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GERMAN WHITE BOOK

Concerning The Last Phase of the German-Polish Crisis

II

Documents

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1. First Note from the Diplomatic Representative of the Republic of Poland in the Free City of Danzig to the President of the Senate of the Free City of Danzig, august 4, 1939

(Translation)

Danzig, August 4, 1939.

I learn that the local Danzig customs officials posted on the frontier between the Free City of Danzig and East Prussia have declared in an unprecedented statement to the Polish customs officials, that the Danzig executives intend from 7 o'clock a. m. on august 6th onwards to oppose a certain number of Polish inspectors in the exercise of their normal duties, which functions are a part of the prerogatives of the Polish government on the customs frontier. I am convinced that this act on the part of the local authorities depends either on a misunderstanding or on an erroneous interpretation of the instructions of the Senate of the Free city of Danzig.

I am fully convinced that you, Mr. President of the Senate, can have no doubt that this infringement of the fundamental rights of Poland will on no pretext whatever be tolerated by the Polish Government.

I await, by August 5th at 6 p. m. at the latest, your answer with the assurance that you have given instructions cancelling the action of your subordinates.

In view of the fact that the above-mentioned action is one of a series which have taken place on the frontier, I am forced to warn you, Mr. President of the Senate, that all Polish customs inspectors have received the order to appear for duty in uniform and bearing arms, on August 6th of the current year and on subsequent days, at every point on the frontier which they consider necessary for examination of the customs.

Every attempt made to hinder them in the exercise of their duties, every attack or intervention on the part of the police will be regarded by the Polish Government as an act of violence against the officials of the Polish State in the pursuance of their duties.

If the above-mentioned illegal actions should take place, the Polish Government will take retaliatory measures (retorsions) without delay against the Free City, as the responsibility for them will rest entirely on the Senate of the Free City.

I hope to receive a satisfactory explanation before the above-mentioned date.

(signed): CHODACKI,

Diplomatic Representative of the Republic of Poland.

2. Second Note from the Diplomatic Representative of the Republic of Poland to the President of the Senate of the Free City of Danzig, August 4, 1939

(Translation)

Danzig, August 4, 1939.

Mr. President of the Senate:

The Polish Government beg to express its astonishment at the fact that the Senate should find technical difficulties in replying to so simple a matter. In the interest of avoiding threatening consequences, I note for the time being that no act of violence will be undertaken against our customs inspectors and that they will be able to proceed in a normal way with their duties. I must repeat nevertheless that the admonitions contained in my note of August 4th, 11:40 p. m. remain

in force.

I beg to remain. . .

(signed): CHODACKI

To

His Excellency, Herr Arthur Greiser,

President of the Senate of the Free City of Danzig

3. Reply of the President of the Senate of the Free City of Danzig to the Diplomatic Representative of the Republic of Poland, August 7, 1939.

(Translation)

Danzig, August 7, 1939

His Excellency

The Diplomatic Representative of the Republic of Poland.

M. Chodacki, Minister with plenipotentiary powers,

Danzig.

Sir:

In reply to your two notes dated the 4th of this month, the second of which I received on August 5th, I must express my astonishment to you that you should make a completely unverified rumor a pretext for sending the Danzig Government a short-term ultimatum from the Polish Government, and thus in this time of political unrest conjure up unfounded danger which may result in inconceivable disaster.

The sudden decree of the Polish Government that *all* Polish customs officials on duty are to appear in uniform and bearing arms, is a breach of the arrangement agreed upon and can be

understood only as an intentional provocation to bring about incidents and acts of violence of the most dangerous nature.

According to facts which I have since ascertained and concerning which I immediately telephoned to you on Saturday morning, the 5th inst., no order announcing that the Danzig executives from August 6th at 7 a. m. onwards are to oppose a certain number of Polish inspectors in the exercise of their normal duties has been issued from an office, certainly not from any administrative quarter of the Customs Office of the Free City of Danzig.

I refer you further to my note of June 3rd of this year, in which I already carefully defined the relationship of the Danzig customs officials and the Polish customs inspectors on the frontier.

The Danzig Government protest with great energy against the threatened retorsions of the Polish Government which they regard as an absolutely inadmissible threat and the consequences of which will devolve on the Polish Government alone.

I beg to remain. . .

(signed): GREISER

4. Communication from the Secretary of State in the German Foreign Office to the Polish Charge d'Affairs in Berlin, August 9, 1939.

(Translation)

Berlin, August 9, 1939.

The Reich Government have received with great astonishment information of the note of the Polish Government to the Senate of the Free City of Danzig, in which a demand was made in the form of an ultimatum to revoke an alleged decree intended to hinder the Polish customs inspectors in the exercise of their normal duties (which decree, however, was based on unfounded rumors, and in reality had **never** been issued by the Senate of the Free City of Danzig). In case of a refusal, the Free City of Danzig was threatened with retaliatory measures.

The Reich Government see themselves obliged to point out to the Polish Government that the repetition of such a demand, in the form of an ultimatum, to the Free City of Danzig and the threat of retaliatory measures would lead to greater tension in the relationship between Germany and Poland, and that the responsibility of such consequences would devolve exclusively on the

Polish Government, the German Government already now declining all responsibility for them.

The German Government further draw the attention of the Polish Government to the fact that the measures taken by the Polish Government to prevent the import of certain goods from the Free City of Danzig to Poland are likely to bring about serious economic loss to the population of Danzig.

Should the Polish Government insist on further lending their support to such measures, there would, in the opinion of the Reich Government, be no choice left to the Free City of Danzig, as matters lie, but to seek other export and consequently import possibilities.

5. Communication from the Under-Secretary of State in the Polish Foreign Office to the German Charge d'Affairs in Warsaw, August 10, 1939.

(Translation)

With the greatest surprise 'the Government of the Republic of Poland have taken note of the declaration given in Berlin on August 9, 1939, by the Secretary of State in the German Foreign Office to the Charge d'Affairs a.i. of Poland on the relations existing between Poland and the Free City of Danzig. The Polish Government in fact cannot perceive any legal foundation justifying Germany to interfere in the above-mentioned relations.

Whatever discussions on the Danzig problem may have taken place between the Polish Government and the Government of the Reich, these had their foundation merely in the good will of the Government and did not arise out of any obligation whatsoever.

In reply to the aforesaid declaration of the Government of the Reich, the Polish Government are compelled to point out to the German Government that, as hitherto, they will in the future oppose by such means and measures as the Polish Government alone consider adequate, any attempt made by the authorities of the Free City of Danzig to jeopardize the rights and interests that Poland possesses in Danzig, on the basis of the agreement to which she is a part, and that the Polish Government will consider as an aggressive act any possible intervention of the Government of the Reich which may endanger these rights and interests.

6. Letter from the British Prime Minister to the Fuhrer, August 22, 1939.

10. Downing Street, Whitehall,

August 22, 1939.

Your Excellency:

Your Excellency will have already heard of certain measures taken by His Majesty's Government, and announced in the press and on the wireless this evening.

These steps have, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, been rendered necessary by the military movements which have been reported from Germany, and by the fact that apparently the announcement of a German-Soviet Agreement is taken in some quarters in Berlin to indicate that intervention by Great Britain on behalf of Poland is no longer a contingency that need be reckoned with.

No greater mistake could be made. Whatever may prove to be the nature of the German-Soviet Agreement, it cannot alter Great Britain's obligation to Poland which His Majesty's Government have stated in public repeatedly and plainly, and which they are determined to fulfill.

It has been alleged that, if His Majesty's Government had made their position more clear in 1914, the great catastrophe would have been avoided. Whether or not there is any force in that allegation, His Majesty's Government are resolved that on this occasion there shall be no such tragic misunderstanding.

If the case should arise, they are resolved, and prepared, to employ without delay all the forces at their command, and it is impossible to foresee the end of hostilities once engaged. It would be a dangerous illusion to think that, if war once starts, it will come to an early end even if a success on any one of the several fronts on which it will be engaged should have been secured.

Having thus made our position perfectly clear, I wish to repeat to you my conviction that war between our two peoples would be the greatest calamity that could occur. I am certain that it is desired neither by our people, nor by yours, and I cannot see that there is anything in the questions arising between Germany and Poland which could not and should not be resolved without the use of force, if only a situation of confidence could be restored to enable discussions to be carried on in an atmosphere different from that which prevails today.

We have been, and at all times will be, ready to assist in creating conditions in which such negotiations could take place, and in which it might be possible concurrently to discuss the wider problems affecting the future of international relations, including matters of interest to us and to you.

The difficulties in the way of any peaceful discussion in the present state of tension are, however, obvious, and the longer that tension is maintained, the harder will it be for reason to prevail.

These difficulties, however, might be mitigated, if not removed, provided that there could for an initial period be a truce on both sides -- and indeed on all sides -- to press polemics and to all incitement.

If such a truce could be arranged, then, at the end of that period, during which steps could be taken to examine and deal with complaints made by either side as to the treatment of minorities, it is reasonable to hope that suitable conditions might have been established for direct negotiations between Germany and Poland upon the issues between them (with the aid of a neutral intermediary, if both sides should think that that would be helpful).

But I am bound to say that there would be slender hope of bringing such negotiations to successful issue unless it were understood beforehand that any settlement reached would, when concluded, be guaranteed by other Powers. His Majesty's Government would be ready, if desired, to make such contribution as they could to the effective operation of such guarantees.

At this moment I confess I can see no other way to avoid a catastrophe that will involve Europe in war.

In view of the grave consequences to humanity, which may follow from the action of their rulers, I trust that Your Excellency will weigh with the utmost deliberation the considerations which I have put before you.

(Signed): NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN.

7. The Fuhrer's Letter in reply to the British Prime Minister, August 23, 1939.

(Translation)

August 23, 1939.

Your Excellency:

The Ambassador to His Britannic Majesty has just handed me a note in which Your Excellency, in the name of the British Government, has drawn attention to a number of points, which, in your opinion, are of extreme importance.

I beg to reply to your note as follows:

1. Germany has never sought to enter into conflict with Great Britain nor at any time interfered where British interests were concerned. On the contrary, Germany has for many years, although unfortunately without success, attempted to gain the friendship for Great Britain. For this reason, Germany voluntarily undertook a restriction of her own interests throughout a large area in Europe which would otherwise have been difficult to justify from a national political point of view.
2. The German Reich, however, has, like every other state, certain interests which it is impossible for it to renounce and which lie within the category which Germany's past history and her economic necessities have rendered of vital importance. Certain of these problems were, and are, of the utmost importance to any German Government but, from a national political and from a psychological point of view.

One of these problems is that of the German City of Danzig and the problem of the Polish Corridor connected therewith. Only a few years ago this fact was recognized by numerous statesmen, by authorities in historical research and literary men, even in England.

I should like to add that the civilization of all those areas which come within the sphere of German interests aforementioned, and especially those provinces which have returned to the Reich within the past eighteen months, was developed not by Englishmen but exclusively by Germans, and, in part, during a period of history which covers more than the last thousand years.

3. Germany was prepared to settle the problem of Danzig and of the Polish Corridor by a very generous proposal, made once for all, and by means of negotiations. The assertions disseminated by Great Britain with regard to the mobilization of German troops against Poland, the assertion concerning aggressive intentions with regard to Roumania, Hungary, etc., as also the more recent so-called guarantees given to Poland, effectually destroyed any inclinations on the part of Poland to negotiate on a basis which would at the same time be acceptable to Germany.
4. The general assurance given by Great Britain to Poland that Great Britain would support Poland in case of conflict in any circumstance, irrespective of the causes giving rise to such conflict, could only be regarded here as an incitement to let loose, under cover of what might be termed a bland cheque, a wave of unspeakable terror against the one and a half million Germans domiciled in Poland.

The atrocities which have taken place there since that time were terrible indeed for those on whom they were inflicted, but intolerable for the German Reich, which, as one of the Great Powers, was expected to watch them idly.

In regard to the Free city of Danzig, Poland has, on countless occasions, infringed its rights, sent demands which were in the nature of an ultimatum and begun a process of economic strangulation.

5. The Reich government informed the Polish government a short time ago that they were not inclined to accept these developments in silence, that they would not tolerate the dispatch of further notes couched in the form of an ultimatum to Danzig, that they would not tolerate a continuance of acts of violence inflicted on the German section of the population, nor would they tolerate the ruin of the Free City of Danzig by means of economic pressure, that is to say, the destruction of the very existence of the population of Danzig by a form of customs blockade, nor would they tolerate the continuance of such acts of provocation against the Reich. Regardless of the above, a solution must and will be found for the problem of Danzig and of the Polish Corridor.

6. Your Excellency informs me in the name of the British Government that in the event of any act of interference on the part of Germany, you will be compelled to support Poland. I have taken due note of your statement and can assure you that it can in no way shake the determination of the Reich government to protect the interests of the Reich as set forth in Section 5.

I likewise agree with your assurance that the ensuing war would, in this case, be a long one. If Germany is attacked by Britain, she is prepared and determined to fight.

I have often declared to the German people and to the whole world that there can be no doubts as to the determination of the New German Reich to accept privation and misfortune in any form and at any time rather than sacrifice her national interests or even her honor.

7. The Reich Government have received information of the fact that the British Government intend to carry out mobilization measures, which in their nature are solely directed against Germany, as is stated in Your Excellency's note addressed to me. This is stated also to apply to France.

As Germany never intended to adopt military measures other than those of a purely defensive nature against either Great Britain or France and, as has already been emphasized, never intended nor in the future intends to attack either Great Britain or France, the announcement which Your Excellency confirmed in your note can only constitute an intended threat against the Reich. I

must therefore, inform Your Excellency that in the event of such military measures being taken, I shall order the immediate mobilization of the German armed forces.

8. The question of a settlement of European problems in a peaceful spirit cannot be decided by Germany but chiefly by those who, since the crime of the Treaty of Versailles was committed, have steadily and obstinately opposed any peaceful revision of its terms.

Only a change of attitude on the part of the Powers responsible for the Treaty can bring about a change for the better in the existing relations between Britain and Germany.

During my whole life-time I have struggled to achieve a friendship between Britain and Germany, but the attitude adopted by British diplomacy, up to the present at least, has served to convince me of the hopelessness of such an attempt. If the future were to bring a change in this respect, none would welcome it more than I.

8. Declaration made by the Fuhrer to the British Ambassador on August 25, 2939, at 1:30 p.m.

(Translation)

The Fuhrer declared at the outset that the British Ambassador at the close of their last conversation had expressed the hope that it would still prove possible to arrive at an understanding between Germany and England. He, the Fuhrer, had thereupon considered the situation once more and intended today to take a step in regard to England which was to be as decisive as the step taken in regard to Russia, the result of which had been the recent pact.

Yesterday's meeting of the House of Commons and the speeches made by Mr. chamberlain and Lord Halifax were further reasons why the Fuhrer had again invited the British Ambassador to meet him.

The assertion that Germany wanted to conquer the world was ridiculous.

The British Empire covered a territory of forty million square kilometers, Russia of nineteen million square kilometers, America of nine and a half million square kilometers and Germany of less than 600,000 square kilometers. It was thus quite clear who wanted to conquer the world.

The Fuhrer informed the British Ambassador of the following:

1) The acts of provocation committed by Poland had become intolerable, irrespective of who might be responsible for them.

If the Polish government contested their responsibility, this merely proved that they themselves had no longer any influence on their military subordinates. In the preceding night twenty-one new frontier incidents had occurred.

On the German side the utmost discipline had been displayed. All the incidents were due to Polish provocation.

Besides this, civil aeroplanes had been fire on. If the Polish Government declared themselves not responsible, this merely proved that they were unable to keep control over their own people.

2) Germany was resolved under all circumstances to put an end to these Macedonian conditions on her eastern frontier, not only in the interests of law and order but also for the sake of European peace.

3. The problem of Danzig and the Corridor would have to be solved.

The British Prime Minister had made a speech which had done nothing towards bringing about a change in the German attitude. This speech might, if anything, give rise to a desperate and incalculable war between Germany and England, a war which would cause far greater bloodshed than that of 1914.

In contrast to the last world war, Germany would not have to carry on a war on two fronts. The agreement concluded with Russia was unconditional and represented a turning point in the foreign policy of the Reich for the longest conceivable time. In no circumstance would Russia and Germany again take up arms against one another. Apart from this fact the agreements made with Russia would safeguard Germany, in economic respects also, for a war of the longest duration.

The Fuhrer had always been strongly in favor of Anglo-German understanding. A war between England and Germany could in the most favorable circumstances bring Germany an advantage, but certainly not the slightest gain to England.

the Fuhrer declared that the German-Polish problem had to and would be settled. He was, however, ready and resolved to approach England again, after his settlement, with a generous and comprehensive offer. He himself was a man of great decisions and he would in this case also be

capable of a great action. he approved of the British Empire and was prepared to give a personal undertaking for its existence and to stake the might of the German Reich to that end provided that

- 1) His Colonial demands, which were limited and could be settled by peaceful negotiations, were fulfilled, for which he was prepared to concede a most protracted time-limit;
- 2) that his obligations to Italy remained untouched; in other words the Fuhrer did not expect England to give up her French obligations and could for his part not abandon his Italian obligations;
- 3) he wished also to emphasize Germany's unalterable resolution never again to enter into a conflict with Russia.

The Fuhrer would then be prepared to enter into agreements with Great Britain which, as he had already emphasized, would not only, on the German side, in any case safeguard the existence of the British empire, but if necessary would guarantee German assistance for the British empire, irrespective of where such assistance might be required. The Fuhrer would then also be ready to accept a reasonable limitation of armaments, in accordance with the new political situation and economic requirements. finally the Fuhrer renewed his assurance that he was not interested in western problems and that he did not for one moment consider any frontier correction in the west.

The western line of fortification which had cost billions, was the final frontier of the Reich in the west.

If the British Government would consider these suggestions, they might end in a blessing not only for Germany but also for the British Empire. If the British Government rejected the suggestions, war would be inevitable. In no circumstances, however, would such a war add to the strength of Great Britain. That this was true, the last war had amply proved.

The Fuhrer repeated that he was a man of great decisions to which he felt himself bound, and that this was his final proposal. Immediately after the settlement of the German-Polish question he would approach the British Government with an offer.

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