

POLITICAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN FRANCE AND POLAND

TREATY AT A GLANCE

Completed
February 19, 1921, at Paris

Signatories
France and Poland

Overview

Within a few years of the end of World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, France saw cooperation with Poland as essential to creating stability in postwar Europe and signed a series of three agreements allying itself politically, economically, and—in secret—militarily with the Poles.

Historical Background

At the conclusion of World War I, France was undecided whether to make Russia or Poland its principal Eastern ally. France did not want a connection with a Communist Russia, however, but hoped that the outcome of the Russian Civil War would be the overthrow of the Bolsheviks. For this reason, during 1920 and 1921, while the Bolsheviks fought the White Russians as well as the Poles, France stayed out of the conflict. After the conclusion of the 1921 TREATY OF RIGA between Poland and Russia, which settled the Polish-Russian frontier, France decided that an alliance with Poland would be a barrier not only against Bolshevik Russia but against Germany, as well.

Terms

Three agreements were concluded between France and Poland. First was a brief statement of principles.



Political Agreement of February 19, 1921

The Polish Government and the French Government, both desirous of safeguarding, by the maintenance of the Treaties which both have signed or which may in future be recognized by both Parties, the peace of Europe, the security of their territories and their common political and economic interests, have agreed as follows:

1. In order to coordinate their endeavours towards peace, the two Governments undertake to consult each other on all

questions of foreign policy which concern both States, so far as those questions affect the settlement of international relations in the spirit of the Treaties and in accordance with the Covenant of the League of Nations.


2. In view of the fact that economic restoration is the essential preliminary condition of the reestablishment of international order and peace in Europe, the two Governments shall come to an understanding in this regard, with a view to concerted action and mutual support.

They will endeavour to develop their economic relations, and for this purpose will conclude special agreements and a Commercial Treaty.

3. If, notwithstanding the sincerely peaceful views and intentions of the two Contracting States, either or both of them should be attacked without giving provocation, the two Governments shall take concerted measures for the defence of their territory and the protection of their legitimate interests, within the limits specified in the preamble.

4. The two Governments undertake to consult each other before concluding new agreements which will affect their policy in Central and Eastern Europe.

5. The present Agreement shall not come into force until the commercial agreements now in course of negotiation have been signed.



The commercial agreement to which the document refers was concluded in secret on February 6, 1922, and, in return for a French loan of 400 million francs, bound Poland to purchase all of its war materials from France. The commercial agreements also gave France most-favored-nation status, especially in regard to the Polish oil industry.

Finally, a Secret Military Convention was also concluded between France and Poland, on February 21, 1921. The secret agreement has vanished in its final form, but was reconstructed from manuscript sources by Piotr S. Wandycz¹.



Article 1

If the situation of Germany should become menacing to the extent that there is a threat of war against one of the two signatories, and especially if Germany mobilizes or if the maintenance of the Treaty of Versailles necessitates joint action by the signatories, then the two signatories undertake to strengthen their military preparations in such a way as to be in a position to provide effective and speedy assistance to each other and to act in common. If Germany attacks one of the two countries, they are bound to afford assistance to each other following an agreement between them.

Article 2

If Poland is threatened or attacked by Soviet Russia, France undertakes to hold Germany in check by action as necessary on land and sea and to aid Poland in defence against the Soviet army as detailed below.

Article 3

If the eventualities foreseen in Articles 1 and 2 arise, direct French help to Poland will consist of sending to Poland war equipment and a technical mission, but not French troops, and securing the lines of sea communication between France and Poland.

Article 5

Poland undertakes with French help to develop its war indemnity according to a particular plan so as to be able to equip the Polish army as necessary.

Article 6

Provision for continuous consultations between the general staffs of the two countries to fulfil the provisions of this treaty.

Article 7

Measures to be taken to ensure the effectiveness of the French military mission in Poland.

Article 8

This Agreement will only come into force when the commercial agreement is concluded.



Consequences

In the long run, such alliances as this protected France against neither Bolshevik Russia nor a resurgent Germany, as the French had hoped, but instead simply tied the country's fate to Poland. This in turn with the signing of the HITLER-STALIN PACT and the German invasion of Poland, dragged France into a second world war.

1. Piotr S. Wandycz, *France and Her Eastern Allies 1919-1925* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962).