

As a student of history, I have always been interested by the ebb and flow of European integration. The 20th century has witnessed both phenomena as Europe has been pushed apart by war and, more recently, brought back together by political and economic cooperation. For my History Honors Thesis, I explore one such instance of diplomatic cooperation between Eastern and Western Europe, the Franco-Polish alliance of 1921. More precisely, use it as a case study to argue that the 1925 Locarno Conference did not cause a rift in the French foreign policy program based on the Treaty of Versailles.

While the nature of the project required hands-on archival work in Europe, the research process began at Notre Dame. Early on, I knew that I wanted to focus on a topic that would connect Polish and French history as these were not only my areas of interest, but areas in which I had the language proficiency to effectively work with primary sources. My advisor, Prof. John Deak, suggested to look at the post World War I period as that would ensure that sources relating to Poland would be in Polish, rather than in German or Russian. After being recommended some secondary literature, I was pleasantly surprised to learn that France and Poland had a rich relationship during this period, even signing an alliance.

The alliance has been mostly focused on by Polish historians. Luckily for me, the generosity of the Twardzik and Zavislak families has led Notre Dame to have one of the most extensive collections in Polish studies. This allowed me to look at a wide historiography on the topic. Delving deeper, the characterization of the Locarno Conference stood out to me. Polish historians almost universally saw the conference as a Western Betrayal, in which France traded in its ally for a guarantee of its own borders.

English and French historians similarly disregarded Poland as a useless liability after Locarno. I decided to study the Franco-Polish relationship within the context of Locarno. Did it really dramatically change the value of the alliance? And if so, why was the useful life of the alliance so short lived?

The existing work on the topic emphasized the change in public sentiment caused by the conference, the “Spirit of Locarno.” I wanted to focus on the actual working nature of the alliance, which meant I would need to look at foreign ministry archives. This proved to be a daunting task as many different archives looked like they might have what I was looking for. Dr. Julie Tanaka played an instrumental role in helping clear through the clutter by coming to our History Methodology Seminar and showing us all the archival databases that Notre Dame offers its students. These resources helped me locate the collections that would be most beneficial to the project. Notre Dame happens to have the Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych archives from 1918-1944 on microfilm, the exact period I needed. However, the thesis also required looking at the French Foreign Ministry and embassy records. Thanks to the generosity of the Nanovic Institute I was able to spend six weeks in the summer of 2015 doing research at the Archiwum Akt Nowych in Warsaw and the Centre des Archives Diplomatiques in La Courneuve, France. While in Paris, I was able to discuss the topic with several members of the Académie Polonaise des Sciences.

The work I did over the summer convinced me that the Locarno Conference had been mischaracterized and did not present a break in French foreign policy. However, I still did not have all the sources required to effectively argue my topic. Luckily, I had the Hesburgh Library. The subject librarians continued to be extremely helpful. For example, Dr. Tanaka helped lead me to *Gallica* an invaluable database of the French National Library which contains, among many other sources, numerous newspapers and Foreign Ministry publications that added more depth to my analysis. The library also contained many relevant primary sources such as memoirs of leading officials and diplomats. Broader secondary literature also helped contextualize the topic, while databases such as

JSTOR gave me nearly unlimited access to the works and ideas of leading historians. I was able to obtain a copy of almost any relevant book found on WorldCat through Inter Library Loan. On the rare occasion that ILL did not have a work I hoped to consult, subject librarians Julie Tanaka and Natasha Lyandres purchased the books for me.

Once I had collected all this information, I had to face the daunting task of parsing through it, finding the most relevant ideas and evidence, and synthesizing it into a coherent argument. The records of the two foreign ministries proved to be full of opinions and conjecture, but I wanted to focus on the actual decision making of the governments. I also worked to maintain a balance between Polish and French sources as previous work on the topic tended to focus heavily on only one side of the alliance. Managing all the primary and secondary sources I referenced in the thesis looked to be daunting, but the advice of Rachel Bohlman and the use of Zotero greatly streamlined the citation process.

Throughout the research and writing process it was very reassuring to know that anything I need is at the Hesburgh Library. Everyone from the subject librarians to student workers such as Ellen always seemed eager to help me with my project. Access to technology such as microfilm readers, Bookeye scanners, and even computers when my laptop broke down, proved to be invaluable. Writing a senior thesis has been an extremely rewarding academic endeavor, and I am grateful for the library and faculty that made it both possible and painless.