

DANZIG
AND GERMAN PLANS FOR WAR, 1938-1939

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND: THE OUTPOST

In 1939 the situation regarding the Free City of Danzig was radically different from that which the founders intended. From a city with built-in safeguards through its relationship with the League of Nations and the Republic of Poland, Danzig had developed into an armed outpost of Nazi Germany. This was due to its peculiar connections with Germany, Poland, and the League of Nations and to events that the peace makers at Versailles did not foresee in 1919.

The statesmen at Versailles intended the Free City of Danzig to be a compromise between the thirteenth of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points which called for an independent Poland with "a free and secure access to the sea," and the principle of self-determination of peoples. In 1919, the peace makers at Versailles faced the dilemma of a Danzig that was German in population but constituted Poland's logical port on the Baltic Sea. To solve this dilemma, the statesmen at Versailles decided to make Danzig a free city with special relationships to Poland and the League of Nations.

Accordingly, articles 100 to 108 of the Treaty of Versailles provided for the establishment of the Free City. Article 100 of the Treaty delimited the Free City to about nineteen hundred square kilometers on both sides of the Vistula River, bordering on East Prussia and stretching as far south as Pieckel near the main Polish border town of Dirschau (Tczew) where an important railway junction and bridge across the Vistula existed. To the west and south, Danzig bordered on the Polish "Corridor," the province of Pomorze. In the census of 1923, Danzig had a population of 366,730 persons, of whom about 7000 were Polish, the remainder German.¹

The Treaty of Versailles placed Danzig within the Polish customs frontier, giving Poland unrestricted usage of port facilities. The Warsaw government controlled the Vistula and the former Prussian railway system, in addition to "postal, telegraphic, and telephone communication between Poland and the port of Danzig." Poland, finally, was entrusted with the "conduct" of Danzig's foreign relations, which, in practice, meant the safeguarding of Danzig's interests abroad.²

¹The German Treaty Text (London, 1920), 70-3; Hans L. Leonhardt, The Nazi Conquest of Danzig (Chicago, 1942), 18-20.

²Article 104, German Treaty, 72-3.

The Convention of Paris and decisions over the inevitable disputes between Poland and the Free City implemented and further defined the status of Danzig. Poland was not allowed to conclude treaties of direct interest to the Free City without consultation with Danzig authorities. Danzig officials, predominantly German, handled customs administration in the Free City but were supervised by Polish inspectors appointed by Warsaw. A Harbor Board, consisting of an equal number of Poles and Danzigers and presided over by a Swiss national, controlled and administered the port. Danzig guaranteed protection of Polish minorities in the city, by promising them the same rights enjoyed by the Germans in Poland as prescribed by the Versailles settlement. Lastly, instead of having a resident minister at Danzig as she desired, Poland was allowed only a "Diplomatic Representative."¹

The international status of Danzig gave her a special relationship, also, to the League of Nations. Under articles 102 and 103 of the Treaty of Versailles, "the guarantee of the League of Nations" was conferred on Danzig. To effect

¹Leonhardt, Nazi Conquest, 25; Text of Convention of Paris in John Brown Mason, The Danzig Dilemma (Stanford University, California, 1946), 325-32.

this in its external aspect, the League Council decided, in 1921, that Poland was "specially fitted to insure . . . the defence of Danzig," but only upon the Council's authorization or, in emergency, by the High Commissioner of the League resident in the Free City. Article 102, moreover, charged the League with protection of the Danzig constitution. A two-thirds majority of the Danzig Volkstag, the popular assembly, was necessary to amend the constitution, but this action also required the League Council's approval.¹

The Treaty of Versailles, placing Danzig under League protection, called for a High Commissioner to be resident at the Free City. The Commissioner's task was to act as "the watch-dog of the League" but with no direct authority in Danzig to "make rules or regulations," except through the League Council's decision. His task was to watch for breaches of the statutes and constitution whether by Poland or Danzig, and to observe and report any such infractions to the League Council. His role, therefore, was not entirely a mediatory one between Poland and the Free City.²

¹Leonhardt, Nazi Conquest 27; Danzig's constitution printed in Mason, Danzig Dilemma, 332-51. See also articles 102 and 103 in German Treaty, 71-2.

²Leonhardt, Nazi Conquest, 28.

The constitution itself can be briefly outlined. The Danzig government consisted of a popularly elected Volkstag-- the lower house--of 72 members, who elected a Senate of ten with a President and Vice-president to administer the state. There being no constitutionally designated chief of state, the President of the Senate filled this function in practice. The Senate, in brief, was very much like a cabinet, with the President acting as prime-minister. It could initiate legislation but held only a suspensory veto over the Volkstag. The constitution, democratic in substance, also specified rights of the minority, meaning, in practice, the Poles and Jews resident in the City.¹

Since the Free City was a compromise between Polish and German demands, disputes between Danzig and Warsaw were interminable. Danzig occupied the League Council's agenda during nearly every meeting up to 1933. Most of the disputes referred to the Council during this period looked trivial, but nearly all of them indicated an attempt by Warsaw to Polonize the Free City and the bombastic counter-effort of Danzigers to assert their German character. When Poland, for example, set up bright red mailboxes in the Free City

¹Mason, Danzig Dilemma, 325-32.

marked "only for letters to Poland" in contrast to Danzig's postal colors of blue, the boxes appeared next day painted in red, white, and black, the Imperial German colors.¹ The dispute arising from this appears picayune, but the attempt at Polonization by displaying signs of unwarranted sovereignty as represented by the painted mailboxes was obvious, as was the counter-attempt to assert the German character of the Free City.

The customs union proved a source of more fundamental differences. Under Article 14 of the Convention of Paris, Poland determined all policy for the union and exercised supervision over customs, while Danzig appointed and paid for administration of customs within her own territory. This, in effect, divided authority and loyalty, since Poland maintained the right to determine policy. Polish customs inspectors continually complained of Danzigers lack of respect for customs regulations, while Danzig Germans viewed all of Warsaw's directives as attempts to Polonize the Free City, as indeed many of them were.²

During the nineteen-twenties, Poland's attitude towards the Free City was conditioned by her war with Russia in 1920.

¹Ibid., 153.

²Ibid., 177-78.

When Russian troops stood at the gates of Warsaw, Poland was faced with a strike of dock workers in Danzig, who refused to unload munitions destined for Colonel Jozef Pilsudski's beleaguered forces. This action, probably stemming from Danzigers' sorrow over their new status, their historically conditioned hatred of the Poles, and a possible feeling of sympathy for the Red Army, convinced Poland that the Germans in the Free City were not to be trusted.

As one consequence of the dock strike, Poland determined to build a port of her own out of the fishing village of Gdynia, about ten miles northwest of the Free City's territory. Danzigers initially jeered at this ambitious undertaking. They worried more over it through the middle 1920's, however, for the success of the new port belied the German term of derision, "polnische Wirtschaft," and constituted a serious rival to the Free City. The League Council, in handling disputes originating from this situation, decided that Poland should make the same use of the Free City's facilities as she did of Gdynia. The League did not accept Danzig's subsequent demand that she should have priority in the event that the volume of trade was insufficient for both ports. The League, after all, could not interfere with Poland's right to use either port. However,

the League also rejected German claims that Gdynia negated the necessity for the Free City and the corollary arguments against return to the Reich.¹

The Free City's relationship to the Reich was direct and obvious. The constitution of the Free City, was, in many places, parallel, even in language, to that of the Weimar Republic. Danzig's political parties during the 1920's were close replicas of the Weimar Republic's. Moreover, Danzig's officialdom was connected with Germany's, citizenship in both states being automatic upon appointment to governmental posts. For example, Heinrich Sahn, the first President of the Danzig Senate, later became mayor of Berlin and subsequently Hitler's minister to Sweden. Dr. Otto Loening, a judge in Danzig, later held the same post in the Reich. The logical culmination of this arrangement came during the Nazi era, when Albert Forster, close friend and advisor of Hitler, a native of Bavaria, and member of the German Reichstag, became the Gauleiter--district party leader--of Danzig and, as such, the most powerful man in the Free City.²

¹Ibid., 130-38; Leonhardt, Nazi Conquest, 35-40.

²Mason, Danzig Dilemma, 70-1. Ernst von Weizsaecker says that Forster was one of the very few close friends of the Fuehrer, permitted, for example, "to disturb Hitler in his bath." Memoirs, tr. by John Andrews (Chicago, 1951), 193. Hermann Rauschning says the Gauleiter was one of Hitler's chief advisors on Eastern policy. The Revolution of Nihilism, tr. by E. W. Dickes (New York, 1939), 185.

Such arrangements cultivated strong political and emotional ties between the Reich and Danzig. The question of the Free City occupied German minds far beyond the fact that it was territory taken from the Reich. Germany harbored no parallel emotion over other territories taken from the Reich in 1919. Eupen-Malmedy, and Alsace-Lorraine, even the areas in Upper Silesia, did not arouse quite the feeling of indignation manifested over Danzig. Probably, as Ian Morrow points out, the emotion over Danzig masked the real German national grievance--the division of the Reich by the Polish province of Pomorze. The fact that the status of Danzig was connected, territorially, with the separation of Germany from East Prussia by the Polish "Corridor" probably accounts for German feelings about the Free City.¹

Easy transit across the Polish "Corridor" did not efface German indignation. Although the Poles facilitated transit traffic, German nationalists still resented having to cross Polish frontiers twice in order to get to another part of the Reich.² In any event, favorable transit conditions were offset by propaganda and events that reminded the

¹Ian F. D. Morrow, The Peace Settlement in the German-Polish Borderlands (London, 1936), 184-89.

²Godfrey Scheele, The Weimar Republic (London, 1945), 264.

German people, during the Republican era, that Danzig was a German city and that East Prussia was separated from Germany. Morrow analyzes propoganda advertising East Prussia as a vacation spot and concludes this to be part of an attempt to keep Germans aware of the "Corridor" and Danzig. The attention thus drawn to East Prussia reminded Germans of the division of the Reich, and always, of Danzig. Moreover, the election of Paul von Hindenburg as President of the Weimar Republic could not but help direct popular attention to East Prussia, where Tannenberg, the place where the General had achieved fame, was located.¹

The attitudes expressed over Danzig and the "Corridor" became deeply ingrained. In the post-World War I period, German scholars, like other academicians, saw in the new arrangement, a source for historical or legal study. A wide variety of scholarly articles on Danzig appeared during the 1920's, in addition to constant newspaper coverage.² Needless to say, German historiography stressed the German character of the Free City. For example, Guenter Lohse and Waldemar Wucher, representatives of revisionist extremism,

¹Morrow, Peace Settlement, 90.

²See, for example, the bibliography in Mason, Danzig Dilemma, 311-22.

published Deutschland und der Korridor in 1939, when propaganda had reached a saturated absurdity. Deutschland und der Korridor presents a series of maps in which the authors compare Germany's eastern border problem with hypothetical examples that purport to parallel the situation of Danzig. For example, the maps show Marseilles as a free city with a Swiss "Corridor" through France to the sea, and a free Narvik with a Swedish "Corridor" through Norway. The divided areas of France and Norway are appropriately labeled East Prussia and Germany. A total of eight such examples are depicted, with the obvious attempt to create foreign sympathy for Germany's plight.¹ No cognizance of the possibility of sea connections between the separate provinces is shown, thus ignoring the fact that, for example, an island empire like Japan communicates between provinces by sea. Or, on the other hand, the possibility of easy transit to another province is not alluded to, as for example, with a map that would show a Canadian "Corridor" separating the United States from Alaska, as indeed exists. But such propaganda, nonetheless, looks convincing to the uncritical mind, and was unquestionably effective, especially in Germany.

¹Guenter Lohse und Waldemar Wucher, Deutschland und der Korridor (Berlin, 1939), 280-83.

Although he could overcome such emotions himself, Hitler, too, was affected by such propaganda. In 1942, for example, he told Albert Forster that he had worn cufflinks with the Danzig Coat of Arms emblazoned on them ever since he had decided to re-annex the Free City to the Reich.¹ And in 1944, he especially instructed Heinrich Himmler not to surrender Danzig to the Russians, if possible, since the "war started here."²

When Hitler and the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933, Danzig, faithfully reflecting the political climate of the Reich, also succumbed. On May 28, 1933, four months after Hitler came to power, electors in Danzig cast 50.03 per cent of their votes for the Nazi candidates (a majority not attained in the Reich), thus giving them 38 of 72 seats in the Volkstag.³ The victory in Danzig provided Hitler with the lever he needed in foreign policy.

Because he needed security in the East in order to embark on his rearmament program and other adventures in

¹Henry Picker, Hitler's Tischgespräche; Im Fuehrerhauptquartier, 1941-42, herausgegeben von Gerhard Ritter (Bonn, 1951), 81.

²Willi Frischauer, Himmler; The Evil Genius of the Third Reich (London, 1953), 233.

³Leonhardt, Nazi Conquest, 58-60.

foreign policy, the Fuehrer sought a rapprochement with Poland with whom relations had been extremely precarious because of a tariff war and Hitler's avowed revisionist policy. In addition, Polish-Danzig relations in 1933 were also severely strained, largely because of the dispute over Gdynia and the fact that Pilsudski had reinforced the contingent at the Westerplatte, Poland's munitions dump in the Free City.¹ Pilsudski's action was preparatory, in part, to a possible preventive war against the new regime in Germany, or failing that, to oblige Hitler to come to terms with Poland.²

The rapprochement began through the Danzig Government. Hermann Rauschning, the new President of the Danzig Senate, concluded agreements with Warsaw that conferred civil rights on Poles in Danzig. These rights were more far reaching than the minority treaties of Versailles specified. In addition, further economic concessions were given Poland, and all pending disputes in the League Council were withdrawn. Pilsudski, who considered Danzig-Polish relations to be a reliable barometer of the Reich's intentions toward

¹Auswaertiges Amt, No. 21-22, Documents on the Events Preceding the Outbreak of the War (New York, 1940), 38-42; Friedrich Berber (ed), No. 10, Europaeische Politik im Spiegel der Prager Akten, 1933-38, Band VIII (Essen, 1942), 24.

²See Zygmunt J. Gasiorowski, "Did Pilsudski Attempt to Initiate a Preventive War in 1933?" The Journal of Modern History, XXVII (June, 1955), 135-51.

Warsaw, reciprocated, and the two nations concluded a non-aggression pact, valid for ten years, on January 26, 1934.¹ Although Poland sought a definite recognition of the frontier and territorial Danzig as created by the Treaty of Versailles, this was never forthcoming. Reich officials repeatedly stressed that recognition of the frontiers was contrary to their policy. Poland unwillingly acquiesced.²

The pact inaugurated a period of collusion between Germany and Poland that helped the Nazis to subvert the Danzig constitution. The Poles were given even more rights, both economic and civil, than heretofore and Senate President Rauschnig resigned because of his inability to agree with his Party on economic measures and the repression of Danzig Germans, a concomitant of the Polish rapprochement.³ He was succeeded by Arthur Greiser, whose virtue consisted chiefly in his ability to take orders from Gauleiter Forster. Under Greiser and Forster, the Nazi Gleichschaltung (coordination) of Danzig proceeded, following closely the developments of the Order State in the Reich. In an attempt

¹Leonhardt, Nazi Conquest, 61-66. Text of Pact in Republic of Poland, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, No. 10, Official Documents Concerning Polish-German and Polish-Soviet Relations, 1933-1939; The Polish White Book (London, 1939), 20-1.

²No. 1, Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, Series D, V (Washington, 1953), 1-2.

³Hermann Rauschnig, The Conservative Revolution (New York, 1941), 3-33.

to achieve the two-thirds majority necessary to alter the constitution, new elections, attended by the usual violence, were held on April 7, 1935. The Nazis failed to achieve their goal, receiving only 57.3 per cent of the vote, despite the assistance of the Reich's star orators, Hermann Goering, Rudolph Hess, Joseph Goebbels, and Julius Streicher and the influx of German citizens who came to Danzig to cast their ballots. Accordingly, the Nazis continued subverting the constitution through "legal" and administrative means.¹

The League Council, disturbed by the activities in Danzig, summoned Arthur Greiser to Geneva in January, 1936, where the Herr Praesident agreed to forego further repressive measures. The League Council did not insist on new elections as members of the Danzig Opposition demanded. Greiser returned to Danzig and the Gleichschaltung continued.² Recalled to Geneva on July 4, 1936, he appeared before the Council and delivered an impassioned harangue demanding that the League replace Sean Lester of Ireland and "send a new High Commissioner to Danzig, instructing him . . . to refrain from any interference in internal politics and to devote himself entirely to his province of foreign policy," or,

¹Leonhardt, Nazi Conquest, 110-24.

²Stephan Heald and John W. Wheeler-Bennett, Documents on International Affairs, 1936. (London, 1937), 433.

better yet, to abolish the institution of the High Commissioner entirely. Greiser ended his oration by giving the Nazi salute to the League Council and thumbing his nose at the laughing press gallery.¹ After this riposte, The League set up a Committee of Three, France, England, and Portugal, to observe activities in Danzig.²

Pursuant to a report from the Committee, the League Council requested, October 5, 1936, that the Polish government seek "means of putting an end" to the unconstitutional measures in Danzig, and make recommendations on that subject at the next meeting. Poland, however, declined to halt the growing rapprochement with Germany and acquiesced in the Nazi activities in Danzig. Colonel Jozef Beck, Polish Foreign Minister, reported on January 26, 1937 that the High Commissioner "should take care to see that the internal administration of the Free City" was not impeded.³

The Committee of Three, through its rapporteur, Anthony Eden of the United Kingdom, recommended the adoption of Poland's report on January 27, which the League Council

¹Ibid., 417-20, 438.

²Sweden later replaced Portugal.

³Heald and Wheeler-Bennett, Documents for 1936, 445-47. See No. 26-27, Polish White Book, 34-6.

did the same day.¹ In effect, the League absolved itself from protecting the constitution of the Free City. To all practical purposes, Herr Greiser had succeeded in his demands; Danzig Oppositionists probably thought that even the League was being gleichgeschaltet.²

The final act of Danzig-Geneva relations was the appointment of Dr. Carl Burckhardt, Swiss historian and a distant relative of the more famous Jakob Burckhardt, to replace Sean Lester as High Commissioner. Burckhardt said of his duties, that "the High Commissioner . . . should take care to see that the internal administration of the Free City of Danzig is not hampered," a quotation of the Polish desiderata as Colonel Beck had expressed them before the League Council in January, 1937.³ Although Burckhardt can not be called a Nazi, he had ingratiated himself with them. For example, he welcomed Dr. Goebbels and his body-guard to his home in Geneva in 1933 and introduced the

¹Heald and Wheeler-Bennett, Documents for 1936, 448-51.

²In relinquishing its duty to protect Danzig's constitution, the League Council, in fact, violated the treaties, for external and internal protection of the Free City were indivisible. See Leonhardt, Nazi Conquest, 280-87.

³Report of M. Carl Burckhardt, High Commissioner of the League of Nations at Danzig (Geneva, 1940), 2.

new gutter elite to international circles in the League of Nations capital. Hitler referred to him as a man of accomplishment. The circumstances surrounding his appointment lend color to Rauschnig's observation that he was appointed to be the "Commissar of the Gleichschaltung," although he did try to slow the process.¹

With effective League interference out of the way, the Nazification of Danzig caught up with that in the Reich.

In Burckhardt's words:

The Communist and Social Democratic Parties had been dissolved in 1934 and 1936 respectively. The German National or Conservative Party left the opposition in the spring of 1937, and, as a result of the pressure exerted, amalgamated with the ruling party. It stated, however, that it took this decision of its own free will. The Catholic Centre Party, on the other hand, showed greater resistance, but, when it informed the High Commissioner on October 21st, 1937, of its dissolution, it added that it had no intention of lodging an appeal or applying to the League of Nations.²

¹Leonhardt, Nazi Conquest, 308; No. 37, Polish White Book, 44; No. 37, Documents on German Foreign Policy, V, 49. Rauschnig's quotation in "Preseedienst der Heimat vertrieben Nr. 4/50, Goettingen, 26 Januar, 1950," cited in Hans Roos, pseud Hans Otto Meisner, Polen und Europa (Tuebingen, 1957), 297.

²Report Burckhardt, 2.

Political parties were completely abolished on November 8, 1937.¹

In ideological matters, the Free City also followed the Reich, enacting laws barring Jews from civil service on November 2, 1938, and prohibiting marriage between Jews and "aryans" on November 25, 1938, pursuant to a decree "for the protection of German blood and German honor."² Danzig "remained calm" during the vicious pogrom carried out in Germany during the "crystal night" on November 10, 1938, but when Burckhardt temporarily absented himself from the city, the anti-Jewish outbreaks paralleled those of the Reich, a singular demonstration of how the "spontaneity" of such "German" manifestations could be manipulated.³

In line with the Nazification of Danzig, "extensive security measures" were planned after September, 1938. Hitler desired only "defensive" weapons such as anti-aircraft guns "within the scope of the Danzig Police" since "he did not desire to cause anxiety in Poland." In addition, the Nazi regime in Danzig enacted a law providing for compulsory service in one of the various arms of the "police"

¹No. 669, Documents on German Foreign Policy, V, 944.

²No. 672, Ibid., 947; Report Burckhardt, 8-9.

³Ibid., 9.

in the Free City. Poland protested, but not strenuously.¹

The rapprochement between Poland and Germany aided Danzig's Nazification. Any difficulties Poland encountered were straightened out through the German Foreign Office, and the Diplomatic Representative in the Free City, Marian Chodacki, said he regarded the new "aryan" laws in Danzig as an internal matter so long as Polish rights were protected.² Moreover, Poland, in taking advantage of conditions in Danzig, had increased her use of the port, further developing, thereby, her trade on the Vistula. Port traffic in Danzig, for example, increased by 33 per cent during the first five months of 1939 in contrast to the same period in 1938.³

The German-Polish rapprochement was also added insurance for Hitler's moves in foreign policy. Official Poland was serene during the Anschluss of Austria in 1938; this was after all Southeastern expansion, not Eastern. Warsaw profited from the Sudeten crisis in 1938 by acquiring the duchy of Teschen from Czechoslovakia. Polish-German relations

¹Appendix III, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VII, 633; No. 675, Ibid., V, 951-52.

²Report Burckhardt, 7-9. See No. 62, Polish White Book, 64.

³No. 461, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939, Third Series, VI (London, 1949), 505-06.

from 1934 to 1938 gave Hitler good reason, therefore, to believe that Colonel Beck's foreign policy would continue on lines acceptable to the New Order.

CHAPTER II

THE SEARCH FOR A "TOLERABLE RELATIONSHIP"

In the winter of 1938-1939, Hitler's Germany was the most feared Power in Europe. Hitler had accomplished much. Germany, rearmed, had reoccupied the Rhineland and annexed Austria and the Sudetenland. Rump Czechoslovakia lay in the shadow of German power. For the most part, Eastern Europe was tacitly acknowledged to be Germany's sphere of economic, if not political, influence. Hitler expected to make the most of his accomplishment. He considered that a test of strength with the West was inevitable, probably in two to three years, since he feared England would ultimately interfere in his economic domain.¹

To prepare for war with the West, the economic and political exploitation of Eastern European Lebensraum was necessary. In order to insure this, Hitler needed a "tolerable relationship" with Poland. Poland could be used

¹Doc. 798-PS, Trial of the Major War Criminals (Nuremberg, 1948), XXXVI, 338-39.

to contain Russia while Germany exploited the Baltic and Balkans. Hitler did not need to worry about Russian interference with his future war with the West for his Eastern Anti-Comintern partner, Japan, would serve to restrain the U.S.S.R. But for his preparatory economic penetration of Eastern Europe, he needed a clarification of Polish foreign policy for both his immediate eastern plans and for the expected future struggle with the West.

To achieve such a clarification, the position Danzig occupied was crucial. With Danzig in German hands, the customs dominance of Poland over the Free City could be effectively reversed. German hold over Danzig would give der Fuehrer sufficient leverage to subordinate Polish foreign policy to his own, provided, of course, that such an arrangement was accompanied by other agreements.¹ Moreover, an extra-territorial road across the "Corridor" would insure Germany's life-line to the Baltic when the ultimate showdown with the West came. Then, too, the return of Danzig and the road through the "Corridor" would placate possible nationalistic demands for the revision of Germany's eastern frontier.

¹Colonel Beck writes that "the establishment of Germany at the mouth of the Vistula would be equivalent to economic and therefore political control over Polish national life." No. 53, Polish White Book, 57.

With such reasoning to support it, the German campaign for Danzig began, October 24, 1938, shortly after the Munich conference. The Polish Ambassador, Jozef Lipski, met Reich Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop on that date at Berchtesgaden. Ribbentrop told Lipski that the time had come for Germany and Poland to complete the rapprochement initiated by Hitler and Pilsudski. The German Foreign Minister advanced the following proposals:

1. The Free State of Danzig would revert to the German Reich.
2. An extra-territorial Reichsauto-bahn belonging to Germany and likewise an extra-territorial, multiple-track railroad would be laid through the Corridor.
3. Similarly, Poland would receive in the Danzig area an extra-territorial road or Autobahn, a railroad, and a free port.
4. Poland would receive a guarantee of a market for her goods in the Danzig area.
5. The two nations would recognize their common boundaries (guarantee) or each other's territories.
6. The German-Polish treaty would be extended 10-25 years.
7. Poland would accede to the Anti-Comintern Pact.
8. The two countries would add a consultative clause to their treaty.

Lipski regarded Anschluss of Danzig impossible, "if only--and principally [Ribbentrop wrote] --for reasons of [Polish] domestic policy." Ribbentrop replied that no immediate answer was anticipated, but requested that Lipski open conversations with Colonel Beck.¹

On November 19, 1938, in Berlin, Lipski informed Ribbentrop of Beck's views regarding the conversation of October 24. The Polish Ambassador told Ribbentrop that his government believed that "German-Polish relations had stood the test," but in regard to Danzig, Beck believed that relations would be impaired by an Anschluss. According to Lipski, Beck suggested that a German-Polish treaty replace the League Statute for Danzig, with Poland recognizing the Free City "as a purely German city with all the rights resulting therefrom." Poland should have her economic rights and customs union with the city unimpaired. Danzig, moreover, should remain a Free City. Lipski did not make a "detailed or official stand" on the question of the extra-territorial highway and rails, although he indicated, personally, that a favorable solution was possible.²

¹No. 81, Documents on German Foreign Policy, V, 104-07. Lipski informed Beck that Ribbentrop had "discreetly gave it to be understood that he was responsible for the initiative" in the Danzig discussions, not Hitler. No. 46, Polish White Book, 51.

²No. 101, Documents on German Foreign Policy, V, 127-29.

Four weeks later, on December 15, 1938, Lipski again met Ribbentrop. He remained noncommittal and "negative" on the Danzig question, indicating, however, that Colonel Beck was willing to discuss the Railroad and Autobahn.¹

Colonel Beck, returning from a Christmas vacation at Monte Carlo, saw Hitler at Berchtesgaden on January 5, 1939. Hitler, affirming that he recognized Polish rights in the Free City, told Beck he "was thinking of a formula by which Danzig would come into the German community politically but remain with Poland economically." Hitler said this was in the interests of Danzig for she could not exist economically without the Polish hinterland. He assured Beck there would be no fait accomplis in the Free City. Beck repeated that the question was difficult because of Polish public opinion.²

In Munich, the next day, Beck complained to Ribbentrop of "little faits accomplis" in Danzig that impaired Polish interests there. These, Beck said, might "force Poland to take a stand." Ribbentrop repeated his "solution" of the Danzig question and the transit problem. He hinted that Germany might support Polish interests in the Ukraine, and refuted Beck's complaint that there was a German conspiracy

¹No. 112, Ibid., 142-43.

²No. 119, Ibid., 152-58.

with regard to Polish Ukrainians. Ribbentrop again suggested that Poland should "accede to the Anti-Comintern Pact." Beck declined the latter suggestion but extended an invitation to Ribbentrop to visit Warsaw.¹

Ribbentrop arrived in Warsaw on January 26, 1939, and again brought up the question of Danzig and the extra-territorial road. Beck did not view the questions "optimistically" but indicated intention to give the suggestions "careful consideration." Ribbentrop again proposed German-Polish collaboration vis a vis a "Greater Ukraine" and repeated his invitation to join the Anti-Comintern Pact.² Although fruitless, Ribbentrop's discussions with the Poles, as with earlier negotiations, were conducted in a friendly spirit.

Behind these negotiations, however, Germany had several operational plans. In the winter of 1938-39, Hitler issued several military directives concerning Danzig, none of them, however, envisaging war with Poland. A directive on October 21, 1938, with an addendum by General Wilhelm Keitel of the High Command of the Wehrmacht--O.K.W.--on November 24,

¹No. 120, Ibid., 159-61. Beck said he was becoming "pessimistic" over the Danzig issue. No. 49, Polish White Book, 56.

²No. 126, Documents on German Foreign Policy, V, 167-68. Beck said he "categorically rejected" the proposal for an extra-territorial road. No. 52, Polish White Book, 56.

specified that an occupation of Danzig was to be a "coup de main" depending on the political situation but "not a war against Poland." The directive was conditional in scope and provided for similar operations in Memel, although it was part of a General Order regarding the occupation of rump Czechoslovakia.¹ Another directive, dated December 8, 1938, ordered preparations for a possible occupation of Danzig from East Prussia in connection with general operational precautions in case of war. The order, part of "Transport Exercise Stolpmuende," stressed the importance of German troops appearing in Danzig "as soon as possible" if the operation occurred. The coup was not to be accompanied by invasion of Polish territory except by "special order," and excluded action in the Polish sphere on the Westerplatte so long as no armed action by the Poles occurred in that quarter.² Finally, during the "Fuehrer Reception" at Munich on February 24, 1939, Hitler told the President of the Danzig Senate, Arthur Greiser, that the Free City would be visited by a "considerable number of German warships." The Fuehrer had in mind about three "fairly large units, a destroyer squadron, a submarine

¹Doc. 136-C, Trial of the Major War Criminals, XXXIV, 479-81; Doc. 137-C, Ibid., 481-83; Doc. 138-C, Ibid., 483-84.

²Doc. 120-C, Ibid., 420; Doc. 137-C, Ibid., 481-83.

flotilla, and escort vessels." Greiser, probably correctly, believed this to be an intended foreign policy demonstration with the object of pressing Poland into compliance with a German coup in Danzig.¹

The military planning regarding Danzig makes it evident that Hitler had no intentions, originally, of war with Poland. Much of the military activity along the Polish borders was defensive in scope, and even after the occupation of Prague, the Wilhelmstrasse noted that Germany was "heavily fortifying" her frontiers with Poland, obviously not necessary if an attack was contemplated.² Moreover, on March 25, 1939, the Fuehrer indicated to the Commander-in-Chief of the Army that he did "not wish to solve the Danzig question by force." Hitler did not want to "drive Poland into the arms of Britain." A military "occupation of Danzig could be contemplated only if Lipski gave an indication that the Polish Government could not justify voluntary cession of Danzig to their own people and that a fait accompli would make a solution easier to them."³

¹No. 361, Note 1, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VI, 47.

²No. 52, Ibid., 59.

³Doc. 100-R, Trial of the Major War Criminals, XXXVIII, 274.

While negotiations between Germany and Poland were underway, Danzig remained calm. Since Poland viewed the Free City as a barometer of German-Polish relations, she was given indications of the Reich's good will. Before Ribbentrop visited Warsaw in January, 1939, he took steps to prevent Danzig Nazis from provoking the Poles and unduly prejudicing his negotiations with Colonel Beck. On January 13, Ribbentrop requested of Gauleiter Forster that he refrain from undertaking any measures in Danzig until after the Foreign Minister's return from Warsaw. Ribbentrop noted that "the Foreign Minister will then summon Gauleiter Forster to a new conference, when it will be decided whether new measures would be rendered superfluous by a general settlement with Poland." Forster agreed to this procedure.¹

Despite such efforts to convince the Poles of the "magnanimity" of Germany's "offer," Ribbentrop's mission to Warsaw, as noted above, did not bear the desired fruit. However, a possible indirect effect of that conference was the decision to complete the plans for the coup in Prague

¹No. 122, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VI, 162. Among the measures then pending in Danzig were the "official adoption of the German salute," of the German flag, which had been a source of friction between Poland and the Free City, and the formation of a Death's-Head unit of the S.S.

before again approaching Poland.¹ From a purely military standpoint, this seemed an intelligent decision, since by occupying the rest of Czechoslovakia, Germany had Poland even more encircled, and could, in addition, offer the bait of condominium in Slovakia in return for concessions along other lines. Politically, however, the decision was fatal, for Poland stiffened her attitude after the March coup, with England reacting by offering her guarantee to the Warsaw government. Whether cynically or sincerely, though, until the March coup, the German government continued to stress friendly relations with Poland. Hitler reviewed his foreign policy before the Reichstag on January 30, 1939, lauding the course of German-Polish relations since the Pact of 1934.

In signing it, [Hitler said], the great Polish Marshall [sic] and Patriot rendered his people just as great a service as the leaders of the National-Socialist State rendered the German people. During the troubled months of the past year the friendship between

¹Colonel Beck claims that his chauffeur overheard Ribbentrop say to the German Ambassador to Poland, Hans von Moltke, after the conversations in Warsaw: "Well they are hard. It will be necessary to change the order of problems and first settle other matters," meaning, of course, Czechoslovakia. Colonel Jozef Beck, Final Report (New York, 1957), 174.

Germany and Poland was one of the reassuring factors in the political life of Europe.¹

Europe had not recovered from Hitler's coup on March 15 when Ribbentrop again interviewed Lipski in Berlin on March 21. The Reich Foreign Minister informed Lipski that the Fuehrer was viewing Poland's "strange" attitude toward Germany's coup in Czechoslovakia and the recent anti-German demonstration in Warsaw with "amazement." Ribbentrop rehashed the earlier German-Polish rapprochement, arguing that Poland had arisen at the expense of the Reich but that Hitler recognized the national existence of the Poles, insisting, only, on a more "reasonable" settlement. Ribbentrop pointed out that Germany's "offer" in its "magnanimity" just asked for an extra-territorial road, not the return of the Corridor. He concluded by suggesting a favorable--to Poland--settlement of the Slovak and Ukrainian questions and urged Lipski to report personally to Colonel Beck in Warsaw.²

On March 24, 1939, Consul General von Janson in Danzig telephoned Poland's most immediate answer to Ribbentrop's

¹Norman Baynes (ed.), The Speeches of Adolf Hitler (London, 1942), II, 1577. Poland's official communique on Ribbentrop's visit to Warsaw was equally laudatory. No. 54, Polish White Book, 57.

²No. 61, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VI, 70-2.

latest proposal. "Measures of a purely defensive nature" had been taken in the northern area of the Corridor. Rolling stock had been removed from Gdynia; the bridge at Dirschau had been fortified; leaves had been cancelled and reserves had been called up at Thorn and transferred to Bromberg.¹ German intelligence confirmed and amplified this report the next day, stating that about four thousand Polish troops had been concentrated at Gdynia, and troops previously in the southern part of the Corridor had been transferred to the Danzig frontier. However, General Keitel of O.K.W. said he did not believe that Poland sought to forestall Germany by occupying Danzig. But the General Staff viewed the situation more seriously.²

Lipski delivered Poland's formal answer to Ribbentrop's proposals on March 26. Poland offered to study, jointly with Germany, means of simplifying transit traffic through the Corridor but rejected the extra-territorial idea as an infringement of her sovereignty. Poland desired, moreover, a joint guarantee of the Free City in which Polish economic rights would be observed and the German "way of life" unhindered. Lipski's note observed, further, that

¹No. 85, Ibid., 101-02.

²No. 90, Ibid., 110-11.

Polish economic interests coincided with Danzig's since the Free City depended on trade with Poland. Receiving the note, Ribbentrop referred Lipski to the reports of Polish mobilization, warning that an attack on Danzig would constitute an attack on Germany. Ribbentrop requested that the Polish government reconsider its proposals since the Fuehrer would not regard them as satisfactory. He reiterated Germany's proposals, claiming them to be the only possible basis for settlement.

In a memorandum following the discussion, the Foreign Minister noted that he did not believe that Poland would intervene forcibly in Danzig or that her proposals represented Warsaw's last word on the issue. Another memorandum expressed Ribbentrop's view that "The Polish press attacks should be answered gradually by the German press so as not to bring things to a head;" that the Polish Ambassador should be advised again that Warsaw's proposals were unacceptable and that a warning should be given Poland if military measures were not reduced.¹ Accordingly, the next day, March 27, Ribbentrop complained to Lipski of an anti-German demonstration in Bromberg and remarked on Poland's

¹No. 101, Ibid., 121-24.

"evasive answer" to Germany's "generous proposals" regarding Danzig and the Corridor.¹

Despite these developments, German officials, as Ribbentrop expressed it, still sought a peaceful settlement of the issue. Goebbels' press maintained "complete silence" on the Danzig and Corridor questions.² State Secretary Ernst von Weizsaecker informed Arthur Greiser, who was visiting Berlin on March 29, of the latest developments. Weizsaecker advised Greiser that Danzig should maintain the same attitude towards Poland as in recent months; he did not believe it desirable "to provoke Poland in any way through Danzig."³

The impasse over Danzig was fully brought out on March 29, however, when Hans von Moltke, German Ambassador to Poland, reported how Colonel Beck had reacted to Ribbentrop's statement that a Polish attack on Danzig would be considered a casus belli. Beck asserted that an attempt by Germany to alter the status of the Free City would also be a casus belli. The same applied if the Danzig Senate made "such

¹No. 108, Ibid., 135-36. Anti-German demonstrations in Poland had reached a high peak after the annexation of Memel, March 22. Von Moltke, reporting from Warsaw on March 28, said there was a "bellicose mood in Poland" and rumors of an impending German coup in Danzig. No. 115, Ibid., 144-45.

²No. 85, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, The French Yellow Book (London, nd), 101-02.

³No. 124, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VI, 152-53.

a breach of treaty." However, Beck stressed that he still hoped to find a satisfactory solution to the Danzig question.¹

Two days later, March 31, 1939, England extended her guarantee to Poland, which was confirmed on April 6. Poland now had more reason to hold fast against encroachment from Germany. Apparently not impressed by British determination, Hitler shortly ordered that several military measures be prepared in order to allow him a wider choice of action. On April 3, 1939, he issued the top secret "Directive for the Wehrmacht, 1939-40." In three parts, the first was on "Frontier Security," the second provided for the surprise occupation of Danzig, and the third directed deployment against Poland (Case White).² Preliminary orders were complete and signed April 11 under the title "Directive for the Uniform preparation of war by the Wehrmacht for 1939/40." Under "Case White" (Enclosure II), the directive read, in part:

German relations with Poland continue to be based on the principles of avoiding any disturbances. Should Poland, however, change her policy towards Germany, which so far has been based on the same principles as our own, and adopt a threatening

¹No. 118, Ibid., 147-48; No. 64, Polish White Book, 69.

²Doc. 120-C, Trial of the Major War Criminals, XXXIV, 380-82.

attitude towards Germany, a final settlement might become necessary in spite of the treaty in force with Poland.

The aim will then be to destroy Polish military strength The Free State of Danzig will be proclaimed a part of the Reich territory at the outbreak of hostilities at the latest.

Preparations for this were to be completed not later than September 1.¹

Enclosure III of the directive, entitled "Danzig," relates that a "surprise occupation of the Free State of Danzig may become possible independent of 'Operation White' by exploiting a favorable political situation." Preparations for this specified that the "occupation by the army [would] . . . be carried out from East Prussia" with the Navy supporting from the sea.² The occupation, moreover, would be carried out by divisions of the peace-time Wehrmacht without strengthening through mobilization. S.S. troops and police taking part would be placed under the Army.³

Although preparing military directives, one of which envisaged the destruction of Poland, Germany still sought a peaceful settlement of the Danzig issue, but on Hitler's

¹Ibid., 388.

²Ibid., 397-400.

³Ibid.

terms. On April 5, Weizsaecker telegraphed von Moltke in Warsaw to inform him that the German "offer to Poland would not be repeated" and that he was "not to enter into any serious discussions on the Polish question" because it was necessary to avoid being maneuvered into a position wherein Germany appeared to allow a Polish proposal to go unheeded.¹ Weizsaecker informed Lipski the next day that the Polish offer of March 27 was not a basis for negotiation and "leftily refuted" the Polish Ambassador's explanation of troop movements near Danzig.²

Although deadlocked, German-Polish relations remained calm and there were no incidents in Danzig. However, after Mussolini launched his adventure in Albania, April 7, 1939, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed his appeal for peace to the European dictators on April 16, Hitler took his next step. In a masterpiece of irony and sarcasm, he addressed the Reichstag on April 28, 1939, in which, among other things, he ridiculed Roosevelt's message, denounced the Pact with Poland by saying that it was ineffective since the British guarantee had destroyed its basis, and terminated the Anglo-German Naval Pact of 1935. Hitler

¹No. 159, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VI, 195.

²No. 169, Ibid., 205-07.

publicly aired, for the first time, Germany's demands on Poland. They included the return of Danzig and the extra-territorial road, for which Germany undertook to "recognize all Polish economic rights in Danzig" with a free harbor "of any size desired;" to recognize the present frontier; to conclude a 25 year non-aggression pact; and to grant Poland a voice in Slovakia--"in practice the renunciation of any German hegemony in this territory." Significantly omitted were mention of the Anti-Comintern Pact, the proposal for a "Greater Ukraine," and the usual diatribes on Russia.¹

The Polish Charge d' Affairs, Prince Lubomirsky, delivered Warsaw's answer to the Wilhelmstrasse on May 5. Poland refuted Germany's contention that she had consistently refused to recognize the status quo in Danzig. Her proposition of March 27 was repeated and, in addition, Poland pointed out that the Reich had not considered the earlier Franco-Polish alliance, which was more definitely pointed at Germany, as a contradiction to the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact of 1934. Therefore, the Poles insisted, the Anglo-Polish agreement did not contradict the German-

¹Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, 1605-56.

Polish Non-Aggression Pact.¹ The gist of this was included in a speech that Beck delivered on the same date, which, however, also carried a suggestion that he reserved the right to return to specific German proposals.² The German Foreign Office, commenting on Beck's speech, offered the interpretation that the Polish Foreign Minister had "lapses of memory" and that his speech was a "relatively insignificant pronouncement by a weak government."³ A new phase had begun in German-Polish relations for which new tactics were to be employed.

¹No. 334, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VI, 430-35.

²No. 77, Polish White Book, 84-88.

³No. 335, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VI, 436.

III CHAPTER III

HITLER'S DECISION

With the denunciation of the Polish pact in his speech of April 28, Hitler's field of action broadened. The qualified phraseology of "Case White" no longer applied, for, in Hitlerian logic, Poland had adopted a "threatening attitude" since receiving the guarantee from England. Thus Hitler's problem was to isolate Poland both diplomatically and militarily so that he could destroy her without interference or, failing that, to bully her into accepting his proposals under the auspices of Western pressure as had been done in Czechoslovakia at the Munich Conference. On May 23, in a top secret conference at the Reichskanzlei, Hitler revealed part of his political thoughts to his high officers. The gist of his monologue was the coming war that he deemed inevitable. Danzig was not the issue. Germany needed Lebensraum in the East in order to prepare for the expected war with the West. Poland was to be destroyed "at the first suitable opportunity." Poland was a "doubtful barrier"

against Bolshevism but the U.S.S.R. "might disinterest herself in the destruction of Poland."¹

Although Hitler had decided to destroy Poland, the decision was by no means "unalterable." Judging by the planning that took place during the summer of 1939, Hitler would have been satisfied by gaining acceptance of his proposals to Poland, although he deemed this improbable. Events during the summer, however, made his decision to attack Poland implacable, so much so that he would tolerate no appeasement. But since his decision was not yet "unalterable," Hitler still held a variety of plans, and preparations continued to be diffuse.

Among the preparations were included the militarization of Danzig and erection of a local armed contingent that could be used either under "Case White" or the directive for a separate occupation of Danzig. Militarization followed throughout the summer. The Polish General Staff informed British Ambassador Howard Kennard in Warsaw on June 15, "that 6000 additional S.A. men were recently drafted into Danzig," making a total of 18,000. They were armed only with rifles. Reportedly, the Danzig police had "250 machine

¹Doc. 079-L, Trial of the Major War Criminals, XXXVII, 546-56.

guns and 300 light machine guns, but so far as was known, no artillery."¹ Hans von Moltke, German Ambassador in Warsaw, in conversation with Kennard, did not deny the report.² On June 28, the British Consul in Danzig, Gerald Shepherd, reported that anti-tank defenses had been completed along the Danzig-Gdynia road. Danzigers were completing approaches for a pontoon bridge across the Vistula at Kaesemark, where the two main roads from East Prussia converged in Danzig territory. Private motor vehicles were inspected and registered. Draught and saddle horses had been assembled for inspection and "car-loads of saddles" had been delivered. The formation of a Freikorps was "proceeding rapidly." The Military Police Barracks were full. And Forster's newspaper, the Danziger Vorposten, reported that "the largest youth hostel in the world, which is approaching completion here, is to be used as a barracks." Moreover, authorities ordered civil servants and students to remain in Danzig during vacation to help with the harvest.³

¹No. 62, Documents on British Foreign Policy, VI, 80-1.

²No. 63, Ibid., 81.

³No. 155, Ibid., 177-79; No. 160, French Yellow Book, 183-85.

Obviously, Danzig as well as the "largest youth hostel" was being "used as a barracks." By July 26, observers in Danzig estimated that armed men in the Free City totaled about 21,000. British Consul Shepherd thought that this was exaggerated, believing 10,000 to be a better estimate. He did not believe there were enough arms, as yet, in Danzig to equip 21,000 men. The hotels, however, were filled with German "tourists."¹ Arms, moreover, kept arriving in Danzig, principally from East Prussia, but also by sea, disembarking at the Schichau dock-yard.² Heavy material found its way into Danzig also and General Keitel addressed an inquiry to Weizsaecker on July 14 asking whether it "would be politically advisable to show in public the twelve light and four heavy guns which are in Danzig and to let exercises be carried on with them."³ On August 14, British Consul Shepherd reported that the preparations looked complete and that "local troops have now reached stage of field training."⁴

¹No. 355, Documents on British Foreign Policy, VI, 391-94.

²No. 160, French Yellow Book, 183-85.

³No. 670, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VI, 920-21. Weizsaecker advised that the guns remain hidden to be shown for political purposes when needed.

⁴No. 653, Documents on British Foreign Policy, VI, 685.

The Poles watched these developments "with apprehension," but most thought it was part of the "war of nerves."¹ The Polish Diplomatic Representative informed the French Consul in Danzig, de la Tournelle, July 3, that the Warsaw government had no intention of opposing rearmament in progress inasmuch as it appeared "defensive" in character.² But Chodacki told Greiser, July 18, that Poland knew "exactly how many troops and how many guns, etc., were available" and would publish this intelligence in the event of political difficulties.³

Not only were men being trained to "defend" Danzig, but Germany was also sending men to reconnoiter the area in connection with military planning. On July 19, O.K.H. sent to the Wilhelmstrasse a list of 168 officers who had been "granted permission to travel through the Free State of Danzig in civilian clothes on a tour for study purposes arranged by the Military Academy."⁴ Non-commissioned officers also came to Danzig for study purposes.⁵ Moreover, on

¹No. 599, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VI, 824.

²No. 152, French Yellow Book, 177.

³No. 686, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VI, 939-41.

⁴No. 547, and Note, Ibid., 750.

⁵No. 1, Documents on British Foreign Policy, VI, 1.

June 27, Robert Coulondre, French Ambassador in Berlin, reported Heinrich Himmler's presence in Danzig and Shepherd, reporting from the Free City on June 28, confirmed that the ex-chicken farmer had been in Danzig incognito on June 25,¹ probably to coordinate S.S. activities there.

On August 1, Gauleiter Forster informed Burckhardt that General Eberhardt, a General of Police in the Reich, who had been regularly coming to Danzig for eight weeks, "would in future reside" there. Forster produced a passport as "proof" that Eberhardt was a Danzig citizen.² As will be seen, the General took command of the Danzig forces, termed later the "Eberhardt Brigade," during the German operations against Poland.

In Germany, meanwhile, preparations for the other courses of action were still proceeding. The Foreign Ministry's liaison officer with O.K.W. informed Weizsaecker on May 8 that the decision to send a large naval flotilla to Danzig, previously broached at the "Fuehrer Reception," was still pending.³ In addition, O.K.W. projected a visit by the cruiser "Koenigsberg" to Danzig to be held independently of the naval flotilla. The planned visit of the

¹No. 155, Ibid., 177-79; No. 145, French Yellow Book, 167-70.

²No. 502, Documents on British Foreign Policy, VI, 547.

³No. 361, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VI, 471-72.

"Koenigsberg" was in connection with the 25th commemoration of the dead of the cruiser "Magdeburg" on August 25. The cruiser would be in Danzig from August 25 to 28. Showing concern for legality, the Foreign Office ordered the German Consul in Danzig to notify the authorities there of the planned visit of the "Koenigsberg;" similar instructions were given to von Moltke in Warsaw.¹ On June 21, The Wilhelmstrasse again noted that the cruiser "Koenigsberg" was slated to visit Danzig August 25-28. Although not connected with this, the Foreign Office also noted that the projected visit of the naval flotilla was also pending.² The Wilhelmstrasse noted, furthermore, on June 22, that Admiral Erich Raeder had recently consulted Hitler about the fleet visit and had been ordered to prepare to carry this out on July 29-30. The strength proposed was "two capital ships, two cruisers, two divisions of destroyers, and two submarine flotillas."³ On July 8, the Fuehrer's adjutant at Berchtesgaden advised the Foreign Ministry of the intended fleet visit, saying that announcement would not be made until shortly before the date set and then only

¹Ibid., No. 378, Ibid., 488-89.

²No. 555, Ibid., 763.

³No. 558, Ibid., 773.

"in the form of a mere notification to Warsaw while the actual formal announcement will be made to the Danzig Senate."¹

Von Weizsaecker, apparently worried over the implications of the projected fleet visit, conferred with Ribbentrop July 18, pointing out that this "was a matter for the Foreign Minister." He suggested that Ribbentrop see Hitler about this before July 22, since

we must always bear in mind that a solution of the Danzig question might occur by force of arms, and that we must put the blame for this on the Poles, while the despatch of this naval unit to Danzig would be interpreted internationally as a prelude to the generally awaited German-Polish conflict.

Ribbentrop concurred, adding "that the visit should in no case take place without informing the Italians and not before August 4."² On July 22, however, Hitler still reserved his decision on the date for the projected fleet visit, but said the order would be given at short notice for the undertaking to take place after July 29-30.³

The evidence seems conclusive that Hitler was still hesitating among alternatives throughout the summer months.

¹No. 635, Ibid., 883.

²No. 687, Ibid., 941-42.

³No. 705, Ibid., 962-63.

The projected fleet visit seems to have been in conjunction with the proposed operation for the occupation of Danzig separate from an attack on Poland. For example, an operational plan dated July, 1939, entitled "Transport Exercise Stolpmuende" provided for the occupation of the Free City by troops from East Prussia with the Navy securing Danzig harbor from the Poles.¹ Hitler must still have thought another appeasement desirable even if improbable.

Along with the plotting regarding Danzig, however, preparations on "Case White," the planned deployment against Poland, continued. The date of readiness was changed from September 1 to August 20. On June 6, Keitel directed the O.K.H. and O.K.M. to study the feasibility of a surprise attack on the bridge at Dirschau. Keitel was concerned whether mining operations in Danzig Bay prior to the attack would endanger the element of surprise needed, observing that the importance of capturing the bridge had been established.² General Walter von Brauchitsch of the High Command of the Army--O.K.H.--noted, further, that the area around Danzig-Gdynia would not be the center of army attack. Since

¹Doc. 030-C, Trial of the Major War Criminals, XXXIV, 200-205. This directive, however, was by no means as solicitous of the Poles as the earlier directives to occupy Danzig, but adds "the opponent must have the first shot!"

²Doc. 120-C, Ibid., 396-97.

Danzig was to be declared a part of the Reich on the opening day of hostilities, according to "Case White," she would be secured by local formations abetted by contingents from Army Group North of East Prussia.¹

As this planning continued, the activities in Danzig became more and more provocative. In the Free City, the Nazis continued pressure on Poland by showing her the consequences of the denunciation of the non-aggression pact and the value of a "tolerable relationship" with Germany. In the night of May 20-21, a demonstration was staged at Kalthof against the Polish customs inspectors residing there. A direct result of this demonstration was the killing of an S.A. man. According to Marian Chodacki, Polish Diplomatic Representative in Danzig, the S.A. man was shot in self-defence after the demonstrators employed fire arms, bombs, and hand grenades against the Polish customs inspectors. Chodacki asserted that his Counsellor had requested a Danzig police officer to investigate the disturbances, but had been informed that no officer was available, obvious nonsense in view of the size of the police force in the Free City. Danzig officials waxed indignant over this episode,

¹Doc. 142-C, Ibid., 396-97.

bereaving their "fellow citizen," actually a resident of Marienburg, East Prussia. He was given a state funeral on May 24, with both Greiser and Forster extolling his "virtues," Hitler sending a wreath, and several S.A. men solemnly swearing revenge.¹

Other demonstrations accompanied such provocations. During the "third Annual District Cultural Week of the National Socialist Party" in the Free City, the German Minister of Enlightenment, Joseph Goebbels, delivered a bellicose address in which he reminded Danzigers of Hitler's speech of April 28. Hitler had said then that "Danzig is a German city and is determined to return to Germany." Goebbels insisted that the Fuehrer "never uses empty phrases."² Of the Cultural Week in Danzig, the Montag reported that "the plebiscite has been held," while the Voelkischer Beobachter said "the people of Danzig know that in no circumstances will they be left alone. . . . Such is the historic significance of June 17, 1939."³ But more ominously, the Danzig Senate published a booklet

¹No. 417, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VI, 549-50; No. 418, Ibid., 550-52; No. 129, French Yellow Book, 149-51.

²No. 93, Documents on British Foreign Policy, VI, 108.

³No. 138, French Yellow Book, 161-63.

in the first week of July entitled, Danzig: What is at Stake? saying, inter alia, that concerning "Danzig and the Corridor and other territories arbitrarily detached from the Reich, it is a question of German soil, for whose possession Poland can put forward no claim, either moral, historical, civilizing, or cultural."¹ Thus even in propaganda issued by the Free City, the Danzig question was connected to larger territorial revision. However, Warsaw viewed most of this activity and propaganda with equanimity so long as Polish rights in the Free City were not prejudiced.

A dispute, however, in which Polish rights were involved began brewing in June. On June 3, Greiser complained to the Polish Diplomatic Representative, Chodacki, of the number of Polish customs inspectors--"well over 100"--functioning in the Free City. Asserting that this was contrary to the treaties, Greiser complained that their behavior was offending the German population. For their protection, Greiser said he must "restrict the activity of the Polish Customs Inspectors to a general supervision in conformity with the treaty principles." Their official activities must "be confined to their offices, that is to say, not performed outside their office buildings." Danzig customs

¹No. 159, Ibid., 182.

officials, now being Nazified, would no longer take instructions or suggestions from Polish customs officials. Official questions would be answered officially.¹ The Poles rejected the Senate's complaint on customs inspectors, saying that the number on duty was "insufficient." No restrictions on the rights of Polish customs inspectors would be permitted. If more Danzig customs officials were sworn in, as had been done, the Poles claimed the right and necessity to increase their inspectors since the German officials could "then be relied upon still less than hitherto to respect the Polish customs regulations." The German Consul, von Janson, commenting on this, noted that there were 106 Polish customs inspectors in Danzig, an increase of 31 since the Kalthof incident.²

The dispute over customs officials continued throughout the summer. Chodacki complained July 22 of infringement on Poland's rights and especially of the "insulting behavior" of Danzig customs officials. He gave notice that the control "exercised by the Polish Customs officials at the Danzig firm, 'Amada Unida,'" a margarine manufacturer, would cease. Poland would no longer recognize the processing certificates

¹No. 471, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VI, 631-33.

²No. 515, Ibid., 712.

issued by Danzig customs officials for "Amada Unida."¹ This, in effect, meant that Danzig could not export margarine into Poland. The same held true for the Danzig herring catch, which Poland had excluded since July 18.

On July 29, the Danzig Senate transmitted a note to the Polish Diplomatic Representative dealing with both matters. The measures, the Senate insisted, were "inadmissible" "action directe" and "would compel the Senate of the Free City to apply economic reprisals."² Another note of the same date accused the Polish customs inspectors of acts of espionage, recalled the incident at Kalthof, and sharply contradicted Poland's assertion that she had an insufficient number of inspectors. The note cited statistics purporting to show that the volume of trade, frontier passage traffic, and the number of Danzig customs officials did not warrant increase of Polish customs inspectors.³ Moreover, the Danziger Vorposten threatened to open the frontiers, as had been done in 1935, if Poland carried out her intentions of excluding margarine and continued to exclude herring.⁴

¹No. 702, Ibid., 957.

²No. 749, Ibid., 1026-27.

³Ibid.

⁴No. 542, Documents on British Foreign Policy, VI, 593-94; No. 503, Ibid., 547-48.

Chodacki, replying August 3, recalled that inasmuch as the Free City was within Poland's customs union and since Polish customs inspectors were paid by the government in Warsaw and an internal matter of Poland, that the Danzig Senate had no competence to limit the number of inspectors deemed necessary. Chodacki refuted the assertion that Polish inspectors were engaged in espionage by saying that Danzig was supposed to be a demilitarized territory. Moreover, Chodacki asserted, the charge of economic espionage was absurd since Danzig was in Polish customs territory.¹

On August 1, the Poles withdrew their inspector from the margarine factory in Danzig and refused to recognize "certificates of origin" issued by officials of Danzig customs, thereby stopping export to Poland of margarine as well as herring. In retaliation, the Danzig Senate sent a note to Poland stating it would no longer treat frontier officials as customs inspectors because they had been involved in the increase of personnel.²

The dispute over customs officials came to a head rapidly on August 4, when Colonel Beck told the British

¹No. 765, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VI, 1056-59.

²No. 503, Documents on British Foreign Policy, VI, 547-48.

Representative in Warsaw, Clifford Norton, that the Danzig Senate had informed four customs posts on the Danzig-East Prussian frontier that they would not be permitted to carry out their duties henceforth. Beck considered this an open challenge to Polish economic rights and said that the government was preparing a strong note.¹ Chodacki called on Greiser about midnight, August 4, to read him the note. Commenting on an alleged statement by Danzig customs authorities at frontier posts between the Free City and East Prussia that they intended to resist Polish customs inspectors beginning 7:00 a.m., August 6, Chodacki warned that in view of these rumors and "the fact that the above mentioned action [had] . . . already taken place at certain posts [Polish] . . . inspectors would be uniformed and armed, as of August 6. All attempts to hamper them [would] . . . be regarded as acts of violence."² Greiser orally promised to suspend temporarily the order not to "recognize the so-called Polish frontier guards as Customs Inspectors from August 6, 1939," but "for technical reasons" could not deny in writing that the order to ignore the four customs

¹No. 550, Ibid., 597; No. 81, Polish White Book, 93-4.

²No. 774, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VI, 1070-71.

posts had been given.¹ Apparently, Herr Bayl, President of the Volkstag and "an ardent National Socialist," had issued such an order without Greiser's knowledge,² but very likely at Forster's instigation, the Gauleiter having previously made a practice of by-passing the Senate.³ Having overcome his "technical" difficulties by August 7 either through order of the Wilhelmstrasse or Forster, however, Greiser sent a protest to Chodacki regarding the "short term ultimatum" of August 4-5 denying that the Senate had ordered the action alleged in Chodacki's note.⁴

On August 6, Forster met Burckhardt. The Gauleiter was "irritated at the Polish ultimatum and inclined towards forcible measures." Herr Forster left Danzig for Bavaria, August 7, for consultation with Hitler.⁵ While no record of his conversations on August 8 with the Fuehrer is available, the actions of the next few days indicate that its

¹Ibid.; No. 83, Polish White Book, 95.

²Report Burckhardt, 13; No. 181, French Yellow Book, 216-18.

³See for example, No. 721, Ibid., 995-97.

⁴No. 780, Ibid., 1077-78.

⁵No. 575, Documents on British Foreign Policy, VI, 620-21.

substance together with the events of August 4-5 made Hitler's decision for war implacable.

State Secretary von Weizsaecker handed the Polish Charge d' Affaires, Prince Lubomirsky, the Reich's demarche on August 9. The note expressed Germany's dismay at Warsaw's ultimatum to the Free City "for the revocation of an alleged decree--falsely rumored to have been issued by the Senate--designed to prevent Polish Customs Inspectors from carrying out their duties." The German government denied that such a decree was issued, saying that "a repetition of such demands in the form of an ultimatum to the Free City of Danzig and threat of reprisals would lead to an aggravation of German-Polish relations," for which the government in Warsaw would be responsible. The note added, moreover, that measures taken by Warsaw to prevent importation of certain goods from Danzig into Poland constituted an economic hardship to the Free City. If the Polish government persisted in such measures the Free City would be obliged "to explore other possibilities for exports, and, of course, also for imports." Weizsaecker permitted no ensuing conversation with Lubomirsky.¹ In addition to this, Ribbentrop ordered von Moltke, who was then in Berlin, to remain in the Reich "until further notice." He also directed the

¹No. 5, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VII, 4-5.

Foreign Ministry "not to establish contact with the Polish Authorities," and ordered the mission in Warsaw to refrain from telephoning Berlin, to send only informative reports, and "maintain a purely receptive attitude."¹

Poland's reply to Germany's note reached Berlin August 10. The reply asserted that Germany had no legal grounds to intervene in Polish-Danzig relations. The "exchange of views on the Danzig problem has been due solely to the good will of the Polish government and did not derive from any obligation." The Polish government would continue to "react as hitherto" to protect its interests in Danzig and would "regard any intervention by the Reich government to the detriment of these rights and interests as an act of aggression."²

Albert Forster, who had meanwhile returned to Danzig, conveyed Hitler's invitation to Burckhardt to visit the Fuehrer. Forster, moreover, delivered an inflammatory speech in Danzig, in which he questioned Poland's right to exist as a state.³ The Gauleiter then piloted Burckhardt to

¹No. 2 and Note, Ibid., 1-2.

²No. 10, Ibid., 9-10; No. 86, Polish White Book, 96-7.

³No. 19, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VII, 20; No. 601, Documents on British Foreign Policy, VI, 640; No. 618, Ibid., 659-60.

Berchtesgaden, where the High Commissioner met the Fuehrer. Burckhardt's report of the conversation at the "Aerie" indicates the Fuehrer's rage over the events in Danzig. According to Burckhardt's account, Hitler raved,

Beck trumpeted ('posaunte') in the press (Furious). The press said I had lost the war of nerves, that menaces were the right course to take with me, that we had given way when the Poles stood firm, that I had only bluffed last year, and that my bluff had been called by Polish courage, which the Czechs had lacked. I have seen idiotic statements in the French press that I had lost my nerve and the Poles had kept theirs. (Herr Hitler was so carried away by anger that he was unable to speak for some moments.)

Hitler said his solution had "unfortunately definitely been ruled out by the Poles."¹

The next two days, August 12 and 13, were taken up in conversations among Hitler, Ribbentrop, and Count Galeazzo Ciano, the Italian Foreign Minister. Hitler told Ciano that he had decided that at the

next act of Polish provocation--be it in the form of an ultimatum, brutal maltreatment of Germans in Poland, an attempt to starve Danzig out, an entry of Polish troops into Danzig, or anything of that kind--to attack Poland within forty-eight hours and solve the problem that way.

¹No. 659, Ibid., 688-98.

Because autumn rains would make the roads a "morass" and the fear that Poland might "occupy Danzig in October," Hitler informed Ciano that it would be settled "one way or the other by the end of August."¹

German press propaganda, which, according to British Ambassador, Neville Henderson, had concerned itself primarily with condemning the "encirclement" powers and a hate-England campaign, launched its assault on Poland from the fifth of August on. Henderson reported, August 13, moreover, that the "German Press began for the first time . . . to speak of German 'Honour'."²

Finally, no further evidence of the projected naval visit to the Free City is available past August 7, when Ulrich von Hassell noted in his diary that there had been "at the top, very bad tempers and wavering for the first time: orders and counter-orders, for instance with reference to an earlier plan to stage a naval demonstration off Danzig."³ Hitler was obviously in the throes of making

¹No. 43, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VII, 39-49; Malcolm Muggeridge (ed), Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, tr by Stuart Hood (London, 1948), 247-304.

²No. 570, Documents on British Foreign Policy, VI, 615-17; No. 585, Ibid., 626-27; No. 662, Ibid., 699-701; No. 68, Ibid., VII, 263. Count Ciano said Hitler spoke of "honor" August 11, Diplomatic Papers, 297-304.

³Hugh Gibson (ed), The von Hassell Diaries (London, 1948), 54.

an "unalterable" decision. Von Hassell notes, further, that there was a conference at the Obersalzberg on August 14 where Hitler had informed his army commanders that he "had decided to strike at Poland."¹

That Hitler now excluded any peaceful settlement as he implied to Burckhardt may be confirmed by his own words on August 22. "I am only afraid," he said, "that at the last moment some Schweinehund will make a proposal for mediation."²

¹Ibid., 60-1.

²Doc. 798-PS, Trial of the Major War Criminals, XXVI, 343. One of the officers present at this harangue gave a version of it to Louis Lochner of the Associated Press, who, in turn, delivered it to the British Embassy in Berlin. The officer, obviously a member of the opposition to Hitler, probably purposely made his account of the speech blood-thirsty, as the following shows. Hitler said, "I have but one worry, namely that Chamberlain or some other pig of a fellow (Saukerl) will come at the last moment with proposals or with ridding (Umfall). He will fly down the stairs even if I shall personally have to trample on his belly in the eyes of the photographers." No. 314, Documents on British Foreign Policy, VII, 257-60.

CHAPTER IV

THE PROPAGANDA REASON

Hitler told his generals August 22 "I shall give a propaganda reason for starting the war" and set August 26 as the date for the German invasion of Poland.¹ The evidence available suggests that Hitler intended to provoke the Poles into action through events in Danzig in order to provide him the "propaganda reason." Provocation and pressure through negotiations in the Free City were employed to ensure this. The pressure in Danzig should be evaluated in terms of Ribbentrop's haste to conclude a treaty of non-aggression with Russia. On August 18, Ribbentrop ordered the German embassy in Russia to inform the Soviet government that he was prepared to go immediately to Moscow to conclude the pact.² At 11:00 p.m., August 21,

¹Doc. 1014-PS, Trial of the Major War Criminals, XXVI, 523-24; Doc. 1780-PS, Ibid., XXVIII, 389.

²No. 113, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VII, 121-23.

the German radio announced that the treaty of non-aggression would be concluded and the news hit the world the next day.¹ Hitler fully expected the British and French governments to fall as a result.² With more reason, Hitler could have expected Poland to be nervous. The increased pressure in Danzig, therefore, must have been calculated to make Poland take measures that would appear aggressive.

Negotiations between the Danzig Senate and Poland on the customs dispute and the "margarine and herring war" began August 16. President Greiser insisted on the Senate's distinction between customs officials and frontier guards, saying this would continue until Poland agreed to decrease personnel. Although no settlement was reached on this, the Polish Representative, Chodacki, seemed willing to cooperate, indicating that Poland would restore the herring and margarine market provided agreement on personnel could be attained. Having no "plenary powers" to make such agreements, however, Chodacki promised to resume talks after conversations in Warsaw.³

¹William A. Shirer, Berlin Diary (London, 1941), 146.

²Erich Kordt, Wahn und Wirklichkeit (Stuttgart, 1948), 192.

³No. 72, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VII, 78-81; No. 25, Documents on British Foreign Policy, VII, 24-5.

Returning from Warsaw August 18, Chodacki told Greiser that although Poland would not concede to Danzig's distinction between frontier guards and customs officials, she "would be prepared to order frontier guards to withdraw successively from their posts in Danzig over a period of eight to fourteen days." Regularly trained customs officials would replace them. Chodacki said he had "carte blanche" on the margarine ban and would lift it when agreement on personnel was reached. Although agreement was not reached, the meeting was amiable enough so that Greiser later telephoned Chodacki to inform him that the Senate would immediately release the customs officials who had been arrested previously.¹

At this juncture, the Wilhelmstrasse took command with Ribbentrop sending Edmund Veesenmayer as his special representative to the Free City. On August 19, Veesenmayer proposed that he and Gauleiter Forster increase pressure "to the maximum possible." Poland showed intention to withdraw twelve customs officials. Forster would demand that fifty be withdrawn. Veesenmayer added that "if the Poles again give way, then it is proposed to increase the demands still further so as to make agreement impossible."

¹No. 117, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VII, 126-28.

Ribbentrop approved of this plan on August 20.¹ Forster, receiving instructions at a private conference with Hitler on August 21, then transmitted, through Veesenmayer, the following suggested procedure on August 22:

1. A final breakdown after long negotiations on the question of customs officials. Blame on the side of the Poles.
2. Then comes the complete removal of all Polish customs officials and the abolition of the customs frontier with East Prussia.
3. There follow reactions one way or the other on the part of the Poles.
4. Thereupon the arrest of numerous Poles in Danzig territory and the clearing of numerous Polish arms dumps. The discovery of these arms dumps is assured.
5. If this does not produce sufficient action by the Poles in reply, then finally the Westerplatte is to be ² attacked.

"Concrete discussions" over the customs inspectors dispute began August 22.³ Danzig negotiators pressed for the removal of fifty Polish customs inspectors on August 23. Expecting the Poles to refuse, they prepared a statement

¹No. 119, Ibid., 129-30; No. 139, Ibid., 155.

²No. 176, Ibid., 186; No. 138, Ibid., 154. Hitler gave a qualified approval to this procedure on August 24, but by then, the plan was well under way. No. 244, Ibid., 258.

³No. 188, Ibid., 195-96.

that evening blaming Poland.¹ On August 24, Danzig demanded that the Poles withdraw all frontier officials and reduce the number of actual customs inspectors by ninety per cent.² The Poles temporarily broke off negotiations on August 24 after these demands, which the Polish Commissioner-General said "compromised the entire customs system."³ Polish customs officials now found it nearly impossible to carry out their duties. The "arrest of numerous Poles in Danzig territory" ensued. Danzigers arrested "several senior officials of the Polish State Railways" on August 24, to which Chodacki protested strongly.⁴ Danzig authorities suspended mail to Gdynia and the Heimwehr occupied three railroad stations in the territory, although traffic remained normal.⁵ Other than Chodacki's protest, however, there were no strong reactions by Poland one way or the other.

¹No. 197, Ibid., 207-08.

²No. 254, Ibid., 268.

³No. 232, Ibid., 249; No. 182, Documents on British Foreign Policy, VII, 152-53.

⁴No. 267, Ibid., 218-19; No. 259, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VII, 273-74; No. 234, French Yellow Book, 264.

⁵No. 245, Documents on British Foreign Policy, VII, 199-200.

Simultaneously with the breakdown of negotiations on the customs dispute, the Danzig Senate decreed Gauleiter Forster "Head of State" (Staatsoberhaupt) on August 24. President Greiser told Burckhardt that any reactions of the Committee of Three "to these resolutions being carried out could no longer have any effect," and privately advised the High Commissioner to leave Danzig.¹ The violation of the constitution, the Verposten told journalists and observers, was a deliberate preparation for "return of [the] territory to the Reich."² Poland protested Forster's appointment and reserved "the right to adopt a further attitude in this respect" but warned Danzig authorities against a policy of "faits accomplis" that could have "serious" consequences.³

In Germany, meanwhile, Hitler issued "Operation Order No. 1 for Ship of the Sea 'Schleswig-Holstein'" during Forster's visit to the Fuehrer on August 21. The "Schleswig-Holstein," an obsolete training ship, preceded to the Free City in place of the cruiser "Koenigsberg" with the

¹No. 231 and Note, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VII, 248-49.

²No. 332, Documents on British Foreign Policy, VII, 269.

³No. 245, Ibid., 199-200; No. 259, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VII, 273-74.

task of engaging Polish coastal installations and protecting Danzig and Neufahrwasser harbor against Polish ships. Hitler ordered the "Schleswig-Holstein" to arrive in Danzig before hostilities and to remain outwardly peaceful until the war broke out. She was ordered to cooperate with General Eberhardt's Brigade, composed of Danzig "police."¹ The old battleship arrived in Danzig on August 25 with no previous notification to Poland, who expected the cruiser "Koenigsberg," and anchored, not in the berth the Poles prepared for the "Koenigsberg," but at the Westerplatte. With her 28-cm. guns, she could command the Hela Peninsula northwest of Danzig from her berth at the Westerplatte.² The Poles, however, did not protest the surprise visit of the "Schleswig-Holstein."

Although the provocations in Danzig were timed to provoke Poland into taking measures so that Hitler's attack on Saturday, August 26, would appear justified, the plan failed for several reasons. Hitler postponed the attack on Friday because of Mussolini's message saying he was unprepared for war and because of the formal conclusion

¹No. 188, Ibid., 195-96; Doc. 126-C, Trial of the Major War Criminals, XXXIV, 448-56.

²No. 225, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VII, 239; No. 197, Ibid., 207-08. Rumors that the "Schleswig-Holstein" would arrive in place of the "Koenigsberg" reached the British Consul in Danzig on August 24. No. 270, Note 6, Documents on British Foreign Policy, VII, 222.

of the Anglo-Polish pact. Hitler required several days for a final attempt to isolate Poland.¹ Moreover, the "propaganda reason" Hitler promised to supply did not materialize in Danzig and a simulated attack on the radio station in Gleiwitz in Upper Silesia, planned previously, had to suffice.² Poland had shown more restraint than Hitler anticipated.

Hitler launched his invasion of Poland on September 1. England and France declared war September 3. Hitler showed surprise when he received the declaration of war.³ He need not have. Britain and France were not making war to "die for Danzig." Not even Poland considered Danzig worth a European war. For as Hitler himself told his officers on May 23, "Danzig [was] . . . not the subject of dispute."⁴

¹No. 271, Documents on German Foreign Policy, VII, 285-86; Ribbentrop's testimony, March 29, 1946, Trial of the Major War Criminals, X, 270-71; Keitel's testimony, April 4, 1946, Ibid., 514-15. See also P.E. Baker, "The Last Ten Days of Peace in Europe," Survey of International Affairs, The Eve of War, 1939 (London, 1958), 516-22.

²Doc. 2751-PS, Trial of the Major War Criminals, XXXI, 90-2.

³Dr. Paul Schmidt, Hitler's Interpreter (New York, 1951), 158.

⁴Doc. 079-L, Trial of the Major War Criminals, XXXVII, 546-56.

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