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German White Book - Documents

Concerning the Last Phase of the German-Polish Crisis

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14. Memorandum from the British Government handed to the Reich Minister for Foreign Affairs by the British Ambassador on August 30, 1939, at midnight.

1. His Majesty's Government appreciate the friendly reference in the declaration contained in the reply of the German Government to the latter's desire for an Anglo-German understanding and to their statement of the influence which this consideration has exercised upon their policy.
2. His Majesty's Government repeat that they reciprocate the German government's desire for an improvement in relations, but it will be recognized that they could not sacrifice the interests of friends in order to obtain that improvement. They fully understand that the German Government cannot sacrifice Germany's vital interests, but the Polish government are in the same position, and His Majesty's Government believe that the vital interests of the two countries are not incompatible.
3. His Majesty's government note that the German Government accept the British proposal and are prepared to enter into direct discussions with the Polish Government.
4. His Majesty's Government understand that the German government accept in principle the condition that any settlement should be made subject to an international guarantee. the question of who shall participate in this guarantee will have to be discussed further, and His Majesty's Government hope that to avoid loss of time the German Government will take immediate steps to obtain the assent of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics whose participation in the guarantee His Majesty's Government have always assumed.

5. His Majesty's Government also note that the German Government accept the position of the British government as to Poland's vital interests and independence.

6. His Majesty's government must make an express reservation in regard to the statement of particular demands put forward by the German Government in an earlier passage in their reply. They understand that the German Government are drawing up proposals for a solution. No doubt these proposals will be fully examined during the discussions. It can then be determined how far they are compatible with the essential conditions which His Majesty's Government have stated and which the German Government have expressed their willingness to accept.

7. His Majesty's government are at once informing the Polish Government of the German Government's reply. The method of contact and the arrangements for discussions must obviously be agreed with all urgency between the German government and the Polish government, but in His Majesty's Government's view it would be impracticable to *establish* contact so early as today.

8. His Majesty's Government fully recognize the need for speed in the initiation of discussions and they share the apprehensions of the Chancellor arising from the proximity of two mobilized armies standing face to fact. They would accordingly most strongly urge that both parties should undertake that during negotiations no aggressive military movements will take place.

His Majesty's Government feel confident that they could obtain such an undertaking from the Polish Government, if the German Government would give similar assurances.

9. Further His Majesty's Government would suggest that a temporary *modus vivendi* might be arranged for Danzig, which might prevent the occurrence of incidents tending to render German-Polish relations more difficult.

15. Official German Statement published on August 31, 1939, at 9 p. m. containing the Proposal for a settlement of the Danzig and the Polish Corridor Problem, as well as of the question concerning the German and Polish Minorities.

(Translation)

In a note dated August 28, 1939, addressed to the German government, the British Government declared themselves prepared to offer their services as intermediaries in arranging

direct negotiations between Germany and Poland for the settlement of the problems under dispute. In this note they left no room for doubt that in view of the continued incidents and the general state of tension throughout Europe they also were aware of the urgency of such action.

In spite of their skepticism regarding the willingness of the Polish Government to reach any agreement, the German government, in a reply dated August 29, 1939, declared themselves prepared in the interests of peace to accept British intermediation or suggestions.

Taking into account all the circumstances prevailing at the moment they considered it necessary to point out in their reply that, if the danger of catastrophe is to be avoided at all, quick and immediate action is indispensable.

The German Government have therefore declared themselves willing to receive a delegate appointed by the Polish government by the evening of August 30, 1939, provided that this delegate should be invested with full power not only to take part in discussions but to negotiate and to take a final decision.

The German government have further expressed the hope that they would be able to submit to the British government the gist of the proposed agreement before the arrival of the Polish delegate in Berlin.

Instead of a declaration regarding the arrival of an authorized Polish representative the German government, in reply to their readiness to negotiate, received firstly the news of the Polish mobilization, and it was only towards midnight on August 30, 1939, that they received the assurance by Britain, couched in more general terms, that she would use her influence to arrange for the opening of negotiations.

Owing to the non-arrival of the Polish delegate who was expected by the Reich Government, the primary condition for informing the British Government, who had themselves recommended direct negotiations between Germany and Poland, of the standpoint taken by the Reich as to the basis for such negotiations, no longer existed.

Nevertheless, Herr von Ribbentrop, the Reich Minister for Foreign Affairs, acquainted the British Ambassador, when the latter handed over the last British note, with the exact wording of the German proposals as prepared for the expected arrival of the Polish plenipotentiary.

Under these circumstances the German Government considered that they had every right to expect that, at least subsequently to this, the nomination of a Polish delegate would immediately take place. It was clearly too much to expect of the German Government that they should continue not only to reiterate their willingness to enter upon such negotiations, but even to sit and

wait and allow themselves to be put off by the Polish side with feeble subterfuges and empty declarations.

In the meantime a demarche by the Polish Ambassador has again shown that not even he is authorized to enter upon any discussion whatsoever, much less to negotiate.

Thus the Fuhrer and the German Government have now waited for two days in vain for the arrival of an authorized Polish delegate.

Under these circumstances the German Government cannot but regard their proposals as having been once more virtually rejected, although they are of the opinion that in the form in which they were also communicated to the British Government, they were formulated in a spirit of more than goodwill and fairness and could have been accepted.

The Government of the Reich consider it appropriate to inform the public of the proposed basis for negotiation as communicated to the British Ambassador by Herr von Ribbentrop, the Reich Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Proposal for a settlement of the Danzig and the Polish Corridor Problem as well as of the question concerning the German and Polish Minorities.

The situation between the German Reich and Poland is at the present time such that any further incident may lead to an outbreak of hostilities between the military forces of the two countries, which have already taken up their position on the respective side of the frontier.

Any peaceful solution of the problem must be of such a nature that the events which originally brought about this state of affairs cannot be repeated on the next occasion thus causing a state of tension not only in Eastern Europe but also elsewhere.

The causes of this development are to be found in

(1) the intolerable demarcation of the frontiers as dictated in the Treaty of Versailles.

(2.) the intolerable treatment of the minority in the territories cut off from the Reich.

In putting forward these proposals, the Reich government are attempting to find a final solution putting an end to the intolerable situation arising from the present demarcation of frontiers, securing to both parties their vital lines of communication, eliminating as far as possible the problem of the minorities and, in so far as this should prove impossible, rendering the fate of the minorities bearable by effectively guaranteeing their rights.

The Reich Government feel convinced that it is indispensable that economic and personal damage inflicted since 1918 should be investigated, and full compensation made therefore. Of course, the Reich Government regard this obligation as binding upon both parties.

The above considerations give rise to the following concrete proposals:

(1) By reason of its purely German character and the unanimous will of its population, the Free City of Danzig shall be returned forthwith to the German Reich.

(2) The territory known as the Polish Corridor, that is to say, the territory bounded by the Baltic Sea and a line running from Marienwerder to Graudenz, Kulm, Bromberg, (including these towns), and then in a westerly direction towards Schonlanke, shall itself decide whether it shall become part of the German Reich or remain with Poland.

(3) For that purpose, a plebiscite shall be held in this territory. All Germans who were domiciled in this area on the first of January 1918 or who were born there on or before that day, also all Poles, Cassubians, etc. who were domiciled in this area on that day or who were born there on or before the above-mentioned date, shall be entitled to vote. Germans who have been expelled from this territory shall return for the purpose of registering their votes.

In order to ensure an impartial plebiscite and to guarantee that the necessary and extensive preparations for the plebiscite shall be carried out correctly, an International Commission like the one formed in connection with the Saar plebiscite, and consisting of members appointed by the four Great Powers, Italy, the U.S.S.R., France and Great Britain, shall be formed immediately, and placed in charge of this territory.

This commission shall exercise sovereign rights throughout the territory. To that

end, the territory shall be evacuated by the Polish military forces, by the Polish police and by the Polish authorities within the shortest possible time to be agreed upon.

(4) The Polish port of Gdynia to the extent of the Polish settlement is not included in this area but, as a matter of principle, is recognized as Polish territory.

The details of the boundaries of this Polish port shall be decided on by Germany and Poland, and if necessary established by an International Court of Arbitration.

(5) In order to allow for ample time for the necessary and extensive preparations for the carrying out of an impartial plebiscite this plebiscite shall not take place before a period of twelve months has elapsed.

(6) In order that during that period, Germany's lines of communication with East Prussia and Poland's access to the sea may be unrestrictedly ensured, certain roads and railway lines shall be determined in order to facilitate unobstructed transit. In this connection only such taxes may be levied as are necessary for the upkeep of the lines of communication and for the carrying out of transport.

(7) The allocation of this territory shall be decided on by the absolute majority of the votes cast.

(8) In order to secure, after the plebiscite (irrespective of the result thereof), Germany's unrestricted communication with the province of Danzig -- East Prussia, and Poland's access to the sea, Germany shall, should the territory be returned to Poland as a result of the plebiscite, be given an extraterritorial traffic zone running, from say, Butow to Danzig or Dirschau, for the purpose of building a Reich Motor Road (Reichsautobahn) and also a four-track railway line.

The construction of the motor road and of the railway shall be carried out in such a manner that Polish lines of communication are not affected thereby, i.e. they are to be overbridged or underbridged. This zone shall be one kilometer in width and shall be German territory.

Should the result of the plebiscite be in favor of Germany, Poland shall have the same rights as Germany would have had, to build an extraterritorial road and railway connection in order to secure her free and unrestricted access to her port of Gdynia.

(9) In the event of the Polish Corridor being returned to the Reich, the latter

declares herself prepared to arrange with Poland for an exchange of population to the extent to which this could be carried out according to the conditions in the Corridor.

(10) Any special rights claimed by Poland within the port of Danzig shall, on the basis of parity, be negotiated in exchange of equal rights for Germany at the Port of Gdynia.

(11) In order to avoid any sense of menace or danger on either side, Danzig and Gdynia henceforth shall have a purely commercial character, i.e. neither of these places shall be provided with means of military defence or fortifications.

(12) The Peninsula of Hela which according to the result of the plebiscite would be allocated either to Poland or to Germany, shall also be demilitarized in any case.

(13) The Reich Government having most serious complaints to make about the treatment of the minority by the Poles, the Polish Government on the other hand considering themselves entitled to raise complaints against Germany, both parties agree to submit these complaints to an International Commission of Investigation charged to investigate into all complaints and economic and personal damage, as well as other acts of terrorism.

Germany and Poland bind themselves to indemnify the minorities on either side for any economic damages and other wrongs inflicted upon them since 1918; and or to revoke all expropriations or otherwise to completely indemnify the respective person or persons for these and other encroachments upon economic life.

(14) In order to free the Germans remaining in Poland, as well as the Poles remaining in Germany, from the feeling of being deprived of the benefits of International Law, and above all to afford them the certainty of their not being made to take part in actions and in furnishing services of a kind not compatible with their national convictions, Germany and Poland mutually agree to safeguard the rights of their respective minorities by most comprehensive and binding agreements for the purpose of warranting these minorities the preservation, free development and cultivation of their national customs, habits and traditions, to grant them in particular and for that purpose the form of organization considered necessary by them. Both parties undertake not to draft the members of the minority into military service.

(15) In case of an agreement on the basis of these proposals being reached,

Germany and Poland declare themselves prepared immediately to order and carry through the demobilization of their respective armed forces.

(16) Any additional measures required to hasten the carrying through of the above agreement shall be mutually agreed upon between Germany and Poland.

16. Announcement made by the Polish Broadcasting Station at Warsaw on August 31, 1939, at 11 p. m.

(Translation)

the publication today of the official German communique has clearly revealed the aims and intentions of German policy. It proves the undisguised aggressive intentions of Germany towards Poland. The conditions under which the Third Empire is prepared to negotiate with Poland are:

Danzig must immediately return to the Reich.

Pomorze together with the cities of Bromberg and Graudenz are to be subjected to a plebiscite, for which all Germans who left that territory for any reason whatsoever since the year 1918 may return.

The Polish military forces and the police force shall be evacuated from Pomorze.

The police force of England, France, Italy and the U.S.S.R. will be placed in charge of the territory. The plebiscite is to take place after twelve months have elapsed.

The territory of the Hela Peninsula will also be included in the plebiscite, Gdynia as a Polish town is excluded. Irrespective of the result of the plebiscite an exterritorial road one kilometer wide is to be constructed.

The German News Agency announces that the time allowed for the acceptance of these conditions expired yesterday. Germany has waited in vain for a Polish delegate. The answer given was the military orders issued by the Polish Government.

Words can now no longer veil the aggressive plans of the new Huns. Germany is aiming at the domination of Europe and is cancelling the rights of nations with as yet unprecedented cynicism. This impudent proposal shows clearly how necessary were the military orders given by the Polish Government.

[Next](#) - Document 17 (of 26) Adolf Hitler's speech before the Reichstag on September 1, 1939

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