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The Locarno System: decline and British attempts at modification, 1935-1937 (through the lens of Ivan Maisky's «Diplomat's Diary»)

DOI: 10.33693/2658-4654/-2020-2-3-20-28

Abstract. The Diary of Ivan Maisky, a diplomat, Soviet Envoy (later Ambassador) to the United Kingdom from 1932 to 1943 is one of the valuable sources on the interwar history of international relations and WWII. Maisky never saw his diaries returned to him after they had been confiscated at the time of his arrest in 1953. It was declassified by the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation and published in 2006-2009 with the commentaries of Russian scholars. The analysis of the Diary which contains unique details about Soviet-British relations casts new light on the roles of Great Britain and the USSR in the pre-war international crises and allows for a re-evaluation of the two powers' efforts aimed at preventing or delaying the war. When the Diary is juxtaposed with the declassified British archive materials, the degree to which the British officials trusted the Soviet Envoy/Ambassador as well as the level of his awareness of the undercurrents of British politics become clearer. The authors argue that the Versailles System had failed by the mid-1920s and was replaced by the Locarno System based on the guarantees of Germany's western borders. In the mid-1930s the Locarno System was in disarray despite British efforts to save it through concessions and the appeasement policy. The «Diplomat's Diary» shows a struggle within the British elite between the supporters and the opponents of the appeasement policy linked with the search for a new configuration of the European system of security.

Key words: Appeasement, the World Economic Crisis of the 1930s, I.M. Maisky, W. Churchill, Anglo-Soviet relations.

For citation: Khakhalkina E. V., Troitskiy E. F. The Locarno System: decline and British attempts at modification, 1935-1937 (through the lens of Ivan Maisky's «Diplomat's Diary») // *History and modern perspectives*. 2020. Vol. 2. №3. P. 20-28. (in Russ.)
DOI: 10.33693/2658-4654/-2020-2-3-20-28

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Начало распада Локарнской системы и попытки ее модификации британскими правительствами в 1935-1937 гг. (по материалам «Дневника дипломата» И. М. Майского)

DOI: 10.33693/2658-4654/-2020-2-3-20-28

Аннотация. Дневник Ивана Михайловича Майского, советского посланника (впоследствии посла) в Великобритании в 1932 - 1943 гг., является одним из ценных источников по межвоенной истории и Второй мировой войны. Дневник был конфискован во время ареста Майского в 1953 г. и не был возвращен ему после освобождения. В 2006-2009 гг. дневниковые записи были рассекречены Архивом внешней политики Российской Федерации и опубликованы с комментариями ведущих российских ученых. Анализ дневника, который содержит уникальные детали о советско-британских отношениях, позволяет по-новому взглянуть на роль СССР и Великобритании в предвоенных международных кризисах и сделать выводы о недостаточности усилий двух держав, направленных на предотвращение или отсрочку войны. При сопоставлении «Дневника» с рассекреченными британскими архивными материалами становится ясно, в какой степени британские официальные лица доверяли советскому посланнику/послу, а также уровень его осведомленности о подводных течениях британской внешней политики. Авторы считают, что Версальская система международных отношений показала свое полное банкротство к середине 1920-х гг. и была заменена Локарнским механизмом, основанным на гарантиях западных границ Германии. В середине 1930-х гг. и этот механизм потерпел провал, несмотря на попытки Великобритании «оживить» его с помощью политики умиротворения. «Дневник дипломата» проливает свет на борьбу внутри британской элиты между сторонниками и противниками умиротворения, связанную с поиском новой конфигурации европейской системы безопасности.

Ключевые слова: политика умиротворения, мировой экономический кризис 1930-х гг., И. М. Майский, У. Черчилль, англо-советские отношения.

Для цитирования: Хахалкина Е. В., Троицкий Е. Ф. Начало распада Локарнской системы и попытки ее модификации британскими правительствами в 1935-1937 гг. (по материалам «Дневника дипломата» И. М. Майского) // *История и современное мировоззрение*. 2020. Т. 2. №3. С. 20-28. DOI: 10.33693/2658-4654/-2020-2-3-20-28

INTRODUCTION

Ivan Maisky (whose true name was Jan Lachowiecki) arrived in Britain as Soviet Envoy in 1932. Highly erudite, educated abroad and speaking several foreign languages, Maisky was the best candidacy for this position. However, he had his own 'skeletons in the cupboard' – the Bolsheviks hardly ever forgave him his «Menshevik» past and initial opposition to the October Revolution. Later Maisky, who became the Russian Communist Party's member in 1921, did all his best to earn the trust of the Soviet authorities. Soon after his arrival in Britain he established extensive contacts in the British political elite. He could rely on his previous experience of working in London as counsellor at the Soviet mission from 1925 to 1927. After the diplomatic relations between the USSR and the UK had been severed Maisky was transferred to a diplomatic position in Tokyo and later to Finland. The appointment to London in 1932 turned out to become a peak of his career, though at that time the Soviet – British relations were tense and there were no reasons to expect much progress.

In mid-July 1934 Maisky began keeping a diary, with the last entry made in December 1943. He maintained close contacts with many of Britain's most influential and brightest political figures, such as W. Churchill, Lord Beaverbrook, J. MacDonald, D. Lloyd George, R. Vansittart, A. Eden. Maisky did not make diary entries every day, sometimes, for often unclear reasons, he made gaps as long as a few months. The diary was written with the author's understanding that it would be read by Stalin (Maisky sent him the diary in 1941 [Maisky, 2006: 9]), and it is of course an essential factor to take into consideration when this source is analyzed.

TENSIONS IN EUROPE AND THE WORLD AND THE STRUGGLE OF ELITES WITHIN THE BRITISH ESTABLISHMENT IN THE FIRST HALF OF 1930S

Maisky began keeping the diary at the time when the storm was gathering over Europe and the whole world. The global economic crisis became a serious challenge to the international system developed after the First World War. The fragility of the whole edifice

was visible in the early 1920s already when the postwar economic slump brought about a number of crises. The conflicts were a consequence of the unviable resolution of the reparations question that resulted in the Ruhr Crisis of 1923-1924 and the excessive weakening of Germany. In the Far East the Washington System infringed on Japan's interests and benefited the United States, making Tokyo's attempt at revenge just a matter of time.

In the mid-1920s the great powers attempted to impose a superstructure of the Locarno mechanism on the Versailles System. In October 1925 the Locarno conference arrived at an agreement whereby Germany confirmed the inviolability of its western borders (with France and Belgium) but gave no guarantees related to its eastern borders. German Foreign Minister Stresemann did not conceal Berlin's intentions to change the borders in the East and regain the lost territories.

The British diplomacy saw the Locarno Treaties as its major achievement. Great Britain was a guarantor of the Rhineland Pact and, together with Italy, the second guarantor, pledged to compel Germany to comply with the Pact if the latter violated it.

The Great Depression triggered the exacerbation of old conflicts and the emergence of new ones. Germany and Italy set a course towards the strengthening of their international positions through a revision of the Versailles Treaty. In 1931 Japan seized the Northeast China where a puppet state of Manchukuo was established. Tokyo's moves elicited only a token resistance from the great powers and the League of Nations.

International tensions were growing in Europe as well. Under the Nazi-led government Germany at first pursued a wait-and-see policy and did not show increased military ambitions or appetite for territories. In line with the Versailles Treaty a plebiscite was held in the Saar, a territory that for a long time had been 'an apple of discord' between Germany and France. After the First World War France insisted on transferring the administration of this territory to the League of Nations for fifteen years. At the referendum more than 90% of voters cast their ballots in favour of rejoining Germany. It was Berlin's first bloodless victory.

This event was not reflected in Maisky's diary, but the German problem was discussed by British politicians. At a meeting between the former Prime Minister David Lloyd George and the Soviet diplomat the situation around Germany was touched: «L[loyd] G[orge] said that the German question was of little interest for him now. The fears aroused by German belligerence are greatly exaggerated. Germany needs at least another 10 years to restore its military, economic and financial might. Until then Europe can sleep soundly. L[loyd] G[orge] is much more worried about the FE [Far Eastern] affairs. The Pacific Ocean is in our times the most important problem of world politics as compared with which all European questions recede into the background. And what happens now in the FE? Japan, widely using the carrot- and-stick tactics, is openly striving for the creation of a powerful «yellow» empire in the Asian continent» [Maisky, 2006: 80].

Lloyd-George was right about Japan, but his forecasts about Germany did not come true. On March 16, 1935 Berlin officially announced that it rejected the disarmament clauses of the Versailles Treaty and planned to build 36 divisions, air forces and the navy. On March 17, Maisky wrote in the diary: «A big day in history: yesterday Hitler published a new law – Germany introduces military conscription and its army's manpower is set at 500 000. A major step to a new war is done! Cards up. The Versailles Treaty is openly and solemnly ripped to shreds. The fascist Germany becomes a formidable military power. Its army will now outnumber the French [Maisky, 2006: 92] On March 18, he went on: «The reaction of the

English press to Hitler's moves is weaker than could have been expected. ...Britgov [the British Government] is visibly confused. It has to make a choice and it does not like it. Therefore, it tries first and foremost to win time and delay the decision. Maybe things will work out somehow!..» [Maisky, 2006: 93].

The events made Maisky increasingly pessimistic. On March 23 he wrote: «I was thinking yesterday and today over the situation in England. A complicated and a self-contradictory picture! There is a strong anti-Soviet current that for this very reason is pro-German; along with this there is a strong pro-French current that for this very reason is anti-German and tends to be tolerant to the USSR; a strong pro-Japanese current that is at the same time anti-Soviet; a powerful pro-American current which for this very reason is anti-Japanese and tends to be tolerant to the USSR; a quite significant current which tries to mobilise England's public opinion against the «yellow danger» (Japan, China), which for this very reason tries to bring the family of the white race peoples to «order» and to find the ways for reconciliation with Germany» [Maisky, 2006: 97].

The great powers, including Great Britain, indeed showed a weak reaction to the German announcement. The only attempt at a token rebuttal was the so called «Stresa Front». In April 1935 a meeting of the prime ministers of France, Italy and Great Britain in Stresa, Italy, produced a broad declaration hinting that the League of Nations sanctions could be imposed against Germany. However, the discussions showed that Britain was not ready to use the sanctions mechanism against Berlin.

The French position differed from that of Great Britain. The German announcement facilitated the French rapprochement with the Soviet Union bringing about the conclusion in May 1935 of the French – Soviet Treaty on mutual assistance. A similar Treaty was signed two weeks later by the USSR and Czechoslovakia.

This mechanism threatened Germany with a potential war at two fronts – in case of aggression against one of the parties the assistance of the second signatory was foreseen, although in vague terms. Despite the fact that the Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty contained a reservation that the USSR could help Prague only if similar assistance were provided by France, both treaties seemed to be of much value.

While French moves were in line with the logic of collective security building and could be interpreted as an extension of the «Stresa Front», British policies clearly undermined these efforts. In March 1935 the British government signed a naval agreement with Germany allowing Berlin to build a Navy with the tonnage of up to 35 % of the British. The way to the appeasement policy was open.

Italy, another participant of the «Stresa Front», put forward territorial claims against Abyssinia, seeking to change the balance of forces and strengthen its position as a colonial power. In late May 1935 Italy set a provocation at the border of this country, but the conflict was settled.

In September 1935 Abyssinia appealed to the League of Nations to take measures to prevent the war. The League of Nations established a five-power committee to find a diplomatic solution to the conflict between Italy and Abyssinia.

The British Cabinet paid much attention to the «Italo-Abyssinian dispute». At the meeting on August 21, 1935 Anthony Eden, the Minister for League of Nations Affairs, reported the Italian position that «to Italy, Abyssinia was a menace to be destroyed». On the contrary, London and Paris believed that the compromise was possible though admitted that Italy could unleash the war at any moment. If this were the case, Foreign Secretary Hoare suggested considering whether article 16 of the League of Nations Covenant

should be invoked and military and economic sanctions imposed [CAB 23-82, 21 Aug. 1935, 1935: 4-5]

On 2 October 1935 Italy attacked Abyssinia. Five days later the Council of the League of Nations declared Italy to be the aggressor but was very slow in taking further steps [The International..., 1936: 521].

In early November 1935 Maisky wrote about his conversation with Hoare where the Abyssinian war was discussed: «Hoare began complaining about the French: they are too optimistic and think that the conflict can be settled in no time. Alas! – undoing the African knot, by all indications, will be a long process. So far the Italian demands are absolutely unacceptable for Abyssinia, the LN and England» [Maisky, 2006: 122].

On 11 November 1935 the League of Nations Council decided to impose economic sanctions against Italy – the exports of arms and certain strategic goods (such as rubber, lead, tin and chromium) was banned. The oil embargo could be a significant blow to the Italian economy, but no agreement on this question was reached. As Hoare stated at the Cabinet meeting on 2 December 1935, «the question of an embargo on oil against Italy raised a number of very difficult issues. First, the risk of a «mad dog» act by Signor Mussolini and its consequences. Second, the future of sanctions and, with them, of the League... As regards the risk of the «mad dog» act there were two considerations that could not be ignored». The first was that Hoare «had received a number of alarmist reports from different Capitals tending to show that Signor Mussolini would regard an oil embargo as rendering defeat inevitable, and might use it as a pretext to get out of his difficulties by attacking the British in the Mediterranean, even though it was tantamount to suicide». The second was «the question of the serious gaps in our system of Imperial Defense, which were in a weak state as compared with an Italy mobilized for war [CAB 23-82, 2 December, 1935: 2-3]. Hoare's conclusion was that «we ought not to under-rate the risk» [CAB 23-82, 2 December, 1935: 3]

Oil sanctions were never imposed on Italy. In the British Government the opinion prevailed that it would be expedient to reach a compromise with Italy at the expense of territorial concessions on the part of Abyssinia. On December 8 Hoare and French Prime Minister Laval signed a secret agreement whereby Ethiopia would cede part of its territory to Italy in exchange for territorial compensations.

At a Cabinet meeting on December 9, 1935 Eden illustrated the idea with the map. He pointed out that the proposed exchange of territories would be hard for the Emperor of Abyssinia but not impossible CAB 23-82, 9 December, 1935: 3]. It was planned that Abyssinia would cede most of its so-called non-Amharic territories in the north in exchange for an outlet to the Red Sea.

Maisky did not know the details of the Hoare – Laval agreement. On December 14 he summed up his thoughts in the diary: «The situation is more and more intriguing. On September 11 Hoare made his famous speech in Geneva where he firmly stated that from now on all of England's foreign policy would be the policy of the League of Nations. This speech was estimated, both here and abroad, as a major, almost historic milestone in the sphere of international politics. And suddenly appears this Paris «peace plan» of Hoare-Laval! The plan which is the most undisguised, the boldest betrayal of all the LN principles! And when? – Three weeks after the election! And at what moment? At the moment of Italian army's outright failures in Abyssinia, at the moment of Mussolini's ever-increasing difficulties in his country. Incomprehensible! What is the matter? Who is to blame? ... Meanwhile, a real political crisis has broken out in England» [Maisky, 2006: 129].

The details of the agreement became clear later. In mid-December 1935 Maisky had a meeting with the British economist Sir George Paish who «told... the details of the «peace plan»: not only Hoare, but also Baldwin who was duly informed of everything is responsible for it. Laval «frightened» Hoare and (Baldwin) with the refusal to support the British Navy in the Mediterranean Sea if it occurred to Mussolini to attack it as a result of oil sanctions. The English probed the ground in Yugoslavia but it (evidently, on French instructions) also refused to help England with ports, airplanes etc. So Hoare and Baldwin approved the «Paris plan» [Maisky, 2006: 129].

It is noteworthy that, although this information correctly reflected Britain's apprehensions discussed at the Cabinet meeting on 2 December Maisky did not take them seriously: «British ministers are east to «scare»! ... It is difficult to imagine that Mussolini, even under the most extreme circumstances, would risk attacking the English Navy. And even if he risked – would the British not be capable of fighting back? Those are tales for babies. The matter of fact is not in the «fearfulness». It seems to me that the main motive of the British policies is that they want to get rid of the Italo-Abyssinian conflict as soon as possible and to have their hands free for acting in the Far East and in Europe (Germany!). ...» [Maisky, 2006: 129].

The Cabinet Papers, however, reveal that Britain was more alarmed at African events. Ethiopia rejected the document that would in fact deprive it of independence. British mediation efforts failed. On 22 December 1935 Sir Samuel Hoare resigned as Foreign Secretary and was succeeded by Anthony Eden.

On 5 March 1936 the Cabinet again discussed the Italo-Abyssinian conflict. Eden believed that Britain should avoid taking the initiative to announce oil sanctions against Italy [CAB 23-83, 5 Mar. 1936: 1] His French counterpart P.-E. Flandin also expressed apprehensions about the sanctions. He thought that «an oil embargo would almost certainly involve the departure of Italy from the League as well as in all probability her withdrawal from her obligations under the Treaty of Locarno». The Foreign Office believed that the rapprochement between Italy and Germany to be unlikely, «partly owing to the Italian need in the maintenance of the independent Austria, partly because the rapprochement would embitter Italy's relations with Jugo-Slavia, partly owing to uncertainty of Italy's future and partly owing to the well-known unpredictability of Italian policy, of which Herr Hitler was well aware» [CAB 23-83, 5 Mar. 1936: 2].

The French questioned the British whether the latter would be able to honour London's commitments under the Locarno Treaty alone, implying Italy's withdrawal from the Locarno system. The Foreign Office view was that: «1) if Germany violated the demilitarised zone and Italy took no action...we were not absolved because under Article 1 of the Treaty of Locarno the guarantee was made «collectively and severally»; 2) if Italy denounced the Treaty...we did not wish to claim that an Italian repudiation of Locarno would release us from our obligations. In this connection the Secretary of State for Foreign affairs pointed out that in the original negotiations for the Treaty of Locarno we had intended to sign without Italy and...Italian co-operation had been introduced at the last moment» [CAB 23-83, 5 Mar. 1936: 3].

INTENSIFICATION OF MILITARY CONFLICTS AND REACTION OF GREAT BRITAIN AND OTHER POWERS IN THE CONTEXT OF LOCARNO SYSTEM

Meanwhile the German question was increasingly attracting attention. In spring 1936 Germany re-occupied the Rhineland.

Generally, the item «The Locarno Treaty» was almost permanently on agenda of British Cabinet meetings. Essentially, the British diplomacy tried to prevent the collapse of the Locarno but not of the Versailles system. The way the problem was posed was symptomatic: the Locarno superstructure seemed more sustainable and, most importantly, served the British interests whereas the Versailles system was mainly the French creation.

The Versailles Treaty envisaged the dismantling of all military fortifications on the right bank of the Rhine and the demilitarization of the territory. In March 1936 Germany, in violation of both the Versailles and the Locarno treaties, moved about 30 000 troops to the Rhineland. On the eve of this move the French parliament ratified the French-Soviet Treaty on Mutual Assistance, and Germany referred to this fact to declare the Locarno Treaty repudiated. On March 7, 1936 Germany transmitted a note to the governments of Great Britain, France, Italy and Belgium where the French party was accused of breaking the Locarno Treaty.

On March 9 the Cabinet began discussing the re-occupation of the Rhineland. For the next day a meeting between the Foreign Secretary and his French counterpart was planned in Paris. At the cabinet meeting, Eden stated «there is...no reason to suppose that the present German action implies a threat of hostilities; the German Government speak in their Memorandum of their 'unchangeable longing for a real pacification of Europe', and express their willingness to concluding a non-aggression pact with France and Belgium» [CAB 23-83. 9 Mar. 1936: 3].

The Foreign Secretary informed the Cabinet that the German Ambassador visited him on the morning of March 7 and handed a memorandum of two parts. «In the first part the German Government has developed at considerable length their objections to the Franco-Soviet Pact and the reasons why in their view the intention of the French Government to conclude this Pact has created an entirely new situation and destroyed the political system of the Locarno Treaty. The German Government hold that for these reasons the Locarno Treaty has ceased in practice to exist and that Germany consequently regards herself for her part as no longer bound by this no longer valid Treaty... The second part of the memorandum contains a series of proposals which are described as being designed to promote the establishment of a system of peaceful security for Europe [CAB 23-83. 9 Mar. 1936: 2-3].

The German proposals clearly demonstrate German attempts to allay the fears of London and Paris through essentially «hollow» suggestions. The German programme envisaged: 1) creating a demilitarized zone on both sides of the Franco-German and Belgian-German frontiers; 2) concluding non-aggression pacts for 25 years between Germany, France and Belgium guaranteed by Great Britain and Italy; 3) inviting the Netherlands to join this system; 4) supplementing these arrangements by an air pact; 5) concluding non-aggression pacts between Germany and the states bordering Germany on the East similar to the agreement between Germany and Poland. Germany also expressed its willingness to re-enter the League of Nations «now that equality of rights and restoration of her full sovereignty over the entire German territory has been attained» and raised «the question of colonial equality of rights» [CAB 23-83. 9 Mar. 1936: 2-6].

The British diplomacy took these proposals seriously though Eden acknowledged that «the abrogation of the Locarno Treaty and the occupation of the demilitarized zone has profoundly shaken confidence in any engagement into which the Government of Germany may in future enter».

Maisky wrote on March 8, 1936: «I don't like England's reaction to Hitler's «coup» in the Rhineland. ...it feels to me that we are in

for a new and very dangerous Germanophile zigzag in British politics. These «7 points» give an excellent ammunition... and, moreover, will make a big mess in the heads of flabby pacifists and spineless labourists who imagine that Hitler's proclamations of willingness to return to the League of Nations solve the whole German problem with a single blow. If only France remained firm. Much will depend on it» [Maisky, 2006: 139].

The French position was hardly firm. Its military system was disorganised by permanent reforms. The French reaction to the Rhineland events turned into a number of hastily convened meetings between government and military officials. To remedy the shortcomings of French military policy a Permanent Committee of National Defense was established in June 1936 [Alexander, 2007: 567] but this newly born structure was unable to act as coordinator of military actions.

On 9 March Maisky wrote: «... The mood of the English? To negotiate, of course. It is a national English disease: negotiations, negotiations, negotiations. That's why the Britgov would right now be ready to launch an «exploration» (what a word!) on the subject of whether Hitler's «7 points» are an appropriate basis for negotiations. From Cranborne's words [Viscount Cranborne, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs] it was clear that the Britgov hopes to restore Locarno minus the Rhineland» [Maisky, 2006: 140].

As the Locarno mechanism was unraveling, the British Government moved to a policy of concessions that seemed to allow for the containment and control of German ambitions. This policy's inadequacy was visible to an outside observer. On March 10, 1936 Maisky wrote: «directives from M.M. [Maxim M. Litvinov was the Soviet Union's People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs] arrived. They are quite in line with what I told Cranborne yesterday. M.M. believes that the British position means a bonus to the aggressor, the disruption of the collective security system, the end of the LN. Negotiating with Hitler the next day after his speech would do even more damage than the Hoare – Laval plan. England's credibility would be irreparably damaged. The LN has lost any significance as an instrument of peace».

Mussolini's aggression against Ethiopia and Hitler's successful remilitarization of the Rhineland changed the balance of forces in the Versailles System and in its superstructure, the Locarno System, by effectively removing Italy, a guarantor of the Locarno Treaty, from the group of countries capable of containing Germany [Weinberg, 2005: 206].

In late March 1936 Maisky was visited by Dr. Martin, the Abyssinian minister in London: «On behalf of his Emperor he asked me to convey to the Sovgov the plea for help. ... Most of all, Abyssinians suffer from Italian airplanes dropping explosive and gas bombs not only on the troops, but also on the Red Cross and the civilians... It turns out that the English don't give anything to Abyssinians. Despite Eden's repeated promises, there is neither money nor airplanes. Eden also repeatedly promised that the LN would help Abyssinia, but to no avail. Abyssinians are totally disappointed with the LN and all the Western powers whose only business is mutual intrigues and who are ready to sell Ethiopia for a piece of gold. ... What could I tell him? I replied that I would contact Moscow although it was clear for me from the start that Moscow, threatened by Japan from the East and by Germany from the West, would hardly wish to supply Abyssinia with airplanes» [Maisky, 2006: 141].

In early April 1936 Maisky was reflecting about the divisions within the British ruling block: «In Britgov there are two groups: young Conservatives (Eden, Duff Cooper, Walter Elliot, Ormsby Gore) and, as it is claimed, N. Chamberlain do not believe Hitler, regard his suggestions as a disguise to better prepare for the war and

insist on rapprochement with France...and further with the USSR. The old ones (Runciman, Simon, MacDonald, Hailsham, Monsell, Cunliffe-Lister etc.) support the policy of half-isolation, trying to avoid the Locarno obligations and a quarrel with Germany... Baldwin, as always, swings between the two groups» [Maisky, 2006: 142]. Maisky's observation about the mass sentiment is noteworthy: «...The broad masses of the people are full of animal fear of the war but have little interest in foreign policy. Churchill told me today that in the past ten days he had received five times more letters from his constituents about new football rules than about the Rhineland crisis» [Maisky, 2006: 142].

In May 1936 Abyssinia's fate was sealed. On May 3 Maisky wrote in the diary: «Yesterday the Abyssinian Negus fled the capital for Djibouti from where, according to today's newspapers, he plans to move to Palestine. Addis Ababa is in flames, there is looting in the streets, gunshot are heard... The war is over... Abyssinia is conquered, Mussolini triumphs. At the same time the LN is buried, Europe is near the fateful crossroads. War is in the air! A terrible storm is approaching with stunning rapidity. Today, I was walking the whole morning in the garden figuring out how and when to build the underground shelter from gas attacks under the mission building. Soon it will be needed. I'll have to ask the NKID for money and instructions» [Maisky, 2006: 143].

In his memoirs «The Second World War» Churchill wrote of that time: «Up till the middle of 1936, Hitler's aggressive policy and treaty-breaking had rested, not upon Germany's strength, but upon the disunity and timidity of France and Britain and the isolation of the United States. Each of his preliminary steps had been gambles in which he knew he could not afford to be seriously challenged. The seizure of the Rhineland and its subsequent fortification was the greatest gamble of all. It had succeeded brilliantly. His opponents were too irresolute to call his bluff ...» [Churchill, 1948: 211-212].

On July 17, 1936 the Nationalist uprising against the Republican government of Spain began in Spanish Morocco. At first these events seemed to be of «local» significance, but soon it became clear that Spain was turning into a testing ground for Germany and Italy before the decisive battle. Italy's and Germany's help was crucial in allowing General Franco, the leader of the anti-Republican uprising, to move the troops to mainland Spain.

In late August 1936 the Agreement Regarding Non-intervention in Spain was signed which banned exports and transit of war material to Spain. Twenty-seven states joined the Agreement including Britain, France, the USSR, Germany and Italy.

Following the signing of the Agreement the International Committee for the Application of the Agreement was created. Maisky and naval attaché Lev Antsipo-Chikunsky were appointed Soviet representatives in the Committee. Unsurprisingly, the second half of 1936, with the exception of entries of July 12 and December 1, is absent from the Maisky diary.

By early October 1936 the rebel forces supported by German and Italian airpower strengthened their positions taking the southern part of the country. The Republican Government lost the time to suppress the revolt. Though the USSR started supporting it in early autumn, its position was increasingly precarious, especially as intra-governmental disagreements were mounting. In blunt statements of October 7 and 23, 1936 the Soviet Government pointed out that «it could not consider itself bound by the Agreement Regarding Non-intervention in view of its systematic violation by the fascist countries» [Dokumenty, 1974: 464].

The Soviet position contrasted sharply with the position of Britain and France. By mid-August 1936 London and Paris agreed to pursue a common line with regard to Spanish events, planning to re-

main uninvolved in the conflict and turning a blind eye to Berlin's and Rome's violations of the Non-intervention Agreement.

The civil war in Spain catalyzed the rapprochement between Germany and Italy who had been separated by the «Austrian question». On October 23, 1936 the Italo-German agreement was signed whereby Rome de facto «ceded» Austria to Germany in exchange for Berlin's «loyalty» to Rome's actions in Africa and the Mediterranean.

On 26 January 1937 Maisky wrote about a «shift» in British foreign policy, pointing out «the four principal moments»: 1) England's increased military capabilities, especially in airpower; 2) Consolidation of Anglo-French rapprochement that, after Blum's government came to power in France, has actually grown into an Anglo-French alliance; 3) USSR's activity in Spain that has proved that we can be a serious factor in Western Europe and that the forces of peace can count on the Soviet Union 4) Growing «boldness» of Germany who allows itself not only to mock openly at Locarno, but also to put forward colonial demands [Maisky, 2006: 153].

However, no real shift in appeasement policies in Europe was forthcoming. Meanwhile the situation in the Far East was worsening. In November 1936 Germany and Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact with a secret annex directed against the Soviet Union. The Pact alarmed the British Government who saw Japan's growing power as a threat to its Asian colonial possessions.

In mid-January 1937 Maisky «was unexpectedly visited by the Japanese Ambassador Yoshida. ... Apparently, Yoshida wanted to somewhat «comfort» us about the effect of the German – Japanese pact and to show as well that he does not belong to the aggressive school of Japan's political thought. As a matter of fact, Y[oshida]'s reflections were quite frank. The Japanese Ambassador was sharply critical of the Army's and Navy's behaviour. ... Y[oshida] expressed confidence that the bloated budget and the exceedingly onerous burden of taxes would soon sober the Japan's ruling circles and then they would be compelled to move to a more peaceful foreign policy. I responded: «May your words come true! Time will tell. So far I see no symptoms of sobering». Y[oshida] also told me that the trade complications between Japan and British colonies were exacerbating...» [Maisky, 2006: 155-156]. Japan was firmly pursuing the aggressive policy it had embarked on in 1931.

In mid-February 1937 Maisky had a conversation with Sir Robert Vansittart, the British Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Vansittart described «the Anglo-German relations as «running on the spot»: «... The most recent conversation between Ribbentrop and Halifax which lasted 2 hours was for 90% Ribbentrop's monologue addressed to Halifax. Ribbentrop dwelled upon two questions: 1) – of colonies – he demanded returning to Germany all of its former colonial possessions; 2) of the Franco-Soviet Pact – as always, Ribbentrop argued that this pact was the main obstacle to the pacification of Europe. ... Halifax responded that the satisfaction of Germany's colonial aspirations faces big difficulties. This was the end of the discussion» [Maisky, 2006: 155-156].

On April 10, 1937 Maisky summarized his observations: «Casting a glance at the Anglo-Italian relations after the end of the Abyssinian War, one can point out two periods. The first period covering approximately the second half of 1936 is characterized by intensified attempts from both sides at «normalizing» these relations. The motives behind these attempts are quite understandable. Italy is interested in Great Britain's «recognition» of its African conquests, in getting financial help from the City (for which it does not lose hope), in reaching agreement with England about limiting the latter's forces in the Mediterranean Sea. London, in its turn, is interested in gaining the time for its own rearmament, in alleviating its situ-

ation in the Mediterranean Sea, in driving a wedge into the maturing German-Italian «axis» (the German – Italian Protocol of October 23, 1936), and, finally, in being able to put pressure on Italy in the Spanish question. Accordingly, the Italian press greatly changed its tune with regard to England after the end of the Abyssinian War while Mussolini found it possible to declare solemnly on June 18, 1936 that «there are no more contentious issues between Italy and Britain». At the same time within the circles of the Britgov an energetic... appeasement policy toward Italy was pursued. These trends and efforts on both parts resulted in the «Gentleman's Agreement» between the two countries signed on January 2, 1937.

However the next three m[onths] that can be regarded as the second period were a bitter disappointment to the proponents of Anglo-Italian rapprochement. There were several reasons for it. Firstly, at the same time that the «Gentleman's Agreement» was signed Italians landed at Cadix its «volunteer corps» whose manpower reached by the end of March 80 000 to 100 000. Though this agreement said nothing about the Spanish War as such, the Italian act was perceived in England as cheating. It undermined immediately the yet fragile basis for «normalization». Secondly, on February 19 there was an assassination attempt against General Graziani in Addis Ababa. Out of fear and revenge, Italians killed up to 6 000 civilians, without regard to sex and age. It caused a vehement anti-Italian campaign in England... Thirdly, as a reaction to the English campaign, Italians resumed the anti-British campaign in the East while Grandi (Italian Ambassador in Great Britain) at the meeting of the Non-intervention Committee on March 23 refused to discuss the evacuation of «volunteers» from Spain which was a matter of great significance for the Britgov. At the same time Mussolini made a theatrical trip to Libya where he declared himself a «defender of Islam» and shook his fist at the Brit[ish] Empire. Fourthly, reacting to the aforementioned Italian actions, the Britgov invited the Ethiopian Emperor to the forthcoming coronation, and Italy responded by refusing to send its delegation to the coronation. ... In the end, the Anglo-Italian relations have by now become so strained and tense that «normalization» can be mentioned only as a bad joke [Maisky, 2006: 157-158].

The deterioration of Anglo-Italian relations was not yet critical. In mid-April 1937 Maisky characterized Eden's position on the Spanish war as «rotten»: «England behaves like it were indifferent about who wins the war since as a result of it Spain would be extremely weakened and would have to look for money that it would be able to find only in London and Paris. The pound is stronger than the gun. Therefore, the Britgov is not very worried about the prospects of the Spanish War. However, E[den] is terribly afraid that England would be bogged down in the Spanish events. Because Spain, in his opinion, is a grave for everyone who wades there. Examples are Napoleon, Wellington and now Mussolini. Mussolini's prestige before the Spanish adventure was much higher than now. And if he does not hurry to go out of Spain, he would face a bad ending. Here E[den] added with a sly smile: It is you who are carrying on your Spanish campaign brilliantly: you are doing what you find necessary and aren't getting bogged down. You even preserve the air of complete and total innocence». I responded in the same vein: «Now even Ribbentrop has stopped shouting that there is a big Soviet army in Spain». Eden exclaimed: «What is an army? What you have given the Spaniards is much more important than an army, especially an army like the one Italians have». I smiled and added: «In the Non-intervention Committee the involvement of the USSR in the Spanish War was found unproven» [Maisky, 2006: 159].

Of course, Maisky was disingenuous. From the very outset of the Spanish civil war the Soviet leadership paid an increasing attention

to it, supporting the Republican Government and, especially, the Communist Party.

On April 18, 1937 Maisky summarized an interesting conversation with Sir Robert Vansittart: «V[ansittart] confidently stated that after the coronation there would be a reorganization of the Cabinet: Baldwin resigns, Chamberlain takes his position, Simon will most likely be Chancellor of the Exchequer. Eden remains in his place. To my question about Chamberlain's foreign policy line V[ansittart] responded that its general vector would not change, but it will get somewhat more definite. With regard to Germany Chamberlain seems to be «all right». We'll see. According to V[ansittart], Anti-German and anti-Italian sentiment in England is growing. ... «The axis» Berlin – Rome is undoubtedly consolidating. Contradictions between Germany and Italy at this stage are not substantial enough to impede their rapprochement. V[ansittart] does not see much sense in concluding a new Locarno; unless Germany changes the whole of its present-day system of upbringing the young people who mature being preached about the expansion to the detriment of others, V[ansittart] would not believe that Hitler is ready to comply with the treaties he signs. V[ansittart] said that the Britgov is worried about German attempts to strengthen its position in the Middle East, in particular about its intention to draw an air line through Iraq, Persia, Afghanistan...» [Maisky, 2006: 160-161].

Despite these worrisome trends, Baldwin's government continued to pursue the appeasement policy. On April 21, 1937 the Soviet Minister discussed the Spanish events with Eden. «Eden ... revealed what in my view was a totally unfounded optimism. He shared the following reflections: Germany is more and more inclined to «go out» of Spain. The same is the tendency in Italy where the «Spanish War» is increasingly unpopular. Moreover, Abyssinia eats away huge money and demands great effort. Italy's internal situation, according to British sources, is getting even more difficult. Meanwhile, the «Spanish adventure (such were the words Eden used) demands that Mussolini invest even more money, arms and manpower. Mussolini cannot go for it. Hence the conclusion: Mussolini is looking for a «golden bridge» to exit Spain. Such a «bridge» should be provided for him. This is now the mission of the Non-intervention Committee. In case of Germany's and Italy's «exit» it can be expected that the Spanish War would finish by autumn. In what way? It's difficult to tell. Eden would prefer a «compromise» between both Spanish fronts and the establishment of a «middle ground» government between Franco and Caballero» [Maisky, 2006: 160-161].

The idea of building such a «bridge» failed. The warring parties of the Spanish conflict were not ready for the compromise, especially as the war was increasingly internationalized. The British diplomacy also continued its efforts to adapt the Locarno Treaty to the changed international realities.

On 28 May 1937 Neville Chamberlain became new British prime minister. Like his predecessor, he was in favour of the appeasement policy, although the developments in Europe and in the world made pursuing this line of action increasingly problematic.

On 9 June 1937 Maisky, on paying a visit to Vansittart, made an important observation: «... The aim of the Britgov is the pan-European agreement, though it admits that the first step in this direction will be the restoration of Locarno [emphasis added *E.Kh., E.T.*]. But with Locarno «the cart is till upon the selfsame spot». Neither London nor Berlin are in a hurry to negotiate. ...» [Maisky, 2006: 163].

In mid-June 1937 Maisky had a noteworthy conversation with the exiled diplomat, former Romanian foreign minister Nicolae Titulescu. «Titulescu was in London for about a week. During this time

he managed to see Chamberlain, Eden, Vansittart, Churchill and plenty of other high-level figures... Titulescu told nearly the same thing to everyone: the peace in Europe and the integrity of the Brit[ish] Empire depend on whether a «peace front» headed by England, France and the USSR is timely established. If it is, everything is fine. If it is not, the mankind in general, and Great Britain in particular will have to survive a tragedy in two acts: 1) the first act – Germany creates a «Middle Europe» 2) the second act – the destruction of the Brit[ish] Empire by the «Middle Europe». The English have to make a choice, and an urgent one. To somewhat sweeten the pot for the British, Titulescu stated: you do not have to make any firm commitments regarding Eastern Europe. It will be enough if you make such commitments to France. «All the rest, – T[itulescu] added with a sly smile, – will come by itself» [Maisky, 2006: 165]. Titulescu's words turned out a prophecy, but at that time the prospects of joining forces with the Soviet Union were hardly visible.

The British diplomacy counted on winning the time, believing that Germany would not be ready for a big war in the next few years. Symptomatic were the reflections of David Lloyd George. In early July 1937 the British politician shared with Maisky his estimates of Hitler's anti-Communist sentiment and of Germany's military power. «Lloyd George ... said: «I saw Hitler and had a lengthy conversation with him. ... One can argue with him and have a sober exchange of opinions. But he has one «point» – it is Communism. Every time when Hitler mentioned Communism and Communists in our conversation, he went mad immediately: his eyes flared up with a sinister fire and his lips were pursed convulsively. ... He really believes that he was designed to accomplish a special mission: to save the European civilization and crush the hydra of Communism. After all the things I saw while visiting Hitler I am absolutely confident that he will never agree to conclude any treaty with the Soviet Union or even to put his signature under any international document along with Stalin's signature. I wondered if Lloyd George touched the issue of the European peace in his conversation with Hitler and what the Fuehrer's reaction was. «Oh yes, – Lloyd George exclaimed, I talked to him a lot about this. Hitler was always convincing me of his love of peace. He put forward the following argument: Germany had required 40 years to build a powerful army that it had on the eve of the last war. As to Hitler, he will need 20 years to make Reichswehr into a big robust army. What is his interest in beginning the war earlier? I cannot deny that there is some truth in Hitler's considerations. Hitler gave me permission to travel wherever I need and see whatever I want. By chance, going by car in Bavaria, I came across wide-scale military maneuvers. ... No, the present-day German army is not yet the army that can risk a big war. I have seen and know the old German army – Hitler's army is a far cry from it. And therefore I am inclined to think that Hitler is right when he says that he will need plenty of time to make the German

army a really military capable one – probably not 20 years, but surely not less than 10 years. And before that Hitler would hardly risk attacking France, us or the USSR». I objected that I did not fully agree with Lloyd George's estimate. I can admit that the present-day German army is not yet ready for the big war, but what about a small war? About a war with the countries like Austria, Czechoslovakia, Romania etc? It seems to me that even the present-day German army is capable enough to pave Hitler the way to the South and the South-East. What can stop Hitler from expansion in this direction? Only the intervention of the great powers. And will they intervene, will England and France take a risk? The experience of the recent years makes me somewhat skeptical. Lloyd George responded: «Yes, if you put the question like that you are right. I fully agree with you. This incurable weakness of our government and the French government, this systematic backtracking from confronting the aggressors only whips up their appetite and makes them bolder ...». [Maisky, 2006: 169-170].

The subsequent events showed that Lloyd George and the British Government underestimated Germany's military capabilities. However, the appeasement policy was on the rise and its protagonists did not take the Soviet envoy's warnings seriously, relying, as earlier, on the balance of forces and territorial concessions.

CONCLUSION

The situation in Europe was heating up as Germany, Italy and Japan tried to redesign the international order in line with their vision of their roles in the international system. The British and French governments continued to use the old approaches to the resolution of new international contradictions, following both the political inertia and their illusionary ideas about the prospects of containing the growing appetites of the three countries through concessions. But in the mid-1930s debates in the League of Nations, bilateral attempts to negotiate solutions at the expense of weaker countries, and hopes for financial and colonial resources were no longer helpful. The revisionist powers were ready to ignore the rules of the «diplomatic etiquette» and change the world in their interest boldly and brutally while the British Government continued to pin false hopes on the appeasement policy.

Maisky would be a close observer of the «gathering storm» and its beginning. The Soviet diplomat played a significant role in the Anglo-Soviet rapprochement when the Anti-Hitler Coalition was formed. In 1943 Stalin recalled him to Moscow where he headed the Reparations Commission. With this appointment, Maisky would stop keeping the diary.

Статья проверена программой «Антиплагиат».

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Статья поступила в редакцию 04.06.2020, принята к публикации 25.06.2020
The article was received on 04.06.2020, accepted for publication 25.06.2020

ОТ РЕДКОЛЛЕГИИ РЕКОМЕНДУЕТ СТАТЬЮ ДЛЯ ПУБЛИКАЦИИ

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РЕЦЕНЗИЯ

**на статью «The Locarno System: decline and British attempts at modification, 1935-1937
(through the lens of Ivan Maisky's «Diplomat's Diary»)»**

Статья написана по материалам исторического источника, ценность которого сложно переоценить. Речь о «Дневнике дипломата», посла СССР в Великобритании в 1932-1943 гг. И.М. Майского, который тщательно фиксировал практически каждый день свой дипломатической службы. Этот дневник был изъят у автора после его ареста в 1953 г., и при жизни И.М. Майский так и не увидел свой многостраничный дневник. Только в 2000-е гг. был рассекречен и опубликован в нескольких частях, с комментариями и пояснениями этот уникальный исторический источник. Несмотря на прошедшее десятилетие с момента публикации, «Дневник» слабо введен в оборот западной историографии; в российской историографии ученые уже откликнулись на его появление. Однако как совершенно справедливо считают авторы, использование материалов дневника дипломата позволяет уточнить ряд важных исторических сюжетов, в частности, выявить причины ломки созданного в 1920-е гг. Локарнского механизма и попытки его замены на новую парадигму отношений в контексте «политики умиротворения» на примере реокупации Рейнской области, итало-эфиопской войны и начального этапа гражданской войны в Испании. В историографии эти проблемы явно нуждаются в детализации, особенно с учетом публикации не только «Дневника дипломата», но и доступностью рассекреченных по истечению срока давности британских

архивных документов, позволяющих верифицировать материалы записей Майского.

Представленный текст статьи полностью соответствует тематике и научной направленности журнала. Авторы представили гипотезу, согласно которой Версальская система международных отношений, созданная в Европе по итогам мирного урегулирования после Первой мировой войны, в середине 1920-х гг. была фактически заменена на Локарнскую систему, базировавшуюся на гарантиях Германии соблюдать неприкосновенность ее западных границ. Гарантами выступали Великобритания и Италия. В середине 1930-х гг. и эта система показала свою полную несостоятельность, несмотря на попытки британской дипломатии «спасти» ее ценой разного рода уступок. Эта гипотеза, хотя и носит не бесспорный характер, заслуживает внимания в контексте нового осмысления «политики умиротворения» на фоне появления новых документов и материалов личного происхождения.

Статья представляет несомненный научный интерес и заслуживает публикации в журнале «История и современное мировоззрение».

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