

Dariusz Jeziorny

**British Diplomacy and the
Concept of the Eastern Pact
(1933–1935)**

Analyses, Projects, Activities

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ibidem-Verlag
Stuttgart

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

First edition in Polish Łódź, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego (2011)

Translation: Katarzyna Gucio

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Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem, säurefreiem Papier
Printed on acid-free paper

ISBN: 978-3-8382-1070-4

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Stuttgart 2017

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Printed in the EU

To Professor Andrzej M. Brzeziński

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INTRODUCTION

British policy towards Germany after Adolf Hitler came to power on 30 January 1933 has been a subject of numerous studies that yielded hundreds of publications. The so-called Appeasement, as London's policy in 1933–1939 came to be known, was harshly condemned as soon as the war ended, although the criticism abated with time. As more new source materials came to light, one-sided assessment was no longer possible, especially since it often resulted from entanglement in contemporary political struggles. Some dubbed London's actions a policy of "realism," which paved the way for affirmation of Appeasement. Such views often involved the assertion that by the 1930s Britain had no longer been a world superpower, which in part relieved politicians who shaped the decisions of His Majesty's government in international relations of responsibility. With time, 1938–1939 came to be treated separately as characteristic of the policy of Appeasement, while previous actions the United Kingdom on the European arena were described as "deterrence diplomacy," emphasising the desire to deter potential aggressors primarily through renewed armament. For obvious reasons, the greatest interest in the issue of British policy towards continental Europe in the years immediately preceding World War Two has always been the domain of historians representing the English-speaking world.¹

British diplomacy is the main focus of this volume. The Foreign Office encountered a number of obstacles in its activities and had to reckon with the opinion of other factors. First of all, in the British structure of power, the government's policy was the responsibility of the prime minister. He was the one who decided what extent of freedom the secretary for foreign affairs had. During the terms of James Ramsay MacDonald (24 August 1931–7 June 1935) and Stanley Baldwin (7 June 1935–27 May 1937) as prime ministers, chiefs of British diplomacy had a relatively large range of autonomy in shaping London's involvement in the international arena. Both prime ministers of the so-called National Government deliberately left the decision in that area to Sir John Simon, and after the reconstruction of the cabinet, to Sir Samuel Hoare. However, the situation was also influenced by objective conditions. In the case of the former, his age and health played no small role, while in the case of the latter it was a well-known fact that he did not like to be involved in external affairs. Occasions when the cabinet made decisions regarding foreign policy as a whole body were few and far between. The situation began to change with the progression of the Italian-

¹ More information and basic bibliography in Brian J. C. McKercher, "National Security and Imperial Defence: British Grand Strategy and Appeasement, 1930–1939," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 18, 3 (2008): 393; McKercher, "Deterrence and the European Balance of Power: The Field Force and British Grand Strategy 1934–1938," *The English Historical Review* 123, 1 (2008): 99–100; Keith Neilson, *Britain, Soviet Russia and the Collapse of the Versailles Order, 1919–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 7–8.

Abyssinian conflict in 1935. Other ministers whose powers extended beyond the British Isles, namely the heads of the Dominion Office, the Colonial Office, the India Office, the Board of Trade, or ministries responsible for the defence of Great Britain: the War Office, the Admiralty and the Air Ministry had relatively little to say regarding the foreign policy of London. A special role in the government was reserved for chancellor of exchequer, who was said to be the most important minister. In the period in question, Neville Chamberlain held that office. He was a man of strong character, who tried to influence the foreign policy of the United Kingdom. To achieve that, he used his competence in the field of budgeting, which meant that he could orchestrate the transfer of funds for purposes he recognised as priority. In Chamberlain's case, his ambitions extended further, however. He was particularly active in issues concerning the Far East, where he tried to promote his concepts of an agreement with Japan. In 1933–1935, another important figure was the relatively young conservative politician, Anthony Eden, dreaming of being appointed as foreign secretary (he eventually achieved his goal in December 1935). According to Sir Robert Vansittart, he never lost any opportunity to promote himself. In December 1933, he was appointed Lord Privy Seal in MacDonald's government, which placed him in charge of contacts with the League of Nations. From June 1935, Eden held the post of minister for the League of Nations, created especially for him. Though he was critical of the heads of diplomacy of his country, there were no conflicts in the foreign policy of London of that era that would get outside the circle of the political elite.²

In the 1930s, various types of inter-ministerial committees began to play an increasingly important role in shaping the strategy of British foreign policy. These bodies were entrusted with analysing various issues of national and imperial security because the large government grew relatively inert, if not downright immobile. They reported to the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID), which then commented on them, developed them and formulated conclusions for the Cabinet. Among them, the most important in 1933–1935 was the Defence Requirements Sub-Committee (DRC), headed by the Secretary of the Government and the CID, Sir Maurice Hankey. The DRC was established with the task of estimating the armament needs of the United Kingdom, when it became obvious that the British government would need to move away from the "Ten Years Rule", which will be discussed in the first chapter. In that case, the Foreign Office had an impact on recommendations adopted by its representative, Sir Robert Vansittart.³

² Donald G. Bishop, *The Administration of British Foreign Relations* (Syracuse: Greenwood Press, 1961), 67–68, 102–105, 108–11, 299–309; Neilson, *Britain, Soviet Russia*, 20–22; Brian J. C. McKercher, "Old Diplomacy and New: the Foreign Office and the Foreign Policy 1919–1939," in *Diplomacy and World Power. Studies in British Foreign Policy. 1890–1950*, ed. Michael Dockrill and Brian J. C. McKercher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 79–80, 88–90, 106–108, 113–14; Robert Vansittart, *The Mist Procession. The Autobiography of Lord Vansittart* (London: Hutchinson, 1958), 428–29.

³ Neilson, *Britain, Soviet Russia*, 18–19, 22–24.

The Foreign Office was therefore largely independent in carrying out the foreign policy of the country, including the concept of the Eastern Pact. This did not mean, however, that British diplomacy did not face any problems at the time. One of them was the question of the personality of the ministry's heads: its political superior, Sir John Simon and the highest ranking civil servant, Sir Robert Vansittart.⁴ The former, a renowned lawyer, earned the moniker of "expert in alternatives," meaning that he excelled in accurate analyses and balanced judgments on any issue, often discovering deeply hidden aspects. However, he was also plagued by indecisiveness, which provoked dissatisfaction among numerous British experts in international relations. Simon himself, who was offered the post of head of the Foreign Office solely on political grounds (it was a prestigious position for a leader of a rather small faction of liberals, which made it possible for the government to use the title of "National"), was on many occasions called a "great mistake" by British politicians, journalists and diplomats. Prime minister MacDonald himself often considered changing his foreign minister. The only thing that prevented him from doing so was the fear that after the departure of liberals the cabinet would lose its "national" character.

Sir Robert Vansittart, however, was a man of great temperament, linguistic abilities (he was fluent in French, German, Turkish, Spanish and Arabic) and considerable experience in diplomacy. He enjoyed the confidence of prime minister James R. MacDonald and lord president of the council, Stanley Baldwin, serving as their private secretary during the early stages of his career. These were the two most important people in the British cabinet, and on 7 June 1935 they swapped positions. Vansittart had a very clearly defined vision for further action, based on the experiences of diplomats from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, with whom he had the opportunity to work closely together. The guiding principle of the permanent under-secretary of state was to ensure the balance of power in the regions of interest for London from the point of view of the global interests of the Empire, and to support diplomatic efforts with economic and military powers. This was meant to serve as a tool to enforce Britain's own purposes on vulnerable countries or deter potential aggressors. Unfortunately, personalities of the two most important figures in the FO proved to be incompatible and conflict and distrust grew between them.⁵ After Simon took a

⁴ Expertise of the secretary of state and the under-secretary of state in the FO as well as the necessity of their harmonious cooperation in Bishop, *The Administration*, 252–58, 260.

⁵ Keith Neilson and Thomas G. Otte, *The Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1854–1946* (New York–London: Routledge, 2009), 210–13, 231–32; David Dutton, "Sir Austen Chamberlain and British Foreign Policy 1931–1937," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 16, 2 (2005): 288; Brian J. C. McKercher, "The Foreign Office, 1930–1939: Strategy, Permanent Interests and National Security," *Contemporary British History* 18, 3 (2004): 88–90; McKercher, "Old Diplomacy," 102–105; Peter Neville, "Lord Vansittart, Sir Waldorf Selby and the Debate about Treasury Interference in the Conduct of British Foreign Policy in the 1930s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 36, 4 (2001): 628–29; Anthony R. Peters, *Anthony Eden at the Foreign Office 1931–1938* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 23, 50; Ian Colvin, *Vansittart in Office. A Historical Survey of the Origins of the Second World War Based on the Papers of Sir Robert*

position in the Home Office and Sir Samuel Hoare was put in charge of foreign affairs, the situation in the Foreign Office calmed down considerably.

Views and feelings among assistant under-secretaries of state who supervised several territorial departments in the structure of the Foreign Office, as well as among heads of those departments corresponded to those represented by Sir Robert Vansittart, as was the case with the majority of British ambassadors to countries most important from the point of view of London. They were characterised by a sense of belonging to the exclusive and prestigious elite, conscious of their superiority over “amateurs” trying to deal with the foreign policy of the country, as they referred to journalists who were opinion leaders, organisations trying to influence the actions of government, and ministers in charge of other ministries, including Neville Chamberlain. The impression of the superiority of “professionals” stemmed from their education and experience gained during their professional careers. Consequently, they felt that politicians underappreciated the work of experts.⁶

The communication between the Foreign Office and British diplomatic posts abroad was carried out via territorial departments.⁷ Each of them covered a specific part of the world. The number of departments was variable and depended on the organisational needs. In 1933–1935, there were eight of them within the Foreign Office, only in July 1933 the Southern Department was separated and tasked with dealing with Italy, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the countries of the Balkan Peninsula, while the entity responsible for contacts with the Dominions was dissolved. At the end of 1935, the Abyssinian Department was established.⁸ As regards the Eastern Pact, works within the Foreign Office were coordinated by the Central Department. It was the most important

Vansittart, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs 1930–1938 (London: Victor Gollancz, 1965), 19–21; The National Archives, London (hereafter TNA), PRO 30/69/1753/1/33, 465–66, MacDonald’s Diary, 11 and 17 Dec 1933; *ibid.*, 30/69/1753/1/34, 477–80, MacDonald’s Diary, 23 Feb and 4 Mar 1934. About deficiency of Simon’s expertise and rumours of his transfer to another post see in reports from the foreign diplomatic posts in London: Archiwum Akt Nowych (Archive of Modern Records), Warsaw (hereafter AAN), Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, 5075, 225–26, Skirmunt to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, London, 18 Nov 1931; AAN, Ambasada RP w Londynie, 1172, 611–13, Biuletyn Informacyjny Polska a Zagranica, 48, 4 Dec 1933; *ibid.*, 1173, 188–90, Biuletyn Informacyjny Polska a Zagranica, 9, 12 Mar 1934; AAN, Ambasada RP w Berlinie, 248, 49, Skirmunt to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, London, 14 Mar 1934; TNA, Government Code & Cypher School 12/175, 55921 and 55937, Rumanian and Egyptian posts to their Ministries for Foreign Affairs, respectively 1 Mar and 28 Feb 1934. See also profiles of the FO chiefs in Iwan Majski, *Wspomnienia ambasadora radzieckiego*, Vol. 2 (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1968), 84–89, 103, 165–67, 320–22.

⁶ McKercher, “Old Diplomacy,” 82–83, 99–102; McKercher, “National Security,” 397–98; Neilson, *Britain, Soviet Russia*, 27–31. Feelings of “professionals” clearly visible in Vansittart, *Mist Procession*, 399–400, 430.

⁷ The Foreign Office’s structure in the years of 1933–1935 available in Annex 2.

⁸ Compare *Foreign Office List and Diplomatic and Consular Year Book for 1933* (London: Harrison and Sons), 10–11; *Foreign Office List and Diplomatic and Consular Year Book for 1934* (London: Harrison and Sons), 11–12; *Foreign Office List for 1936* (London: Harrison and Sons), 13–14.

and the largest unit within the Foreign Office, and it emerged from the War Department established in 1914. Ralph Wigram and his subordinates were first and foremost in charge of issues relating to Germany and executing the provisions of peace treaties. After the restructuring and establishment of the Southern Department, all issues related to Europe south of the Third Reich were no longer their concern. Instead, they turned their focus to questions concerning France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Gdańsk (Danzig) and Poland, as well as problems labelled as "European". Thus, the significant expansion of the competencies of the Central Department contributed to a reduction in the scope of tasks of the Northern and Western Departments.⁹

Another factor shaping issues relating to the British policy on the Eastern Pact was the cooperation between Ralph Wigram and Laurence Collier, who was in charge of the Northern Department from 1933. He was responsible for the Soviet Union, but also the Baltic and Scandinavian states (the latter were of minor importance for the examined issue), and even Afghanistan.¹⁰ In the opinion of historians, however, the Northern Department was of secondary significance in the entire structure of the Foreign Office. Its prestige diminished even further in 1928, when its then head, John D. Gregory was forced to resign because of the financial scandal in which he was involved. The staff that Laurence Collier had at his disposal was not considered particularly brilliant. Often, employees could not even speak Russian, which was a fundamental requirement for the analysis of information coming from Moscow to be accurate. One of the notable exceptions was the first secretary, Edward Walker, who, however, was assigned to Athens in April 1933. In May of the same year, he was replaced at the Northern Department by John Vyvyan, previously the third secretary at the British Embassy in the USSR.¹¹ Less important in the discussion on the Eastern Pact is the collaboration of Ralph Wigram's office with the following departments: Southern (Czechoslovakia and Romania), Western (covering the League of Nations) and Far Eastern (the entirety of relations in the triangle of the USSR–Japan–China).¹²

Developing a coherent foreign policy line required not only appropriate persons in senior positions within the Foreign Office, although internal discussions, exchange of opinions and assessments, as well as reaching conclusions on further action were essential.¹³ Still, another significant factor was the staff of the

⁹ *Foreign Office List ... for 1933*, 10; *Foreign Office List ... for 1934*, 11; Michael Hughes, "The Peripatetic Career Structure of the British Diplomatic Establishment, 1919–1939," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 14, 1 (2003): 36; Neilson, *Britain, Soviet Russia*, 31–32.

¹⁰ *Foreign Office List ... for 1933*, 11; *Foreign Office List ... for 1934*, 12.

¹¹ Neilson, *Britain, Soviet Russia*, 32–33; Michael Hughes, "The Virtues of Specialisation: British and American Diplomatic Reporting on Russia, 1921–1939," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 11, 2 (2000): 83–87; Hughes, "The Peripatetic," 36–37.

¹² Short characteristics in Neilson, *Britain, Soviet Russia*, 32, 35–36.

¹³ On organization of the FO's work, on circulation of documents within the FO, on minuting of reports, on particular functions, starting from the lowest rank of third secretary, second and first secretaries up till the head of the department interesting information in Donald Cameron

most important diplomatic posts. From 2 August 1933, the ambassador in Berlin (which was crucial for the examined issue) was Sir Eric Phipps, Vansittart's brother-in-law, regarded as a pro-French diplomat. His predecessor in that position was Sir Horace Rumbold, who was extremely critical of the Nazis. Both, however, were experienced diplomats and represented the so-called "Edwardians," sharing the beliefs of the permanent under-secretary of state in the Foreign Office. In Paris, after Lord Tyrrell retired for health-related reasons (although he remained an influential figure in the British establishment), the office of ambassador was entrusted to Sir George Clerk, who officially took over in the spring of 1934. He had already had a long career as the head of various institutions, and prior to taking the embassy in Paris he had been a British envoy in Brussels. The worst situation was in Moscow. The embassy, abandoned at the end of March 1933 by Sir Esmond Ovey following a crisis associated with the arrest of representatives of the British company Metro-Vickers, remained vacant until October. Then, a new British ambassador in Moscow was appointed, namely Lord Chilston. According to historians, he was unprepared for the tasks he was entrusted. Prior to the appointment, he had been working in the smaller countries of Central Europe, where he never had any opportunity to become acquainted with the realities of the Soviet Union, nor the language of the host country. The majority of his staff were no better prepared. In addition, in the 1930s, the average time that employees of the British embassy spent in Moscow was shorter than two years, which was insufficient to gain the necessary experience when it came to very specific conditions in the USSR. The employee turnover rate was similar in the Northern Department.¹⁴

In addition to the characteristics of the main subject of this analysis, it is also necessary to explain the chronological framework of the volume. January 1933 has been chosen as the starting point, as it marked the moment when Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany. All it took was one month with him in the office of the chancellor for Berlin's relations with the Soviet Union to start to deteriorate, at a pace that seemed irreversible. As a result, Moscow changed its foreign policy and, instead of cooperation, launched an action against "German fascism," which led to the concept of the Eastern Pact. London followed the development of these events from its own perspective. The concept of the Eastern Pact ceased

Watt, "The Nature of the Foreign-Policy-Making Elite in Britain," In Watt, *Personalities and Policies. Studies in the Formulation of British Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century* (London: Longmans, 1965), 4–11; John Tilley and Stephen Gaselee, *The Foreign Office* (London–New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1933), 262–63, 266.

¹⁴ *Foreign Office List ... for 1935*, 197, 201, 373; Neilson, *Britain, Soviet Russia*, 26–27; McKercher, "Old Diplomacy," 82–83, 86–87; Michael Hughes, *Inside the Enigma. British Officials in Russia. 1930–1939* (London–Rio Grande: The Hambledon Press, 1997), 224–25, 228–29; Hughes, "The Virtues," 84–85; Hughes, "Peripatetic," 35, 37–38, 41–43. See a very interesting description of everyday diplomatic work in Moscow as well as relationships between members of diplomatic corps from Germany and other countries in Hans von Herwarth, *Między Hitlerem a Stalinem. Wspomnienia dyplomaty i oficera niemieckiego 1931–1945* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Bellona, 1992), 76–131.

to be in the centre of attention of British diplomats in the autumn of 1935. There were several reasons but the most important in this regard was the outbreak of the Italian-Abyssinian conflict, which was much more important for the safety of the British Empire. It could even result in a war with Italy. However, it was not until a series of memoranda on the relations between the United Kingdom and the Third Reich issued by senior officials of the Foreign Office¹⁵ in November and December 1935 that the subject of the Eastern Pact was closed. Thus, this event marks the final point of the book. The idea of a collective pact for East Central Europe was later revisited in 1936 but it no longer had any serious significance.¹⁶

This monograph is an attempt to demonstrate the approach of British diplomats to European policies in 1933–1935 through the prism of the Eastern Pact. Not infrequently, however, much broader issues were at stake, namely the interests of the whole of the British Empire in all parts of the globe. This is why extensively characterised here are the opinions of the Foreign Office employees, as well as their topical analyses, responses to the actions of the main actors on the European stage, assessments of the best options for the security of the state, and their often lively discussions. The reader will encounter a number of “dead ends” in which “professionals” from the Foreign Office and British diplomatic posts abroad wandered. For obvious reasons, a special focus will be given to the reports from countries that were expected to be members of the Eastern Pact, as it will demonstrate how extremely divergent the positions of individual diplomats involved in the decision-making process were, and how unfair making swift, unequivocal judgments about British foreign policy in the 1930s has been. Accurate or inaccurate interpretation of the intentions of Berlin, Warsaw, Moscow, Prague, Helsinki, Tallinn, Riga, Kaunas (Kovno), as well as Paris, as it too was very much involved in the whole affair, was essential for London to take a right or wrong action with regard to those capitals. The attitude of British policy makers to the Eastern Pact was not, as it turns out, limited to observing and commenting on developments in Europe in 1933–1935. Analyses and discussions undertaken in the Foreign Office translated into concrete actions. As such, they deserve to be given enough attention so that it is possible to evaluate the involvement of British diplomacy in the issue of a multilateral agreement for East Central Europe because they affected the general European policy of Great Britain in 1933–1935.

The principal research problem of this volume is the question of the attitude of British diplomacy to the concept of the Eastern Pact. To tackle it, however, specific questions must be posed. First of all, what primary objectives did

¹⁵ Ralph Wigram and Orme Sargent were authors of the first one, Laurence Collier of the second one and Robert Vansittart of the third one.

¹⁶ Maria Pasztor, “Polityka francuska wobec Polski w latach 1936–1939,” In *Druga ku wojnie. Polityka europejska i amerykańska w przededniu drugiej wojny światowej*, ed. Tadeusz Kisielewski (Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo Uczelniane WSP, 1999), 60–64.

London assume in its foreign policy? What was the place of the idea of the Eastern Pact, designed to enhance security in East Central Europe? What did the Foreign Office think about the intentions of authors of this initiative? At which point did London decide to support it and why? Was the motivation of British diplomacy's involvement in attempts to finalise the concept of the Eastern Pact the same or did it evolve at some point? Did the British make a creative contribution to the development of the project of the Eastern Pact? How active was His Majesty's Government in relations with their partners in the European arena, and to what extent did it simply respond to their actions? Which among these partners had a significant impact on the thinking of the Foreign Office staff?

Specialist studies to date have not yet reached final conclusion as whether the concept promoted by Paris and Moscow was more French or more Soviet. Usually in talks with diplomats from other countries Paris presented the idea of the Eastern Pact as Soviet, while Moscow, on the contrary, declared that the USSR only responded to what the *Quai d'Orsay* proposed.¹⁷ The new Eastern European agreement, which was called, depending on the phase of debate, "the Eastern Locarno," "Eastern Pact on Mutual Assistance," or, in short, the "Eastern Pact," has been already rather extensively examined in scholarly publications on the subject. Usually, however, such studies were focused exclusively on the development of a multilateral pact for East Central Europe. Quite a few of them were written in Poland, which was associated with the planned participation of Warsaw in the initiative of Paris and Moscow.¹⁸ As for London's attitude to the

¹⁷ Wojciech Rojek, "Geneza koncepcji paktu wschodniego 1933–1934," In *Niemcy w polityce międzynarodowej*, Vol. 2: Lata wielkiego kryzysu gospodarczego, ed. Stanisław Sierpowski (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1992), 205.

¹⁸ Wojciech Materski, *Na widenie. II Rzeczpospolita wobec Sowietów 1918–1943* (Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN–„Rytm”, 2005); Materski, *Tarcza Europy. Stosunki polsko-sowieckie 1918–1939* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1994); Henryk Korczyk, *Działanie i recepcja Locarna 1927–1936* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo NERITON–Instytut Historii PAN, 1999); Andrzej M. Brzeziński, *Zagadnienie bezpieczeństwa zbiorowego w Europie w polityce zagranicznej Francji (1919–1939)* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1992); Mariusz Wołos, *Alfred Chłapowski (1874–1940). Biografia ambasadora Polski we Francji* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2001); Marek Baumgart, *Londyn–Berlin 1918–1939* (Szczecin: Archiwum Państwowe, 1993); Rojek, "Geneza koncepcji," 205–26; Michał J. Zacharias, *Polska wobec zmian w układzie sił politycznych w Europie w latach 1932–1936* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1981); Stanisław Gregorowicz, "Koncepcja paktu wschodniego na tle stosunków polsko-sowieckich 1934–1935," In *Międzymorze. Polska i kraje Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej XIX–XX wiek. Studia ofiarowane Piotrowi Lossowskiemu w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, ed. Andrzej Ajnenkiel et al. (Warszawa: Instytut Historii PAN, 1995), 321–31; Gregorowicz and Zacharias, *Polska–Związek Sowiecki. Stosunki polityczne 1925–1939* (Warszawa: Instytut Historii PAN, 1995); Maria Nowak-Kiełbikowa *Polska–Wielka Brytania w dobie zabiegów o zbiorowe bezpieczeństwo w Europie 1923–1937* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1989); Jarosław Jurkiewicz, *Pakt wschodni. Z historii stosunków międzynarodowych w latach 1934–1935* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, 1963); Walenty Daszkiewicz, "Dążenia ZSRR do stworzenia ogólnoeuropejskiego systemu bezpieczeństwa zbiorowego w latach 1933–1934," *Przegląd Zachodni* 20, 2 (1963): 201–44; Daszkiewicz, "Dyplomacja radziecka a kwestia bezpieczeństwa zbiorowego w Europie w latach 1934–1935," *Przegląd Zachodni* 21, 3 (1965): 44–73; Daszkiewicz, "Z

Eastern Pact, the prevailing opinion is that it was negative.¹⁹ However, some judgments are more balanced. Supposedly, British diplomacy was averse towards the Franco-Soviet initiative only after the Third Reich refused to participate, while previously London had been merely reserved about the planned pact²⁰, or approved, albeit only “conditionally”²¹ and certainly without accepting any additional commitments.²²

Aside from Poland, the Eastern Pact has been analysed in publications in the countries that were supposed to be involved, especially in the Soviet Union, and after its collapse—in Russia. In contrast, it has been relatively rarely the focus of research of Anglo-American scholars.²³ The aforementioned studies have sometimes a vastly different approach to assessing the attitudes of individual European players regarding the Eastern Pact. Thus, they could only serve as an incentive for further research on what in fact the multilateral pact for East Central Europe was and what was the attitude of British diplomacy in this context. Importantly, none of the existing works is a source study of this very issue,

dziejów stosunków polsko-radzieckich w latach 1932–1934 (III),” *Sprawy Międzynarodowe* 21, 8–9 (1968): 91–110; Andrzej Skrzypek, *Strategia pokoju. Radziecka polityka zbiorowego bezpieczeństwa w Europie 1932–1939* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1979); Marian Wojciechowski, *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie 1933–1938* (2 edition, Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1980).

¹⁹ Skrzypek, *Strategia*, 149–50, 155, 216–18; Daszkiewicz, “Dążenia ZSRR,” 239–40; Daszkiewicz, “Dyplomacja radziecka,” 57–58, 61–64.

²⁰ Jurkiewicz, *Pakt wschodni*, 75–77, 117, 129.

²¹ Wojciechowski, *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie*, 135.

²² Baumgart, *Londyn–Berlin*, 183–84.

²³ *Historia dyplomacji*, Vol. 3: 1914–1939, ed. Andrei Gromyko et al. (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1973); Vilnis Ia. Siplos, *Vneshnaia politika Sovetskogo Soiuz, 1933–1935 gg.* (Moskva: Nauka, 1980); Zinaida S. Belousova, “Sovetskii Soiuz i evropeiske problemy: 1933–1934 gody,” *Voprosy Istorii* 10 (1999): 52–64; Oleg Ken and Aleksandr Rupasov, *Politburo TsK VKP(b) i otnoshenia SSSR s zapadnymi sosednimi gosudarstvami (konec 1920–30-kh gg.)*. *Problemy. Dokumenty. Opyt Kommentaria*, P. I: 1928–1934 (Sankt Petierburg: Evropeiskii Dom, 2000); Mikhail Meltukhov, *Sovetsko-polskie voiny*, (2 edition, Moskva: “Iauza”–“EKSMO”, 2004); *Ocherki istorii Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del Rossii*, Vol. 2 (1917–2002), ed. Anatolii V. Toruknov. (Moskva: Olma-Press, 2002); Aleksandr W. Vakhrameev and Sergei G. Kuleshov, *Ocherki istorii sovetskoj vneshnei politiki (1917–1991 gg.)* (Moskva: Vuzovskaia Kniga, 2007); Lisanne Radice, “The Eastern Pact 1933–1935: A Lost Attempt at European Cooperation,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 55, 1 (1977): 44–64; Rolf Ahmann, “‘Localisation of Conflicts’ or ‘Indivisibility of Peace’: The German and the Soviet Approaches towards Collective Security and East Central Europe 1925–1939,” In *The Quest for Stability. Problems of West European Security, 1918–1939*, ed. Rolf Ahmann, Adolf M. Birke, and M. Howard (Oxford: German Historical Institute and Oxford University Press, 1993), 201–47; Jonathan Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Struggle for Collective Security in Europe, 1933–1939* (London–Basingstoke: St. Martin’s Press, 1984); Jiří Hochman, *The Soviet Union and the Failure of Collective Security, 1934–1938* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Geoffrey Roberts, “Collective Security and the Origins of the Peoples Front,” In *Britain, Fascism and the Popular Front*, ed. Jim Fyrth (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), 74–88; Teddy J. Uldricks, “Soviet Security Policy in the 1930s,” In *Soviet Foreign Policy 1917–1991. A Retrospective*, ed. Gabriel Gorodetsky (London–Portland: Frank Cass, 1994), 65–74; Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, “Louis Barthou et la rapprochement franco-soviétique en 1934,” *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* 3, 4 (1962): 525–45; Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence. Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917–1973* (2 edition, New York–Washington: Praeger, 1974).

although authors from communist countries and contemporary Russia categorically attributed a negative or, at the very best, indifferent attitude towards the Eastern Pact to London. Extensive archival research revealed immense source material that made it possible to examine the problem in depth. The outcome of a thorough analysis is the lengthy volume. It disproves the existing theses present in the scholarly discourse for many years.

Answering the question about the significance of the Eastern Pact in the whole foreign policy of Great Britain in the 1930s required researching a considerable number of studies on this particular topic. In this regard, the scope of available literature is of enormous help to reconstruct the policy of London in almost every field. The activity of British diplomacy in the European arena was not disconnected from the global policy of London. It will be important to spare at least a perfunctory glance at other theatres that focused the attention of the government, especially the Far East. Particularly important for this monograph have been some relatively new articles and books written by British, Canadian and American historians on the subject London's strategic planning and the practical implementation of its conclusions. Some of the most noteworthy titles include the works by K. Neilson²⁴, B.J.C. McKercher²⁵, M.L. Roi²⁶, G. Post²⁷, G. Kennedy²⁸, A. Best²⁹, A. Trotter³⁰ and R. Louis³¹. The very well documented book by the German historian G. Niedhart should be also mentioned in this group.³² The political climate in Great Britain was another relevant issue, especially the sources of pacifist tendencies and means of their expression used by the broader anti-war movement. Here, several books have proven to be of tremendous help,

²⁴ Neilson, *Britain, Soviet Russia*; Neilson, "The Defence Requirements Sub-Committee, British Strategic Foreign Policy, Neville Chamberlain and the Path to Appeasement," *The English Historical Review* 117, 2 (2003): 651–84.

²⁵ Particularly Brian J. C. McKercher, "Deterrence," 79–114; McKercher, "The Foreign Office," 87–109; McKercher, "National Security and Imperial Defence: British Grand Strategy and Appeasement, 1930–1939," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 18, 3 (2008): 391–442.

²⁶ Michael L. Roi, *Alternative to Appeasement. Sir Robert Vansittart and the Alliance Diplomacy, 1934–1937* (Westport–London: Praeger, 1997).

²⁷ Gaines Post Jr., *Dilemmas of Appeasement. British Deterrence and Defense, 1934–1937* (Ithaca–London: Cornell University Press, 1993).

²⁸ Particularly unpublished dissertation Greg Kennedy, "Imperial Crossroad: The Influence of the Far East on Anglo-American Relations, 1933–1939" (Ph.D. University of Alberta, Edmonton 1998) 148–149, <http://proquest.umi.com> (access on 20 Apr 2009).

²⁹ Specially Antony Best, *British Intelligence and the Japanese Challenge in Asia, 1914–1941* (Basingstoke–New York: Palgrave–MacMillan, 2002).

³⁰ Ann Trotter, *Britain and East Asia, 1933–1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

³¹ Roger Louis, *British Strategy in the Far East 1919–1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

³² Godfried Niedhart, *Grossbritannien und die Sowjetunion 1934–1939. Studien zur britischen Politik der Friedenssicherung zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1972).

namely the works by D. Birn³³, M. Ceadel³⁴, D. G. Anderson³⁵, D. Carlton³⁶, M. Pugh³⁷ and A. Williams³⁸. Other works used in the volume concern the foreign policy of countries involved in the negotiations on the Eastern Pact in the examined period, mainly world powers. There is no shortage of studies on the attitude of London towards various specific issues of importance in the 1930s and the relationship of Great Britain with various countries. Finally, biographies of significant politicians and diplomats also proved enormously helpful.

Nevertheless, the numerous sources have been the most important element of research on the attitude of British diplomacy towards the concept of the Eastern Pact. First, these are governmental documents, kept in The National Archives in London (Kew). The basic collection of materials used here consisted of general correspondence of the Foreign Office (FO 371). There, one can trace the exchange of telegrams, dispatches and semi-official letters between the headquarters and diplomatic missions. Most attention has been devoted to the records of the Central Department, which was in charge of activities related to the Eastern Pact (reference numbers of documents begin with the letter "C"). Second most useful have been the records of the Northern Department (reference numbers begin with the letter "N"), supplemented with materials from the Southern, Western and Far Eastern Departments (reference numbers beginning with the letters "R," "W" and "F," respectively). When issues concerning the Eastern Pact or the countries involved in negotiations reached the level of the government, traces can be found in the cabinet records (CAB 23). Most often preparations for negotiations with the French took place during ministerial meetings. Less significant for the volume have been records of governmental committees, which can be found in various files series marked "CAB." Another source, thus far rarely consulted in historical publications, is the archive of the British Governmental Code & Cyphers School, which was in charge of radio intelligence. Intercepted signals were deciphered (if possible). Decoded telegrams from foreign countries circulated among relevant ministries, including the Foreign Office. In addition to extensive diplomatic materials (reference number HW 12), the British managed to break the ciphers on telegrams circulating between Moscow's Comintern

³³ Donald S. Birn, *The League of Nations Union, 1918–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

³⁴ Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain 1914–1945: The Defining of a Faith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); Ceadel, "The First British Referendum: the Peace Ballot, 1934–1935," *English Historical Review* 95, 377 (1980): 810–39.

³⁵ David G. Anderson, "British Rearmament and the "Merchants of Death": The 1935–1936 Royal Commission on the Manufacture of Trade in Armaments," *Journal of Contemporary History* 29, 1 (1994): 5–37.

³⁶ David Carlton, "Churchill and the Two 'Evil Empires'," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 9 (Dec. 2001): 331–51.

³⁷ Martin Pugh, "Pacifism and Politics in Britain, 1931–1935," *The Historical Journal* 23, 3 (1980): 641–56.

³⁸ Andrew Williams, "The Labour Party's Attitude to the Soviet Union, 1927–1935: An Overview with Specific Reference to Unemployment Policies and Peace," *Journal of Contemporary History* 22, 1 (1987): 71–90.

headquarters and communist parties in various European countries (reference number HW 17).

The importance of the subject of the Eastern Pact is evidenced by the fact that a large part of materials on the subject has been published, first of all in *Documents on British Foreign Policy* and, to a lesser extent, *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*.³⁹ Therefore, applicable volumes of both publications have been used in this work. Also helpful have been publications of diplomatic documents from other countries, mainly German⁴⁰, post-Soviet⁴¹, French⁴² and Polish⁴³. As for the Polish documents particularly useful have been reports of the Polish Embassy in London. They can be found in the Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw, primarily in the collection of the Polish embassy in Berlin (*Ambasada RP w Berlinie*), but also in the collection of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych*). Another source was *Przegląd Informacyjny Polska a Zagranica* for relevant years, preserved in the collection of the Polish embassy in London (*Ambasada RP w Londynie*).

³⁹ *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, Ser. 2, Vol. 6–7, ed. Ernest L. Woodward and Rohan Butler (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1957–1958); *Ibid.*, Ser. 2, Vol. 12–15, ed. William N. Medlicott, Douglas Dakin and Margaret E. Lambert (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1972–1976); *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, Ser. A, P. II, Vol. 11–13, ed. Donald Cameron Watt (University Publications of America, 1986); *Ibid.*, Ser. F, P. II, Vol. 55–56, ed. Keith Sword (University Publications of America, 1996).

⁴⁰ *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918–1945*, Ser. C, Vol. 2–4, ed. Margaret Lambert (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1959–1962); *Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik*, Ser. C, Vol. 2/2: 1. February bis 13. Juni 1934 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973); *Ibid.*, Vol. 3/1: 14. Juni bis 31. Oktober 1934 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973); *Ibid.*, Vol. 3/2: 1. November 1934 bis 30. März 1935 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973); Vol. 4/1: 1. April bis 13. September 1935 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975). In this study references to English edition are much more often. The content of both editions is very similar.

⁴¹ In spite of *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR*, Vol. 16, ed. F. P. Dol'a et al. (Moskva: Izdatelstvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1970); *Ibid.*, Vol. 17, ed. Georgi K. Deev et al. (Moskva: Izdatelstvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1971); *Ibid.*, Vol. 18, ed. Jurii V. Borisov et al. (Moskva: Izdatelstvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1973) in recent years some new documentary editions appeared. The most valuable for this topic are: *Politburo TsK RKP(b)–VKP(b) i Evropa. Reshenia „osoboi papki”*, ed. Grant M. Adibekov et al. (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 2001); *The Stalin–Kaganovich Correspondence 1931–1936*, ed. Robert W. Davies et al. (New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2003); *Materiały „osoboi papki” Politbiuro TsK RKP(b)–VKP(b) po voprosu sovetskopol'skikh otnoshenii 1923–1944 gg.*, ed. Ivan I. Kostiuszko (Moskva: Institut Slavianovedenia i Balkanistiki RAN, 1997).

⁴² *Documents diplomatiques français 1932–1939*, 1^{re} Sér., Vol. 6–12 (Paris: Ministère des affaires étrangères, 1972–1984).

⁴³ The most important one is *Diariusz i teki Jana Szembeka*, Vol. 1, ed. Tytus Komarnicki (Londyn: The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum). Less important are: *Źródła do historii powszechnej okresu międzywojennego*, Vol. 1: 1919–1926, ed. Stanisław Sierpowski (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1989); *Ibid.*, Vol. 3: 1935–1939, ed. Stanisław Sierpowski (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1992); *Współczesna Europa polityczna. Zbiór umów międzynarodowych 1919–1939*, ed. Władysław Kulski and Michał Potulicki (Warszawa–Kraków: Księgarnia Powszechna, 1939); *Dokumenty i materiały do historii stosunków polsko-radzieckich*, Vol. 6: 1933–1938, ed. Euzebiusz Basiński et al. (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1967).

Memoirs, while used in research, have been of little significance as a source. Such materials include recollections and diaries of politicians and diplomats—British⁴⁴, as well as Polish⁴⁵, French⁴⁶ and Soviet⁴⁷. Here, the diary of prime minister James Ramsay MacDonald has been the most valuable source of information. It has not been published and the manuscript is available at The National Archives in London.⁴⁸

Working on the volume has been made significantly easier thanks to access to the online version of records of the House of Commons and, to a much lesser extent, the House of Lords.⁴⁹ Debates on the country's foreign policy, as well as ministers' replies to questions asked by interested members of parliament are evidence of the scope of information on London's diplomatic actions regarding the Eastern Pact revealed to the public. In a democratic system, creating one's own image to attract future voters is very important, and both the government and the opposition were well aware of that. Thus, they tried to use their involvement in foreign policy to sway voters before the next election, if not general, then at least by-election.

London's attitude towards the Eastern Pact has been presented based, firstly, on chronology and secondly on particular issues. Such an approach allowed for an outline of the evolution of views and actions of British diplomats over the course of three years discussed herein. Chapter 1 is introductory in character, presenting a synthesis of the approach of subsequent governments of Great Britain to the system of collective security before 1933. Chapter 2 discusses British evaluation of changes in the foreign policy of the Soviet Union. The analysis concerned the reports on the deterioration of relations between Moscow and Berlin. The condition of relations between the two capitals led to a series of statements by leading Soviet politicians at the turn of 1933 and 1934. They supported such actions for collective security that would be anti-German in nature. Also presented has been the complete inability of the Foreign Office to understand the meaning of Moscow's initiatives to guarantee independence of the Baltic states. Chapter 3 outlines British response to information coming from

⁴⁴ Anthony Eden (Earl of Avon), *Pamiętniki*, Vol. 1: W obliczu dyktatorów (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1970); Vansittart, *Mist Procession*; Samuel Hoare (Viscount of Templewood), *Nine Troubled Years* (London: Collins, 1954); Thomas Jones, *A Diary and Letters 1931-1950* (London-New York-Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1954); Hugh Knatchbull-Hugessen, *Diplomat in Peace and War* (London: John Murray, 1949); Robert Vansittart, *Czarny rejestr. Niemcy dawniej i dziś* (Londyn: M. I. Kolin, 1941).

⁴⁵ Józef Beck, *Ostatni raport* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1987); *Diplomat in Berlin 1933-1939. Papers and Memoirs of Józef Lipski, Ambassador of Poland*, ed. Waclaw Jędrzejewicz (New York-London: Columbia University Press, 1968).

⁴⁶ André François-Poncet, *Byłem ambasadorem w Paryżu* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1968); Jules Laroche, *Polska lat 1926-1935* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1966).

⁴⁷ Aleksandra M. Kollontai, *Diplomatyczne dnevnik. 1922-1940*, Vol. 2 (Moskwa: Akademia, 2001); Iwan Majski, *Wspomnienia ambasadora radzieckiego*, Vol. 2 (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1968).

⁴⁸ TNA, PRO 30/69/1753/1-3.

⁴⁹ <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons>; <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords>.

different sources about the willingness of the USSR to join the League of Nations, as well as to participate in the Eastern Pact of Mutual Assistance. London learned about it from the French in May 1934. Chapter 4 characterises Louis Barthou's visit in London as well as its consequences. The most important one was the involvement of the British diplomacy in activities supporting the French initiative particularly intensive efforts were undertaken in that regard in the summer of 1934. However, they ended with Berlin, and then Warsaw refusing to join the Eastern Pact. Nevertheless, London could celebrate the success of negotiations on the USSR joining the League of Nations, in which the British were actively involved. Overcoming the impasse in the negotiations concerning the Franco-Soviet initiative is the subject of chapter 5. London regained interest in the success of the concept in the early 1935. Ultimately, the visit of the French prime minister, Pierre-Étienne Flandin, and the minister for foreign affairs, Pierre Laval, in Great Britain on 1–3 February 1935 concluded the period of uncertainty regarding the Eastern Pact. However, London no longer wanted to support the original version of the pact. The efforts undertaken by the Foreign Office to develop an alternative concept are presented in chapter 6. Once that became possible, the involvement of British diplomacy in the international arena was manifested with a series of foreign visits of John Simon, Anthony Eden, and even James Ramsay MacDonald, in March and April 1935. The final, seventh chapter discusses London's loss of interest in Eastern Pact. However, before efforts undertaken by the British diplomacy to implement the concept were ultimately abandoned, they had intensified under the new secretary for foreign affairs, Sir Samuel Hoare, in the summer of 1935.

The presented monograph would not have been possible without support of many people. Suffice to say that the assistance was very diverse. It has been rendered first and foremost by the scholarly environment, namely the Department of Contemporary World History, with its head, Professor Andrzej M. Brzeziński, whom I owe particular gratitude for his helpful comments and incentive to work. I also owe my thanks to those granted the funds for two month-long study visits in London to carry out research at The National Archives and local libraries, namely the Witold Giller scholarship (2001) and The De Brzezie Lanckoronski Foundation (2007). As for those who are not professionally associated with history, I would like to thank my immediate family (my wife and my parents, relieved me from housework duties at the last stage of work on the book), as well as many friends. It is impossible to list them all here, therefore I will only name my two hostesses during the study visit in London, Kristina Cooper and Bożena Laskiewicz.