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Response by Michael Jabara Carley, Université de Montréal

I appreciate the interest which H-Diplo has taken in my work in the past and now with regard to my article "Fiasco" on the failed Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations in 1939 and the unpublished British white paper (or blue book) on that subject. The Foreign Office sought to attribute blame to the Soviet Union for the failure of those negotiations. I would also like to thank the reviewer, Artemis Photiadou, for her comments and observations. She quite rightly notes that my published work on the topic of war origins dates back to the early 1990s before I made my first trips to Moscow to work in the newly opened archives there. I started my research in the French, then the British papers and was at first dependent on the published Soviet documents.[1] The unpublished Soviet diplomatic papers were opened gradually at the beginning of the 1990s. Like other researchers, I have had my ups and downs with archivists at the AVPRF (the Russian foreign ministry archives), but I have been persistent, and over time, persistence has led to a wider access to files and thus led to a deeper understanding of Soviet foreign policy during the interwar years. This increasing access to files explains the progression of the publications to which Dr. Photiadou refers in her comments. I would add that excellent collections of documents on various topics and countries have been published, and access to other papers concerning the origins of World War II is available online.[2]

[1] *God krizisa: dokumenty i materialy*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Politizdat, 1990); and *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki, 1939 god*, 2 vols. (Moscow: *Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia*, 1992).

[2] For example, *1941 god: Dokumenty*, 2 vols. (Moscow: *Mezhdunarodnyi Fond 'Demokratiia'*, 1998); *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR* [hereinafter *DVP*], 26 vols. (Moscow, etc.: Politizdat, etc.1958-); *Glazami razvedki, SSSR i Evropa, 1919-1938.* (Moscow: IstLit, 2015); *Komintern i grazhdanskaia voina v Ispanii. Dokumenty* (Moscow: Nauka, 2001); *Komintern i vtoraia mirovaia voina, 1939 - 1941gg.* (Moscow: *Pamiatniki Istoricheskoi Mysli*, 1994); *Ivan Mikhailovich Maiskii :Izbrannaia perepiska s rossiiskimi korrespondentami*, 2. vols. (Moscow: Nauka, 2005); *Moskva-Berlin: Politika i diplomatiia Kremlia, 1920-1941*, 3 vols. (Moscow: Nauka, 2011); *Moskva-Rim : Politika i diplomatiia Kremlia, 1920-1939* (Moscow: Nauka, 2002); *Moskva-Tokio: Politika i diplomatiia Kremlia, 1921 – 1931*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Nauka, 2007); *Moskva-Vashington: Politika i diplomatiia Kremlia, 1921-1941*, 3 vols. (Moscow: Nauka, 2009); *Organy gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti SSSR v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine*, 11 vols. (Moscow: *A/O 'Kniga i biznes'* & Kuchkovo pole, 1995-2014); *Politbiuro Tsk RKP(b) i Evropa: Resheniia "Osoboi Papki", 1923-1939* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2001); *Politbiuro Tsk RKP(b)-VKP(b) i Komintern, 1919-1943, Dokumenty* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004); *Sekrety pol'skoi politiki 1935-1945 gg. Rassekrechennye dokumenty sluzhby vneshnei razvedki Rossiiskoi Federatsii* (Moscow: Ripol Klassik, 2010); *Sovetsko-Amerikanskie otnosheniia, Rossiia i SShA: Ekonomicheskie otnosheniia, 1917-1941*. 2 vols. (Moscow: Nauka, 1997-2001); *Sovetsko-Amerikanskie otnosheniia. Gody nepriznaniia, 1927-1933, Dokumenty* (Moscow: *Mezhdunarodnyi Fond 'Demokratiia'*, etc., 2002); *Sovetsko-Amerikanskie otnosheniia, 1934-1939, Dokumenty* (Moscow: *Mezhdunarodnyi Fond 'Demokratiia'*, 2003); *Sovetsko-Amerikanskie otnosheniia, 1939-1945, Dokumenty* (Moscow: *Mezhdunarodnyi Fond 'Demokratiia'*, 2004); *Sovetsko-Pol'skie otnosheniia v 1918-1945gg.*, 4 vols. (Moscow: Aspekt Press, 2017); *Sovestsko-Rumynskie otnosheniia, 1917-1941*, 2 vols. (Moscow: *Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia*, 2000); *SSSR-Germaniia, 1932-1941*, 2nd edition (Moscow: IstLit, 2019); *Stalin i Kaganovich, Perepiska, 1931-1936gg.* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2001); *Vynuzhdennyi al'ians: Sovetsko-baltiiskie otnosheniia i mezhdunarodnyi krizis, 1939-1940.*

It was the most extraordinary experience for historians to go to Moscow for the first time and hold in their hands freshly declassified files that no one, apart from archivists and a few token Soviet historians, had ever before read, let alone explored. Maybe we should talk about history before the opening of the Soviet archives, and history after the opening. I would suggest that historians cannot now study the origins of World War II without reference to the Soviet archival sources.

Some historians have not taken well to my work or even to the essay reviewed by H-Diplo. This opposition goes back a long way. Dr. Photiadou points to my view that "the anti-Communism of the two [British and French] governments was so entrenched that it kept them from dealing seriously with the Soviet Union in those crucial months preceding the invasion of Poland." That position caused a commotion not least of all here on H-Diplo more than twenty years ago during one of the earliest roundtables on my book *1939* (vol. 1, no. 2, February 2000).[3] In retrospect, I don't understand why. Anti-Communism during the interwar years was visible even to casual observation. The early Red Scare influenced the outcome of elections in France, Britain, and elsewhere in Europe; and triggered widespread repression and violence against "anarchists" and communists. The western policy of containment of Soviet Russia dates from 1919. There is a rich iconography of anti-Communist political posters and cartoons.[4] So much so that for me, the interwar years represent stage one of the Cold War.

The USSR was the only existing Communist state, which promoted socialist revolution and threatened colonial empires. The Communist International, the Comintern, became the west's *bête noire*. Of course, neither side was innocent in its intentions. The Bolsheviks wanted to make a world socialist revolution; and the west, the United States, France, Britain, for example, wanted to overthrow Soviet authority and hang "the Bolsh" from a string of lampposts stretching along the way from Moscow to Petrograd. Some Bolsheviks claimed that the Comintern was an instrument of self-defence against the foreign intervention. When western governments complained about Comintern activities in their colonies, Soviet diplomats replied, *inter alia*, that there would always be indigenous resistance to colonialism without any help from the Comintern. As Georgii V. Chicherin, Commissar for Foreign Affairs (1918-1928), put it facetiously, the capitalists like to portray themselves as the lambs and the USSR as the wolf. In secret, some Soviet diplomats, Chicherin and his deputy, or *zamnarkom*, Maksim M. Litvinov, for example, cursed the Comintern as fiercely as their western interlocutors because it interfered with a normalisation of Soviet relations with the west.[5]

Capitalists expected Communists to renounce communism, accept their world as it was, or be isolated and punished. In some ways the Communists did conform. Soviet diplomats dressed in proper suits, wore silk ties, or top hats when the occasion required it. They certainly did not look like the western caricature of the unwashed, blood-thirsty Bolshevik with a dagger clenched in broken teeth and holding a smoking grenade ready to throw at the capitalist world.[6] Soviet agents respected diplomatic protocols in the west, conducted business in the ways required in the west and were punctilious in respecting their signed contracts and in paying their commercial obligations. The Bolsheviks made good businessmen, in

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Sbornik dokumentov (Moscow: *Assotsiatsiia Knigoizdatelei 'Russkaia kniga'*, 2019); *Voennaiia razvedka informiruet, ianvar' 1939- iiun' 1941* (Moscow: *Mezhdunarodnyi Fond 'Demokratiia'*, 2008. Also, *Vtoraia Mirovaia voina v Arkhivnykh dokumentax, Prezidentskaia Biblioteka imeni B. N. El'tsina* (https://www.prlib.ru/collections/1298142), hereinafter RF, World War II; and *Nakanune i posle Miunkhena. Arkhivnye dokumenty rasskazyvaiut* (https://munich.rusarchives.ru/documents-list).

[3] M. J. Carley, *1939: The Alliance that Never Was and the Coming of World War II* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999).

[4] See, for example, https://www.google.ca/search?source=univ&tbm=isch&q=French+anticommunist+propaganda+poster+1919&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjrkpDQjr3yAhUYEVkFHe7qDY4QjJkEegQIBhAC&biw=1366&bih=594.

[5] M. J. Carley, *Silent Conflict: A Hidden History of Early Soviet-Western Relations* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).

[6] See, for example, https://www.reddit.com/r/PropagandaPosters/comments/840s28/how_to_vote_against_bolshevism_this_is_a_french/.

effect good capitalists. That did not mean of course renouncing communist principles, paying the tsar's debts (although this was once contemplated with France [1926-1927]), or endorsing western colonialism and American Jim Crow laws. Even there, however, Soviet diplomats tried to work around such inconveniences, a good example of this being the Italian colonial war in Abyssinia (1935-1936). In their discussions with western counterparts, Soviet diplomats addressed their ideological differences and proposed live and let live. When the German *Führer* Adolf Hitler threatened European peace and security, they promoted the principle of the enemy of my enemy is my ally. The French Radical politician Édouard Herriot, for example, understood that language, even evoked the sixteenth-century analogous alliance between the Catholic French King François 1er and the Muslim Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. Some principles were after all shared alike by capitalists and Communists. Let's work on that basis, said Soviet diplomats. They made the arguments but could not carry the debate. Well, they did sometimes, but could not win over governments. My views don't seem so outlandish twenty years later. It should be *passé* now for some historians to continue Cold War caricatures of Soviet foreign relations and, not reading Soviet archival sources, or citing them only cosmetically, to wave off the idea that the Soviet Union might have acted to defend legitimate national interests.[7]

I want to emphasise that Dr. Photiadou does *not* take such an approach. Indeed, she is critical of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain rushing off by airplane to do deals with Hitler and the Italian *Duce* Benito Mussolini. It is quite right that he never rushed off to Moscow to conclude an anti-Nazi alliance, and never would have. In fact, Chamberlain opposed sending the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, to Moscow, though Viacheslav M. Molotov, then Commissar for Foreign Affairs, would have welcomed him. Chamberlain even ridiculed the idea of sending others, then Conservative MPs, Anthony Eden or Winston Churchill, in place of Halifax. Dr. Photiadou's argument is similar to those taken in recent books by Tim Bouverie and Jonathan Haslam, which attribute to the British government a large responsibility in the origins of World War II.[8] Is a new interpretive wave developing concerning the British government's role in the origins of the war? It is too early to tell.

I do have some observations in response to Dr. Photiadou's comments. The first is that "Fiasco" is only a fragment of a larger work (more than 2000pp. of typescript) on Soviet foreign policy and on Soviet relations with Britain, France, the United States, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, and Czechoslovakia between 1929/30 and 1942, the year of Stalingrad. It is the sequel to my *Silent Conflict*, the topic of an H-Diplo roundtable in 2014 (XVI, 10, November).[9] The new manuscript is divided into three stand-alone volumes, the first two of which are finished (and being evaluated by a publisher); the third part is about 75% complete. The first two volumes address the main questions concerning the origins of the war. My opinions are based on an array of evidence, a good deal of which heretofore uncited from the archives in Moscow.

Dr. Photiadou quite rightly identifies mutual mistrust, British, French, and Soviet, as a factor in the months prior to the Nazi invasion of Poland. Mistrust was partly ideological in nature on all sides, but in Moscow it was also based on the practical experience, not only of five months in 1939, but over a longer nearly six-year period beginning in December 1933. It was then that the Politburo, the Soviet cabinet dominated by the party general secretary or *gensek* Iosif V. Stalin, approved a new policy of collective security and mutual assistance, breaking in effect with the earlier "Rapallo" policy based on better relations with Germany.

In fact, December 1933 was the apogee of the new Soviet policy, in the context of renewed diplomatic relations with the United States (November), French foreign minister Joseph Paul-Boncour's proposal for a pact of mutual assistance

[7] See, for example, Sean McMeekin, *Stalin's War* (New York: Allen Lane, 2021).

[8] Tim Bouverie, *Appeasement: Chamberlain, Hitler, Churchill, and the Road to War* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2019); and Jonathan Haslam, *The Spectre of War: International Communism and the Origins of World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021).

[9] https://networks.h-net.org/system/files/contributed-files/roundtable-xvi-10.pdf

(October), and a pact of non-aggression, etc. with Italy (September). Italy in fact figured in Soviet plans to recreate the World War I anti-German entente. The Metro-Vickers crisis in the spring of 1933 delayed Soviet overtures in London until the summer of 1934.

No sooner had the Politburo approved the new Soviet policy, then it began to run into trouble. All the potential members of the Soviet coalition, one after the other, drifted away. First, the United States, then France (1934), Italy (1935) and Britain and Romania (1936) gradually dropped out. They were all out or exiting by the time of the first Stalinist show trial in August 1936. For Moscow it was one disappointment after the other. In the end, the only power supporting mutual assistance against Nazi Germany was the USSR.

The Soviet government could not make collective security and mutual assistance work on its own. It needed France and Britain as essential partners. The East Europeans would not march with the USSR alone; France would not march without Britain, and Britain would not march at all. Moreover, political polarisation in Europe that was underscored by the violent demonstrations on the *place de la Concorde* in Paris in February 1934 and reinforced by the Spanish Civil War, which began in July 1936, made Soviet policy impossible to bring off. Collective security against Nazi Germany could only work as a *union sacrée*, as national political coalitions from left to centre-right; it could not work uniquely as a policy of the left, or the *Front populaire* in France. When Nicolae Titulescu, the Romanian foreign minister and strong supporter of collective security, was squeezed out of power in late August 1936, it marked the failure of Soviet policy, though in Moscow, efforts to make mutual assistance work continued until August 1939. This was not, by the way, the personal policy of the Soviet commissar, or *narkom*, Litvinov, but of Stalin himself.

One of the most bitter defeats of Soviet policy, and not so well-known, was the failure of Franco-Soviet staff conversations in 1936-1937, desired by the Soviet side and rejected by the French and marked by flagrant bad faith and sharp intrigues in a divided cabinet in Paris. The defence minister, Édouard Daladier, even had a direct hand in passing bogus rumours to Moscow of a *coup d'état* being planned by the Soviet high command. The purge of Red Army senior officers, to which Dr. Photiadou refers, was not the cause, but rather the pretext justifying French opposition to the staff talks.[10] Cause or pretext, the purges were a shot in the leg of Soviet foreign policy and national security. What could Stalin have been thinking? Franco-Soviet relations never recovered. There then followed *Anschluss* and the Munich crisis in 1938 which demolished most though not all of the residual willingness in Moscow to believe in the possibilities of cooperation with Britain and France.

The last-ditch efforts in 1939 to conclude a tripartite alliance against Nazi Germany represented an anti-climax, dramatic to be sure, but destined to fail due especially to the determined opposition of Chamberlain and due also to a lack of French resolve. Those in London and Paris who favoured a Soviet alliance were not strong enough to swing government policy their way, and Stalin finally accepted that alone the USSR could do no more. He then abandoned collective security—after all, no one else *really* wanted it—and came to terms with Nazi Germany in August 1939. Doing a deal with Hitler was not a sin; or if it was, everyone was being sinful, not least the French and British governments.

What I found particularly interesting about the white paper is that the French government vetoed publication. Charles Corbin, the French ambassador in London, delivered an unsigned note to the Foreign Office in early January 1940 saying essentially that the French government thought the collection of documents chosen for the white paper suggested that the Soviet side was more serious about concluding an anti-Nazi alliance than were the British and French.[11] That was the key point, and of course the French were irritated that they did not receive credit for a more active role in trying to obtain

[10] M. J. Carley, "'Komediia, obernutaia ironiei vnutri tragedii': Franko-Sovetskie popytki zapustit' protsess konsul'tatsii mezhdu genshtabami (1936-1937)," *Zhurnal rossiiskikh i vosmochnoevropeiskikh istoricheskikh issledovanii* (Moscow), forthcoming, autumn 2021.

[11] Untitled memorandum in French, on stationery of the French embassy, London, not signed (but delivered by Corbin to Sir Alexander Cadogan, Permanent Undersecretary of State), 12 Jan. 1940; and Halifax's minute, 13 Jan., C671/23/18, TNA FO 371 24395.

agreement with the Soviet side. This was a somewhat paradoxical position for the French government to take because it was ready to charge at the Red Army, which was then bogged down in the Winter War against Finland. The French therefore pressured London for the despatch of an expeditionary force into Scandinavia to help the Finns and to draw Norway and Sweden into the war against Germany. In March 1940 Daladier, still *président du Conseil*, instructed his *chargé d'affaires* in Moscow to try to impede Finnish-Soviet peace negotiations to give France and Britain time to intervene. In fact, French pressure in London seemed to be having some effect. The Finnish-Soviet war ended in mid-March, just in the nick of time if one took the position that the outbreak of war between France and Britain and the USSR would have been a catastrophe. Not everyone shared that view.

It is true, as Dr. Photiadou points out, that the French government seemed to get hold of itself at least to some degree in 1939. This is an argument put forward in particular by Peter Jackson.[12] There were some modest signs of French resurgence in 1939 and 1940, but it is also true that few contemporaries respected France, certainly not in Moscow or in eastern Europe, or even in the Foreign Office. Nevertheless, Iakov Z. Surits, then the Soviet ambassador in Paris, made the argument that Moscow should try to use the French position on alliance negotiations as a wedge against British opposition, but that argument did not fly in Moscow.[13] Incidentally, Surits was one of the relatively few first-generation Soviet diplomats to survive the Stalinist purges.

It should be kept in mind that the Soviet embassies in Paris and London were well informed about goings-on inside the French and British governments. In fact, neither the British nor the French authorities quite understood just how low their stock had fallen in eastern Europe because of their unwillingness to face down Hitler. In particular, their failure to stop the entry of the Wehrmacht into the demilitarized Rhineland in March 1936 had disastrous effects on their credibility in eastern Europe, even in Czechoslovakia, which had mutual assistance pacts with France and the USSR. The Rhineland crisis led indirectly to Titulescu's sacking as foreign minister.

However sceptical Litvinov was about the prospects of agreement with France and Britain, he took the initiative to propose to Stalin a draft text for a formal Anglo-Franco-Soviet tripartite alliance against Nazi Germany. Stalin gave his consent with some modifications to the original draft and it was handed over to the British ambassador in Moscow on 17 April 1939. Sixteen days later Litvinov was sacked. Everyone has a theory about why he was sacked, mine is that the Foreign Office disrespected Litvinov, did not take him seriously, and therefore Stalin replaced him with a tougher Molotov. I have asked several times for Litvinov's correspondence with Stalin in 1939 (some of which is published) to see if there is any written explanation for his dismissal. To date, I have not gained access to the pertinent files.

Dr. Photiadou raises the issue of the Polish role in the negotiations in 1939. In my new manuscript I closely follow Soviet-Polish relations. From 1932 onward, it was Soviet policy to strengthen relations with Poland and to bring it into a large anti-Nazi entente. The Poles rejected Soviet proposals, concluding a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany (January 1934), despite repeated warnings from Litvinov and his colleagues that they risked Poland's fourth partition. It was also the position of Romanian, Czechoslovak, and French diplomats, amongst others, that Poland was headed toward ruin if it continued to throw in with Nazi Germany. One often sees these comments from various sources in the Soviet diplomatic correspondence.[14] In April 1938 deputy commissar Vladimir P. Potemkin instructed Surits to organise a press campaign in

[12] Peter Jackson, *France and the Nazi Menace: Intelligence and Policy Making, 1933-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[13] Carley, *1939*, 139-140.

[14] *Passim* in my new manuscript referenced above, but, for example, excerpt from Litvinov's *dnevnik*, "Record of conversation with the Polish foreign minister [Józef] Beck, 13, 14, 15 February 1934," secret, AVPRF, f. 05, op. 14, p. 95, d. 4, ll. 53-62 (published in *DVP*, XVII, 131-40); "Conversation with Titulescu," Mikhail S. Ostrovskii [Soviet minister in Bucharest], no. 53, secret, 11 Sept. 1934, AVPRF, f. 010, op. 9, p. 43, d. 128, ll. 4-12; "Record of conversation with minister of foreign affairs [Eduard] Beneš, 6 February 1935," Sergei S. Aleksandrovskii [Soviet minister in Prague], no. 65/s, secret, AVPRF, f. 05, op. 15, p. 104, d. 3, ll. 150-54; record of conversation

Paris warning Poland of its fourth partition if it did not change course.[15] Even the Polish ambassador in Moscow, Wacław Grzybowski, admitted the danger during a conversation with Potemkin in July 1938. It was a startling admission coming from the Polish ambassador.[16] The last Soviet effort at rapprochement with Poland occurred in the autumn of 1938 and ended when the Poles rejected the British proposition in late March 1939 for a four power "declaration" supporting the integrity and independence of governments in eastern and southeastern Europe. Shortly after Molotov became commissar in May 1939, he made an offer of help to Warsaw against the Nazi aggressor, only to be once again rejected by the Poles. It was the last such Soviet offer made to Poland.[17]

Dr. Photiadou mentions Lord Halifax's complaint to Soviet ambassador Ivan M. Maiskii in May 1939 that the Soviet side was inflexible in negotiations with the British. What Maiskii said in reply during a conversation in June was that it had probably been a mistake for the Soviet government to state its "irreducible minimum" at the outset.[18] We should have asked for more at the beginning in order to be able to make subsequent concessions. In point of fact, as I note in my article, all the big issues of Anglo-Franco-Soviet relations had been on the table for several years. There were no new fundamental issues in the spring of 1939 and no constant upping of Soviet demands. Take, for example, security on Soviet Baltic frontiers. It had been a Soviet concern since the 1920s. *Narkom* Litvinov considered the Baltic region to be a potential *place d'armes* for an attack on Leningrad and he wanted, *inter alia*, an agreement with Poland to close off that danger. After 1933 Litvinov returned repeatedly to this issue, for example, with French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou in the late spring of 1934.[19] The Polish government declined Soviet proposals.

Dr. Photiadou concludes with this statement: "the impression may be left that while there was deep and mutual distrust, only that of the Soviets was justified; and that only the Soviets were serious about the negotiations, unlike what the British 'blue book' would have wanted the public to believe." My view is that the Soviet government pursued a policy of collective security and mutual assistance against Nazi Germany from December 1933 until August 1939 and that genuine Soviet overtures were repeatedly rejected during that period, so that by August 1936, prior to the beginning of the Stalinist show trials, the USSR was largely isolated in Europe. The context for examining the failure of negotiations in 1939 should not be April to August of that year, but the nearly six years from 1933 to 1939. However implausible it may seem, the facts remain, based on the archival record, that the Soviet side offered collective security and that France (excepting a period in 1933-1934) and Britain rejected it. So at first did the United States, although its position was not crucial during the 1930s. Yes, there was important French and British support for a Soviet alliance, but it was not enough to swing around the French and British governments. Churchill, former Prime Minister David Lloyd George, Chief Diplomatic Adviser Robert Vansittart, outlier Colonel Charles de Gaulle (with a cameo appearance in my new manuscript), and French cabinet ministers Paul-Boncour and Georges Mandel were amongst those who favoured an alliance with the USSR. 'We're sunk without it,' was their main argument. Who can say now that they were wrong? They fought hard for a grand alliance with the USSR and

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between Stalin and Pierre Laval, French foreign minister, May 1935, in *Ivan Mikailovich Maiskii, Dnevnik diplomata*, 2 vols., in three parts (Moscow: Nauka, 2006-2009), entry of 19 June 1935, I, 110-11.

[15] Potemkin to Surits, no. 6200, secret, 4 April 1938, AVPRF, f. 05, op. 18, p. 148, d. 158, ll. 25-30.

[16] Excerpt from Potemkin's *dnevnik*, "Conversation with the Polish ambassador Grzybowski, 5 July 1938," no. 6321, secret, AVPRF, f. 011, op. 2, p. 20, d. 206, ll. 237-234.

[17] Carley, *1939*, 140-41.

[18] According to Halifax to Seeds, no. 488, 23 June 1939, C8979/3356/18, TNA FO 371 23069.

[19] V. S. Dovgalevskii, Soviet ambassador in Paris (from Litvinov, Menton) to NKID [Commissariat for Foreign Affairs], cc. Stalin, Voroshilov, *et al*., no. 6324, very secret, 18 May 1934, AVPRF, f. 059, op. 1, p. 168, d. 1273, l. 9, RF, World War II, 1934; and Dovgalevskii (from Litvinov, Menton) to NKID, cc. Stalin, Voroshilov, *et al*., nos. 6366-6367, 6371-6372, very secret, 19 May 1934, AVPRF, f. 059, op. 1, p. 168, d. 1273, ll. 10-11, RF, World War II, 1934.

lost. After so many failures it is only human nature that Soviet officials—those who survived the purges—would doubt the honest dealing of their western counterparts, the more so since even people in Britain and France who favoured a Soviet alliance did not trust their own governments. Churchill is a good example. Dr. Photiadou notes the opposition of Chamberlain to an alliance with the USSR. His letters to his sisters, Ida and Hilda, leave no doubt.[20] He was the prime minister and he had great influence in spite of the opposition which he encountered. Lord Halifax was more open than the prime minister (or senior Foreign Office officials), to Soviet overtures, if one may judge from Ambassador Maiskii's cables to Moscow.[21]

On the more general issue of whether capitalists could put aside their fundamental ideological differences with Communists to cooperate against a common enemy, the answer must be that they could not until June 1941 when Britain and USSR were equally threatened by a deadly foe. To be sure, after September 1939 Stalin was no longer interested in a deep rapprochement with Britain, because it had little to offer as an ally, especially after the Dunkirk evacuation. Prior to that point, the Soviet side seemed to make a better job of setting aside ideological differences, being naïve enough to believe, oddly enough, that they could win over their western counterparts. They certainly tried, though it was not a rigorous Marxist position to take. Even after June 1941 trust was never fully established, and as the Red Army took the upper hand in the war against the Wehrmacht, such trust as there was, began to weaken. That of course is another story.

My thanks again to Dr. Photiadou for her review of my article.

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[20] Robert Self (ed.), *The Neville Chamberlain Dairy Letters*, 4 vols. (London: Ashgate, 2000-2005).

[21] For example, Maiskii to NKID, cc. Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Kaganovich, *et al*., no. 4261, rigorously secret, 19 March 1939, AVPRF, f. 059, op. 1, p. 300, d. 2075, ll. 198-99, RF, World War II, 1939.