin, for the first time, spoke of German-Soviet relations other than in the context of world revolution. Carr, *German-Soviet Relations*, p. 40.

⁴¹ Freund, p. 84.

⁴² Hilger and Moritz-Schlesinger had molded the agreement to extend the sphere of activities of the prisoner-of-war representatives, gradually transforming them into diplomatic representatives. Freund, p. 85; Hilger p. 66.

⁴³ The German government maintained that relations were abrogated because the Comintern's instigation of the Kronstadt rebellion. Hilger, p. 66.

⁴⁴ On March 8, 1921, the ports of Duisburg, Düsseldorf and Ruhrort were occupied by the Western powers. D'Abernon, p. 135.

⁴⁵ The treaty promised to advance trade in the Soviet Union. The adoption of the New Economic Policy in March 1921 had led substantial sectors of the Western public, as well as government opinion, to conclude that the Bolsheviks' revolutionary enthusiasm was waning and that a more acceptable form of politics and economics was taking its place. White, p. 97.

⁴⁶ The February agreement would be similar to the British-Soviet Trade Treaty of March 21, 1921.

Germany that they had little more to lose,⁴⁷ and consequently, the February discussions between Germany and the Soviet Union were renewed. Yet, despite the provocations of the Western powers, the foreign office was nevertheless hesitant to conclude and sign the agreement of February 1921, not wishing to influence the final verdict of the London Conference.⁴⁸ The ultimatum of May 5, 1921, whereby the Germans were obliged to accept the full burden of reparations, decided the fate of the February agreement.⁴⁹ One day later, in a direct response to the London Ultimatum, the German government signed and published the German-Soviet Trade Treaty.⁵⁰ Like its British counterpart, the treaty signified the *de facto* diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union by Germany and provided for a further agreement which would establish *de jure* diplomatic relations between the two governments. Immediately sensing that the conclusion of the economic agreement might cause Western repercussions, however, the German government suspended further relations with the Soviet Union.

The crisis over the London Ultimatum and the furor aroused by the German-Soviet trade agreement in the Reichstag forced the resignation of the Fehrenbach/Simons government. The new Chancellor and Foreign Minister, Josef Wirth and Friedrich Rosen, adopted a firmer commitment to honour the Treaty of Versailles. This policy of fulfillment, whereby every attempt was made to adhere to the letter of Versailles with the ultimate aim

⁴⁷ There was actually a strong force within the German establishment that felt that the West would never be receptive to German efforts at honouring the treaty. A large percentage of the German establishment felt that the occupation of the Ruhr was inevitable and that it mattered little how they attempted to fulfill the peace settlement. D'Abernon, p. 71, expressed, as early as July 1920, that "the Germans regard the occupation of the Ruhr as a fixed determination of the French."

⁴⁸ A full description of the events of the London Conference are in D'Abernon, Chapter VI, pp. 162-178.

⁴⁹ D'Abernon, p. 162.

⁵⁰ Simons discussed the ultimatum and justified the signing of the economic agreement of 6 May in a report written on May 7, 1921. *ADAP*, A V, pp. 13-18. The text of the treaty is restated in Hilger, p. 67. The agreements extended the powers of the representatives responsible for prisoners-of-war in each country to all matters concerning their respective nationals, and provided for the appointment of trade representatives to each mission in order to facilitate the development of economic relations between the two countries. Importantly, the two countries agreed to refrain from agitation or propaganda against the government of the state in which they were located. White, p. 147.

of relaxing the demands of the peace settlement, could not be practiced in concert with German-Soviet entente. Thus, as a natural corollary to fulfillment, Wirth found it politically expedient to slow the pace of German-Soviet relations. On 10 May he wrote Prime Minister Lloyd George of Great Britain clarifying the position of the new German government,⁵¹ and Rosen relieved Maltzan of his position in the Eastern Division, appointing Kurt Weidenfeld as trade representative in Moscow in concurrence with the Soviet agreement of 6 May.⁵² Weidenfeld had no diplomatic training and was uninterested in relations with the Soviet Union, so his appointment was seen as benign, and thus acceptable by the West.⁵³

Although trade progressed through the summer of 1921, the foreign office consciously refrained from undertaking any new negotiations with the Soviets. But, in October 1921 Wirth's inclination to fulfillment was appreciably altered when the victorious powers detached Upper Silesia from Germany in spite of the results of the March plebiscite.⁵⁴ Wirth revived German-Soviet relations and Maltzan was recalled to the Eastern Desk of the foreign office.⁵⁵

In January and February of 1922, the Soviets and Germans renewed their talks in Berlin with enthusiasm. After the Silesian affair, the German government was willing to reestablish a basis for relations with the Soviets that could promote a greater need for conciliation from the Western powers.

⁵¹ Wirth stated that Germany would do everything possible to honour the Treaty of Versailles. *ADAP*, A V, p. 20.

⁵² Freund, p. 89.

⁵³ Hilger, p. 68, described the German government's commitment to the 6 May agreement as "timidly fulfilled," and Weidenfeld's posting as a poor choice. The German government actually tried to pull out of the treaty altogether by refusing the Soviet choice of Nicolai Krestinsky for "political reasons", but in the end he was accepted. Hilger, p. 71.

⁵⁴ According to Article 88 of the Treaty of Versailles, the question of whether Upper Silesia was to become Polish or remain German was to be solved by a plebiscite. On March 20, 1921, 707,000 electors voted for Germany and 479,000 for Poland. On the other hand, more communes voted to join Poland, and the French regarded this as the deciding factor. Lloyd George was against assigning Upper Silesia to Poland, but President Briand of France remained firm. D'Abernon, pp. 208-209.

⁵⁵ Freund, p. 91. Rosen was forced to resign because of the Silesian problem.

The Soviets were prompted by fear of the West's recent proposal for a western consortium against the Soviet Union.

The idea of a consortium was formulated by the French who were eager to establish a western economic syndicate for the economic development of Russia. The conclusion of the German-Soviet Trade Treaty had begun to revive the earlier intimacy of German and Russian trading and the French wished to break this bond and replace it with a more far-reaching arrangement that would include other western interests.⁵⁶ In January 1922, the Western powers decided to hold a conference in Genoa to discuss the matter of a consortium and the important reconstruction of the European economy.⁵⁷ The German government was pleased at the prospect of an economic conference,⁵⁸ but the Soviets, although initially in favour of a conference that would address Soviet-Western differences, were loath to the idea of a consortium and wary of a possible dictate at Genoa.⁵⁹ A separate treaty with Germany, however, might preclude the West from forming such a consortium.

In January 1922, the Soviet representatives, Radek and Krassin,⁶⁰ tried to convince the German government and foreign ministry to conclude a Soviet-

⁵⁶ White, pp. 39-50.

⁵⁷ White, pp. 47-48. See the study of Carole Fink, *The Genoa Conference* (Chapel Hill, 1985) for a discussion of the causes and the results of the Genoa Conference.

⁵⁸ Walter Rathenau, German Minister for Reconstruction, was in London in November and December of 1921 to talk about this consortium and its ramifications for reparations and western industry. German businessmen, including Rathenau as head of Allgemeine Elektrizitätsgesellschaft (A.E.G.) were pleased at the prospect of an economic conference. Pogge von Strandmann, *Walter Rathenau, Notes and Diaries, 1907-1922* (Oxford, 1985), p. 291.

⁵⁹ On November 12, 1921, in a letter to the British government, Chicherin had proposed that all Soviet-Western differences could be referred to an international conference. White, p. 39. Prior to that, a series of notes between Chicherin, Lenin, and the British government had sought to remedy the situation of a Soviet recognition of Tsarist debts. Lenin remained firmly opposed to any such suggestions that could result in a change of policy, but he was willing to discuss the common economic malaise in Europe. The consortium, however, was not what the Soviets had in mind. Chicherin described the consortium as an "international capitalist front for the exploitation of Russia" in *Izvestia*, November 1922. White, p. 76. Weidenfeld wrote to Rathenau before the Genoa Conference that the Soviets were angered by the idea of a consortium. He described it as a red flag for the Soviets. *ADAP*, A VI, p. 68.

⁶⁰ In Koblajkow's "Neue Materialien über den Rapallo-Vertrag", p. 162, the author, using Soviet sources says that the representatives were Stomonjakow (a former engineer for Siemens-

German treaty before the conference at Genoa; a treaty that would entail Germany's recognition of the Soviet government, as well as economic assistance to the Soviet state.⁶¹ The Soviet representatives stated unequivocally before negotiations commenced, however, that Lenin would refuse to honour Tsarist debts, and such clauses could not be part of a German-Soviet agreement. On the issue of a consortium, the Soviet representatives argued that, although their government was opposed to a single consortium, they were not against the formation of several consortia. The Germans countered by stating that the formation of consortia would introduce an element of competition among the powers bidding for consortia and keep control in the hands of the Soviets; the German government wanted special consideration for their business interests if they were to avoid a western consortium. Also, the German government was not convinced of the need for total eradication of the Tsarist debt and asked that its claims be partially recognised. Moreover, the German government presented the stipulation that any formal treaty between the two must contain a clause on the nullification of article 116 of the Treaty of Versailles, under which the Soviet Union could claim her share of reparations from Germany.⁶² A treaty was drawn up in February of 1922 that addressed some of these concerns, but, at the request of Foreign Minister Walter Rathenau, Wirth decided to await the outcome of the Genoa Conference before making a commitment. Prior to the Soviets' departure, however, Maltzan gave Radek a five point list as a basis for further discussions.⁶³

The issue of a separate treaty was broached again by the Soviets in April before their voyage to Genoa. At the end of March 1922, the Soviet delegation to Genoa stopped at Riga and ratified a series of commercial agreements with the governments of Estonia, Latvia and Poland⁶⁴ in an attempt to gather

Schuckert), Krassin, Scheinmann, and Smilga. White, p. 151, who also uses Soviet sources, does not mention Scheinmann nor Smilga, but includes Karl Radek.

⁶¹ The Soviets also asked for a loan, which Rathenau said was impossible to grant. Koblaikow, p. 162; White, p. 152.

⁶² A lengthy discussion of the above is in White, pp. 148-151.

⁶³ The outline included the phrase "Die beiden Regierungen darüber einig." That both states are at one. Koblaikow, p. 164.

⁶⁴ White, p. 119.

ammunition against the consortium proposals at Genoa. The Soviet delegates arrived in Berlin on 1 April with the same intentions. The German negotiators were not averse to reopening discussions. The Soviets concentrated again on the renewal of full diplomatic relations and a complete renunciation of Tsarist debts, including private claims. Maltzan had actually proposed, in his February points to Radek, that Germany would be willing to reduce the right to compensation for Tsarist debts to a small fraction, but the Soviets wanted to secure formal and total renunciations of claims for compensation. Maltzan met with Chicherin on 2 April and reiterated his desire for compromise⁶⁵ and, a day later, Wirth and Rathenau received Chicherin and Litvinov to discuss the compromise formula.⁶⁶ Wirth and Rathenau stated that Germany would renounce her claim arising from the nationalisation of foreign property in the Soviet Union provided the Soviet government refused to accept the claims of any other power. A draft agreement was prepared encompassing this mutually satisfying amendment. Yet, on 4 April, when Chicherin and Litvinov met Maltzan to finalise the text of the treaty, Maltzan had drawn up a revised treaty which was significantly different from the agreement of the previous day: on the issue of claims for compensation arising from Soviet nationalisation, Maltzan proposed that Germany could reserve her right to damages but would renounce them if other powers did likewise. The meaning was the same, argued Maltzan, but the Soviets disagreed. Moreover, Maltzan stipulated that the agreement could only be initialled pending its discussion in the German cabinet, which would not be convened before Genoa.⁶⁷ It became clear to the Soviets that the German government had no intention of concluding any agreement with them before the Genoa conference.⁶⁸ Despite valiant efforts, the Soviet delegation left empty-handed on 6 April to complete their journey to Genoa. One day later, Chancellor Wirth, Foreign Minister Walter Rathenau, Eastern Division head Ago von Maltzan, Count Harry Kessler from the *Auswärtiges*

⁶⁵ ADAP, A VI, pp. 78-79.

⁶⁶ *Akten der Reichskanzlei, Die Kabinette Wirth I und II* (Boppard am Rhein, 1973), p. 681. Hereafter cited as *ADRK, Wirth*.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, note 14, pp. 681-682.

⁶⁸ White, pp. 153-155.

Amt, State Secretary Ernst von Simon, Friedrich Gaus, (the foreign ministry's legal advisor) and military advisor Colonel Otto Hasse, followed their Soviet counterparts to the conference.

CHAPTER TWO: ECONOMIC PARTNERS

The German industrialists had traditionally held a major share of the Russian internal market. In 1913, for instance, Germany had been Russia's principal trading partner, accounting for more than 38% of her total foreign trade turnover.¹ Large and key companies such as Siemens had deep roots in Russia.² A series of decrees in the early months of Soviet rule had taken land, banks, oil, and other sectors of the economy into state ownership and had nullified all Tsarist debts. All foreign investment was lost, including hundreds of millions of dollars in profits that investors had made and not withdrawn.³ Perhaps resilience to gain and loss is inherent in business mentality, for German business concerns were looking into financial opportunities in the Soviet Union almost immediately after the conclusion of the war.

German business was plagued by some, although not the same, concerns that haunted the government with regard to Soviet relations. Beyond the question of the nationalisation of foreign property and debts, the popularity of communism and the effectiveness of the Comintern was a serious problem. The communist movement had affected the Western working class and had brought governments near capitulation, rendering businessmen apprehensive about the problems and ramifications of socialist/capitalist coexistence.⁴ Perhaps at one time the Germans thought that the existence of the Soviet state was a mere transient phenomenon (as did most of the world),

¹ White, p. 148.

² See Walter Kirchner, "Russian and the Siemens Firm 1853-1890", *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 2 (1974): 321-357.

³ White, pp. 25-26.

⁴ White, p. 17. Karl Stockhammern, director of trade in the foreign office, advised that because of the political situation in the Soviet Union, the resumption of economic relations was unsuitable. *ADAP*, A I, pp. 378-381.

but by 1919 they were not convinced. The Bolsheviks rose from every political, domestic and external crisis more firmly entrenched than ever. Russia, therefore, remained an essential element in the European economic equation, and could not be kept separate in post-war economic reconstruction. Before the revolution, Russia had supplied much of Europe's grain and foodstuffs; the absence of these after the war had led to shortages and high prices. Russia had also provided an important market for German, as well as European, manufactured products and equipment; a market whose absence after the war contributed to an excess industrial capacity (especially since it had been geared to war-time productivity) and unemployment.⁵ All other considerations could not outweigh the economic need to reventure into Russia. Yet, although German industrialists wished to reopen the Russian market, venture in the Soviet Union was risky. The German government had an unstable relationship with the Soviet Union after the armistice, and would not provide normal diplomatic and consular protection to German investors in the Soviet Union. Although the Reichswehr would later attempt to fill the governmental void, initially, German business concerns pursued economic contacts and the formulation of contracts with the Soviets independently of the foreign office.

Before the severance of diplomatic relations in November 1918, German-Soviet economic relations progressed normally. In June 1918, after a request by Chicherin to organise a commission to address all commercial and political questions between the Soviet Union and Germany, Russian representatives Joffe, Krassin,⁶ Larin, Sokolnikov and Menzhinsky joined German representatives Rudolf Nadolny, Friedrich Prittwitz, Harry Kessler, Paul Litwin, and Gustav Stresemann in discussions. Although there is some dispute as to the purpose and outcome of these meetings, they were decisive to the German-Soviet Trade Treaty of August 27, 1918.⁷

⁵ White, p. 17.

⁶ Leonid Krassin, future economic representative to Germany as a result of the May 6, 1921 agreement between the two nations, had extensive ties with the German financial establishment. He had been an engineer for Siemens in the Soviet Union and was in Berlin in June 1918 to discuss a shipment of coal to the Soviet Union. See "Leonid Krassin" in Uwe Lisakowski (ed.), *Russland und Deutschland* (Stuttgart, 1974): 295-309.

⁷ Freund, p. 28, introduces a provocative meaning to the August Trade Treaty, stating that Admiral Hintze, who replaced Nadolny as a negotiator at the meetings, exchanged

The defeat of Germany and the formal abrogation of consular relations between the Soviet Union and Germany momentarily interrupted the economic relationship between German business and the Soviet state. German investors and industrialists were awaiting the results of the armistice and a semblance of political normalcy after October and November 1918 before resuming Russian contacts.⁸ In the summer of 1918, trade talks were based upon many of the economic possibilities borne out of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, and the severity of the treaty gave German industrialists a bargaining power. By 1919, however, German entrepreneurs were in no position to dictate trade terms and had no government support. But, for German businesses that wanted to survive in the face of western hostility and restrictions, it was imperative to rekindle contacts with the state that had been Russia.

To a great extent, the presence of Karl Radek⁹ in Germany provided German investors with the encouragement and assurance they needed to reopen relations with the Soviet state. Karl Radek, disguised as an Austrian prisoner-of-war, was the only member of the Soviet delegation to the All-German Congress of November 1918 to gain access to Berlin.¹⁰ In February 1919, he was arrested for his participation in the founding of the German Communist Party and was placed in prison. Apparently through the action of

confidential notes with Joffe. These notes contained directives on the transportation of troops to Murmansk with the aim of ousting the Entente element in the Soviet Union. Hans Gatzke, *Stresemann and the Rearmament of Germany* (Baltimore, 1957), p. 1, called the treaty one in a series of supplementary economic agreements to Brest-Litovsk with the eventual aim of a military alliance.

⁸ Brockdorff-Rantzau felt, however, that before the conclusion of the peace treaty, German businesses should initiate contact with the Soviets. *ADAP*, A I, pp. 473-474.

⁹ E. H. Carr, "Karl Radek's Political Salon in Berlin 1919", *Soviet Studies* 3 (1952): 411ff, describes Radek as an innovator in the field of Soviet diplomacy as he was the first to forge the idea of a diplomatic alliance between Soviet Russia and Germany not on ideological grounds, but on the basis of the common hostility to Western imperialist powers. Although this is debatable (as General Hans von Seeckt felt much the same way) his talks did affect the military and economic alliances between the two states.

¹⁰ See note 17 on page 11. Lenin had quickly assembled a contingent of Soviet delegates to go to the first Pan-German Congress in November 1918. Carr, *German-Soviet Relations*, p. 4. Although Radek was sent specifically to help the Spartacists take power, Rosa Luxemburg hated the Soviet official and the lack of democracy in the new Soviet state he represented. Freund, p. 35.

Karl Moar¹¹ (a member of the Swiss Labour Movement) and his ties to the German military establishment, little happened to Radek in prison¹² and soon his cell became a "political salon".¹³ No doubt the presence of such a prominent Soviet official was a novelty to German political and diplomatic figures, and his internment was regarded as an opportunity to discuss theoretical/philosophical issues concerning the problems of a communist state, as well as issues of a practical German-Soviet co-existence. Many of Radek's visitors¹⁴ discussed political-military matters (which will be described in the succeeding chapter) but a significant number of his guests came with the intention of discussing the possibilities for German and Soviet business concerns.¹⁵ Enver Pasha's¹⁶ conversation with Radek in late March 1919 primarily concerned the establishment of a Turkish-Soviet-German political alliance, but also broached the subject of economic ties.¹⁷ In April 1919 Enver Pasha boarded a Junkerswerke airplane destined for Moscow. Enver's aim was to make political contacts, but the three Junkersflugzeugwerke representatives escorting him had contracts to explore the possibility of selling the patent for the airplane and establishing a factory in Russia for the manufacture of such airplanes.¹⁸ Although the subsequent crash of the

¹¹ Carr, "Radek's Political Salon", p. 419.

¹² He certainly did not suffer the fate of Liebknecht or Luxemburg, although according to Radek, he was put into "heavy irons". Carr, *German-Soviet Relations*, p. 17. Brockdorff-Rantzau maintained that he should be deported immediately. ADAP A I, pp. 156-157.

¹³ This phrase was coined by Radek himself. Carr, "Radek's Political Salon", p. 419. Marie Louise Goldbach, *Karl Radek und die deutsch-sowjetischen Beziehungen, 1918-1923* (Bad-Godesberg, 1973) is an excellent study of Radek's relations while imprisoned in Berlin.

¹⁴ Passes to see Radek were obtained at the War Ministry. Ruth Fischer, *Stalin and German Communism* (Harvard, 1948), p. 206.

¹⁵ Radek was isolated from contacts with the Soviet Union and was largely expressing his own point of view in these talks. They may not have been contrary to Soviet foreign policy, but they were nevertheless unofficial. Carr, "Radek's Political Salon", p. 412.

¹⁶ Enver Pasha was the Minister of War in the Young Turk rebellion in the Ottoman Empire. He fled to Germany after the aborted attempt of the movement. D'Abernon, p. 201.

¹⁷ Accounts depict Enver Pasha as the "wire to St. Petersburg" as he initiated the first contact between Germany and the Soviet Union after the First World War. Lionel Kochan, "General von Seeckt", *Contemporary Review* (July, 1950), p. 37.

airplane in Lithuania and the passenger's detainment by the British stationed there precluded talks with the Soviets on this matter, it indicated that German industrialists were interested in reviving German-Russian trade.

Radek's next notable visitor was Walter Rathenau, head of the Allgemeine Elektrizitätsgesellschaft (A.E.G.).¹⁹ Although Radek described their conversation as a philosophical one, in April of 1919 Rathenau sent "a reliable young man" to the Soviet Union to gather information about Lenin's system and to investigate opportunities for employing German industry's skilled labour.²⁰ This trip was sponsored by a few industries, among them Siemens and Deutsche Bank.²¹ However, the agent found that "commerce

¹⁸ The airplane had mechanical difficulties *en route* and crashed near Kovno, Lithuania, where it was detained by the British stationed there. The events, the passengers, and the contents of the plane are described by Colonel Rowan Robinson, military representative in Kovno, in E. L. Woodward and Rohan Butler (eds.), *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939, First Series, Volume I* (London, 1946), pp. 43-47. Two Turks were on the plane: Enver Pasha, described in note 16 above, and Talaat Pasha, leader of the Young Turk movement; although they introduced themselves to the British as Dr. Dimitri Nicola and Mohammed Ali Sami, Turkish Red Cross workers in Russia. It has only been circumstantially proven that these two were indeed Talaat and Enver Pasha, but in Kurt Okay (pseud.), *Enver Pasha - Der grosse Freund Deutschlands* (Berlin, 1935), pp. 334-335, the author states that the two were in Russia in October 1919. As well, the German foreign office acknowledged that one of the Turks was Enver Pasha. *ADAP*, A II, note on page 391. In any case, the British decided against allowing the airplane to continue to the Soviet Union, "as the journey was avowedly undertaken to commence trade relations between the Soviet Union and Germany, which is not permitted at present." Woodward and Butler, p. 46.

The patent and contract for the plane and the possible construction of a factory read as follows: **Patents:** To establish the position of patents in Russia. Is the patent law to be presumed to be subject to variations of forms of government? Would it be possible for patent applications to accompany a further flight? General information about the patent position. **Aircraft:** 1. Is there any possibility as to the manufacture in the future? What is the position and stability of the industry in this respect? Are there any parties interested? What internal security exists? Would it be possible to send German engineers and workmen there? 2. **Sale:** Is there any demand for sale on the part of a. private persons, b. authorities, or c. military? What is the demand for the purchase of completed aircraft? Does there exist any possible demand for the establishment of companies for air traffic? Describe in this connection the great prospects and possibilities of development of the Junkers aircraft? Woodward and Butler, p. 46.

¹⁹ Neither Carr nor Goldbach can specify the date, but it was probably in the spring of 1919.

²⁰ This 'reliable young man' was a certain Herr Albrecht. Rathenau was convinced of the necessity to enter into relations with Russia. Freund, p. 49. This mission, and Rathenau's later undertaking of an Industrial Study Commission are often confused or interchanged. There were, however, two separate missions.

²¹ Himmer, "Rathenau, Russia and Rapallo", *Central European Affairs* 9 (1976): 146-183. Note on page 151.

with Russia [could] be conducted only under the very greatest of difficulties."²²

Trade possibilities were effectively halted by the Western powers' blockade of the Soviet Union, but the exchange of prisoner-of-war representatives in November 1919 gave the German industrialists an opportunity to resume negotiations. Vigdor Kopp, Soviet plenipotentiary for prisoner-of-war exchange in Berlin, was an important link for German firms interested in rebuilding in Russia. Radek, still incarcerated in Berlin in November 1919 had provided the industrialists with sound ideas, but, as an unofficial voice of the Soviet government, his urgings could not be taken seriously. Kopp, as an official representative of the Soviet Union, was seen as a legitimate negotiator. Kopp spoke with representatives of German firms in November 1919, and in the same month he discussed the possibilities for a resumption of trade relations between Germany and the Soviet Union despite the fiat of Versailles, with Hermann Müller, former Foreign Minister.²³ In January 1920 he met with Deutsch of A.E.G and Foreign Minister Simons,²⁴ which resulted in the expedition of Paul Stählers, a German economic expert on the Soviet Union, to Moscow.²⁵ Hilger, Kopp's counterpart in Moscow, broached subjects of an economic nature with Soviet officials after he had been dispatched in April 1920.²⁶ Both Hilger and Kopp carried out quasi-formal functions as trade representatives beyond their official P.O.W relief duties.

²² Linke, pp. 62-63. The mission was observed by the British. Woodward and Butler, First Series, 3, pp. 510-511.

²³ Kopp told Müller that certain American companies (he named only the Manhattan Trade Company) would be willing to help German businesses circumvent the stipulations of the treaty. Although Kopp was doubtful that the American government would support the plan, he expressed the hope that members of the German economic community would be nevertheless amenable to developing trade relations with the Soviets. Müller did not comment. *ADAP*, A II, pp. 390-392.

²⁴ Freund, pp. 48-49. This conversation was held while escorting Radek to the border for extradition back to the Soviet Union.

²⁵ *ADAP*, A IV, pp. 122-124.

²⁶ Hilger, p. 66ff.

Opportunities for the resumption of economic relations with the Soviet Union came after the West lifted the blockade of the Soviet Union in January 1920. Following this, "scores, probably hundreds"²⁷ of German firms took the initiative in exploring the chances of securing concessions in the Soviet Union. These explorations resulted in some monetary benefits, as the Soviets ordered 100 steam engines from Hamburg-Amerika Linie in May 1920 and another 600 in January 1921.²⁸ But, as a matter of course, independent business concerns did not profit as well as they hoped from Soviet economic relations. Indeed, historians concur on the point that the German business communities' expectations went largely unfulfilled. Giant corporations such as Stinnes, Siemens, Thyssen, Haniel, Hamburg-Amerika Linie, Krupp, IG Farben, Deutsche Bank, and Borsig met with little success. From January 1920 to March 1922, only seven concessionary agreements were concluded, none of which provided the sort of access to Russia's raw materials or consumer goods which German commerce and industry anticipated.²⁹ Yet, it is debatable whether the German industrialists' expectations with regard to Russia were unrealistically high. Some magnates had a desire to "bleed the Soviet Union dry"³⁰ and entertained the naive notion that the Soviets could be convinced, out of necessity, to accept a blanket penetration of German industry into the Soviet Union. However, the Soviets were shrewd and aware of the German Grossraum concepts and its significance with regard to trade and commerce with the Soviet Union.³¹

Although the German government was hesitant to change the course of foreign policy and upset the Entente powers, in light of the industrialists' lack

²⁷ Himmer, p. 152.

²⁸ Strandmann, "Rapallo", p. 126. The delivery of these locomotives was postponed until March 1921, as Krassin, the Soviet negotiator, wanted the German foreign office to sign an agreement guaranteeing the delivery of the items. For "special reasons" (namely, the prohibition of the Western powers), Gustav Behrendt, head of the Eastern Division of the foreign office at that time, could not involve the government in the transaction and asked that Krassin accept his verbal promise instead. Krassin agreed. *ADAP*, A IV, p. 383. 552

²⁹ Himmer, p. 152. He lists the seven concessionary agreements in his accompanying note.

³⁰ Felix Deutsch of A.E.G. stated this in an interview. Himmer, p. 172.

³¹ Deutsch wrote to Lord D'Abernon on November 9, 1920 that the orders were heavy, but that there was not as much work as before. D'Abernon, p. 96.

of success with Soviet trade, and at the urging of Rathenau and other magnates, the German government attempted to promote better German-Soviet relations. Rathenau had been concerned that the Russian market would be exploited by American and British industrialists if the German government did not extend diplomatic recognition of the Soviet state and thus promote a more aggressive pursuit of Soviet trade. Rathenau directed a memorandum to the German government in February 1920³² with the aim of convincing them of the need for political and economic cooperation with the Soviet state and recommended a fact-finding mission to investigate the common ground for this end. The Kapp Putsch and Russo-Polish war delayed this mission for another year, but the Moritz-Schlesinger mission to Moscow in January 1921 succeeded, as a part of its dual purpose, in restoring economic relations between the two countries.³³ The February and March 1921 trade talks led to the economic agreement of May 6, 1921, and to the formation of several of the previously described concessionary agreements in the autumn of 1921. The discussions of January and February 1922 were based primarily on the issue of the consortium and the concomitant interests of Soviet-German trade and commerce. Not surprisingly, many of the industrialists felt that the consortium would be helpful in strengthening economic relations with the Soviet Union. The immense capital that investors needed in order to establish a trade concern in the Soviet Union would be easier to provide if several European countries combined their efforts. On January 25, 1922 at the Foreign Ministry, Karl Radek met with Rathenau and Deutsch of A.E.G., Karl Melchior of the Deutsche Bank, and Hugo Stinnes.³⁴ Maltzan represented the Foreign Office. The Germans assured Radek that their interest in the consortium did not reflect hostility toward Russia, but stressed that Germany must join because it concerned her survival.³⁵ Maltzan was not convinced. In a remark to Lord D'Abernon, British Ambassador to Germany, he said "let us obtain concessions from the

³² Müller, *Das Tor zur Weltmacht*, pp. 33-34. Moreover, Rathenau felt that a cooperation with the Soviet Union would solve the larger problem of revision of the peace settlement.

³³ Hilger, p. 66.

³⁴ Himmer, p. 170.

³⁵ White, pp. 152-153.

Russians individually. Individually, we shall obtain more than collectively."³⁶ Indeed, Maltzan had invited Radek to Berlin in January of 1922 to discuss the matter and forge an agreement that would preclude the need for Germany to join the consortium. But, the Germans wanted some kind of special compensation for a rejection of the consortium, particularly if they were to sign an agreement before the Genoa conference. Although the Soviets were eager to circumvent the consortium, they were unwilling to offer any preferential deals to the German business concerns. Instead, the Soviets used the threat of Article 116, the Versailles clause whereby Russia could claim reparations from Germany, to force the German businesses and government to sign an agreement. Neither ruse proved fruitful. The Soviets' last attempt in the early days of April 1922 was equally unsuccessful, leaving the German foreign office, as well as German industrialists, convinced that cooperation with the West was the best route for Germany's reconstruction, and eager for the conference at Genoa.

³⁶ D'Abernon, p. 249.

CHAPTER THREE: MILITARY COLLUSION (1917-1920)

As the First World War progressed, the German General Staff exerted increasing influence on foreign policy. By the later stages of the war, the Army High Command, specifically Field Marshall von Hindenburg and General of Infantry Ludendorff, were in effect the leaders of Germany,¹ and orchestrated much of Germany's political and diplomatic policy.² In 1917, they conspired to defeat Russia by allowing the exiled Lenin and his Bolshevik entourage to return to Russia through Germany, marking, for the purpose of this study, the commencement of German-Soviet military relations.³ The subsequent withdrawal of the Soviet Union from the war bolstered the power of the High Command and, for a brief period, the German military entertained the notion of continental dominance. The German Army's defeat in the west changed the power-political position of the erstwhile leaders of Imperial Germany⁴ and, in the months directly following the armistice of 1918, the High Command was dissolved, the German Army

¹ John Wheeler Bennett, *The Nemesis of Power* (New York, 1954), pp. 4-11.

² By the threat of their resignation, Hindenburg and Ludendorff forced the Kaiser to dismiss two Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs and Bethmann-Hollweg, whom they replaced with someone Wilhelm II did not even know. Francis L. Carsten, *Essays in German History* (London, 1985), p. 203.

³ German aid to the Bolsheviks started early in 1917 and is discussed in George Katkov, "German Foreign Office Documents on Financial Support to the Bolsheviks in 1917", *International Affairs* 32 (London, April 1956): 181-189. The sealed car transport of the Bolsheviks is discussed in Werner Hahlweg, *Lenins Rückkehr nach Russland 1917* (Leiden, 1957). See page 9 of this thesis and the accompanying note. Lenin's presence and agitation would, if not completely remove Russia from the war, then at least weaken her to the extent where her collapse and subsequent withdrawal from the war would be imminent.

⁴ Harold Gordon, *The Reichswehr and the German Republic 1919-1926* (Princeton, 1957), pp. 9-15. In the months directly succeeding the armistice, the Soviet Union, by their agitation for communist insurrection, forced the German military into the role of an internal peace keeping force.

emasculated, and its ability to exercise control kept in check.⁵ Although the victorious powers were convinced of the necessity to subordinate the power of the German military, the seriousness of the German domestic situation in November caused the Western leaders to approve the German government's enlistment of the military forces to maintain internal peace.⁶ This indicated to the General Staff that their position in post-war Germany could not be ignored, nor their power rebuffed. As early as December 1918, General Hans von Seeckt, soon to be Chef des Truppenamtes and later Chef der Heeresleitung,⁷ demonstrated that the spirit of the High Command was undaunted by emphasising that Germany must be able to conclude alliances.⁸

⁵ Lee and Michalka, pp. 19-20. If at one point the government entertained the idea that peace negotiations could be based upon American President Wilson's 14 Points, the far-reaching annexations demanded by Hindenburg and Ludendorff even in the summer of 1918, effectively destroyed that hope. Indeed, the severity of the Treaty and the fact that so many of the clauses concerned the emasculation of the German Army, was in direct response to the power and authority that the High Command had wielded during the war. Even Brockdorff-Rantzau knew that such hopes were fleeting. "The destruction of the political and military Great Power aspirants of the Wilhelmine Reich was accepted as an established fact." Lee and Michalka, p. 19. See page 46, note 2, of this thesis for an explanation of the articles of the Treaty of Versailles relating to the dissolution of the Germany High Command and Army.

⁶ Indeed, it took all the energy and ingenuity that the German government could muster to prevent Germany's subjugation to Communism in November 1918. The Imperial Army, which the government and the Supreme Command had hoped to use to reestablish security within Germany, had disintegrated. President Ebert was pressed to call upon the military forces and the help of General Groener in order to quell riot and unrest throughout Germany. The ramifications of this move are discussed in Eyck, pp. 73-80.

⁷ Although the usage of the Freikorps (literally, free corps) that had sprung into being by the proclamation of Defense Minister Noske in January 1919 in response to the Spartacist uprising and the Polish invasion of German territory, served the immediate purpose of restoring order, it was generally agreed that the Freikorps were an unreliable and unmanageable lot and therefore needed to be replaced with a new army. On March 6, 1919, the German government issued a decree for a Provisional Reichswehr, intended as a first step toward the creation of a permanent army. The command of the Provisional Reichswehr was entrusted to the President of the Republic. Directly under him was the Reichswehrminister, a civilian cabinet minister who exercised command authority over the Reichswehr unless this function was exercised by the President. The senior military official (who was actually a member of the Army) was the Chef der Heeresleitung (Chief of the Army Leadership, or High Command). Under him came the Chef des Truppenamtes, or Troops Office. Gordon, p. 66.

⁸ Seeckt stated this at a discussion of the General Staff. Friederich von Rabenau, *Seeckt: Aus seinem Leben, 1918-1936* (Leipzig, 1940), pp. 118-119. Although some authors quote Rabenau, the first biographer of Seeckt, religiously, Hans Meier-Welcker, the author of *Seeckt* (Frankfurt am Main, 1967) disputes the learnedness of Rabenau. Meier-Welcker complains in his introduction that Rabenau never read through the files of the Heeresleitung; he hired a General Lieber to do this. Rabenau subsequently lost the Heeresleitung files and Lieber lost the

As a result, General von Seeckt's Reichswehr pursued an independent foreign policy and forged a unique relationship with the Soviet Union.⁹

Lord D'Abernon, British Ambassador to Germany after the war, described Seeckt as a general with vision and insight;¹⁰ a quality he saw lacking in other members of the German High Command, and to which he attributed much of Seeckt's success and position toward Russia.¹¹ Unlike Hindenburg and Ludendorff during the war, Seeckt did not harbour contempt for Russia, nor the desire for her total vassalage to Germany.¹² And, unlike the German government, Seeckt's desire for an alignment with Soviet Russia was not motivated by Western intransigence. Seeckt truly favoured a relationship with the Soviets over the West. He understood that Germany's position with the West could be altered by concluding an alliance with the Soviet Union. A German-Soviet alliance would threaten the security of the nascent Polish state, and engender its demise. In Seeckt's opinion, the annihilation of Poland was the first step toward recapturing Germany's position of preeminence in Europe: the destruction of Poland, one of the pillars of the Versailles system, would trigger the dissolution of the Treaty of Versailles, France's alliance system in Europe, and consequently France's dominance of the continent, thereby allowing Germany to resume her pre-war status.

accompanying Otto Hasse diary. Authors who cite the Hasse diary are actually using the marginal notes of General Lieber. Francis Carsten expresses this point in "Reichswehr and Red Army, 1920-1933", *Survey* (October, 1962), p. 115, note 3. Meier-Welcker also accuses Rabenau of not distinguishing between his own or Seeckt's opinion. Nevertheless, Carsten considers Rabenau the authority. Carsten, *Essays in German History*, p. 215, note 59.

⁹ Reichswehrminister Groener had also emphasised the need for the establishment of friendlier relations with the Soviet Union, but, beyond his request that Goltz halt his foray in the Baltic in 1918, there is little evidence that he took part in German-Soviet military relations. See R. H. Phelps, "Aus dem Groener-Dokumenten IV: Das Baltikum, 1919", *Deutsche-Rundschau* (Darmstadt, October 1950), p. 836ff.

¹⁰ D'Abernon, pp. 65-66.

¹¹ Lionel Kochan concurs. "General von Seeckt", p. 37.

¹² Carsten, *Reichswehr and Politics*, p. 104, states that Seeckt was not educated in a cadet school, but attended a secondary school at Strasbourg. Later, he became an ensign in the Emperor Alexander Guards Grenadier Regiment, where it was improbable that he developed anti-Russian sentiments. "You know that my wishes go in the direction of conciliation with Russia", he wrote to a friend. Rabenau, p. 174.

Poland, partitioned among the powers of Prussia, Russia and Austria-Hungary in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, had been reborn at the conclusion of the First World War, according to President Wilson's Fourteen Points.¹³ Point thirteen argued, moreover, that the economic viability and success of a Polish state depended on access to the sea.¹⁴ Thus, the Treaty of Versailles stipulated that a Polish Corridor, constituting a strip of land accessing Poland to the North Sea, be created at the expense of Germany.¹⁵ For Germany, a division of her territory for the creation of a Polish state was more disturbing than France's sequestration of Alsace-Lorraine or the Rhineland. A Polish state had not been in existence for a century and had not been a legitimate combatant during the war. A territorial settlement in Poland's favour was therefore deemed unfair by the German government, especially since German minorities inhabited the area. Moreover, the German establishment questioned whether the creation of Poland was a matter of honouring national self-determination or securing the diplomatic ambitions of the French. Therefore, it was the existence of the Polish state *per se*, not specifically the Polish Corridor dilemma, that was anathema for Germany. For, beyond minority problems or the loss of German territory to establish the Polish Corridor, the creation of Poland strengthened France's position on the continent and consequently over Germany.¹⁶

France had favoured the creation of the Polish state after the war, in the same manner as she had the creation of the East-European states of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia,¹⁷ partially in response to the right to national self-determination, but more as a result of her need to dissolve

¹³ The Fourteen Points were expounded by Wilson in a speech on January 9, 1918 concerning the Russo-German Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Count Harry Kessler, *In The Twenties*, trans. by Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd. (London, 1971), p. 493.

¹⁴ Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert (eds.), *The Diplomats 1919-1939* (Princeton, 1953), p. 134.

¹⁵ Article 27 and 28 of the Treaty of Versailles. Israel, pp. 1289-1291.

¹⁶ An undated memorandum (probably dated in the middle of April 1919) to be read by Brockdorff-Rantzau at a cabinet meeting, stated that for the survival of Germany, Poland's ambitions had to be stopped. *ADAP*, A I, p. 415.

¹⁷ Lee and Michalka, p. 23.

German and Austro-Hungarian dominance of Central Europe.¹⁸ After the establishment of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, France designed an alliance system, the so-called Little Entente, with these states which served two purposes: first, it erected a bulwark against the possible encroachment of communism; and, second, and most importantly, it physically encircled Germany, thereby containing any aspirations she might have to recapture her pre-war status in Europe.¹⁹ For Seeckt, it was clear that any attempt to revive Germany's power-political position must first involve the dissolution of the Little Entente. Thereafter, France's position in Europe would be lessened and the basis for the Treaty of Versailles dissolved. The absence of the treaty would relieve Germany's obligation to honour a post-war settlement. Poland, as the Little Entente's principal partner, was Germany's primary nemesis. Yet, for a defeated and powerless Germany the neutralisation of Poland was an impossible task. Germany needed an ally who shared the same loathing she had for the nascent Polish state and an equally committed desire for its demise. The Soviet Union fit these criteria perfectly. In September 1922, Seeckt wrote:

*The existence of Poland is intolerable, incompatible with Germany's condition of life. It must disappear, and it will disappear through its own weakness and through Russia - with our help. For Russia, Poland is even more intolerable than for us. No Russia can reach an agreement with Poland. With Poland will disappear one of the strongest pillars of the Versailles settlement, the preponderance of France. The reestablishment of the broad, common frontier between Russia and Germany is the precondition of the regaining of strength of both countries...Russia and Germany within the frontiers of 1914. This should form the basis of an understanding between the two.*²⁰

¹⁸ Lakervo Hovi, *Cordon Sanitaire ou Barriere de l'est? The Emergence of French Eastern European Alliance Policy, 1917-1919* (Finland, 1975), pp. 11-21.

¹⁹ Hovi, pp. 215-217.

²⁰ From Seeckt's reply to Brockdorff-Rantzau's "Promemoria" entitled "Germany's Attitude toward the Russian Problem" in Julius Epstein's "Der Seeckt Plan", *Der Monat* 1 (November 1948), pp. 42-50. The complete "Promemoria" is in Herbert Helbig, "Die Moskauer mission des Grafen Brockdorff-Rantzau", *Forschungen zur Osteuropäischen Geschichte* 2 (Berlin, 1955): 286-346. An English translation is in Freund, pp. 135-137.

Indeed, the Soviets possessed an equally malevolent attitude toward the existence of the Polish state.²¹ Beyond the historical hostility that existed between the Poles and the Russians that served to justify Seeckt's theory, Poland, after her creation, sought to expand her Eastern frontier at the expense of Russia.²² Although the Soviet Union managed to gather and launch an effective counterattack against the Poles, she nevertheless remained wary of the ambitions of her western neighbour. The desire to eradicate the Polish threat formed the basis of the relationship between the Soviet Union and the Reichswehr.²³ While the focal point of Soviet-Reichswehr relations remained the annihilation of the Polish state, the position of Seeckt within the Reichswehr played an important role in the intensity of these relations. Before November 1919, Seeckt served no official function within the new High Command and his mark on Soviet relations was not yet clearly felt. From November 1919 to June 1920, Seeckt served as head of the Truppenamt and was subordinate only to General Reinhardt, chief of the Heeresleitung. In this capacity, Seeckt initiated overtures of friendship to the Soviets, but it was not until after the Kapp Putsch in March 1920, when Seeckt was elevated to head of the Heeresleitung, that the general wielded more power and could effectively steer the course of the Reichswehr's foreign policy.

Concurrently, before 1920, German-Soviet military relations were based solely on a mutual desire to destroy Poland within existing conditions and with their present military force. After 1920, indeed after the Russo-Polish War demonstrated that an attack against Poland carried the threat of a European war, both the Soviet government and the Reichswehr knew that first and foremost the two powers had to revamp their armies and their armaments industry if they intended to lead a successful attack on Poland. This need was made more evident after Seeckt's request for a revision of the

²¹ Lionel Kochan, *Russia and the Weimar Republic* (Cambridge, 1954), p. 35. D'Abernon, p. 242, stated that "the hatred of Poland by Russians and Germans particularly by the Russians, is such that it has become ingrained and inborn."

²² White, p. 20.

²³ Meier-Welcker, p. 323.

100,000 man army was denied at the Spa Conference in the autumn of 1920.²⁴ Thus, before the autumn of 1920 Reichswehr-Soviet military relations may be referred to as collusive: a secret arrangement between the Reichswehr and the Soviet Union to destroy Poland that involved no mutual and prior build-up of arms. After the autumn of 1920, Soviet-Reichswehr relations maintained their collusive character, but were more collaborative: a secret military arrangement to destroy Poland where both parties engaged in a mutual build-up of arms.

Seeckt was in Turkey when he heard of the collapse of the German Army in the autumn of 1918, and only managed to return to Germany in December of that year.²⁵ In that same month, he expressed his opinion about the necessity to form alliances, and two months later he made his first attempt to promote such an alliance with Russia. In February 1919 Enver Pasha, a former leader of the Young Turk movement in the Ottoman Empire and a friend of Seeckt from his campaigns in Turkey during the war, visited Karl Radek. It has never been proven that Seeckt actually sent or persuaded Enver to approach Radek, but two pieces of evidence make it probable that Enver's visit with Radek was related to Seeckt's wish to cultivate relations with Russia: 1) in the summer of 1920, Seeckt's aide, Ernst Köstring, helped arrange for the departure of Enver to Russia after numerous unsuccessful attempts,²⁶ and 2) one year later, Enver wrote to Seeckt about his discussions with the Soviets.²⁷

Enver Pasha spoke at some length with Radek about the possibility of a Turkish-Soviet-German alliance against the West and, quite unofficially,

²⁴ Seeckt himself went to the Conference at Spa to declare his conviction that the military stipulations of the Treaty were unreasonable. However, Seeckt was in full uniform and did not have the desired effect he imagined. The Western powers retorted that Germany still had twice the number of regular troops than allowed her and 6000 more machine guns. The West set a time limit for Seeckt to adhere to the disarmament clauses. D'Abernon, p. 61.

²⁵ D'Abernon, p. 65.

²⁶ According to Paul Weitz, correspondent for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in Constantinople, Enver Pasha was well acquainted with Seeckt and his aides, and travelled with a German passport under the name of Altmann. ADAP, A IV, p. 37.

²⁷ Later in 1920, Enver returned to Germany where he took up residence one block away from Seeckt and under the assumed name of Professor Ali Bey. Blücher, p. 133.

Radek persuaded Enver to express his goals to Soviet officials in Moscow.²⁸ In April, Enver boarded a Junkerswerke plane destined for the Soviet Union.²⁹ This first mission failed and, had it not been for the intervention of Seeckt's aide in Lithuania, Major Tschunke, Enver and Talaat Pasha would have been incarcerated. Importantly, however, the British discovered that Enver had been carrying maps, maps which the British envoy at Kovno described as "showing the number of troops which could be massed against the Bolsheviks in all countries ranged against them."³⁰ The purpose of sending these maps is unknown, but there are three possibilities: 1) the maps might have been sketched to demonstrate that Germany would be a trusted accomplice in an alliance with the Soviet Union because she divulged precious reconnaissance information; 2) the maps may have been an illustration that an alliance with Germany could be lucrative for the Soviets since Germany could obtain such information; and 3) they may have been the basis for a future attack on Poland. Whether Seeckt or someone else compiled these maps is unknown,³¹ but the possibility that it was Seeckt and that they were to be used in an attack against Poland cannot be discounted.

Seeckt's second effort to cultivate an entente with the Soviet Union came in the form of his attempt to impede the progress of Goltz's mission in the Ukraine. For much of the German population and militarists who had been forced to accept defeat, Goltz's success demonstrated the unsurpassed spirit of Germany, but for Seeckt, the mission was a serious hindrance to German-Soviet entente. In May 1919, Tschunke, stationed in Kovno, Lithuania as an official Reichswehr representative to assist in dissolving German troops in the east, reported to Seeckt that Goltz's success was upsetting relations with the Soviet Union.³² There were no official relations

²⁸ Carr, "Radek's Political Salon", p. 419. Enver was impressed with the potential of the Russian military force and thought that Turkey could save itself by concluding an alliance with the Soviet Union.

²⁹ This trip is described on page 28 of this thesis and in the accompanying note.

³⁰ Woodward and Butler, p. 46.

³¹ The British envoy thought that they were intended for spying purposes. Ibid, p. 46.

³² George Hallgarten, "General Hans von Seeckt and Russia, 1920-1922", *Journal of Modern History* 21 (1949), p. 30.

between the foreign office and the Soviet state at that time; relations had been abrogated in November 1918 and remained suspended in the spring and summer of 1919. There is virtually no information about the "relations" to which Tschunke was referring. It is possible that Tschunke was describing the general malevolent attitude the Soviets felt toward the German Army evacuating the Eastern regions, or that there existed actual negotiations between the military establishments of Germany and the Soviet Union which were disrupted by the penetration of German troops into the east. In either case, the importance of Tschunke's letter was its demonstration that Seeckt was seeking an entente with the Soviet Union in the spring of 1919, or was already involved in negotiations to that end.

Although there is no evidence to support the probability that Seeckt's efforts to contact and build relations with the Soviets continued through to 1920, it is reasonable to assume that they did. Both previous attempts and demonstrations were discovered either by intervention (as in the case of the British stationed at Kovno) or through inference (as in the case of Tschunke's letter to Seeckt). Seeckt was, after all, at serious odds with official German foreign policy in his quest for rapprochement with the Soviets in 1918 and 1919 and, thus, he could only proceed cautiously and surreptitiously. Moreover, he was subordinate to Reinhardt and could not enjoy the freedom to pursue his desired amity with the Soviets.

The intensity of Reichswehr-Soviet relations increased considerably in March 1920 after Seeckt's appointment as Chef der Heeresleitung and culminated with the infiltration of the German army in the Russo-Polish War in the summer of 1920. The official German position on the role of Germany in the Russo-Polish War was declared in July 1920 when the German cabinet passed a motion proclaiming its neutrality, and disallowed the usage of German ports or German territory for the transportation of Western arms.³³ German neutrality was justified considering the country had a limited army and so few armaments; but, importantly, it was a demonstration of independent foreign policy and an indication that Germany desired the victory of the Soviet Union over Poland, and a subsequent reorientation of the Versailles peace. Germany's neutrality did not offer the

³³ Josef Korbel, *Poland between East and West* (Princeton, 1963), p. 87.

Soviets much practical aid, but it was not overlooked by the Western powers who supported Poland,³⁴ nor by the Soviets who "were deeply appreciative of the German workers who refused to man transports across to Poland."³⁵

According to Polish sources, however, Germany had not remained neutral during the Russo-Polish War. In August 1920 the Polish government presented documents which told a remarkably different story concerning the German contribution to Soviet forces.³⁶ In a report by Polish Chief of Staff, General Rozwadowski, on August 26, the following revelations were made: 1) German military equipment had been sold to Russia as early as March 1920, 2) in May, six Zeppelins had flown over Warsaw in the direction of the Northeast carrying telegraphic and medical supplies to Russia, 3) units of the Soviet 7th Infantry had used German ammunition in July, 4) the Soviet government had placed orders in Germany for 400,000 rifles and 200 million cartridges, 5) Polish soldiers had indicated that Germans were fighting in Soviet lines,³⁷ and 6) on 20 July, (the same day the cabinet passed the neutrality law) a German major in Breslau had signed detailed descriptions concerning air communications with Soviet Russia. According to the same source, the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs had documents regarding the preparation of German organisations to invade West Prussia, describing their secret contact with Kopp. Although these accounts may have been fabricated or exaggerated by the Poles to garner Western support, it is probable that the Reichswehr and the Soviet Union had become increasingly intimate after March 1920 and had broached the delicate matter of a German-Soviet alliance against Poland. As early as April 1920, Kopp had questioned Maltzan about a

³⁴ Indeed, the French thought that German neutrality was one-sided. Korbelt, p. 88.

³⁵ Korbelt, pp. 66-67.

³⁶ The following is reported by Korbelt, pp. 89-90, and was taken from the Polish Foreign Ministry Archives, dated August 26, 1920.

³⁷ In response to foreign press accusations that some sectors of the Soviet front were under the command of German officers, Trotskii provocatively replied, "In no unit is there a single German officer. Needless to say, the ranks of the Red Army are open to all volunteers who consider it their duty to fight for the cause of Communism." Korbelt, p. 88.

possible collaboration between the Red Army and the German Army.³⁸ Although Maltzan was too wary of Soviet propaganda to take the offer seriously,³⁹ it is likely, given Maltzan's penchant for Soviet rapprochement, that he was pleased at the proposition and informed the military establishment about the conversation. Indeed, in May 1920, Kopp paid Seeckt an unofficial visit, and in July, as the Russo-Polish War ensued, Seeckt approached Kopp about the possibility for a "course of action against Versailles."⁴⁰ Another source corroborates the fact that the idea of a joint German-Soviet military strike against Poland had been discussed and planned by Kopp: an unpublished memorandum by Baron Eugen Reibnitz stated that Radek and Kopp had negotiated a plan under which German Freikorps would march into West Prussia as soon as the Red Army entered Warsaw.⁴¹ This collusion between German and Soviet troops is substantiated by Enver Pasha's letter to Seeckt in August 1920. When he finally gained entry into the Soviet Union in the summer of 1920, Enver met with a Red Army official and sent three letters to Seeckt. In an earlier letter he wrote that "the Mohammedan units on the Polish front had fought with brilliance"⁴² and on August 26, Enver wrote a letter of particular interest.

I had a talk with Sklyansky [Deputy People's Commissar for War], the deputy and right hand man of Trotskii...A party here which has real power and to which Trotskii too belongs is in favour of a rapprochement with Germany. Sklyansky said: this party would be willing to recognise the old German frontier of 1914. And they see only one way out of the world's chaos: cooperation with Germany and Turkey. In order to strengthen this party's position and to win the whole government for the cause, [would it] not be

³⁸ Erickson, p. 150. The question was posed on 16 April. Kopp expressed to Trotskii that with German military and industrial help, Russia could be a great power. Trotskii was interested in the possibilities.

³⁹ Erickson, p. 148.

⁴⁰ Erich Wollenberg, *The Red Army* (London, 1938), p. 236.

⁴¹ Baron Reibnitz, a colleague of Ludendorff, had housed Karl Radek during his last few months in detention in Berlin. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, Vol. III, p. 324.

⁴² On August 25. Rabenau, p. 306.

possible to give some unofficial help, for example, reports about the Polish Army, and, if possible to have arms sold and smuggled. ⁴³

The sincerity of Enver's letters is questionable, but the issue of revising the borders to those of 1914 was a direct reference to the eradication of the Polish state and a demonstration that a German-Soviet military collusion strove for that end. As well, the mention of "giving unofficial help", was an indication that the Soviet Army was willing to receive German military support (if not already accepting it) in order to secure the defeat of Poland. Indeed, in July 1920, in the letter that Simons wrote to Chicherin concerning the renewal of Soviet-German relations, Simons asked (at Seeckt's insistence) that a German officer be attached to the flank of the Soviet army advancing on Warsaw.⁴⁴ The officer was Colonel von Schubert, who had been an attaché in Moscow in the summer and fall of 1918 and who was a key man in the future clandestine rearmament of Germany in the Soviet Union. There are no reports on the effects of Schubert's presence in the Red Army, nor on his exact duties, but it may be presumed that he was sent to give tactical aid to the Soviets and to oversee the redistribution of Poland after the Soviet victory.

Thus, there exists an appreciable amount of evidence to support the claim that Seeckt was in collusion with the Soviets after his appointment as Chef der Heeresleitung and certainly during the Russo-Polish War. There is no question that the progression of the war attracted Seeckt's attention and brought him (probably earlier than he expected) closer to his dream of the destruction of Poland, the dissolution of Versailles and the resurgence of Germany. Whether he actually aided the Soviet cause, as the Polish authorities claimed, is debatable. But Maltzan's, Reibnitz's and Seeckt's own talks with Kopp, as well as Enver Pasha's letter and Schubert's presence on

⁴³ Rabenau, p. 307. Carsten translates the letter in *The Reichswehr and the Red Army*, and states on page 117 that George Hallgarten misinterprets the letter in his article, "General von Seeckt and Russia". Carsten adds, p. 118, that as we do not know how Seeckt responded, the letter should not be treated as too important. Blücher, pp. 129-137, states that Enver was also urging Seeckt to create an incident in the Corridor which would give Germany an opportunity to intervene against Poland. Seeckt was uninterested.

⁴⁴ Freund, pp. 73-74.

the Red Army flank, clearly demonstrate that there was a Soviet-German military collusion aimed against the Polish state.⁴⁵

In the end Schubert's services were unnecessary and Seeckt's efforts went unrewarded, as the Western powers' assistance in the war effectively destroyed Soviet hopes of overrunning the Polish state. The Soviet defeat, in light of their earlier successes, was an anti-climactic conclusion to the war, and extinguished the Reichswehr's attempt to disintegrate the Polish state and the Versailles settlement. Nevertheless, Seeckt's dream remained intact. But the German general saw that before another attempt to eradicate Poland could be mounted, both the German Army and the Red Army would have to be revamped.⁴⁶ To this end, Seeckt started formulating new plans in the autumn of 1920.

⁴⁵ Wheeler-Bennett, *Nemesis of Power*, p. 126, maintains that Seeckt wanted to unite the Reichswehr and the Red Army against the inflictors of the Versailles Treaty as the Soviets were gaining the advantage on the Poles, but this is unlikely.

⁴⁶ Erickson, p. 150.

CHAPTER FOUR: MILITARY COLLABORATION (1920-1922)

Germany's need to rearm was not merely a reflection of Seeckt's desire to reduce Poland. The drastic limitations on the size and strength of the German Army and military arms production imposed by the Treaty of Versailles threatened basic security.¹ For Germany to become a viable power again in Europe, the military clauses of the peace treaty had to be evaded.² However, the Treaty of Versailles provided for an Inter-Allied Disarmament Commission, which was to oversee that the Reichswehr adhered to the terms of the Treaty.³ Thus, evasion was rendered difficult by unannounced spot-checks of the Commission. Although Seeckt had to concede to the victors' demands, and initiate the reduction of the military forces, he vowed to make the Reichswehr, small as it was, into a solidly based army comprised of well-

¹ Barton Whaley, *Covert German Rearmament, 1919-1939* (Frederick, Md., 1984), p. 7. The victors' early efforts to force German compliance with the armistice and treaty terms covering disarmament were harsh and punitive. When the Germans failed to surrender the number of artillery guns the French intelligence office had estimated, Krupp was ordered to manufacture them until the quota had been met and surrendered. The scuttling of the German fleet enraged the Western powers to the extent that German shipyards were required to make up the tonnage with the construction of new warships. The civilian population were bound to hand over its small arms.

² Part V, articles 159-213 were the military, naval, and air clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. This portion of the Treaty of Versailles is reprinted in Whaley, pp. 121-149. Articles 159 through 163 detailed the demobilisation of the German military forces: "By a date which must not be later than March 13, 1920, the German Army must not comprise more than seven divisions of infantry and three divisions of cavalry...The total number of effectives must not exceed 100,000 men including officers, all of which shall be devoted exclusively to the maintenance of order within the territory and to the control of the frontiers. The "Great German General Staff" and all similar organisations shall be dissolved." (Article 160). Articles 161 and 162 stipulated that officials of the German states or police could not be used for military training. Article 163 discussed the way in which the reduction of the strength of the forces would be undertaken. Although the date for the reduction of personnel was set for March 31, 1920, the deadline was postponed for six months by the Western powers as a result of their partial recognition of the difficulties inherent in the task. Gordon, pp. 78-79.

³ Articles 203-210. Israel, pp. 1381-1383. The definitive study on the success and failure of the Inter-Allied Disarmament Commission is Michael Salewski, *Entwaffnung und Militärkontrolle in Deutschland, 1919-1926* (München, 1966).

selected and finely trained officers that could constitute the command corps of a future German Army. Although the Great General Staff had been abolished by the fiat of Versailles, it reemerged in the form of the Truppenamt with four subdivisions: T-1 for operations, T-2 for organisation, T-3 for foreign armies, and T-4 for training; and greatly resembled the old General Staff.⁴ The number of regular troops was supplemented by equipping or funding several of the private paramilitary organisations that sprang up after the armistice; the Freikorps (bands of ex-servicemen), the Black Reichswehr (set up in 1920 by Seeckt under the name Arbeitkommandos), the Einwohnerwehr, and the Zeitfreiwilligenverbände.⁵

The articles governing the disarmament of the German Army were similarly evaded. Article 165 of the Treaty stipulated the maximum number of guns, machine guns, mortars, rifles and the amount of ammunition that Germany was allowed to maintain. Circumvention of this directive was carried out by a secret transfer of quantities of arms, equipment and ammunition to the paramilitary during the 15 month interval between the time when the provisional Reichswehr learned of the 100,000 men limit and the deadline for its implementation.⁶ Unlawful stocks were hidden beyond the reach of the Inter-Allied Disarmament Commission, thereby circumventing article 167, which stated that the number of arms over and above the specified amounts were to be delivered to the Western powers.⁷ The manufacture or importation of armoured cars and tanks was prohibited

⁴ Gordon, p. 179. The Truppenamt was further subdivided into groups who were to oversee operations forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles. T1 had an airforce expert who dealt with matters concerning aviation in mobilisation. Group L under T2 saw to retaining a hard corps of pilots. Under T3 was the Special Group R, entrusted to handle the secret Reichswehr-Red Army collaboration after 1921. Its activities are discussed on pages 50-60 of this chapter.

⁵ It is generally agreed that these groups' existence went beyond the stipulations of Versailles, but Morgan, p. 53, asserted that they camouflaged a large German Army. The Zeitfreiwilligenverbände were forced to dissolve in the early 1920s at the insistence of the victorious powers. Gordon, p. 187.

⁶ Whaley, pp. 8-9.

⁷ Seeckt carried on a lucrative transport of arms to Lithuania, and it was later intimated that the Soviets might desire to share these arms during their campaign against Poland. Roger de Wyss, *L'Allemagne et la paix* (Paris, no date), pp. 23-24. August Winnig, German Plenipotentiary in the Baltic, told a reporter of Seeckt's desire to keep arms in Lithuania, and his statement was reprinted in a Geneva newspaper in May 1920.

in Article 169, as was the importation of any kind of war material (article 170). Krupp was apparently involved in serious violations of these clauses. Company chiefs designed plans for heavy weapons in dummy companies and with code names. A tank, for instance, was labelled an agricultural tractor.⁸ Articles 173 to 179 pertained to recruiting and military training, the abolishment of compulsory military service, as well as the extension of the years of service (thereby keeping the trained military force to a minimum) and was effectively circumvented by accumulating a small reserve of short term enlistment recruits and by introducing semi-military training and a 12 year enrollment policy in the national police force (whose numbers were also padded).⁹ The prohibition of troop training in foreign countries was evaded by the Reichswehr's collaboration with the Red Army. The airindustry was as devious as Krupp in response to the articles designed to halt the construction of an airforce and dirigibles (Articles 198-201): building planes that could be easily dissembled and hidden in the area surrounding the factory.¹⁰ Planes were also built in Holland by the Fokker aircraft company. Although not under the auspices of Seeckt, the Reichsmarine also managed to circumvent the naval limitations described in Articles 181-197 of the Versailles Treaty, specifically article 181, which stipulated that the Navy flotilla could not include submarines, by constructing them outside of Germany.¹¹

Although much can be made of Germany's secret rearmament and treaty evasion, truly large scale rearmament and circumvention could only be undertaken outside of Germany and, for Seeckt, this meant in the Soviet Union. Yet, covert rearmament in the Soviet state was not a venture to be attempted without consideration. The Soviet Union had long been an agricultural state, noticeably behind Great Britain, France and Germany in

⁸ Whaley, pp. 10-11. According to Whaley's source, these codes were demonstrated at the Krupp Neuremberg Trial. Plans were shown with marginal statements that said, "specifications for power tractors (self-propelled guns) must meet the requirement for transportation on open railroad cars in Belgium and France." This scheme was apparently suggested by Seeckt. Whaley, p. 29.

⁹ Gordon, pp. 186-189.

¹⁰ Whaley, pp. 24-25. Heinkel Co. rented a factory outside their regular factory for such work.

¹¹ Whaley, pp. 26-27; Carsten, "Reichswehr and Red Army", p. 121.

industrialisation.¹² While these European nations were making significant advances in the invention, construction and implementation of heavy machinery, Russia was only beginning to enter these ranks. Russia had vast territories, a wealth of resources and a large population, but she had employed them only partially for industrialisation. Her antiquated weaponry and lack of heavy machinery had been slightly revamped and remedied after the humiliating defeat to Japan in 1905, but her relative backwardness was still evident during the First World War. However, most of her battles were fought against the forces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, who could boast of no better resources. Nevertheless, the use of obsolete arms and farm implements by the Russian troops toward the end of the war was testimony to Russia's industrial retardation. Moreover, little energy could be placed into industrialising the Soviet nation immediately after the war, as the civil war and the famine of 1921 had demanded the full attention of the Soviet government. Russia's industrial strength in 1921 was in marked contrast to Germany's.¹³ The glaring industrial incompatibility between Germany and the Soviet Union was a significant deterrent to a rearmament alliance. Yet, Russia was not without her merits or her potential as an ally for covert rearmament. Russia was a mineral rich nation whose resources, if tapped, could provide the necessary basic materials for successful and mass construction of heavy material. Importantly, Soviet Russia was a vast country with a multitude of cities and towns that would provide ideal locations for covert rearmament.

The relationship between the Army and heavy industry in Germany had always been interdependent. The settlement of Versailles and its articles on arms limitation not only affected the troops, but heavy industry as well, causing them financial hardship, perhaps total loss. Indeed, the prohibition of military aircraft closed most of Germany's 35 aircraft companies, leaving only four in 1921: Junkers, Henkel, Albatross, and Dornier.¹⁴ The loss of such pillars of the war industry was an issue of some concern for the Reichswehr.

¹² Indeed, Russia had been nicknamed the giant with the feet of clay. Nicholas Riasonovsky, *A History of Russia* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 470-474.

¹³ Riasonovsky, p. 540.

¹⁴ Whaley, p. 24.

It was unacceptable for the German Army to be without the support of strong and successful heavy industry. Therefore, it was in the best interests of the Reichswehr to aid or bolster their industrial allies. Schemes for successful covert manufacturing within Germany were fashioned together with the Reichswehr and Seeckt.¹⁵ But, rebuilding within Germany was risky and involved far too much expense of energy and efforts on evading the Inter-Allied Disarmament Commission's agents. Although rearming in the Soviet Union was also risky, for the reasons discussed above, it was a viable alternative. But, beyond the attempt by Junkers at building an armament alliance with the Soviet Union in April 1919, there is no documentation that other German arms companies ventured into Soviet Russia. Until the autumn of 1920, German industrialists remained unmotivated and uncertain of the merits of the Soviet Union as an ally for surreptitious evasion of the peace settlement. Although Seeckt may have been rendered despondent by the negligible progress made by the industrial establishment toward revamping German heavy industry, he was in no position to offer any assistance to his industrial allies prior to his promotion to head of the Army; he could merely urge the arms and heavy industry magnates to explore the benefits for rearming and rebuilding in the Soviet Union. However, after the summer of 1920, Seeckt had the power to initiate a change for German industry. Moreover, the disappointing loss of the Soviets in the Russo-Polish War gave him the impetus and the commitment for a close cooperation between German industry, the Reichswehr and the Soviet Union. To this end, Seeckt formed the highly secret *Sondergruppe R* in November 1920.¹⁶

The task of *Sondergruppe R* was to examine the basis for successful collaboration between German industry, the Reichswehr, and the Soviet Union. In the years to come, it proved to be a productive organ for German rearmament, initiating the construction of German-Soviet flying schools, airplane factories, tank and poisonous gas plants and, in later years, the training of German troops in Soviet territory. The existence and undertakings of *Sondergruppe R* were kept secret, and it was initially funded

¹⁵ The Krupp schemes were but a few. See Whaley, Chapter II, and note 8 above.

¹⁶ See note 4 above. Historians of the Rapallo era all concur on the formation of *Sondergruppe R*, and all but a few sources date its inception in November 1920.

by the Reichswehr's "Blue Account".¹⁷ Although Seeckt attached *Sondergruppe R* to the Truppenamt and coded it appropriately T₃R,¹⁸ very few individuals knew its function, and it is difficult to know exactly which individuals exercised what role in the operations of this division. How Seeckt managed to attract disciples to his cause is unknown (he may simply have ordered them) but, it can be reasonably assumed that Seeckt's network of officers and civilian aides dedicated to fashioning a collaboration with the Soviet Union was extensive. However, research has produced only a handful of names and little on their actual roles. Indeed, what becomes glaringly evident is the extent to which Seeckt was able to conceal the activities of his aides, and diffuse their activities and functions in such a way as to allow no one person total knowledge of the progress of German-Soviet military relations. Beyond that, "documents were regularly and systematically destroyed",¹⁹ so that little evidence remains to help researchers piece together the puzzle.

It is known that a former adjutant of Seeckt, Captain (later Lieutenant Colonel) Fritz Fischer was the chief of T₃R.²⁰ Little more is heard of Fischer until the beginning of 1922, and sources state that his first trip to the Soviet Union was undertaken in July of that year. Beyond leading *Sondergruppe R*, Fischer was entrusted with the specific task of overseeing the smooth operation of the German/Soviet aircraft factories and schools.²¹ Major Tschunke, who has been previously described as the saviour of Enver Pasha and the military attaché in Kovno who wrote to Seeckt about the interference caused by the Goltz mission, was a vital link in the secret T₃R. Tschunke was installed as manager of GEFU - *Gesellschaft zur Förderung gewerblicher Unternehmungen m.b.H* - the Reichswehr's organisation for German industrial enterprises in the Soviet Union, with seats both in Berlin and

¹⁷ Helm Speidel, "Reichswehr und Rote Armee", pp. 22-24.

¹⁸ Gordon, p. 179.

¹⁹ An admission of Speidel, p. 12.

²⁰ Carsten, *Reichswehr and Politics*, p. 138, and Müller, p. 98, are in agreement that Fischer was the head of *Sondergruppe R*.

²¹ Müller, p. 99.

Moscow.²² There is some discrepancy on the date of GEFU's creation,²³ but most recent accounts maintain that it was formed in August 1923.²⁴ GEFU was given quite a large income, of which a considerable amount was furnished by the German government.²⁵ Tschunke was a good choice for GEFU's chief position because of his contacts with German business through his brother-in-law, Paul Reusch, director-general of Gutehoffnungshütte, a large arms manufacturer.²⁶ However, Tschunke proved to be a less than successful entrepreneur and in 1927 GEFU was dissolved and replaced by another company whose function was basically the same as GEFU.²⁷ However, beyond the important function of leader of GEFU, Tschunke's role in *Sondergruppe R* is somewhat cloudy. Wilhelm von Schubert's function in *Sondergruppe R* is equally nebulous and his activities are even less known. According to Hilger, prisoner-of-war relief liaison in Moscow, Schubert was stationed as a military attaché in Moscow in July 1918²⁸ and was still there in November and December 1918.²⁹ Schubert was the German

²² Freund, p. 97 and Erickson, p. 151. Hallgarten, p. 30, states that GEFU had specific tasks, but these are after-the-fact operations, not pre-determined, as he proposes them to be. Moreover, Hallgarten gives no citation for his claim. Earlier studies stated that a General von Borries was head of GEFU. Melville, p. 87, Hallgarten, p. 31, and Wheeler-Bennett, *Nemesis of Power*, p. 127, list him as head of GEFU. Recent studies (Carsten, Erickson, and Müller) do not mention Borries, but in fact place Tschunke as the chief of GEFU. Tschunke himself, in a letter to Rabenau that was reprinted in Epstein, "Der Seeckt Plan", p. 48 inferred that he was the leader of the organisation.

²³ Hallgarten, again undocumented, intimates that it was created sometime in 1920-1921. Epstein, p. 49, Erickson, p. 151, and Carsten, "Reichswehr and Red Army", p. 119, state that it was started sometime toward the end of 1921. However, in *Reichswehr and Politics*, p. 143, Carsten writes that GEFU was created toward the end of 1922. Müller, p. 99, says 1923.

²⁴ These dates are unsupported by evidence. It seems as if *Sondergruppe R* and GEFU are interchanged arbitrarily.

²⁵ Melville, p. 88, reports that "at regular weekly and fortnightly intervals, GEFU remitted to Moscow sums amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars." Wirth gave *Sondergruppe R* 75 Million RM in the autumn of 1921. Erickson, p. 151. Wirth's involvement is discussed on pages 54 and 58 of this chapter.

²⁶ Müller, p. 99.

²⁷ Müller, pp. 141-142. Tschunke apparently financed his own dealings through GEFU.

²⁸ Hilger, p. 7.

officer attached to the Red Army flank, at Simons' request and Seeckt's suggestion, in August 1920 during the Soviet advance on Warsaw.³⁰ Because he spoke fluent Russian, Schubert was appointed by Seeckt as liaison officer between German arms representatives and the Soviet War Commissariats.³¹ Schubert appeared to have some difficulties with the Soviets at one point, but no details are known.

Only fleeting bits of information are known of Colonel Nicolai, another member of *Sondergruppe R*. He was the former head of German Intelligence and was sent to Moscow in January 1921 to set the stage for negotiations, but he is not reported on again.³² Otto Hasse,³³ Seeckt's aide and later Chef des Truppenamtes in 1921, was also a member of T3R, but is mentioned only as a negotiator in talks with industrialists and Soviet representatives in the summer of 1921 and later in the autumn when he was one of several on a mission to the Soviet Union.³⁴ Lieutenant Lieth von Thomsen, a later director of the flying school in Lipetsk, was a member of this secret organisation, but is mentioned only once before 1922. He was one of the military negotiators in the discussions of the summer of 1921. These talks of 1921 were held in the apartment of Kurt von Schleicher, a close friend and political advisor to Seeckt, but opinions on his part in *Sondergruppe R*, beyond these apartment talks, conflict.³⁵ Few government officials were

²⁹ Radek apparently lent Colonel Schubert a copy of the *Communist Manifesto* sometime after the armistice and before Radek left for Germany in 1918. Carr, "Radek's Political Salon", p. 418.

³⁰ Müller, p. 99.

³¹ Müller, p. 99.

³² Freund, p. 85. Melville reports that Colonel Nicolai visited Russia with regularity after 1921, but it is not known in what capacity. Actually, Seeckt may not have wanted to use the services of Nicolai as he was a close affiliate of Hindenburg. Hans Berndorff, *General zwischen Ost und West; aus den Geheimnissen der Deutschen Republik* (Hamburg, 1951), pp. 91-94.

³³ Not the Paul Hasse that Erickson and Hallgarten refer to, pp. 151 and 31 respectively, nor the Ludwig Hasse, as Wheeler-Bennett reports in *Nemesis of Power*, p. 127.

³⁴ Erickson, p. 151; Carsten, "Reichswehr and Red Army", p. 118.

³⁵ Wheeler-Bennett, *Nemesis of Power*, pp. 127-128, states that Schleicher was the moving spirit in the negotiations in August 1921, but Carsten in *Reichswehr and Red Army*, p. 120, note 18, says that this is not borne out by the evidence. See Melvin Stealy, *Kurt von Schleicher and*

made aware of the activities of *Sondergruppe R*: Maltzan, an accomplice of Seeckt's of sorts because of his unwavering leaning toward relations with the Soviet Union, was aware of the activities of the Reichswehr in the Soviet Union, if not specifically of the creation of *Sondergruppe R*; and Josef Wirth, Finance Minister and then Chancellor, in his capacities in the German government made funds available to Seeckt for *Sondergruppe R*, but only after Seeckt requested this of him.³⁶ Information on the secret funding was imparted to Maltzan, Finance Minister Dieterich, Haeckel also of the Finance Ministry, State Secretaries Popitz, Schwerin von Krosigk of the Accounting Office, and two members of the Reichstag's Appropriations Committee, Ersing and Stücklen.³⁷ Importantly, Seeckt, although the creator of *Sondergruppe R*, distanced himself from the negotiations as much as he was able.

However, slightly more information is available on General Oskar Ritter von Niedermayer, and it is through his activities that the dealings of T₃R are exposed. Niedermayer seems to have been the most flamboyant member of *Sondergruppe R*. According to later Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, Niedermayer made outlandish promises to the Soviets that annoyed German negotiators who had no intentions of committing themselves to such offers.³⁸ Niedermayer also fancied himself a war hero for his successes in Afghanistan and Persia, and he revelled in hearing himself called the "German Lawrence". He apparently had contacts with the Soviets before 1920, although these have not been revealed. His work for *Sondergruppe R* began in earnest after April 1921. He made many trips between Moscow and Berlin, and was a chief negotiator, along with Schubert,

the Political Activities of the Reichswehr, 1919-1926 (PhD dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1971), pp. 210-215, for the role of Schleicher. He was the political advisor of Seeckt and only housed the talks because of the proximity of his apartment to the War Ministry.

³⁶ See note 25 above. In January 1921, the three (Wirth, Maltzan, and Seeckt) held a meeting and decided against informing President Ebert. Müller, p. 44.

³⁷ Speidel, p. 52.

³⁸ Müller, p. 99.

in forging contracts between German businesses and the Soviet government.³⁹

Few other individuals seem to have participated in the early activities of *Sondergruppe R*. Several names are mentioned once or twice in describing negotiations, but they rarely reappear.⁴⁰ This is especially true for a Major von Borries, who is described as the head of *Sondergruppe R*,⁴¹ and a Colonel von Lücken, who is mentioned in talks between the Soviets and the German military in 1921. In fact, their names appear so infrequently, that researchers may surmise that Seeckt kept the personnel and the activities of *Sondergruppe R* undercover by the use of code, although only a few code names are known (a testimony of Seeckt's efficiency). The Reichswehr itself was given the name "Kupferberg Gold"⁴² and innocuous champagne terminology was used to describe the plans of the military establishment in the Soviet Union and Germany. The Soviet Union was referred to as "R", German/Soviet factories were numbered and referred to only by number,⁴³ and active Reichswehr officers trained at the Lipetsk flying school were termed "markers", in contrast to "youngmarkers", officer-cadets trained at Lipetsk before their entry into the Reichswehr.⁴⁴ In a contract between *Sondergruppe R* and Junkers, the latter was referred to as "N.N.", the Soviet Union as "R.R.", and airplanes were "boxes".⁴⁵ Niedermayer was referred to

³⁹ Müller, p. 99.

⁴⁰ Köstring, aide to Seeckt in the Enver Pasha mission was later stationed as military attaché in Moscow, and probably participated in clandestine operations, but no specifics are known. Hilger, p. 192,

⁴¹ See note 22 above.

⁴² Müller, p. 98. A complete file under the name of Kupferberg Gold, concerning the activities of the Reichswehr, 1923-1928, exists in the Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts in Bonn. Müller, pp. 353-355.

⁴³ Georges Castellan, "Reichswehr et Armée Rouge 1920-1939", J. B. Duroselle (ed.), *Les Relations Germano-Soviétique 1933-1939* (Paris, 1954), p. 157, refers to the airplane factory at Fili as Number 2 and the Krupp tank factory in Manych as Number 8.

⁴⁴ Speidel, pp. 21 and 28.

⁴⁵ Mueller, "Rapallo Reexamined", note on page 116.

as Neumann and Tschunke was Teichmann.⁴⁶ Hence it may be surmised that Borries was Fischer and Lücken may have been Schubert; the possibilities are endless.⁴⁷ The extent of this concealment of names and events underscores the very secret nature of German and Soviet military collaboration.

Seeckt's first documented move toward establishing relations with the Soviet Union after the formation of *Sondergruppe R* was the dispatch of Colonel Nicolai to Moscow to lay the groundwork for negotiations in January 1921. Nicolai must have told the Soviet Defense Commissariat of German plans to circumvent the Treaty of Versailles in the Soviet Union and to request their cooperation in the matter. The Soviets were obviously amenable to such plans, as the role of Vigdor Kopp in Berlin was altered to encompass the duties of a negotiator between Moscow, German armament firms and the Reichswehr. Indeed Kopp played at least as large a part in the success of *Sondergruppe R* as did Niedermayer.⁴⁸ Both travelled extensively to and from Moscow, and were principal conspirators in contract talks between *Sondergruppe R*, German industrial magnates, and the Soviet Union.

Seeckt's first matter of business once the groundwork was laid by Nicolai, was to persuade the German arms firms that Russia would be a suitable place for the build-up of arms and machinery, and that the Soviets would be suppliant partners. Krupp agreed in January 1921 to circumvent the military restrictions of Versailles in the Soviet Union, as did the airplane manufacturer, Albatrosswerke, and the naval supplier Blohm and Voss.⁴⁹ Indeed after fairly lengthy conversations through February and March, Kopp, who had been requested by Seeckt to participate in these negotiations, wrote to Trotskii on April 7, 1921 that the project with the German manufacturers

⁴⁶ Melville, p. 91. Although Erickson, p. 158, states that Teichmann was Schubert.

⁴⁷ Hallgarten, p. 31, however, attaches an identity to Borries. His full name was Karl von Borries (General) and he was the leader of the Tenth Army Corps in Metz during the war.

⁴⁸ Freund, p. 85.

⁴⁹ Müller, p. 43.

was progressing well.⁵⁰ Albatrosswerke was ready to build airplanes in Russia; Blohm and Voss, submarines; and Krupp, shells and munitions.⁵¹ A technical mission was to be sent to the Soviet Union before the beginning of May to gauge whether existing Russian factories could be used for the three firms' respective operations. Kopp mentioned to Trotskii that the Reichswehr's representative would be "Neumann", who was, according to Kopp's letter, known to the People's Commissar for War. The technical mission arrived in Petrograd sometime in April 1921, and consisted of Kopp, Niedermayer, prisoner-of-war relief organiser, Gustav Hilger, and Vice Commissar for Foreign Affairs Karakhan.⁵² According to Hilger's account, the factories were in total disrepair, entirely unsuitable to accommodate large scale arms and heavy machinery manufacture. Consequently, Niedermayer advised the Reichswehr in a report to abandon the idea of using existing Soviet facilities for rearming. New factories would have to be built if such operations were to be undertaken.⁵³

The inadequacy of preexisting Soviet facilities was a significant drawback to German rearmament in the Soviet Union. The ability to use Soviet plants would have facilitated Germany's efforts to build arms and certainly would have eased the cost of the endeavour. Full-scale construction of factories was an entirely different matter and involved a need for capital, something which was in short supply in Germany in 1921. Industrialists were, therefore, justifiably hesitant to undertake such a large operation. The 6 May trade agreement between the governments of the Soviet Union and Germany reduced somewhat the reticence of the industrial establishments, but they remained unconvinced of the feasibility of full-scale investment in the Soviet Union.

⁵⁰ This Kopp letter is in the Trotskii archives at Harvard and includes Lenin's approving notes. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics*, pp. 135-136. Concurrent to the talks instigated by the Reichswehr, in the spring of 1921 Leonid Krassin had asked Gustav Behrendt (leader of the Eastern Division of the foreign office) to negotiate with the German industrialists. ADAP A IV, pp. 382-383.

⁵¹ Weidenfeld reported that the conclusion of the agreements was a great step in German-Soviet relations. ADAP A VI, p. 69.

⁵² Hilger, p. 195.

⁵³ Hilger, p. 195.

In light of the reluctance of the German industrial concerns, Seeckt was forced to take more practical steps to ensure their compliance with his rearmament schemes. According to Niedermayer's report on his talks with Junkers in July 1921, industrialists would only speculate in the Soviet Union if guaranteed that they would not be liable for financial loss.⁵⁴ Indeed, after the abysmal outcome of the Niedermayer mission to the Soviet Union in April 1921, talks had been ongoing throughout the summer of 1921 in the apartment of Schleicher between industrialists, the Reichswehr and Soviet representatives Kopp and Krassin (now in Berlin as the Soviet representative from the 6 May agreement) to discuss how the problem could be resolved.⁵⁵ In July, Niedermayer, Schubert, and Tschunke led a mission to speak with Lenin.⁵⁶ Although it is not known whether they saw the Soviet leader in person, Lenin, in response to an anonymous report, agreed to a policy of economic concessions for German businesses, thereby creating the incentives the industrialists desired.⁵⁷ For his part, in September 1921, Seeckt told Wirth of his plans to rearm in the Soviet Union and of the obstacles he was encountering with the industrial establishment. Reportedly, Wirth placed 75,000,000 RM at Seeckt's disposal, and continued to issue money to *Sondergruppe R* in the succeeding years.⁵⁸ Seeckt used this money to finance German industry's undertakings in the Soviet Union. Seeckt's initiative and planning, and Lenin's policy of concessions, apparently satisfied the demands of German business, for in the autumn of 1921 the first of the mixed Soviet-German companies were founded: Derutra, Deruluft, and Derumetall.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Fritz Tschunke to Rabenau February 13, 1939, reprinted in Epstein, "Der Seeckt Plan", pp. 47-48. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, Vol. III, p. 317, 362-363 and Carr, *German-Soviet Relations*, p. 57.

⁵⁵ Erickson, p. 151; Freund, p. 95.

⁵⁶ Carr, *German-Soviet Relations*, p. 57.

⁵⁷ The instigation of concessions ran parallel to Lenin's New Economic Policy, proclaimed in March 1921 after the Tenth Congress of the All-Russian Communist Party. Rosenbaum, pp. 8-9.

⁵⁸ See note 25 in this chapter. Rabenau, p. 308, reports that Seeckt approached Wirth in October 1921.

⁵⁹ Himmer, p. 152.

There is a considerable divergence of opinion on the functions of these companies, but it would be naive to discount the possibility that they served a military purpose, or at least a basis for a potential military use. Derumetall was a joint Russo-German company for scrap metal and Deruluft for air transport.⁶⁰ Derutra, whose nascence is dated ambiguously,⁶¹ was a mixed company in which Hamburg-Amerika Linie and the Soviet Union trade mission were stock holders, and whose function was to provide land and sea transport between the two countries. Little is known of the fate of these companies, but it is fair to surmise that Deruluft aided in the construction of the flying schools, and Derumetall in the ammunition factories. Derutra was undoubtedly employed to transport German workers and materials to the Soviet Union and finished products back to Germany. Indeed, there is every possibility that the companies camouflaged those companies erected in the autumn of 1921 that were designed specifically to circumvent the Treaty of Versailles:⁶² companies such as Bersol, which had initiated plans for the construction of a poisonous gas factory near Samara, and Krupp, which had signed a concession for a tank factory at Kazan⁶³ and probably for munitions factories at Tula, Leningrad and Schlüsselburg on Lake Lagoda.⁶⁴ Indeed, in September 1921, Junkerswerke had drawn up plans for the construction of a plane and airmotor factory in Fili outside of Moscow, and in December 1921, Niedermayer, Schubert and two Junkers representatives, Spalock and Sachsenberg, finalised these plans.⁶⁵ In March 1922, the first contracts were

⁶⁰ Himmer, p. 152.

⁶¹ White, p. 150, gives the date as May 1921. Freund, p. 90, says the autumn, and Himmer, p. 152, gives no date, but infers sometime before March 1922.

⁶² Melville, pp. 94-109, states that these companies were involved in serious artillery manufacture and transport, but his dates are sketchy and his sources are undisclosed.

⁶³ Melville, pp. 117-118, reports that Krupp concession produced arms, and Ruth Fischer in *Stalin and German Communism*, p. 528, reports that it was a mining concession. Carr, *German-Soviet Relations*, p. 55, denies that the Krupp factory was anything but legitimate, and concurs with Hilger, p. 172, who states that the factory was an agricultural concession used to experiment with grains and farm equipment. Moreover, Hilger is indignant that Fischer suggested such slander. Melville, p. 118, states, however, that Hilger was one of the negotiators of the Krupp concession contract.

⁶⁴ Hallgarten, p. 30; Carsten, *Reichswehr and Red Army*, p. 121.

⁶⁵ Castellan, p. 152.

signed between the Soviet government and Junkerswerke whereby the Soviets agreed to buy German-made planes. 40,000,000 RM was placed at the disposal of Junkerswerke by *Sondergruppe R* to ensure against any possible financial loss.⁶⁶

Secure in the knowledge that his efforts to help German industry circumvent the limitations imposed on them by the settlement of Versailles had been successful, Seeckt turned his attention to the completion of the second phase of his plan to neutralise Poland and dissolve France's hegemony on the continent: the build up of a finely trained army capable of using state of the art weaponry and machinery.

The biggest blow to Seeckt at the peace negotiations was the 100,000 men limitation on the German Army. He bitterly resented Brockdorff-Rantzau, the leader of the German delegation to Versailles, for not more vehemently expressing outrage at the clause,⁶⁷ and Seeckt consistently harangued the delegates to the post-peace conferences to seek amendments on the imposed limit. Seeckt himself went to the Spa Conference in July 1920 to express his opinion,⁶⁸ but the Western powers remained as intransigent on the question of the 100,000 man army as they were on the payment of reparations. The German police force was subsequently padded and paramilitary organisations were formed, but the presence, if not necessarily the vigilance, of the Inter-Allied Disarmament Commission was a constant annoyance and frustrated Seeckt's quest to increase the 100,000 man limit. Soviet Russia, beyond the jurisdiction of the Inter-Allied Disarmament Commission, was an ideal place for training and increasing the number of German army personnel. By the autumn of 1921, Seeckt had laid down a framework for the evolution of heavy industry - he now needed finely trained regiments.

Soviet-Reichswehr talks underwent a discernable change in the autumn of 1921, as a result of Seeckt's desire to reorient the military collaboration to the training of troops. Negotiations included fewer representatives from

⁶⁶ Castellan, p. 152; Carsten, *Reichswehr and Politics*, p. 138.

⁶⁷ Brockdorff-Rantzau felt that by accepting the military clauses of the Treaty he could gain compensation in others. Freund, p. 44.

⁶⁸ See page 39, note 24.

German industry and more from Army personnel. In September 1921, Otto Hasse, Chef des Truppenamtes, Colonel Lieth-Thomsen of the German airforce, Fritz Fischer, leader of *Sondergruppe R*, and Niedermayer, met with Krassin and Kopp at the apartment of Kurt von Schleicher⁶⁹ to discuss, among many things, the possibility of building a Luftwaffe training center deep in Soviet territory.⁷⁰ In November 1921, Hasse, accompanied by Admiral Hintze of the Reichsmarine, went to Moscow and met with Trotskii and Lebedev⁷¹ (second to Trotskii in the Soviet War Commissariat) and, in January 1922, Niedermayer (who had recently concluded plans with Junkerswerke at Fili) returned to Moscow accompanied by Karl Radek, now alias as Constantin Romer.⁷² Concurrent to the economic/diplomatic talks that Krestinski and Radek were having with the German government, Radek was also involved in a series of discussions with the German military.⁷³ It seems that the question of a joint German-Soviet attack on Poland was a topic of these discussions and had been broached in the Hasse/Hintze-Trotskii/Lebedev talks of the previous month in Moscow.⁷⁴ Radek asked Fischer about the possibility of such a cooperation at the end of January 1922.⁷⁵ The idea of a joint effort against the Poles must have triggered some debate within the ranks of *Sondergruppe R*, as Seeckt himself, in what were to be rare episodes, received high Russian officers to the Truppenamt on February 7, 1922⁷⁶ and met with Radek on February 10.⁷⁷ Hasse, who had been

⁶⁹ Carsten, *Reichswehr and Politics*, p. 120; Erickson, p. 151.

⁷⁰ Speidel, p. 18.

⁷¹ Freund, p. 99. Erickson includes Hintze, p. 151.

⁷² Goldbach, p. 108. She includes the journalist Waurwick, who is mentioned in Helbig, "Die Moskauer Mission des Grafen Brockdorff-Rantzau", p. 309, as a contact of Seeckt.

⁷³ Freund, p. 100.

⁷⁴ Rabenau, pp. 308-309.

⁷⁵ Goldbach, p. 108.

⁷⁶ Selchow, Seeckt's adjutant, recorded the visits of several high Soviet officials to the War Ministry. Carr, *German-Soviet Relations*, p. 59.

⁷⁷ Hallgarten, p. 31, states that Seeckt met the Soviets on 8 December. This is not corroborated in any other source.

enthusiastic about the possibility of a joint German-Soviet action against Poland, was eager for Seeckt to meet with the Soviets and settle the details. However, Seeckt was less ebullient than Hasse and questioned the sincerity of the Soviets, as well as the timeliness of the proposed move against Poland.⁷⁸ Seeckt was, however, very interested in taking steps to ensure the success of a future German-Soviet campaign against Poland and in the 7 February meeting with the Red Army officials, he discussed the idea of direct German troop participation in the training of the Red Army and the establishment of several experimental training facilities operated by both the Reichswehr and the Red Army.⁷⁹ It is not known if the Soviets were immediately amenable to Seeckt's suggestion, but the idea resulted in the establishment of the flying school in Lipetsk in the following year, and negotiations for the Junkers concession in the Soviet Union were amended to include the possibility of using commercial planes to train personnel.⁸⁰ In August 1923 a military agreement between the two armies was signed which formed the basis for Reichswehr-Red Army training collaboration.⁸¹

By April, 1922, the foundation had been laid for the Reichswehr's collaboration with the Soviet government and the Soviet military. Close interaction would gradually intensify over the next years, resulting in joint training operations between the two military establishments. Seeckt had forged, after his ascendance to Chef der Heeresleitung, a secret German-Soviet relationship distinctly different from, and dangerously at odds with, the foreign office. Although Wirth, Maltzan and a handful of other government officers were aware of the contact and the exchanges between the Reichswehr and the Red Army, official German foreign policy was reluctant to reestablish intimate contact with the Soviet state.

Thus, before the conference at Genoa there existed a dichotomy in both the attitude and the relationship of the German government and the

⁷⁸ Freund, pp. 112-113. Based on the Hasse diary, which is, in reality, Lieber's notes.

⁷⁹ Carstén, *Reichswehr and Politics*, p. 138; Freund, pp. 112-113.

⁸⁰ ADAP A VI, p. 122. Taken from a letter from Otto Hasse to Maltzan, written in April 1922. Hasse also mentioned that Junkers use of metal planes in their commercial enterprise was beneficial to the German military.

⁸¹ Freund, p. 205.

Reichswehr toward the Soviet Union. The government maintained a tendency to the West, convinced only of the defensive use of a Soviet alliance to procure revision of the Treaty of Versailles, and was not inclined to a Soviet alliance *per se*. Seeckt's Reichswehr was oriented toward the Soviet Union and bitterly opposed compromise with the guarantors of the dictate of Versailles. German industrialists possessed no foreign policy leanings beyond those that promised economic profit, and, before Genoa, favoured, with few exceptions, a pact with the West and the acceptance of a consortium against the Soviet Union. Yet, it was the Reichswehr's Soviet inclination that was supported by the signing of the Treaty of Rapallo at the Genoa Conference.

CHAPTER V: GENOA AND RAPALLO

The Genoa Conference of April/May 1922 was the "largest and most representative international gathering that had taken place since the Paris Peace Conference".¹ Convoked at the Cannes Conference of January 1922, its aim was to address the economic problems of post-war Europe and was to include, for the first time since the peace negotiations, delegates from every country in Europe. 42 prime ministers, and a total of 216 other delegates or experts were listed in the official directory of delegations.² Over 800 journalists were present,³ and in grand total, over 5000 people were in Genoa for or because of the conference.⁴

Aside from all the optimism that surrounded the conference because of its objective of curing the economic malaise of Europe, the Western powers were plagued by differences on how that was to be accomplished even before the convocation of the conference. Lloyd George of Great Britain was eager to find a fruitful and accommodating solution to the problem of economic reconstruction with Germany and was willing to be conciliatory to Soviet counterclaims to the proposition of a consortium.⁵ The French (represented by Louis Barthou, deputy premier, because Poincaré had to remain in France),

¹ White, p. vii.

² White, p. 121.

³ White, p. 121, lists Ernest Hemingway for the *Toronto Star*, Max Eastman for the *New York World*, Wickham Steed for the *London Times*, and Edgar Mourer for the *Chicago Daily News*. Maynard Keynes was a special correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian*. Hemingway, who wrote "Russian Girls at Genoa" from his experiences there, seemed to be struck by the scantily clad Russian secretaries at the Imperial Hotel at Santa Margarita where the Soviets were housed. *Hemingway By-Line: 75 Articles and Dispatches of Four Decades* (London, 1968): 46-47. Reprinted from the *Toronto Daily Star*, 24 April.

⁴ White, p. 121. The United States, although initially stating that they would attend the conference, declined in March 1922. *ADRK, Wirth*, p. 675.

⁵ White, p. 136.

unlike Great Britain, were firmly against closer collaboration with Germany, as well as the reduction of French rights to compensation for Tsarist debts from the Soviets.⁶

In the opening remarks of the delegates at the conference, Chicherin stated that the economic restoration of Europe and Russia would be impossible if the Soviets were obliged to accept the responsibility of previous debts⁷ and, in the first meeting of the Soviets and the Western allies, Chicherin further clarified the Soviet position by stating that the Soviet government and people were no longer representative of Tsarist Russia and could not, indeed would not, honour the debts of the Tsarist regime. Moreover, Chicherin presented the West with a sum of financial payments that the Soviet government requested in compensation for the devastation caused by the participation of British and French troops in the Russian Civil War.⁸ The British delegation was mortified at the Soviet claim; the French were little less affected. After barely a few days, the Genoa Conference was precariously close to disaster; the French demands for Soviet responsibility for Tsarist debts were implacable, and the British efforts at reconciliation were met with Soviet rebuke. According to the German delegations' recollections of the Conference events,⁹ however, the Western powers and the Soviets had been progressively ameliorating their relations, while the German delegation had been practically ignored. The German account revealed that Western preoccupation with the Soviet problem led the Germans to believe that they

⁶ White, p. 132.

⁷ Carole Fink, *The Genoa Conference* (Chapel Hill, 1984), pp. 153-154.

⁸ Fink, p. 160.

⁹ The official German recollection was written by Ago von Maltzan. Actually, he wrote two documents: "Letzte Vorgänge vor der Unterzeichnung des deutsch-russischen Vertrages" on 17 April and the longer "Ausführliche Aufzeichnung über die letzten Vorgänge vor der Unterzeichnung des deutsch-russischen Vertrages" on 17 or 18 April. Both are reprinted in Ernst Laubach, "Maltzan's Aufzeichnungen über die letzten Vorgänge vor dem Abschluss des Rapallo Vertrages" in *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 22 (1975): 554-579. The first version was given to Lord D'Abernon, who included it (anonymously) in *Versailles to Rapallo*, pp. 311-315. This account indicated that the German delegation had been forced to sign the Treaty of Rapallo. The second version was shown to Count Harry Kessler, who included it, albeit with omissions and including his own commentary, in his recollections, *Walter Rathenau: His Life and Work* (New York, 1930), pp. 312-325. The omissions are replaced in Laubach and can also be found in *ADAP A VI*, pp. 122-130. Maltzan's account is the only German one available.

were being rebuffed and purposely isolated from negotiations concerning European reconstruction. The Germans were driven to negotiate with the Soviets and thereafter forced to conclude the Treaty of Rapallo to prevent the ratification of a treaty between the Western powers and the Soviet state. The Germans maintained that the Treaty of Rapallo was strictly a defensive agreement. Although the German delegation may indeed have been disregarded by the Western powers during the first few days at Genoa, which may have given them some degree of psychological impetus to sign the treaty, the story is more complicated.

German-Soviet diplomatic relations had progressed at a relatively rapid rate after January 1922, peaking during the early April stopover of the Soviets in Berlin before the conference. However, this was short-lived as relations cooled substantially before the Soviets departed on 6 April. Thereafter, prospects for a separate German-Soviet treaty were bleak, and early German-Soviet dealings at the conference gave no indication that the situation had changed. French, British and other Inter-Allied intelligence agencies who had been alarmed by the German-Soviet rapprochement in April, were now placated by the apparent German-Soviet frost, and were reporting to their respective governments that fairly serious differences of opinion reduced the chances at German and Soviet entente.¹⁰

According to Ago von Maltzan, the German path toward Soviet entente began after the German delegation read the Genoa experts' report on the proceedings of the conference of 11 April.¹¹ The report confirmed the nagging suspicion of the German government and delegation that Russia had the legal right to reparations under article 116 of the Versailles settlement.¹² Maltzan stated that he approached the British delegation with his concerns about the Soviet's claims, and elucidated that during their stay in Berlin at the beginning of April, the Soviets had been accommodating on the issue of their claims to reparations. The British delegates understood Maltzan's

¹⁰ White, pp. 152-153.

¹¹ The proceedings of the first week are expertly recounted in Fink, pp. 143-176.

¹² White, p. 156.

concerns, but offered no solution.¹³ Concurrently, Maltzan stated that reports were reaching the German delegation about the proceedings between the West and the Soviets, and on 14 April a member of the Italian delegation reported that an agreement between them was imminent.¹⁴ The Soviets would be willing to recognise the Western powers' pre-war debts over long-term leases, and special consideration would be extended for nationalised property.¹⁵

German fears that an agreement between the former Entente powers and the Soviet delegation would be concluded at the expense and exclusion of Germany were heightened on 15 April when the German delegation's press secretary, Oscar Müller, reported to Berlin that negotiations to that end were in progress.¹⁶ Later that day, Maltzan met Soviet representatives Joffe and Rakovsky and was given their version of the progress of Western-Soviet talks. Maltzan, in an effort to preclude the Soviets from concluding what he believed (or what he was led to believe) was an imminent agreement, told the two Soviets that the German government would be willing to change their 4 April stance on the debt and nationalisation claims if the Soviets would renounce their claims to reparations under article 116. The Soviets were apparently receptive to the idea and expressed their ability to sign the treaty the Soviets had drawn up as a consequence of the 3 April talks in Berlin. According to Maltzan, he contacted the British delegation immediately with news of the possible event, but failed to reach them. In the late afternoon, Maltzan bumped into Wise, the British government's authority on Russian affairs, and told him of the proceedings with the Soviets. Wise retorted that

¹³ The British delegates also promised that they would relate the information to Lloyd George. White, p. 156.

¹⁴ ADAP A VI, p. 60. Francesco Giannini was officially charged with keeping the German delegation informed of the negotiations that were proceeding between the Soviets and the Western powers. According to the Italian government, he carried out his duty satisfactorily. Fink, p. 165. But Kessler, *Walter Rathenau*, p. 300, queried "what it was that Giannini said and how far it was admissible for Rathenau to rely on him alone without obtaining more information."

¹⁵ White, pp. 156-157.

¹⁶ Müller based his finding on his talk with Giannini. ADAP A VI, p. 131.

Western-Soviet negotiations were themselves very near a successful conclusion of a treaty.¹⁷

The events of the early morning and the day of 16 April, Easter Sunday, are well-known and have been recounted in reasonable detail. At 1:00 A.M. Joffe telephoned the German delegation to report that the Soviet delegation would be pleased to resume the discussions that were suspended from the beginning of April, and invited the Germans to their hotel at Rapallo for this purpose. Maltzan tried to contact Wise at 8:00 A.M. and again at 9:00 A.M., but was initially told that he was asleep and then that he was out for the day. The German delegation set out for Rapallo and arrived at 11:30 A.M. At 7:00 P.M., after lengthy discussion concerning Germany's right to equally favourable compensation for nationalised property and debts than were offered to other powers, the Treaty of Rapallo was signed. Maltzan later told Lord D'Abernon, who recounts it in his memoirs, that the Germans had spent a harrowing evening on 15 April and had gone to bed gloomy and agitated that negotiations for a treaty had been discussed and nearly completed by the Soviets and Western powers in exclusion of the Germans.¹⁸ The Soviet telephone call in the middle of the night¹⁹ had spurred the Germans to surmise that the West and the Soviets had not yet come to a mutual agreement and, therefore, became eager to conclude an agreement of their own with the Soviets to preclude the possibility of German isolation. Maltzan went to Rathenau, who was "pacing anxiously in mauve pajamas"²⁰ to persuade him to resume talks with the Soviets. Rathenau was reluctant,²¹

¹⁷ Maltzan's account to D'Abernon, pp. 313-314.

¹⁸ Fink, p. 171.

¹⁹ Laubach, p. 571, note 81, states that it is a mystery as to which Russian phoned, although White, p. 231, note 41, says it was Andrei Sabanin who telephoned. Peter Krüger, at a 1989 meeting of the German Historical Association in Washington D.C., maintained that it was a German delegate who made the phone call. He named Albert Dufour von Feronce who later became Ambassador to Great Britain. This information will be published in the autumn publication of Catherine Epstein (ed.), *Bulletin* (German Historical Institute, Washington D.C.).

²⁰ Kessler, p. 330.

²¹ Louis Fischer, *The Soviets in World Affairs*, Vol. I, pp. 339-340.

but Maltzan persuaded him to make the trip. There, after rigorous negotiations, the treaty was signed.

The Treaty of Rapallo²² contained 5 clauses: the first stated that under the provisions of the treaty both the Soviet Union and Germany agreed to renounce all claims for compensation against the other with respect to the war (this effectively dissolved the Soviet's right to claim reparations from Germany under article 116); according to clause two, the German government renounced all public and private claims arising out of the nationalisation of foreign property in the Soviet Union and the Soviet government's erasure of Tsarist debts, provided that the Soviets honoured no similar claims of other countries; article three allowed for the immediate resumption of diplomatic and consular relations; article four identified each power as the others most favoured nation; and article five called for the resumption of economic ties. In a secret exchange of notes on the same evening as the signing of the Treaty of Rapallo, the Soviet government guaranteed that if any other country's claims were honoured, the Germans would be honoured first.²³ The Germans, on their part, promised to refrain from any participation in the consortium.

The fact that the treaty was signed in direct violation of the settlement of Versailles and under the auspices of a conference designed to improve relations in Europe, was infuriating to the Western powers. The British were shocked and disappointed, and the French considered the situation very grave;²⁴ they insisted that no conference negotiations could continue until the treaty had been repudiated.²⁵ Lloyd George sought to remedy the

²² The Treaty is printed in League of Nations Treaty Series: *Publications of Treaties and International Engagements Registered with the Secretariat of the League*, 203 vols. (Geneva, 1920-1946) 19: 248-252. The Soviet delegation's hotel was in the locality of Santa Margarita. White, p. 158, suggests that Rapallo, the neighbouring locality, was easier to pronounce and therefore the treaty was named appropriately.

²³ *Documents on the Foreign Policy of the U.S.S.R.* Volume V (Moscow, 1961), pp. 225-226. The addendum was signed by Chicherin and Rathenau and was asked to be considered in confidence.

²⁴ An American journalist recounted that Poincaré said, "we can always count on Germany to make a blunder." Fink, p. 174.

²⁵ At a cabinet meeting held by the delegates at Genoa on 17 April, Wirth stated that the British would probably accept the treaty, while the French never would. *ADRK, Wirth*, p. 708.

situation and on 19 April met with Rathenau and Wirth.²⁶ After expressing his displeasure with the Soviet and German alliance, he asked if it could be nullified. Rathenau, although probably eager to show the German government's ability to comply, stated that it could not be done unless the Soviet government agreed.²⁷ The Soviets were willing to postpone the implementation of the Treaty until after the conclusion of the conference, but they were not prepared to dissolve it.²⁸ Rapallo gave the Soviet government exactly what they wanted: official recognition by a European power; an end to the Soviet government's long political and diplomatic isolation; and the dissolution of any threat that the Western powers would dictate a consortium. It was a treaty that was clearly advantageous for the Soviets.

In contrast, the Treaty of Rapallo was not as propitious for the German government. While it brought the Soviet state out of diplomatic isolation, it buried hopes for German concord with the Western powers. Germany's alliance with the Soviet state was a violation to the Treaty of Versailles, and was, according to the guarantors of the peace settlement, an affront to Western authority. Although the treaty clearly demonstrated that German foreign policy was an independent force, it brought with it the threat of Western penalty. And, on the issue of economic gains, German-Soviet trade grew steadily, but by the end of the 1920's it nevertheless fell short of the pre-war trade that the Germans and the Russians had enjoyed. According to a report made to Lord D'Abernon, German business leaders had found that their Soviet counterparts were "Jews in making a contract, and Russians in carrying a contract out."²⁹

Indeed, the Treaty of Rapallo was so distinctly weighted in favour of the Soviets, both in its terms and its implications,³⁰ that the Western delegates at Genoa were suspicious of its purpose. The West thought that the Germans would never have signed such a blatantly one-sided treaty unless it included

²⁶ ADAP A VI, p. 136.

²⁷ White, p. 161.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 161.

²⁹ D'Abernon wrote this in a report to Lord Curzon, October 27, 1922. White, p. 168.

³⁰ Peter Krüger, *Die Aussenpolitik der Republik von Weimar* (Darmstadt, 1985), p. 175.

some secret protocol which benefitted Germany. The conclusion drawn by the Western powers was that the treaty contained secret military clauses.³¹ Although this was not the case, the conspicuous advantages the Soviets derived from the Treaty of Rapallo warrant some speculation.

Members of the German government and foreign office came to the Conference at Genoa with hopes not unlike those they had entertained at the previous post-peace conferences. Unlike the previous Inter-Allied conferences, however, Genoa included representatives from many more nations. Because of that special dimension, the German government felt that their hopes for revision of the Treaty of Versailles would not be dashed as before.³² Nevertheless, the Germans were too wary not to follow a more practical and less optimistic course. Specifically, the German government cultivated a close relationship with the Soviets in the event that the West remained opposed to settlement revisions. But, because the German government favoured a Western orientation, they held the Soviets at bay. The German government could have signed a separate treaty with the Soviets before going to Genoa, but opted to wait for a possible successful outcome to the conference.

The early proceedings of the Genoa Conference dampened the German delegation's spirits and hopes for conciliation with the West. Whether provoked by the true course of events, or the one put forward by the Soviet delegation,³³ the Germans were genuinely concerned that they were being ostracised at the conference. Naturally, the Germans were sensitive to inference and innuendo directed against them. The Western powers were the guarantors of the peace, and it was known that the French were, as yet, not prepared to accept Germany into the European family. Thus, the German delegation was perhaps overly (but not surprisingly) affected by any actions that could be construed as an affront, regardless of whether they were

³¹ Mueller, *The Road to Rapallo*, p. 384.

³² At the same time, however, Rathenau felt that the large representation might unnaturally elevate the expectations of the participants. In a cabinet meeting on 5 April, Rathenau said that he would be pleased if the conference concluded without a disaster. *ADRK, Wirth*, p. 675.

³³ The Soviets, for their part, fueled German notions that Soviet-Western relations were cordial, but this was largely a ploy designed to lure the Germans away from supporting the Western consortium. White, p. 152.

intentional. These feelings may indeed have driven the German delegates to make rash judgements and hasty advances toward the Soviets. However, the Soviets, and in particular the Italian delegate Giannini, may have contributed to the German delegates' paranoia. The Soviet delegation maintained that they were near the conclusion of a treaty with the West, and Giannini, on the evening of 14 April, told Rathenau that such a treaty was in preparation. The German delegation, notwithstanding the efforts of the Soviets to convince them of the necessity to sign a separate treaty before the conclusion of one with the Western powers and the Soviet government, should have been aware of the steps the Soviets would take in order to ensure an abrogation of the consortium. Indeed, as soon as the Soviets made it known that they were willing to honour the treaty drafted in Germany on 4 April, the German delegates should have suspected that the prospect for a Western-Soviet pact had been exaggerated. If they were truly convinced of an imminent Western-Soviet accord and, hence, the need for a defensive treaty with the Soviets, it is peculiar that the German delegation did not respond to Lloyd George's urgent call to Rathenau at the Soviet delegation's hotel while they were there negotiating the Treaty of Rapallo.³⁴ It certainly was not because the Germans did not want to seem uncertain or vacillating in their opinion; they had demonstrated this tendency to the Soviet government on numerous occasions in times when a pact such as the Treaty of Rapallo, which carried far more serious implications for the German government and Western relations, was not at stake. And, in the final analysis, the Treaty of Rapallo was signed a mere six days after the convocation of the Genoa conference; a conference which was slated to last into May. Arguably, the eastern orientation faction, in the form of Maltzan, may have grown tired of the German government's unrewarded commitment to the West, and may have persuaded Rathenau to finally accept Soviet amity; but, the risk of the Western power's ire at a separate German-Soviet accord was very real. The French had, after all, marched into three Rhine towns in March 1921 over the reparations issue, and Rapallo was certainly as grievous a default of the Treaty of Versailles. Somehow, Maltzan and Rathenau must have known that the benefits of a separate treaty with the Soviet government outweighed the risks.

³⁴ White, p. 158; Fink, p. 173. Rathenau, learning of Lloyd George's invitation, allegedly said that the wine had been poured and it had to be drunk. Kessler, *Rathenau*, p. 324.

The Reichswehr, as has been discussed above, developed a relationship with the Soviet Union and the Red Army that was based on the mutual build-up of troops and arms. While arms manufacturers were not the only industries, German or otherwise, that had economic links and factories in the Soviet Union, their business enterprises were unique. The German arms manufacturers were building materials forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles in the Soviet Union. Troops were trained there as well. The reason these operations were undertaken in the Soviet Union was to avoid Western intervention, specifically by the Inter-Allied Disarmament Commission, and, as a consequence, Western penalty. Logically, the Reichswehr wanted to prevent the Western powers from discovering ongoing covert German rearmament in the Soviet Union.

In the past, the Reichswehr did not need to worry about extensive Western economic penetration into the Soviet Union. European business concerns were hesitant to invest in the Soviet Union. Indeed, the Reichswehr had a difficult time in persuading their own German industrial allies to venture into the Soviet Union. The fact that the West perceived the Soviet Union as an undesirable trading partner was precisely the reason why Seeckt viewed the Soviet Union as a desirable collaborator; Germany alone would be in the Soviet Union, out of sight and out of reach of the West and therefore free to undertake any operations she chose.

The Western consortium proposed in January 1922 potentially changed the Reichswehr's relationship with the Soviet Union. A Western consortium would open the Soviet Union to the West, giving mutual economic support and incentives to European industries who had been previously hesitant to venture in the Soviet state. The Soviet Union, teeming with foreign investors, companies, and their personnel, was an unsavoury image for the members of *Sondergruppe R*. Sooner or later, the West would discover the Reichswehr's operations in the Soviet Union. Although Seeckt could have made efforts to ensure the secrecy of the military operations in the Soviet Union, this would have entailed extensive cover-up such as that used within Germany; and operations in the Soviet Union were undertaken specifically to avoid this. Germany's conclusion of a separate treaty with the Soviet Union, however, would solve a number of Seeckt's problems: 1) it would give government support to German business, thereby aiding the arms industry and consequently Seeckt's plans to revamp

Germany's war effort; 2) it would supplant Western efforts for a consortium against the Soviet Union, thus ensuring German businesses' preeminent position in the Soviet Union; and, 3) furthermore, by supplanting a Western consortium, the presence of Western business in the Soviet Union, and consequently the possibility of discovering the Reichswehr's operations, would be minimised. Although their reasons were self-serving, the Soviets were willing accomplices to Seeckt's plans.

The fact that a separate treaty with the Soviets would, on the one hand, neutralise Germany's European business rivals in the Soviet Union and, on the other, clear the way for a continuation of Reichswehr/German industry and Reichswehr/Red Army operations, were results that were no doubt imparted to and understood by Seeckt's government allies, Maltzan and Wirth. Maltzan was keenly aware and interested in a Soviet-German cooperation since his installment in the Eastern Division of the Foreign Ministry in January of 1920,³⁶ and had known specifically about Seeckt's collusion, and later collaboration, with the Soviets as early as the summer of 1920. For his part, Wirth, in his capacity as Finance Minister and Chancellor, had been funnelling money to the Reichswehr to support Seeckt's efforts with the German arms industries and the Soviet Union.

The close affinity these men shared with Seeckt's plans for German and Soviet/Red Army collaboration is not a fact to be overlooked when addressing the question of why the Treaty of Rapallo was signed. Maltzan and Wirth were two of the principal delegates and negotiators at the Genoa Conference. It was Maltzan who, in his accounts, stressed the urgency to sign a treaty with the Soviet delegates. Although he claimed that the Soviets were on the verge of concluding a treaty with the West, this may have been exaggerated to strengthen Germany's alibi to the Western powers after the Treaty of Rapallo was signed. Even if no direct proof exists that he did so, it is reasonable to question whether Maltzan persuaded Rathenau to sign the Treaty because of ulterior motives, perhaps related to the Reichswehr's activities in the Soviet Union and Seeckt's wish to thwart the formation of a Western consortium.

³⁶ *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, Vol. 50 (Berlin, 1987), pp. 743-744.

The role of Chancellor Wirth at the Conference was mentioned with little regularity in Maltzan's account, but it is known that Wirth presented the first formal speech for the German delegation,³⁷ and was a member of the "pajama party"³⁸ on the eve of the Rapallo negotiations. He was not a member of the delegation that actually participated in the treaty negotiations in Rapallo. It is entirely feasible, however, that he was of the opinion that a treaty with the Soviets would be politically expedient, as he sent a telegram to President Ebert at approximately noon on Easter Sunday to inform him that a Russo-German agreement was imminent,³⁹ and another to Statesecretary for Political Affairs in the foreign office, Haniel, at 2:00 P.M., stating that such an agreement was needed.⁴⁰ Both were sent without the knowledge of the proceedings at Rapallo and hours before the treaty was actually signed. As testimony to his sentiments, Wirth would write a few months later that he was in complete agreement with Seeckt's plans in the Soviet Union.⁴¹

Apart from these two participants, Otto Hasse, Seeckt's Chef des Truppenamtes, was at Genoa at the behest of his superior to observe the proceedings. As intimately involved in the activities of *Sondergruppe R* as Hasse was, it is safe to assume that he maintained a pro-Soviet stance throughout the first six days of the conference and stood as a mirror of Seeckt to the other delegates. Interestingly, Hasse no longer remained at the conference once the treaty with the Soviets had been signed; on Easter Monday he visited Seeckt at Spa where he and his wife were vacationing, and told him of the news. According to Hasse, Seeckt was very pleased with the outcome.⁴² Before he left Genoa, however, Hasse wrote Maltzan a letter of particular interest about the status of the Junkers concession in the Soviet

³⁷ The speech was considered to be a tactless gesture as it was recited in German. Kessler, *Rathenau*, p. 288, called it thin and sterile.

³⁸ Kessler, *Rathenau*, pp. 322-323. Maltzan omitted him in his account. Fink, p. 172, note 110.

³⁹ Fink, p. 173. It arrived in Berlin at 2:40 P.M., hours before the Treaty was signed.

⁴⁰ *ADAP A VI*, p. 116. He wrote that all delegates agreed that a treaty would prevent the isolation of Germany.

⁴¹ Freund, p. 128.

⁴² Freund, p. 122.

Union, stressing that the Treaty of Rapallo was very valuable for Germany, and inferring that it was equally valuable for the German military.⁴³

The other noteworthy delegates at the conference did not maintain such an avowed leaning toward the Soviet Union as did Wirth, Maltzan and Hasse, but the role of Rathenau is no less interesting. Before negotiations were undertaken and after the Treaty was signed, Maltzan, in his accounts, painted Rathenau as an insipid diplomat and a spineless negotiator. Maltzan, by contrast, presented himself as an insightful and calculating statesman who assumed full responsibility for the initiation and conclusion of the treaty with the Soviets.⁴⁴ However, Maltzan had the good fortune to outlive the foreign minister (Rathenau was assassinated on June 24, 1922) and had time to present the events of the Genoa Conference to suit his own interpretation. It is fair to assume, however, that Rathenau was reluctant to sign a treaty with the Soviets, albeit not as apprehensive as Maltzan depicted. Although Rathenau kept an open mind on the possibilities of closer relations with the Soviet Union, he was more inclined to believe that German recuperation would be a byproduct of entente with the West, not with the Soviet state.⁴⁵ It is practically unimaginable that Rathenau would have desired to hinder, or possibly sever, relations with the West by concluding a treaty with the Soviets. Nevertheless, he did sign the treaty with the Soviet delegation, and he refused, during the negotiations, to respond to Lloyd George's request for a meeting. Judging from his character and his Western inclination, it is extraordinary that Rathenau did not take the opportunity to desist in the talks with the Soviets and to resume negotiations with the West. Either Rathenau felt that it was too late, or he was pressed to disregard Lloyd George's request and continue paving the road to German-Soviet entente. Since his close collaborators were Maltzan and Wirth, it is reasonable to assume that they impressed upon him the benefits of a separate treaty with the Soviets. Rathenau must have known (although there is no proof⁴⁶) of Seeckt's

⁴³ ADAP A VI, pp. 120-121. It was dated 17 April.

⁴⁴ Maltzan said that he raped Rathenau at Rapallo. Blücher, p. 161.

⁴⁵ At the 5 April cabinet meeting, Rathenau stated that he hoped the conference would promote a better understanding of German problems. ADRK, Wirth, p. 675.

⁴⁶ Interestingly, Hans Berndorff, *General zwischen Ost und West*, states that Rathenau asked Maltzan back at their hotel after the signing of the treaty with the Soviets, what Seeckt

collaboration with the Red Army and Soviet government before the Genoa conference. As co-director of A.E.G. he must have been approached by the Reichswehr with requests for his company's participation in the Soviet Union, especially since he himself had undertaken and advocated several rapprochements with the Soviet Union in 1919 and 1920. He may not have wanted to oblige the Reichswehr,⁴⁷ but Seeckt's allies were convinced of the advantages of signing the Treaty of Rapallo.

The chief negotiators at Genoa, Wirth, Maltzan, and Rathenau, may not have embarked for the conference expressly to sign a separate treaty with the Soviets. Had that been the case, there would have been nothing to impede them from signing the 3 April treaty with the Soviet representatives in Berlin. Maltzan and Wirth carried a responsibility to every faction of the German political establishment. Thus, they had to temper their penchant for cooperation with the Soviet Union and respect the incongruous opinions of their colleagues, who were distinctly against cooperation with the Soviets and for reconciliation with the West. Germany was, after all, a Western oriented country; a phenomenon that was reflected in her social and political structure. Moreover, the Western powers were the guarantors of the Peace Treaty and comprised the dominant force on the continent. It was through them that Germany searched for treaty revision, and because of them that her efforts were unsuccessful. An alliance with the Soviet government violated articles 258 and 433 of the Versailles peace settlement.⁴⁸ As a result, the conclusion of the Treaty of Rapallo carried the possibility that future concessions from the West would be difficult to acquire. Therefore, the ratification of the treaty was no small decision for the German establishment to make, nor for Maltzan or Wirth to instigate. For, regardless of how much they believed that the signing of the Treaty of Rapallo was a *tour de force*, there is no doubt that the delegates were aware of the serious ramifications of

would think of the treaty. Although this statement would help corroborate the theory that the Reichswehr played a major role in the Treaty of Rapallo, Berndorff's citation seems to be fabricated. He wrote that Herbert von Dirksen, *Moskau, Tokio, London: Erinnerungen und Betrachtungen zu 20 Jahren deutscher Aussenpolitik, 1919-1939* (Stuttgart, 1950), p. 46, reported this information, but no such statement exists.

⁴⁷ Himmer, pp. 148-149, suggests that Rathenau, for reasons of economic gain, was as aggressive an advocate of the Treaty of Rapallo as Wirth or Maltzan.

⁴⁸ See notes 11 and 16 of the introduction.

such a move. Judging from the German foreign office's previous vacillation, it is likely that the negotiators knew of additional reasons to sign the treaty that favourably counterbalanced the risk of Western revanche.

However, even with the incentives that a separate treaty afforded the Reichswehr, the foreign office could not make it appear as if a German-Soviet treaty was predetermined; it was politically expedient for Maltzan to put forward the claim that the Western powers' rebuke of the Germans at the conference had given the German delegates no recourse but to sign a treaty with the Soviets. Despite their support for Seeckt's plans, Maltzan and Wirth were first functionaries of the German foreign office whose official duty lay in reconciliation with the West.

CONCLUSION

The principal aim of German foreign policy after the First World War was to ameliorate relations with the guarantors of the Versailles Peace. As a result, German-Soviet relations were controlled by the German foreign office's commitment to the Western powers. Until the Treaty of Rapallo, German overtures to the Soviet Union were used merely as a diplomatic tool to procure concessions from London and Paris.

The German economic community was equally committed to rapprochement with the West. Although Russia had been a lucrative trading partner before the war and had the potential to be so again, the reconstruction of the German economy necessitated an engagement with the Western powers. At the convocation of the Genoa Conference, both the German government and the German economic establishment, were eager to resume relations with the West and were unconvinced of the merits of an alliance with the Soviet Union.

The Reichswehr, however, held a different view. For three years, General von Seeckt's military force had nurtured a relationship with the Soviet Union and Red Army in order to regain German military preeminence and to circumvent a reliance upon the Western powers for vindication. Before the Conference at Genoa, the Soviet Union was the Reichswehr's private armaments supplier and prospective army training centre. The goal of the Genoa Conference, namely the creation of a Western economic consortium against the Soviet Union, threatened to dissolve the special alliance the Reichswehr, the Soviet government, and the Red Army had developed. The signing of the Treaty of Rapallo, however, precluded the West's goal of imposing a consortium against the Soviet state, thereby removing the threat of Western economic penetration in the Soviet Union, and ensuring the secrecy of the Reichswehr's activities.

Given the knowledge that the conclusion of the Treaty of Rapallo 1) bolstered the Reichswehr's position in the Soviet Union, and 2) was contrary to the German government and economic establishment's avowed

commitment to ally with the Western powers, it is not reasonable to disregard a possible involvement of the Reichswehr in influencing the treaty signed at Rapallo. The general historical consensus, however, has been to dismiss this hypothesis specifically because no documentation exists to support it. Whether such evidence ever existed will probably never be ascertained, since documents were admittedly, "regularly and systematically destroyed"¹ However, the significant roles of Wirth and Maltzan at the conference, and Otto Hasse's letter to Maltzan after the treaty was signed, strongly suggest that the ambition of the Reichswehr was an important factor in the Treaty of Rapallo and should prompt researchers to address this potential relationship.

Maltzan and Wirth were privy to the progress of German-Soviet contacts and, as such, must have known the detrimental effect of a consortium on the Reichswehr in the Soviet Union. When, after just one week of the conference, they persuaded Rathenau to sign a separate treaty with the Soviets, they were aware of the implications of the manoeuvre, and the merits of the agreement for the Reichswehr. Maltzan's account, however, caused the Western powers then, and perhaps scholars later to believe, that the treaty was merely defensive and concluded in response to Western intransigence. Thus, an objective evaluation of the military aspects of the Treaty of Rapallo has been clouded because of Maltzan's political need to present the case that the Treaty of Rapallo carried no serious implications. But, according to Hasse's 17 April letter to Maltzan, the treaty did. The Treaty of Rapallo was a valuable agreement for the Reichswehr, as it ensured the unfettered growth of German-Soviet military relations.

¹ Helm Speidel, "Reichswehr und Rote Armee," p. 12. G. F. Mueller, "Rapallo Reexamined," p. 110, gives further support to this statement by citing a document of Director of the Eastern Division, Eric Walroth, which was marked "for destruction" in April 1923. The document concerned secret arrangements for German-Soviet military relations.

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