

NATIONAL SOCIALISM
AND
GERMAN-POLISH RELATIONS, 1919-1939

by

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PREFACE

In 1920 the livid scars of war still burned in the memory of Europe. From the ashes of the great conflict Poland arose, reborn at the expense of Germany and Russia, dedicated to a policy of balancing between these two weakened but potentially powerful neighbors, and determined to keep all that it had gained at Versailles and later. In ebb-tide Germany voices were already raised in denunciation of the Treaty of Versailles.

1930 saw the beginnings of the National Socialist movement in Germany. The Nazis, from the very first, were among the most ardent and most dedicated of the revisionists. Soon, under the direction of Adolf Hitler, they began to agitate for more than the mere recovery of the "lost regions."

Innumerable works have considered the story of German-Polish relations in the troubled years that separated the two great European wars of this century. No attempt will be made here to summarize what has been done so often and, frequently, so well. Rather, this paper addresses itself to the single point of investigation: when they were in command of the German State did the National Socialists pursue, with regard to Poland, the policy championed in their early program, in the pre-1933 speeches and writings of Adolf Hitler, the policy implicit in their inherently imperialistic ideology?

TABLE of CONTENTS

Chapter One	Polish Territorial Acquisitions from Germany and German Revisionism	Page 3
Chapter Two	The German Minority in Poland, the Minorities Régime, and German Nationalism	Page 14
Chapter Three	The Problem of Danzig and Concluding Survey of the Troubled German-Polish Scene between 1919 and 1933	Page 30
Chapter Four	National Socialist Ideology: An Imperialistic Foreign Policy is Conceived for the Reich	Page 36
Chapter Five	The <u>Rapprochement</u> of 1934	Page 53
Chapter Six	The Years of Preparation, 1934-1936	Page 72
Chapter Seven	Partners in Aggression, 1938-1939	Page 89
Chapter Eight	The Plot Against Poland, 1937-1939	Page 96
Summary and Conclusion		Page 124
Bibliography		Page 132

CHAPTER ONE

Polish Territorial Acquisitions
from Germany and German Revisionism

In his war message to the German Reichstag on September 1, 1939, Adolf Hitler referred to the "Versailles Diktat" as productive of two decades of German suffering; he declared that Danzig and the Corridor had always been, and remained, German. He complained, too, of the mistreatment of the German minority in Poland, a large portion of which had been created at Versailles along with the creation of the German-Polish frontier. "For us," cried Hitler, "the Treaty of Versailles has never had the force of law!"¹ He demanded solutions to the problems of Danzig and the Corridor, and required a change in German-Polish relations that "...shall ensure a peaceful collaboration of the two peoples."² There was nothing new in these demands, for Weimar Germany and Nazi Germany alike had been consistently revisionist. Never, from 1919 forward, had Germany reconciled itself to the settlement with Poland.

¹ Republic of France, The French Yellow Book, Diplomatic Documents (1936-1939); Papers relative to the events and negotiations which preceded the opening of hostilities between Germany on the one hand, and Poland, Great Britain and France on the other (New York, Reynal and Hitchcock, 1940), p. 361.

² Ibid., p. 365.

Beginning in 1914 the various Allied Powers had been busy making promises to "Poland." The Russian Provisional Government of 1917 was the first to recognize the absolute independence of the old "Kingdom of Poland" in Russia.³ The armistice with Germany required the evacuation of German occupied territories, and by mid-November, 1918, all German troops had left the greater part of what was to become Poland.⁴ Moreover, the Allies, the Central Powers and the Poles had all accepted the Fourteen Points of President Wilson, and the Thirteenth Point had called for an independent Polish state to include territories inhabited by Polish majorities, and assured a free and safe outlet to the sea.

When, on January 29, 1919, the Supreme Council of the Allied and Associated Powers asked to be informed of the territorial demands of the new Poland, M. Roman Dmowski, chief of the Polish mission, demanded Danzig together with all areas where a majority of the population was Polish. In the West Poland asked for territories considerably in excess of what she was ultimately to obtain.⁵

The Commission to which the matter was referred reported in March, recommending as a frontier in Posen and West

³ C.S. Macartney, National States and National Minorities (London, Humphry Milford, 1934), p. 196.

⁴ Robert Machray, Poland, 1914-1931 (London, George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1932), pp. 97-99.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 119-121.

Prussia the far limits of Polish ethnographic majorities; the Commission further advised that Danzig and the land covered by the Danzig-Eylau-Warsaw railway be awarded to Poland, that Upper Silesian areas of Polish majorities be ceded to the Poles, and that the disposition of Allenstein be determined by plebiscite. It was recommended that a small area in the south of Upper Silesia be ceded to Czechoslovakia.⁶

David Lloyd George quickly secured important changes in these proposals: the fate of Marienwerder, a portion of East Prussia through which the railway ran, was to be decided by plebiscite, and Danzig was to become a Free City under League of Nations supervision.⁷

On May 29, in their "Comments on the Peace Terms," the Germans protested with special vigor the assignment of parts of Upper Silesia to Poland. Lloyd George took the German point of view, and with Wilson's support, secured yet another change in the proposed settlement: the fate of Upper Silesia, too, would be settled by plebiscite.⁸ Ultimately Poland obtained, without plebiscites, Posen and the greater part of West Prussia, including the famous Corridor; the Silesian frontier above Upper Silesia was left largely intact; Dan-

⁶ Machray, Poland, 1914-1931, p. 131.

⁷ Ibid., p. 132.

⁸ Casimir Smogorzewski, Poland, Germany and the Corridor (London, Williams and Morgate, Ltd., 1930), pp. 103-104.

zig, a German town, but in 1919 Poland's one natural port, became a Free City in customs union with Poland and with its foreign affairs confided to Polish keeping.⁹

In both Allenstein and Marienwerder the plebiscites showed huge German majorities, and except for a few unimportant Polish-voting villages the two territories were allowed to remain with the Reich.¹⁰

The Upper Silesian issue was not so quickly settled. Owing to great excitement in Upper Silesia itself, and in Germany and Poland, the plebiscite there was not taken until March 30, 1921. Both sides prepared energetically for the voting, and in 1919 and 1920 there were uprisings in the area. Final election figures showed that the German element had won both a majority of the popular votes and a majority of the communes. However, because of the intermingling of German-voting and Polish-voting communes, the inter-Allied Commission supervising affairs in Upper Silesia was unable to agree upon a frontier.¹¹ German opinion, holding that Upper Silesia was indivisible, found sympathy with the British and Italians; the French view favored dividing Upper Silesia, as far as possible, along the lines of the voting.¹²

⁹ E.H. Carr, International Relations Between the Two World Wars (1919-1939) (London, Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1947), p. 8.

¹⁰ Macartney, p. 198.

¹¹ For the substance of this material see Machray, Poland, 1914-1931, pp. 195-196.

¹² P. De Azcárate, League of Nations and National Minorities; An Experiment (Washington, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1945), p. 138.

In May matters were further complicated by the Polish "Korfanty" uprising in Upper Silesia, which, although it was disowned by the Polish Government and resisted by Italian occupation forces, nevertheless provoked an irregular German body, the Selbstschutz, into taking strong counter measures. ¹³

The Council of the League received the matter in August, 1921, and referred it to a Committee of Experts who held that it had not been the meaning of the Treaty of Versailles that the whole of Upper Silesia should be given to either Germany or Poland. This Committee favored drawing the frontier along a line based on the voting by communes. At this point the dispute began to concentrate on only a portion of Upper Silesia, the small but industrially wealthy "Triangle," delineated by the towns of Beuthen, Gleiwitz and Katowice. Poland claimed the greater part of the area, but the British, Japanese and Italian representatives argued for its indivisibility. On September 1 the Council entrusted a preliminary examination of the question to four of its members not directly concerned with the dispute, that is, to one representative each from Brazil, China, Spain and Belgium. ¹⁴

The frontier in Upper Silesia, as it was finally drawn, represented another of the many compromises that characterized the post-First World War Settlements. Upper Silesia was

¹³ Machray, Poland, 1914-1931, p. 198.

¹⁴ For the substance of this paragraph see Machray, Poland, 1914-1931, p. 203.

divided somewhere between the proposed British-Italian line, which had sought to reproduce the results of the voting, and the French line, which represented the extreme Polish claim. This division penetrated even the "Industrial Triangle," and was manifestly unfair in that a number of German-voting communes were awarded to Poland. ¹⁵

The Upper Silesian dispute afforded Adolf Hitler one of his earliest opportunities to castigate the peace settlements. In 1921 Hitler made a number of speeches on the Upper Silesian issue; to advertise the speech of April 8, 1921, a typically inflammatory handbill proclaimed:

Germany's fate hurries towards its decision. Ignoring the plebiscite, a Foreign Commission will decide in whose possession UPPER SILESIA is to remain. The Commission consists of adversaries of Germany. Its decision is dictated by flaming hatred of our people. ¹⁶

Polish territorial acquisitions at the expense of Germany, generally fair but certainly unjust in the case of Upper Silesia, were to form a major pretext for the attack of the Third Reich on Poland in September of 1939. The early Hitler speeches on the subject were by no means the only expression of German protest. On the contrary, re-

¹⁵ Carr, p. 9.

¹⁶ Quoted by John Chamberlain, Sidney B. Fay and Others, eds., Mein Kampf, Complete and Unabridged, Fully Annotated, by Adolf Hitler, (New York, Reynal and Hitchcock, 1939), p. 529; italics and capitals are in the original handbill.

visionism was a powerful current throughout the entire Weimar period, and it was voiced by Nazi and non-Nazi sources with equal vehemence.

Early German revisionist policy had two easily recognizable elements: it sought to foster the theory of the "stab in the back," and it promoted the allegation that Allied motives, in drawing up the peace terms, had been base and immoral.¹⁷ This, indeed, was the early Stresemann policy. But Stresemann, while he persistently voiced revisionist sentiments, was willing to move with patience. He was as much dedicated to peace as to revision.

From the very first the German Nationalists, abetted by the Army, were declaring themselves the guardians of the lost territories of the East.¹⁸ An affidavit given at Nuremberg by von Blomberg, German Field Marshal and onetime Reich War Minister and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, affirmed that after 1919, and especially after 1924, three land questions commanded official German attention; these, von Blomberg said, concerned the Ruhr, the Corridor and Memel. He affirmed that "the whole group of German staff officers" considered that these matters would one day have to be settled in Germany's favor, by force if necessary.

¹⁷ Henry L. Bretton, Stresemann and the Revision of Versailles: A Fight for Reason (Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1958), p. 26.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 117.

This, said von Blomberg, was

...one of the chief reasons behind the partially secret rearmament which began about 10 years before Hitler came to power and was accentuated under Nazi rule. 19

And in 1922 General von Seeckt, Chief of the Reichswehr from 1920 to 1926, told Chancellor Wirth and President Ebert that

Poland's existence is intolerable, and incompatible with the vital needs of Germany. She must disappear, and disappear she will....

With Poland falls one of the main pillars of the Versailles Treaty, namely the predominance of France. To reach that goal must be one of the fixed aims of German policy. 20

The letter of Gustav Stresemann to the former Crown Prince, dated September 7, 1925, is famous. Writing of Germany's impending entry into the League, and outlining what he conceived to be the three great problems with which German foreign policy had to wrestle, Stresemann observed:

The third great task is the readjustment of our Eastern frontiers; the recovery of Danzig, the Polish Corridor, and a correction of the frontier in Upper Silesia. 21

Stresemann went on to advise German concentration on these

19 International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal, 42 vols., (Nuremberg, Germany, Secretariat of the International Military Tribunal, 1949), IV, 413.

20 Zygmunt J. Gasiorowski, "Did Pilsudski Attempt to Initiate a Preventive War in 1933?" The Journal of Modern History, XXVII, No. 2 (June, 1955), 136-137.

21 Eric Sutton, ed. and tr., Gustav Stresemann: His Diaries, Letters, and Papers, 3 vols., (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1935), II, 508.

aims, and stated that it was in order to be free to do so that he was willing to guarantee the western frontiers at Locarno.²² Stresemann made public his revisionist sentiments with remarkable candor. In March, 1925, in a statement to the press, he remarked that when he was Chancellor he had been advised by the Army Chief that even in a defensive war Germany could not hold the Polish frontier, and "An offensive war was not to be thought of with the resources at our disposal."²³

In negotiations preliminary to the signing of the Locarno agreements Stresemann told the French Ambassador quite frankly that Germany could not guarantee her Eastern frontier, but that she did not intend to proceed against Poland by force.²⁴ Stresemann made good on this pledge by concluding an Arbitration Treaty with Poland and by renouncing the use of force in attempting to alter the Eastern frontier. Further, while Stresemann labored to better diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia, he firmly rejected a Soviet proposal that the two powers jointly revise their frontiers with Poland.²⁵

In 1927 Stresemann asked Ambassador Bonnet, French representative in Berlin, to repeat to Briand that "...so

²² Sutton, II, 503.

²³ Ibid., p. 70.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 75.

²⁵ Bretton, p. 118.

long as there remains one German alive, he will never accept the dispositions of the Versailles Treaty relative to Danzig and the Corridor." ²⁶ Herr Loebe, President of the Reichstag, declared at Lodz on January 16, 1927, "In Germany we protest against the Corridor, yet everyone there agrees that its population is Polish." ²⁷

Revisionist propaganda grew in volume and in intensity with the passage of the Weimar years. In September, 1928, while on an official tour of German Silesia, President Hindenburg declared that the cession of Upper Silesia to Poland was infamous, and he demanded its restitution. ²⁸ The German press promptly took up the cry. Adolf Hitler, meanwhile, continued making public utterances in which one of his main themes was that of revision. In September, 1930, in an article for the London "Daily Express," he demanded the revision of the Treaty of Versailles, and characterized the Polish Corridor as "...a strip of flesh out from our body...a national wound that bleeds continuously, and will continue to bleed 'till the land is returned to us." ²⁹

²⁶ Gasiorowski, p. 137.

²⁷ Smogorzewski, p. 38.

²⁸ Machray, Poland, 1914-1931, p. 361.

²⁹ Norman H. Baynes, ed., The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April 1932-August 1939; An English Translation of Representative Passages, 2 vols., (London, Oxford University Press, 1942), II, 994-995.

In 1931 Hitler wrote to Brüning that:

The Peace Treaty of Versailles is not a Peace Treaty. On the contrary it belongs to the category of those Tribute-Diktats which bear in themselves the seed of later wars. ³⁰

François-Poncet, French Ambassador to Berlin from 1931 to 1938, later observed that by 1938 Germany showed no inclination to war, no desire to enter upon a program of conquest. The Germans' sole grievance, he felt, was against Poland, and their great dream was to erase the Polish Corridor. ³¹

German revisionism in the 1920's, then, pervaded Nazi and non-Nazi alike, and it was not confined to demanding the return to Germany of territories inhabited by German majorities. On the contrary, there was persistent agitation for the recovery of all the lost regions, without consideration to Poland's needs, and without regard for the complexion of the population. The territorial provisions of the Versailles Treaty, as they concerned Germany and Poland, established a situation to which Germany refused to assent. Certain other problems, notably those concerning Danzig and the German minority in Poland, sprang from the territorial stipulations of the Treaty; these, too, failed of solution in the period from 1919 to 1933.

³⁰ Baynes, II, 998; italics are Hitler's.

³¹ André François-Poncet, The Fateful Years; Memoirs of a French Ambassador in Berlin, 1931-1938 (New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949), p. 28.

CHAPTER TWO

The German Minority in Poland, the
Minorities Régime, and German Nationalism

By 1921 the German-Polish frontier had finally been determined in all areas; this frontier left a sizeable German minority in Poland in whose interests Hitler was one day to find it "necessary" to go to war. In his proclamation to the German Army, on September 1, 1939, the Führer charged that "Germans in Poland are persecuted with bloody terror and driven from their houses."¹ The German White Book takes as its main theme the minority grievances. There was a certain element of truth in Hitler's indictment of the Poles on this score: the lot of the German minority in Poland had never been an altogether secure one. The remarkable fact was that Hitler was quite capable of remaining more or less unmoved by this situation during those years when it served his purposes to be so.

To meet the problems that would inevitably arise from the presence of a German minority in Poland numbering an estimated 1,500,000 persons, the League had recommended that relevant portions of the Polish Minorities Treaty be accepted

¹ Foreign Office, Miscellaneous No. 9 (1939), The British War Blue Book: Documents concerning German-Polish Relations and the Outbreak of Hostilities between Great Britain and Germany on September 3, 1939 (New York, Farrar and Rinehart, 1939), p. 214.

by the German Government, and the Conference of Ambassadors decided that this should be the case during a fifteen-year transitional period. A German-Polish Convention, it was decided,² was to be concluded to incorporate the whole agreement.

The Convention regarding Upper Silesia was not signed until May 15, 1922. The German representative who signed it declared that Germany signed under duress, and looked to the future for redress. There were demonstrations against the agreement in the Polish Sejm and in the German Reichstag when those parliaments ratified the Convention. The Poles complained that the over-all settlement had given them too little, while in Berlin the Versailles Treaty was already drawing heavy fire. Representatives of the various German political parties voting for ratification took the occasion to affirm that Germanism would always remain vital in Upper Silesia.³

The Convention of 1922 provided that for a fifteen-year period both Germany and Poland would accept as binding in their respective spheres of Upper Silesia all portions of the Polish Minorities Treaty except the nationality article. The Convention required that tribunals and courts of justice

² Robert Machray, Poland, 1914-1931 (London, George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1932), p. 207.

³ See Ibid., p. 228, for the substance of this paragraph.

were to be competent to examine whether the legislative or administrative provisions were not contrary to the Pact.⁴ Article 74 of the Convention stipulated that "...the question of whether a person does or does not belong to a racial, linguistic or religious minority may not be verified or disputed by the authorities."⁵

The heart of the Convention was the Polish Minorities Treaty itself, which served as a sort of model for all the other post-First World War minorities treaties. Article 2 of the Treaty assured all inhabitants of Poland, without regard to birth, nationality, language, race or religion, "full and complete protection of life and liberty," and further guaranteed to them the free exercise of "any creed, religion or belief" in public or in private.⁶ Article 4 stipulated that Germans habitually resident in Poland, and their children, including those who were not in Poland when the Treaty entered into force, were Polish nationals.⁷ Article 6 declared that "All persons born in Polish territory who are not born nationals of another State shall ipso facto become Polish nationals."⁸ All nationals were declared

⁴ C.S. Macartney, National States and National Minorities (London, Humphry Milford, 1934), p. 263.

⁵ P. De Azcárate, League of Nations and National Minorities; An Experiment (Washington, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1945), p. 141.

⁶ Macartney, p. 503.

⁷ Ibid., p. 504.

⁸ Ibid., p. 504.

to be equal before the law, and to possess the same civil and political rights; no restriction was to be placed on the free use of their language.⁹ Minorities were to enjoy the same treatment and security in law, they were to be free to establish, manage and control their own schools and other educational establishments, and their own charitable, religious and social institutions, with the right to use their own language and exercise their own religion therein.¹⁰ Articles 8 and 9 of the Polish Minorities Treaty required that Polish citizens living in parts of Poland which had been German soil on August 1, 1914, in districts where a considerable portion of the population was of other than Polish speech, were to be afforded facilities for instruction in their own language inside the framework of the public education system.¹¹

These provisions were declared to be obligations of international concern, and so were placed under a League of Nations guarantee. They could not be modified without majority consent of the League Council, and an elaborate mechanism was created to effect solutions to any disputes which might arise under the Treaty.¹² The record of the Weimar years and of the first six years of the Nazi era shows that innumerable disputes did, in fact, arise.

⁹ Macartney, p. 504.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 505.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 505.

¹² Ascárate, pp. 94-95.

A plan for the international protection of minorities was considered by the peace-makers to be a sine qua non of an enduring peace. The plan they developed was produced from a potpourri of antagonistic interests and points of view. Germany, of course, came under the system only to the extent that the Convention of May 15, 1922, regarding Upper Silesia, was under League of Nations supervision. Apart from this Convention the League minority system was built upon multilateral agreements.¹³ Opposition to the régime in Upper Silesia, and to the whole minorities system, was soon registered by Poland, by the German minority in Poland, and by Germany. Nothing better than a universally unpopular modus vivendi was ever realized.

From the very beginning Poland resented what appeared to it to be a fundamental limitation upon its sovereignty; minorities affairs, reasoned the Poles, were matters of purely domestic concern. Such was the burden of Paderewski's vocal objections to the Polish Minorities Treaty.¹⁴ In theory the German minority in Poland was well protected; a law of July, 1920, had given local autonomy and a local legislature to Upper Silesia. Moreover, the Polish Republic had its foundations on the principle of broad local autonomy, which was written into the Constitution of March, 1921.¹⁵ And

¹³ Inis L. Claude, Jr., National Minorities, an International Problem (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1955), pp. 15-16.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁵ Machray, Poland, 1914-1931, p. 189.

the Convention of 1922 recognized and sought to protect a long list of minority rights. But these theoretical gains for the minority were not always realized in fact.

The minority itself was frequently the source of trouble. The Polish Germans, especially those in Upper Silesia, possessed a dynamic consciousness of being German, and they cast longing eyes across the frontiers toward the Reich. They were, therefore, dangerous to Poland, and so they suffered, sometimes severely, under the Warsaw Government.¹⁶ Nowhere, outside of certain areas in Upper Silesia, did the German-Poles outnumber the other Poles; but these Polish Germans had formerly constituted a ruling class; the drastic change in their position after 1918 left them bitter, and the German Governments of the 1920's and 1930's encouraged them in their resentment.¹⁷

The German minority in Poland was one of the inspirations of what has been termed the "transitional neo-nationalism of the intellectual élite"¹⁸ that made so much headway between the defeat in 1918 and the rise to power of National Socialism in 1933. Walter Rathenau spent those

¹⁶ Macartney, pp. 415-416.

¹⁷ Hugh Seton-Watson, Eastern Europe Between the Wars, 1918-1941 (Cambridge, England, At the University Press, 1948), pp. 277-279.

¹⁸ Maurice Baumont, John H. E. Fried and Edmond Vermeil, eds., The Third Reich, Introduction by Jacques Rueff. (New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1955), p. 83.

years raising his call for a national community led by a trained élite, Oswald Spengler revived Pan-Germanism and the philosophy of German predestination, and Moeller van den Bruck, condemning Communism and liberal democracy with equal élan, campaigned for the absolute state.¹⁹

Gottfried Feder's program for the National Socialist German Workers' Party, written in 1920, reflected the revisionist and pan-German attitudes that characterized the ebb-tide Germany of the period. The first two points in this program read:

1. We demand the union of all Germans to form a Great Germany on the basis of the right of self-determination enjoyed by all nations.
2. We demand equality of rights for the German People in its dealings with other nations, and abolition of the Peace Treaties of Versailles and St. Germain.²⁰

Feder later wrote certain remarks relative to this program, and in them he stated,

All those of German blood, even if they live at present under Danish, Polish, Czech, Italian or French sovereignty, are to be united in one German Reich...We will not relinquish our claim to any German.²¹

During the troubled years after 1919 the semi-official organisations concerned with work for and among the Germans living outside Germany grew tremendously. The Verein für

¹⁹ See Baumont, pp. 84-91, for the substance of this paragraph.

²⁰ United States Department of State, National Socialism; Basic Principles, Their Application by the Nazi Party's Foreign Organization, and the Use of Germans Abroad for Nazi Aims (Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1943), p. 68.

²¹ Ibid., p. 68.

das Deutschum in Ausland, usually referred to simply as V.D.A., had been founded as a German School League, in Austria, in 1880. Possessed of an elaborate organization, with departments for business management, youth work, publicity and organization, vacation trips and hiking, and the like, V.D.A. was a sort of connecting link between Germans in the homeland and German schools in foreign countries.²² In the years after 1919 V.D.A. altered its program to meet the exigencies of the changed situation. Basically, it came to concern itself with maintaining German culture among the Auslanddeutsch against other nationalisms. With the rise of National Socialism V.D.A. continued, outwardly, as a semi-private organization. Little doubt as for whom it worked can be entertained, for after 1933 V.D.A. busied itself sending Nazi textbooks abroad, and carrying out Nazi propaganda abroad. By 1933, for example, it was very active distributing handbills calling for an extension of the German Lebensraum.²³

Another important organization interested in Germans abroad was the Deutsches Ausland-Institut, or D.A.I., founded in 1917 to investigate the situation of the German minorities and to aid in the preservation of their nationalism. This organization, too, was especially active in the propaganda field, and it worked in close cooperation with V.D.A.²⁴

²² United States Department of State, National Socialism, p. 111.

²³ Ibid., pp. 111; 115.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 121-122.

D.A.I. studied Germans abroad in a scientific manner, and quickly came to be the most important of all these kindred organizations. After 1919 it concerned itself with the new problems resulting from the war, and undertook not only to defend German nationals abroad, but even to direct new emigration to strengthen German communities already existing.²⁵ That this semi-official organization served the German State seems a safe conjecture: by 1932 its board of directors included representatives of the Reich and state governments. From the early 1920's the several governments in Germany took an active part in the annual meetings of D.A.I.²⁶ D.A.I. was officially reorganized under the Nazis, in 1933, and there is no lack of evidence to show its full and ardent cooperation with the Party from that time forward.²⁷

Many other nationalist societies were founded, including a number of Heimatvereine, which united in 1919 to form the Deutscher Schutzbund, which became the central association of the various protective societies.²⁸ Most student groups were subsidiaries, and the over-all aim came to be the fostering of a feeling of community among all Germans, no matter where they might live. The basic thought in their

²⁵ Ralph E. Bischoff, Nazi Conquest Through German Culture (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1942), p. 104.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 104.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 125-127.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 84-85.

program was to protect the German Volkstum; for example, they worked to produce a German victory in plebiscite areas and they campaigned against the Ruhr occupation.²⁹ The theory was that the Germans abroad constituted a national group which, because of its blood ties with Germany, possessed inherent rights as a people; the goal, admittedly, was the synthesis of people and state within the limits of practical possibilities.³⁰

This thinking meshed beautifully with National Socialist ideology, for Nazism, of course, thought of the organic Volksgruppen. The theorizing of Adolf Hitler and others, writing and speaking in the 1920's, appears much less original when viewed against the background of the general German picture!

There can be little doubt that in Weimar Germany there was popular as well as official interest in these nationalist organizations devoted to fostering Germanism among the German minorities abroad. The number of Landesverbände reached 27 by 1932; their locals, which numbered 1,707 in 1925, totaled 3,286 by 1931. The Schulgruppen, unimportant in 1914, and numbering nearly 1,000 in 1923, totaled about 5,500 in 1932. Local women's organizations rose from 55

²⁹ Bischoff, pp. 98-99.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 100.

in 1919 to 112 in 1932. Jugendgruppen reached a total of 354 in 1932, and Akademische Gruppen mounted to 41. Many³¹ of these organizations were cooperating fully after 1932.

So it was that the National Socialists found a popular and smoothly functioning machine for their work among the German minorities. The first purely Nazi organizations for Germans abroad were founded, for the most part, independently. In 1930 a small group of Nazis in Hamburg began preparatory work for a Party office to deal with problems concerning Party members and the Germans abroad. The "Foreign Society of the Reich's Directorate of the NSDAP" was formally established on May 1, 1931, and in October, 1933, was put under the leadership of Rudolf Hess; a few months later its name was changed to "Foreign Organization of the NSDAP," and headquarters were moved to Berlin.³²

V.D.A. changed its name but retained its initials upon the rise of Hitler, when it became the Volksbund für das Deutschem im Ausland; more than ever it worked in close cooperation with D.A.I. and the minor German groups with similar aims. Most finally united to form the great "Alliance of Free Germanom Associations," managed by V.D.A. After 1933 all these institutions worked together under

³¹ Bischoff, p. 87.

³² United States Department of State, National Socialism, pp. 93-94.

33

the guidance of the Nazis.

After 1933, all over the world, wherever there were Germans, centrally organized groups were established which confessed their faith in Hitler and obeyed orders from Berlin. While this situation was not so bad as many believed, it did contribute greatly to the mounting atmosphere of fear and suspicion.³⁴

These groups, like the NSDAP itself, were part of a Foreign Organization which was highly organized on the basis of Landesgruppen, Landeskreise, Ortsgruppen and Stützpunkte, or country groups, regional sections, local groups and branches. The "Führer Principle" obtained throughout, with final authority reposing in the hands of Adolf Hitler. The stated purpose of this highly organized machinery was the propagation of Nazi ideology among the Germans abroad and the control of their economic, political and cultural activities. To further this purpose, the Germans abroad were themselves classified into organizations for lawyers, professors, students, and so forth.³⁵ By 1936 Rudolf Hess was able to boast that Germanism abroad had been captured by National Socialism.³⁶ In Poland, even outside the areas ever held by

³³ United States Department of State, National Socialism, p. 181.

³⁴ Baumont, p. 865.

³⁵ United States Department of State, National Socialism, p. 96.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 352.

Germany, the Germans were well prepared by Nazification to serve as a pretext for war against Poland. During the war they functioned as an effective "fifth column," collecting data, planting signals for the Luftwaffe, engaging in diversionist activities, and generally undermining the Polish forces.³⁷

Meanwhile, all through the 1920's German-Polish relations were vexed by the minority problem. Before Germany became a member of the League of Nations it had no right to invoke the Minorities Treaty against Poland. But the Council heard "countless petitions from the German minority groups which Poland regarded as frivolous."³⁸ A number of such cases even reached the Permanent Court of International Justice.³⁹

Allegedly to keep the question of the Corridor alive, and to encourage revisionist sentiment, the Weimar régime brought many complaints before the Council and the World Court. Poland, consequently, was confirmed in its opinion that its German minority was an enemy of the state. Polish bitterness was aggravated by the fact that Germany had had to accept no obligations to protect the Polish minority in

³⁷ United States Department of State, National Socialism, p. 132.

³⁸ Raymond Leslie Buell, Poland: Key to Europe (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1939), p. 242.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 248.

Germany.

The League system required the genuine support of the "Kin-States," the states connected by ethnic bonds with groups dwelling outside their borders, if it were to work. Only if Germany had regarded the minority régime with sympathy might it have worked with regard to the German minority in Poland. But Germany had had to accept treaties which it found bad from every possible aspect; the Treaty of Versailles was the source of the greater portion of the German minority in Poland. Germany was completely committed to treaty revision, and so never gave real support to the minority settlement.⁴¹

Once in the League of Nations, and a Permanent Council member, Germany worked to convince the rest of the Council that disputes between German minorities and their rulers were not matters of domestic jurisdiction, but affairs of international concern. This tact, of course, was best suited to further the interests of the Germans in Poland. It also came into direct conflict with traditional Polish thinking on the subject.⁴²

Indeed, the large German minority in the Corridor was one reason why that area represented Germany's main revis-

⁴⁰ Buell, p. 243.

⁴¹ Claude, p. 45.

⁴² Henry L. Bretton, Stresemann and the Revision of Versailles: A Fight for Reason (Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1953), p. 128.

ionist objective. Failure to make progress in the matter of territorial revision helps to account for Stresemann's concentration on German minority rights after 1926.⁴³

A recital of German-Polish exchanges relative to the minority issue could only prove tedious. Usually the clashes occurred in the League Council. Generally the clashes took place because of German charges of mistreatment of the German minority in Poland.

Whatever the full truth may be about the condition of this minority, the fact is that by 1931 about 1,000,000 Germans had emigrated from the western provinces of Poland under varying degrees of pressure. A large proportion of this emigration was allegedly occasioned by Poland's use of its agrarian reform program to dispossess German landowners of their holdings; it was claimed that from 60% to 70% of all the land parcelled out in Posen and Pomerania had belonged to Germans; it was contended that very few Germans obtained any land under the agrarian reform program. It is true, certainly, that the emigration of Germans from Poland maintained a steady stream all through the Weimar era.⁴⁴

German revisionists used this situation well; they found the aggrieved minority in Poland a fertile field for propaganda, and they exploited an admittedly imperfect situation to broadcast their aims for all the world to hear.

⁴³ Bretton, p. 128.

⁴⁴ Buell, pp. 246-247.

As was the case with the territorial provisions of Versailles per se, the question of the Germany minority in Poland remained unsolved during the Weimar era and awaited the attentions of the Third Reich.

CHAPTER THREE

The Problem of Danzig and Concluding Survey
of the Troubled German-Polish Scene between
1919 and 1933

Danzig has been termed "a German microcosm"¹ and the "sick child of the League of Nations."² From the long range point of view the events in Danzig, and its relations with Poland, in the period before 1933, were of no very great significance. But since Danzig reflected the troubled state of German-Polish relations Danzig-Polish relations can not be altogether ignored.

Ill feeling between Germany and Poland had become evident shortly after 1919. Often this emanated from, and contributed to, the strained relations between the Free City and Poland. For example, during the Polish-Soviet war of 1920-1921 the Germans, officially neutral, prohibited the movement of war materials across their territory. This had the effect of injuring Poland but not Russia.³ In Danzig a similar situation existed, for Danzig followed Germany in a proclamation of neutrality; too, the Danzig

¹ Hans L. Leonhardt, Nazi Conquest of Danzig (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 41.

² Ibid., p. 30.

³ Robert Machray, Poland, 1914-1931 (London, George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1932), p. 156.

dock workers, members of a radical union, refused to unload ships bearing munitions for Poland. Great delays were encountered in getting supplies to the Poles until Allied troops in the Free City were able to unload the ships themselves. Poland's "safe" access to the sea was not always so safe!⁴

In April, 1921, by a German-Polish Convention, Poland granted free transit across the Corridor between Germany and East Prussia, without customs or passport formalities. This agreement further regulated the individual rights of Polish nationals in the Free City. But from the very first the officialdom of the Free City revealed strong pro-German feelings, and by 1934 Poland had already been before the League many times because of disputes with Danzig.⁵

One controversy with Danzig involved the question of a munitions depot for Poland in the territory of the Free City. In March, 1934, the Council of the League ruled in favor of allowing Poland a larger depot for war materials en route from the Port to Poland. The Westerplatte, at the very entrance to the Port of Danzig, was designated as the spot, and Danzig was further required to turn over to Poland the island of Holm.⁶

⁴ Leonhardt, p. 35.

⁵ Machray, Poland, 1914-1931, P. 210.

⁶ Ibid., p. 274.

Next occurred the celebrated affair of the mailboxes; this arose from the fact that Poland was permitted to set-up its own postal service in the Port of Danzig. Poland was supported in her move to extend this service to areas Danzigers thought were beyond the Port area.⁷

From 1921 forward an argument centered upon whether or not Poland might use the Port of Danzig as a port d'attache for its warships. An interim agreement was effected by the parties themselves.⁸

Intermittently, from 1925 through 1932, disputes centered upon the ambition of Poland to introduce Polish currency into the Free City. This ambition was finally frustrated.⁹ And all through the period there was disputation as to what Article 104 of the Treaty of Versailles meant when it said that the Polish Government was to "conduct" Danzig's foreign relations. The Germans argued that "conduct" meant "manage" rather than "control," and that that implied Poland's obligation to consult the wishes of the Danzigers, and the League's obligation to settle matters in dispute. Poland, of course, interpreted "conduct" to mean "control."¹⁰

⁷ Leonhardt, pp. 32-33.

⁸ Ibid., p. 33.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 33-34.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 34.

Danzig's claim to be Poland's sole port was disallowed by the Council in 1932; it was declared that Poland was obligated to use the Port of Danzig fully, though not to the detriment of Gdynia.¹¹ The authority being followed here maintains that by 1931 Gdynia had become the second port on the Baltic, and that consequently Danzig "was degenerating more and more into a loading place for bulk goods."¹²

Political developments in Danzig closely paralleled those in the Reich. In 1930 the National Socialists won 107 of 577 seats in the German Reichstag; in Danzig they won 12 of 72 seats in the Volkstag.¹³ In July, 1932, the Nazis registered tremendous gains in the German elections. Taking advantage of the event, von Papen re-established the Nazi Storm Troops. About the same time furious anti-Polish propaganda once more began to appear in Germany.¹⁴ In September a big Nazi rally, disguised as a sports rally, was held in Danzig. Ernst Roehm, who was present, exhorted the Nazis in Danzig to cooperate more fully in the struggle

¹¹ Leonhardt, p. 39.

¹² Ibid., p. 38.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 42-43.

¹⁴ Robert Machray, The Poland of Pilsudski, Incorporating "Poland, 1914-1931" Much Condensed, and Carrying on the History of Poland Till Mid-July, 1936 (London, George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., n.d.), p. 307.

15

for Danzig's liberation.

Meanwhile the frequent speeches of Adolf Hitler castigating the existence of the Corridor had the predictable effect among Danzig's Nazis. So vicious did the anti-Polish propaganda become that Wysocki, Polish Minister in Berlin, reported to Polish Foreign Minister Beck, in May, 1933, that he had told German officials that the Nazis in Danzig were fostering the conviction that the surrender of the Free City to the Reich was imminent.¹⁶

In his universally quoted work, Diplomatic Prelude, L.B. Namier succinctly summarizes the foreign policy position of Poland thus:

Poland...having re-arisen through the double defeat of Russia and Germany in the First World War, and having grown at the expense of both; being essentially weaker than either, and in danger from both;...pursued a policy of balancing between them, and of playing them off against each other without committing herself to either.¹⁷

For the first years after the armistice France was considered the strongest power on the Continent; no one doubted either her will or her ability to maintain the peace settlement. Russia did not become really important in international politics until after her entry into

¹⁵ Machray, Poland of Pilsudski, p. 308.

¹⁶ Republic of Poland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Official Documents concerning Polish-German and Polish-Soviet Relations 1933-1939 (Polish White Book) (London, Hutchinson, 1940), p. 11.

¹⁷ L.B. Namier, Diplomatic Prelude, 1936-1939 (London, Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1948), p. xvi.

the League in 1933 and after the Franco-Russian Pact of 1935. During most of this period most of the Eastern European states had "coldly correct relations with Germany."¹⁸ Poland was dedicated to maintaining the existing territorial arrangements with Germany. Germany, on the other hand, aimed her policy at regaining her equality with and prestige among the nations; of this policy the policy of revision was a fundamental part.¹⁹ There was, then, a fundamental conflict in the policies of Germany and Poland; on the shoals of this difference all hopes for normal relations between the two powers suffered ship-wreck during pre-Nazi era.

Germany's unwillingness to guarantee her Eastern frontiers at Locarno, even though Berlin subsequently pledged itself not to use force in the attempt to secure revision, left the Poles anxious and angry. In 1925, too, the question of Germany's admission to the League of Nations first arose. Poland's attitude was that Germany ought not to get a permanent Council seat unless she did, also. In September, 1928, when Germany finally entered the League, as a permanent member of the Council, she supported the

¹⁸ See Hugh Seton-Watson, Eastern Europe Between the Wars, 1918-1941 (Cambridge, England, At the University Press, 1946), p. 362, for the substance of this paragraph.

¹⁹ Zygmunt J. Casiorowski, "Did Pilsudski Attempt to Initiate a Preventive War in 1933?" The Journal of Modern History, XXVII, No. 2 (June, 1955), p. 157.

20

successful Polish bid for a "semi-permanent" seat.

In 1927 the question of German disarmament became important. On January 31 the Inter-Allied Commission was scheduled to be withdrawn from Germany. Thereafter any possibility of investigating the state of German armaments would reside only in the Council. Poland demanded that all the stipulations of the Treaty of Versailles relative to German armaments be complied with, and took the occasion to reaffirm that not one square mile of Upper Silesia would be restored to Germany.²¹

In December, 1932, when France, Great Britain, Italy, Germany and the United States agreed to a somewhat restricted version of the German views on German armaments the Poles registered great displeasure.²²

Normal commercial relations between the two powers had been established in 1922. Within a few years Germany was absorbing 50% of all Polish exports, while approximately 40% of all Polish imports were coming from Germany. Then, as Poland began making commercial arrangements with other countries, the volume of German-Polish trade began to decline. By 1925 an economic war, which featured German boycotting of Poland, was in full swing. During the course of the economic war some 15,000 German families were pressured into quitting Poland, and some 12,000 Polish families

²⁰ Machray, Poland, 1914-1931, p. 354.

²¹ Ibid., p. 365.

²² Machray, Poland of Pilsudski, p. 310.

into emigrating from Germany. Discussions initiated to ease the situation collapsed because of political problems; when Poland finally renounced her right to expel Germans, Germany refused to reciprocate.²³ A new commercial treaty was initialed in March, 1930; by mid-April the Germans had raised tariff barriers to the point of negating much that Poland had hoped to gain from the agreement.²⁴

Thus, as the Hitler era dawned, none of the great Polish-German problems growing out of the post-First World War Settlements had been solved. Frequently, in the years from 1919 to 1930, these problems had led to border incidents. To these problems the National Socialists brought a new approach, based on an inherently imperialistic ideology.

²³ For the substance of these remarks see Machray, Poland, 1914-1931, pp. 291-292.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 293.

CHAPTER FOUR

National Socialist Ideology: An Imperialistic
Foreign Policy is Conceived for the Reich

Although its roots were buried deep in the soil of German history, National Socialist ideology as such took shape in the Germany of Versailles, the Germany of defeat, disarmament, economic instability, in short, in Germany humiliated. This ideology contained tenets which had the result of making the time of Hitler's rise to power the time of a post-war world's maturation into a pre-war world. The virulent nationalism of Nazism could not but come into conflict with those who had humbled Germany; it could not fail to clash violently with all who would oppose obstacles to the ambitions of the Third Reich. With the rise of National Socialism to power in Germany the pacific revisionism of the Weimar era died. The struggle for equality was replaced by the struggle for supremacy, although, for a while, the word "equality" would constitute a shibboleth on German lips, a slogan indicating immediate aims.

The nationalism of the Third Reich assumed a unique form called by the Germans Blut und Boden, which term designated several distinct but intimately related theories, none of them altogether new to German thought, each of them

nourished by refinements distinctly Nazi. Basic to the whole thought of Blut und Boden was the theory of racial superiority, with its corollary, racial purity.

Essentially, the idea of racial superiority was that of the races of the world the Aryan was supreme, that among the Aryans the Nordics were pre-eminent, and among the Nordics the Germans were superior. There is a long history to the growth of this idea. Friedrich Schelling (1775-1854), an early German writer on the Volk theme, called for ridding Germany of decadent foreign influences. Adam Müller (1779-1829), the economist, believed that all that was good and basic in civilization came from the Germans, who, he dreamed, would one day dominate Europe. Another economist, Friedrich List (1789-1846), maintained that Providence had appointed the Germans to lead world affairs. Artur de Gobineau (1816-1882) wrote that the white race was superior to the colored races, and that the Aryans were supreme among the whites. The great composer, Richard Wagner (1813-1883), took over Gobineau's ideas and made them the basis of his anti-Semitism. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900) romanticised the stalwart, blonde Teuton, and urged the Germans to pursue their goals with utter ruthlessness.¹ Houston Stewart Chamberlain

¹ See United States Department of State, National Socialism; Basic Principles, Their Application by the Nazi Party's Foreign Organization, and the Use of Germans Abroad for Nazi Aims (Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1943), pp. 8-10.

(1855-1927), a son-in-law of Wagner, made the Germans supreme among the "Germanics" and wrote to Wilhelm II that "God builds today upon the Germans alone."²

Alfred Rosenberg, in Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts, did more than any other National Socialist, with the possible exception of Adolf Hitler himself, to develop the twin concepts of racial superiority and racial purity. He saw the Indian, Persian, Greek, Roman and European cultures as the creation of a ruling Nordic element. The decline of each civilization was attributed by Rosenberg to the intermixture of this Nordic blood with that of inferior breeds.³ Of Rosenberg's Mythus Hitler once said that it was the "most tremendous achievement of its kind."⁴ In the speeches and writings of Adolf Hitler the "blood myth," or idea of racial superiority, played a prominent role.

What we see before us of human culture today, the results of art, science and techniques, is almost exclusively the creative product of the Aryan. But just this fact

² Quoted in Ibid., p. 10.

³ Alfred Rosenberg, Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts, Eine Wertung der seelisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit (Munich, Germany, Hoheneichen-Verlag, 1935), pp. 641-642.

⁴ Norman H. Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April 1922-August 1939; An English Translation of Representative Passages, 2 vols., (London, Oxford University Press, 1942), II, 866-869.

admits of the not unfounded conclusion that he alone was the founder of higher humanity as a whole....⁵

By a process of elimination it is possible to show that Hitler assigned to the Nordics a superior position to that held by other Aryans, and to the Germans a position of absolute supremacy. In 1930 Hitler wrote to Otto Strasser:

The Nordic race has a right to rule the world and we must take this racial right as the guiding star of our foreign policy.⁶

In a speech delivered in 1932 Hitler cried:

Let them call us inhuman! If we save Germany, we shall have done the greatest deed in the world. Let them call us unjust! If we save Germany, we shall have repaired the greatest injustice in the world. Let them say we are without morality! If our people is saved, we shall have paved the way for morality.⁷

These texts serve very well to establish the completely pragmatic approach of Hitler's ethics; the test to be applied in formulating a foreign policy for the Reich, the test to be applied in assaying the morality of an act, was whether or not the superior German race might gain profit! This was an attitude completely at odds with the Judao-Christian tradition which lies at the heart of

⁵ Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, Complete and Unabridged, Fully Annotated, eds. John Chamberlain, Sidney B. Fay, and others. (New York, Reynal and Hitchcock, 1938), p. 397.

⁶ Baynes, II, 989.

⁷ Quoted by John Chamberlain, Sidney B. Fay and Others, eds., Mein Kampf, by Adolf Hitler, p. 402.

Western civilization. Nowhere was Hitler's fundamental nihilism more clearly demonstrated.

The theory of racial purity, too, is significant in a consideration of National Socialist foreign policy. Essentially the theory taught that the superior race must be preserved pure; it must not be bastardized by the admixture of other bloods. Hitler wrote:

No, there is only one most sacred human right, and this right is at the same time the most sacred obligation, namely: to see to it that the blood is preserved pure, so that by the preservation of the best human material a possibility is given for a more noble development of human beings.⁸

In another section of Mein Kampf, discussing citizenship in the folkish state, Hitler deplored the fact that "...the child of any Jew, Pole, African or Asiatic...can be declared a German citizen."⁹ Such an ideology could not fail to arouse a feeling of contempt for Jews, Poles, and others, in the minds of Hitler's avid followers. This attitude would one day be reflected in Germany's rape of so many countries, among them Poland.

The National Socialist metaphysics of history, then, was based on the "blood myth." Rosenberg considered history a "religion of blood,"¹⁰ and Adolf Hitler wrote:

⁸ Hitler, p. 406.

⁹ Ibid., p. 656.

¹⁰ Rosenberg, pp. 22-23.

All that is not race in this world is trash.

All world historical events, however, are only the expression of the races' instinct of self preservation in its good or in its evil meaning.¹¹

The state envisioned by the Nazis was the folkish state. Here again, though, the fundamental concept was not altogether a Nazi invention, for the past made contributions to the theory.

Herder (1774-1803) was the first German philosopher to develop the concept of the "organic folk-nation in contrast to the concept of the political-juridical state."¹² He believed that the place of the individual in society was derived from his link with the folk community. Karl Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829) made Herder's idea of Volk the basis of the nation-state, and argued that the highest kind of state was that embracing all the members of one Volk. Joseph Görres, the historian, added the thought that blood ties bound the Volk together, and he it was who anticipated the Nazi metaphysics of history by making the concept of Volk¹³ the basis of all history.

Schelling continued in the growing tradition of subordinating the person to the totality, the Volk, and Hegel contended that the individual was of slight value, the

¹¹ Hitler, p. 406.

¹² United States Department of State, National Socialism, p. 5.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 5-6.

state possessing actual and total power. Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) anticipated a day when individuals would lose themselves in the mass of the Volk, and Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) wrote to the effect that private life no longer existed, that it was the community that counted.¹⁴ So from the ideas of Volk and folkish state the growth of totalitarianism gradually sprang.

Simultaneously with the growth of the idea of totalitarianism grew the concept of a führer. Over a century ago Ernst Moritz Arndt wrote, "Germany needs a great military tyrant capable of exterminating entire nations."¹⁵ Fichte foretold that conditions would arise that would produce a leader, and he depicted the leader as necessarily brutal and an educator to brutality.¹⁶ Nietzsche created the cult of the "Superman," with a "will to power;" "God is dead," wrote Nietzsche, "now we will that the Superman live."¹⁷

Görres spoke of Germany's longing for a leader, Hegel saw history as being shaped by heroic personalities, Ferdinand Lasalle (1825-1864) favored a nation with but one will,

¹⁴ United States Department of State, National Socialism, pp. 7-8.

¹⁵ Quoted in Feliks Gross, ed., European Ideologies; A Survey of 20th Century Political Ideas, Introduction by Robert M. MacIver, (New York, Philosophical Library, 1948), p. 744.

¹⁶ United States Department of State, National Socialism, p. 11.

¹⁷ Quoted in John Bowle, The Unity of European History; A Political and Cultural Survey (London, Johnathan Cape, 1948), p. 283.

which would be exercised by a single individual. Walter Rathenau extolled the benefits of autocracy, and Oswald Spengler wrote of racial superiority and "caesarism" with equal fervor. Finally, Artur Moeller van den Bruck wrote that the basis of German revival lay in the example of the past, when people chose a "Dux" to lead them.¹⁸

These concepts of the folkish state, of totalitarianism, and of a führer found expression in the words of Adolf Hitler. Of the state Hitler wrote:

We must sharply distinguish between the State as a vessel and the race as the content. This vessel has meaning only if it is able to preserve and to protect the contents; in the reverse case it is useless.¹⁹

And again:

Thus the highest purpose of the folkish State is the care for the preservation of those racial primal elements which, supplying culture, create the beauty and dignity of a higher humanity. We, as Aryans, are therefore able to imagine a State only to be the living organism of nationality which not only safeguards the preservation of the nationality, but which, by a further training of its spiritual and ideal abilities, leads it to the highest freedom.²⁰

National Socialism, of course, made the Nazi Party one with the State, thus providing the foundation for totalitarianism. A decree of December 1, 1933, read:

¹⁸ See United States Department of State, National Socialism, pp. 11-13, for the substance of this paragraph.

¹⁹ Hitler, p. 595.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 595.

After the victory of the National Socialist revolution, the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) is the bearer of the German State-idea and indissolubly joined to the State. ²¹

To crown the totalitarian edifice Nazi ideology made the Führer, who combined Volk, Party and State in his person, absolute.

The folkish State, therefore, has to free the entire leadership---especially the highest, that means the political leadership---from the parliamentary principle of the decision by majority, that means decision by the masses, in order to establish firmly in its place the right of the person. ²²

With Hitler the theory was that all authority ultimately derived from the Volk, and was to be exercised through the Party, through which the Volk expressed itself. It was his personal identification with the Party, indeed, with the Volk, that afforded the philosophical justification for his personal dictatorship.

Hitler himself wrote that "A majority can never re-
²³place the man," and that, granted the presence of council-
²⁴lors, "one man decides." Dr. Ley was quoted by the German press in 1942 as asserting "The National Socialist

²¹ United States Department of State, National Socialism, p. 221.

²² Hitler, p. 669.

²³ Ibid., p. 105.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 670.

Party is Hitler, and Hitler is the Party."²⁵ Ley also sired the formula "Adolf Hitler is Germany, and Germany is Adolf Hitler."²⁶ To correctly characterize authority in the Third Reich, then, it is solely to the authority of the Führer, Adolf Hitler, that one must refer.

Finally, to provide the necessary underlings to fulfill his will, without sacrificing principle to necessity, Hitler extended the "Führer Principle" to a whole hierarchy of officials:

The principle which once made the Prussian Army the most marvelous instrument of the German people has to be some day in a transformed meaning the principle of the construction of our whole State constitution: authority of every leader towards below and responsibility towards above.²⁷

The "blood and soil" philosophy of Nazism envisioned a sort of mystic union between the Volk and the land on which they lived, with each giving its vitality to the other. For this theory Walter Darré and Alfred Rosenberg were to a large extent responsible. Karl Troebbs, in Deutsche Kultur im Leben der Voelker (1938) gave as the true meaning of the term "fatherland" "...the primal basis and source of our existence."²⁸ Rosenberg advocated a German volkische Imperi-

²⁵ Quoted in United States Department of State, National Socialism, p. 44.

²⁶ Quoted Ibid., p. 185.

²⁷ Hitler, p. 670; italics Hitler's.

²⁸ Quoted by John Chamberlain, Sidney B. Fay and Others, eds., Mein Kampf, by Adolf Hitler, p. 591.

alism seeking Lebensraum in areas contiguous to Germany and in the East of Europe; in this work Rosenberg saw as the ultimate need the breaking-up of Russia, and as the immediate job the obliteration of the Polish State.²⁹

Mein Kampf and the speeches of Hitler are full of references to the need for and right to Lebensraum. Hitler was at no loss to advance many reasons justifying a German policy of expansion. He believed, for example, that Germany would have to grow or decline, but that it could not remain static; only more soil, he wrote, could guarantee future generations of Germans an adequate food supply;³⁰ he argued that the defense of Germany required a greater territory for the Reich, saying,³¹

Never regard the Reich as secure while it is unable to give every national offshoot for centuries his own bit of soil and territory. Never forget that the most sacred right in this world is the right to that earth which a man desires to till himself, and the most sacred sacrifice that blood which a man spill for this earth.³²

The essentially imperialistic orientation of National Socialist ideology, then, cannot be doubted, for it is the ideology of a master race, ultimately to be gathered together

²⁹ Quoted by Elizabeth Wiskemann, Prologue to War (New York, Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 223.

³⁰ Hitler, p. 950.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 178-180.

³² Ibid., p. 964; italics Hitler's.

into a folkish state, led by an absolute captain, and entitled by reason of its intrinsic superiority to the acquisition of Lebensraum at the expense of other peoples. It remains only to ask if the imperialistic longings, if the policy of expansion, would lead to an appeal to arms. The weight of evidence supports the thesis that the rise of Nazism threatened war, right from the very beginning.

As with certain tenets in Nazi philosophy, so with its militant bent, it is traceable to the past. Certain German poets of the Napoleonic era, such^{as} Theodore Körner and Ernst Moritz Arndt glorified battle. The Pan-German League (1884) and such men as Spengler and van den Bruck were openly imperialistic.³³ German writers consistently betrayed a martial spirit; Hegel, von Ranke, von Clausewitz, Treitschke, von Bernhardi and Spengler may be cited³⁴ in example.

Adolf Hitler hoped that into the mind of the youngest children this prayer might be instilled:

Almighty God, bless our arms; be just as
Thou always wert; judge now, whether we deserve
freedom; Lord, bless our battle! 35

³³ United States Department of State, National Socialism, p. 19.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 19-21.

³⁵ Hitler, p. 921.

It is quite certain that Hitler believed the true program of revision of the post-First World War treaties lay not in the pacific policy of Stresemann, but in recourse to war. He wrote, in 1924,

One must be quite clear about the fact that the regaining of the lost regions will not come about through solemn appeals to the dear Lord or through pious hopes in a League of Nations, but only by force of arms. ³⁶

At the same time Adolf Hitler made it quite clear that his interests extended beyond merely regaining the lost territories; criticizing the expansion policy of Imperial Germany, he remarked:

In place of a healthy European land policy, a colonial and trade policy was adopted...The correct road would, even then, have been... strengthening continental power by winning new soil and territory in Europe...³⁷

It was, wrote Hitler, to Russia and its border states ³⁸ that Germany had to look for Lebensraum. This thinking was not abandoned by Hitler as the 1920's grew older. In a speech at Essen, in 1926, he specifically condemned a ³⁹ policy of peace and at Munich, in 1928, he once again

³⁶ Hitler, p. 912.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 892.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 950-951.

³⁹ Gordon W. Prange, ed. Two Decades of National Socialism, 1923-1943; Hitler's Words, Introduction by Frederick Schuman (Washington, American Council on Public Affairs, 1944), p. 4.

denounced the principle of frontier revision as a "philistine conception" and repeated the cry for Lebensraum.⁴⁰ In 1930, at Berlin, Hitler cried that in the acquisition of more soil "God helps him who helps himself."⁴¹

One authority relates that in 1933 he worked for a while in the Nazi Labor Service; young German workers, according to this source, were even then being systematically indoctrinated with romantic tales of German peasants who had worked the soil then in Polish hands.⁴²

Thus it is possible to deduce from the words of Hitler himself that Nazi ideology provided an imperialistic foreign policy for the Third Reich. It is possible to show that Hitler's policy favored revision of the frontiers laid down at Versailles, and that he believed that only through war could such revision be realized. It is possible to show that Hitler, from the very start, wanted a great deal more than mere frontier revision: he wanted to extend the German Lebensraum, and to do so in the East of Europe. This could only mean that the Polish State would inevitably be faced with the loss of land to Germany and slavish obedience to

⁴⁰ Prange, p. 27.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 29.

⁴² Ralph F. Bischoff, Nazi Conquest Through German Culture (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1942), p. 28.

Hitler's will, or complete destruction.

The doctrinaires of the Third Reich were thorough-going opportunists. Göring, at Nuremberg, testified:

It was never the case, that from the very beginning, as has often been represented here, we got together and, conspiring, laid down the every point of our plans for decades to come. Rather, everything arose out of the play of political forces and interests...⁴³

A timetable for aggression would come, and Poland would have a place in that schedule. But that would have to wait until "the play of political forces" enabled the generals to flash the green light. For the first few years of his time in power Hitler had to concentrate on the preparation for the struggle. In those earlier years, as in 1939, he governed his conduct of foreign relations with the policy aim, domination of Europe, in view, with that same indifference to justice and fairness and truth which prompted him to tell his military leaders in August, 1939:

I shall give a propagandistic cause for starting the war, never mind whether it be plausible or not. The victor shall not be asked later on whether he told the truth or not. In starting and making a war, not the right is what matters but victory.⁴⁴

There was always more than mere verse in the Nazi Party's

Horst Wesel Lied: "Heute gehört uns Deutschland und morgen die ganze Welt."⁴⁵

⁴³ International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal, 42 vols. (Nuremberg, Germany, Secretariat of the International Military Tribunal, 1949), IX, 309.

⁴⁴ Ibid., III, 233.

⁴⁵ Quoted by Wiskemann, p. 243.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Rapprochement of 1934

In the years prior to 1933 Poland's international position was secure; its very existence was necessarily dependent upon Germany and the Soviet Union, but not until after 1933 did either of these great neighbors begin to emerge as a potent factor in international politics. Moreover, Polish security rested upon the apparently firm foundations of the French alliance system. But the events of 1933, despite the serious state of affairs between Germany and Poland in the first months of that year, caused a drastic shift in the orientation of Polish policy, a shift toward rapprochement with Germany, where the program of a new régime required the securing of the Eastern "front."

The chronically evil relations between Germany and Poland had grown worse during 1932; tensions mounted steadily at the very time that the ultra-nationalist Nazi movement was gaining strength in the Reich. Still, Marshal Pilsudski was not at first alarmed; it was his belief that the growing political crisis in Germany would produce a weakening of that country. Furthermore, he seems to have taken little fright at Hitler's persistently venomous clamorings for revision and expansion. Indeed, the doughty Marshal once told a French military attaché

that Hitler and his lieutenants simply talking.¹

Nothing ever said by Adolf Hitler could have been more pregnant with ugly implications for Poland than these words in Mein Kampf:

Never tolerate the establishment of two continental powers in Europe. See an attack against Germany in every attempt to organize a second military power on German borders, even if it is only in the form of the establishment of a state which is a potential military power...See to it that the strength of our folk has its foundations not in colonies but in the soil of the European homeland.²

These words, written in 1924, show a remarkable similarity³ to German military opinion of that period.

During the first months of Hitler's rule there fell from Nazi lips a confusing torrent of apparently contradictory declarations. From this mountain of verbiage two facts may be deduced: in 1933 Hitler campaigned for "equality," and in this campaign he left no doubts of his continuing hostility to the territorial provisions of the Versailles Treaty, and, secondly, he promised to use none but pacific means in the impending struggle for German

¹ Zygmunt J. Gasiorowski, "Did Pilsudski Attempt to Initiate a Preventive War in 1933?" The Journal of Modern History, XXVII, No. 2 (June, 1955), pp. 140-141.

² Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, Complete and Unabridged, Fully Annotated, eds. John Chamberlain, Sidney B. Fay, and Others (New York, Reynal and Hitchcock, 1939), pp. 754-755.

³ See above, pp. 9-10.

"rights." Mussolini's "white war" of lies had already begun!⁴

Simultaneously with his rise to power Adolf Hitler began making a series of pronouncements which occasioned alarm in Poland. In a proclamation of February 1, 1933, the Führer denied German war guilt and demanded full German equality with other states. It was a theme Hitler repeated often in the next weeks in interviews with the foreign press.⁵ To a representative of the London Daily Mail and Sunday Express Hitler said that the Polish Corridor constituted a particularly great injustice.⁶ On February 12 he was quoted by the London press as stating that the Corridor must be returned to Germany.⁷ Polish Foreign Minister Beck, however, mused that "Frontiers were not

⁴ See Feliks Gross, ed. European Ideologies; A Survey of 20th Century Political Ideas, Introduction by Robert M. MacIver (New York, Philosophical Library, 1948), p. 748; Mussolini characterized that type of propaganda which aimed at disarming other nations of their suspicions by distortions of the truth the "white war" of lies which preceded the "red war" of blood.

⁵ Norman H. Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April 1932-August 1939; An English Translation of Representative Passages, 8 vols. (London, Oxford University Press, 1942), II, 1001-02.

⁶ Ibid., p. 1007.

⁷ Robert Machray, The Poland of Pilsudski, Incorporating "Poland, 1914-1931" Much Condensed, and Carrying on the History of Poland Till Mid-July, 1936 (London, George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., n.d.), p. 315.

changed by words." ⁸ About this time, too, the Polish leaders believed that because Hitler, Göring, Goebbels and Hess were not Prussians they were probably not too concerned with the former German provinces. ⁹

The disarmament provisions of the Treaty of Versailles were attacked by Hitler a few days later; on February 23 he struck the equality note with Louis P. Lochner, Berlin correspondent of the Associated Press, saying:

In the Peace Treaty of Versailles the obligation to disarm was not imposed upon us in order that thirteen years later there should be held a discussion upon military systems, but in order that the other peoples should be in a position to disarm. For this disarmament we ¹⁰ have now been waiting for more than ten years.

Pan-Germanism, too, was openly admitted to be a Nazi aim in the first weeks after Hitler's rise to power. On March 22 Herr Kube, National Socialist leader in the Prussian Diet stated:

As leader of the National Socialists in this House and by order of Herr Hitler I declare that the Prussians are pan-German, that we shall continue to be so, and that we shall have attained our goal only when all Germany,

⁸ Machray, Poland of Pilsudski, p. 315.

⁹ Republic of Poland, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Official Documents concerning Polish-German and Polish-Soviet Relations 1933-1939 (Polish White Book) (London, Hutchinson, 1940), p. 3.

¹⁰ Baynes, II, 1012.

including German Austria, is united with the Fatherland in one great State that can thus save Germany's world mission.¹¹

A day later, addressing the Reichstag, the Chancellor himself said that he had particularly at heart the welfare of Germans living beyond Germany's frontiers. His Government intended, said Hitler, "...to use all the means at their disposal" to support the frequently violated rights of the German minorities.¹²

German words were matched by German deeds during these early months of 1933. On February 15 the Strangely pro-German Danzig Government withdrew the special Port police, the Hafenpolizei, and replaced it with the Danzig Schutzpolizei, which was entirely beyond any sort of Polish control. Less than two weeks later the Poles, believing that Hitler purposed to support a supposed Danzig plot to seize the Westerplatte, strongly reinforced the guard there. Poland refused to heed the High Commissioner's order to withdraw the oversized guard, and the matter was referred to the Council of the League. Finally the Poles withdrew the guard upon Danzig's pledge not to infringe upon Polish rights in the Westerplatte.¹³

Moltke, German representative to Poland, reported to his Government that in his view Poland meant the Westerplatte

¹¹ Baynes, II, 1014-15.

¹² Ibid., p. 1019.

¹³ See Machray, Poland of Pilsudski, pp. 318-320.

14
 affair as a warning to the advocates of revision. The
 French Ambassador in Berlin thought that Pilsudski, see-
 ing at last the dangers of Nazism, was testing the wis-
 dom and resolve of the Allies. 15
 In any event, by the
 spring of 1933 the Polish Government was finally taking
 the Nazi régime seriously.

Throughout March and April German threats to the
 Corridor and Upper Silesia continued, and incidents took
 place. Anti-German demonstrations erupted in many places
 in Poland, and both ministers lodged formal protests. 16

Many writers assert positively that the state of
 German-Polish relations had deteriorated to such a degree
 by spring that Pilsudski proposed a preventive war to
 France. 17
 At least one authority avers that Pilsudski
 asked Berlin, in so many words, "do you want peace or
 war?" 18

14 Gasiorowski, p. 144.

15 André François-Poncet, The Fateful Years, Memoirs
 of a French Ambassador in Berlin, 1933-1938 (New
 York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949), p. 115.

16 Machray, Poland of Pilsudski, p. 324.

17 See L.B. Namier, Diplomatic Prelude, 1933-1939
 (London, Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1948), p. 10;
 John W. Wheeler-Bennett, Munich, Prologue to Trag-
 edy (New York, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946), p. 283.

18 Elizabeth Wiskemann, Prologue to War (New York,
 Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 208.

The author of a recent article maintains, however, that the French Foreign Minister in 1933, Paul-Boncour, and the then Premier, Daladier, knew nothing of any such proposal. Count Lipski, says this authority, stated that there was in fact such a proposal, but that it was made through military rather than through diplomatic channels. The French Army chief in 1933, Weygand, claimed never to have heard of such a suggestion.¹⁹ The Polish Foreign Minister, Colonel Beck, according to this source, denied that there was such a proposal, and claimed that Poland had merely generated a "smoke screen" to frighten the Germans into a rapprochement.²⁰

Hitler himself said, at a much later date, that his program for the first years of his rule entailed the re-
armament of Germany, separation from the League of Nations, remilitarization of the Rhineland and fortification of the entire Reich.²¹ Such a program, certainly, required some kind of understanding with Poland, some assurance to Germany that the East would give him no trouble while he was undertaking measures which could be expected to awaken French and British hostility. It is highly doubtful that the Germans had to be frightened into a rapprochement, whatever their immediate motives for undertaking the softer

¹⁹ Gasiorowski, p. 147.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 151.

²¹ See below, p. 72.

approach that marked their attitude toward Poland after April, 1933.

On May 2, at Pilsudski's direction, Wysocki, the Polish Minister in Berlin, met with Hitler and von Neurath and came to a highly significant understanding which was later endorsed by Colonel Beck. Wysocki told the German leaders that Poland was very alarmed about Nazi agitation in and concerning Danzig. Hitler replied that Germany would respect the treaties by which it was bound, that he himself was a pacifist, that as a nationalist he respected other nationalities, and this his own concern centered upon the danger that emanated from Russia.²²

Shortly thereafter both capitals issued communiques declaring it to be their intention to keep within treaty limits in their dealings with one another.²³ Then, on May 17, Chancellor Hitler delivered his celebrated Friedensrede. In this address the Führer stated:

Our boundless love for and loyalty to our own national traditions makes us respect the national claims of others and makes us desire from the bottom of our hearts to live with them in peace and friendship.²⁴

After criticizing once again the Treaty of Versailles in general, and the unrealistic territorial settlement in the East in particular, Hitler said that his preoccupation with

²² Republic of Poland, Polish White Book, pp. 11-12.

²³ Baynes, II, 1041.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 1047.

the question of equality was based on Germany's great need for security.²⁵ Germany, he stated, would accept any arms prohibition that applied equally to all states,²⁶ but would sign no agreements which would continue her degradation. In all events, said the Chancellor, Germany would tread only the paths laid down by the treaties.²⁷ Hitler particularly condemned any recourse to arms in the settlement of outstanding differences.²⁸

A few days after delivering his "Peace Speech" Hitler told the people of Danzig, who were about to go to the polls, that the National Socialists did not want to turn foreigners into Germans and did not want to correct frontiers at the expense of foreign peoples. He appealed to Germans outside of Germany to be of the same "inner community of soul and spirit."²⁹ The Danzig National Socialists, after winning the election, affirmed their desire to have good relations with Poland.³⁰

By July Hermann Rauschning was suggesting that Poland and the Free City settle their disputes by direct negotiation, rather than by appeals to the League, and in August

²⁵ Baynes, II, 1056.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 1054.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 1056.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 1057.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 1061.

³⁰ Machray, Poland of Pilsudski, p. 329.

and September four agreements were signed; these agreements regulated Polish use of the Port of Danzig, acknowledged the rights of Polish citizens in Danzig, and reaffirmed Poland's obligation to share her trade and commerce, within the realm of possibility, equally between Danzig and Gdynia. ³¹

In July Chancellor Hitler once again formally protested his peaceful intentions toward Poland. Wysocki reported to Beck that,

Le Chancelier m'a déclaré également qu'il a pris des dispositions afin que fussent évitées à Dantzig toutes discordes avec Pologne: il est fondé à croire que l'atmosphère qui y sera créée produira les meilleurs résultats.³²

At the same time Hitler accused the authors of the Versailles Treaty of creating the Corridor in order to "set an enduring abyss between Germany and Poland." This remark, ³³ observed Wysocki, was made in a conciliatory tone.

In August Hitler again renounced any possibility of his seizing foreign possessions, and spoke of Germany's ³⁴ great longing for peace. On October 18, 1933, upon being reminded of his former avowals to someday recover the

³¹ Machray, Poland of Pilsudski, p. 333.

³² Baynes, II, 1081.

³³ Republic of Poland, Polish White Book, p. 15.

³⁴ Gordon W. Hrange, ed. Two Decades of National Socialism, 1923-1943; Hitler's Words, Introduction by Frederick Schuman (Washington, American Council on Public Affairs, 1944), p. 181.

Corridor, Hitler observed:

...even the Peace Treaty gives us the right to ask for revision. No one in Germany thinks of going to war with Poland over the Corridor, but we all hope that the two nations can get together and discuss it dispassionately. 35

A few days later, speaking in the Sportspalast, the Führer struck the theme of peace once again, and afterwards he told Rauschning that he would sign anything or do anything which would work for the success of his policy. It will appear that that policy was stalling for time in which to rear. 36 37

In 1924 Hitler had written in Mein Kampf that among the possible allies of the Reich were Italy, Poland, Czechoslovakia and England. With any of those powers, Hitler thought, an alliance might be feasible, since the possible interests of any one of them might coincide with the interests of the Reich. Only France was seen as an implacable enemy. 38 The record of Hitler's later years illustrates what worth such understandings had for the powers which collaborated with the Third Reich.

It would appear that a number of factors influenced the Führer's thinking as he moved toward the rapprochement

35 Baynes, II, 1107.

36 Ibid., p. 1120.

37 Hermann Rauschning, The Voice of Destruction (New York, G.P. Putnam's, Sons, n.d.), p. 109.

38 Hitler, p. 926.

with Poland. François-Poncet conjectured that one motive was Hitler's desire to allay the suspicions that his régime had aroused in Europe, and that another was his need to earn time for the consolidation of Nazi power in Germany.³⁹ Ribbentrop reported that Hitler was urged to this course by General von Blomberg, who considered it essential for any easing of the general situation.⁴⁰ Rauschnig thought that Hitler really preferred a policy of agreement with Poland if Poland "would be generous in its views," that is, if Poland would return territories to Germany in return for compensation elsewhere.⁴¹

Polish interest in an understanding with Germany was similarly the result of a number of factors. From March through June, 1933, Britain, France, Italy and Germany had held discussions relative to a possible pact between them which would, according to the original draft of the proposed pact, have had the effect of establishing a four-power directory over Europe. Despite the fact that the final, greatly diluted draft failed of ratification, Poland was enraged. Pilsudski knew only contempt for Mussolini, chief sponsor of the idea.⁴² Too, Polish pride had

³⁹ François-Poncet, p. 110.

⁴⁰ Joachim von Ribbentrop, The Ribbentrop Memoirs, Introduction by Alan Bullock, tr. Oliver Watson (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1954), p. 37.

⁴¹ Rauschnig, p. 116.

⁴² Casiorowski, pp. 144-145.

been grievously offended because the Warsaw Government had been left out of the talks and its Great Power pretensions ignored.⁴³ Despite French assurances that the proposed Four-Power Pact contained no understanding at Poland's expense, Pilsudski took the affair as an example of French duplicity, and so began his soundings for the possibility of a rapprochement with Germany.⁴⁴ There may be great significance in the fact that Pilsudski learned of the negotiations only a short time before directing Wysocki to secure the May 2 audience with Hitler and von Neurath.⁴⁵

In September Beck reported to Warsaw that the Nazi regime needed calm on the international scene in order to revolutionize Germany; Nazism, he declared, was not so wicked as it seemed, representing only the "final act in the national unification of Germany."⁴⁶ In October, though, the Polish leaders felt some apprehensions because of Germany's withdrawal from the Disarmament Conference and from the League of Nations, and Pilsudski asked both his aides and the French Government for full information on the German rearmament program.⁴⁷

⁴³ François-Poncet, p. 115.

⁴⁴ Wheeler-Bennett, p. 284.

⁴⁵ See above, p. 60.

⁴⁶ Caslorowski, p. 149.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 148.

On November 15 Lipski, the new Polish Minister to Berlin, informed Hitler and von Neurath of Poland's sense of insecurity as a result of recent German measures. He asked if the German Government could reassure Poland. Hitler replied that his only territorial ambition in Europe concerned the return of the Saar to Germany; the Versailles Treaty, said Hitler, was a bad one, but the Third Reich would not appeal to force in order to secure revisions. The Fuhrer added that since Poland constituted a bastion against Russia he did not want it destroyed, and he excluded "even the possibility of war" in German-Polish relations.⁴⁸

On November 28, 1933, von Moltke conveyed to Pilsudski and Beck the Fuhrer's wish for the establishment of normal relations between Berlin and Warsaw in both the political and economic spheres.⁴⁹ And, indeed, German trade, always a matter of the greatest importance to Poland, had assumed even greater significance with the onset of the Great Depression.⁵⁰

The Polish Government surrounded the negotiations with Berlin with secrecy, denying to both the French and the Czechs that it was treating with Berlin on political affairs.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Republic of Poland, Polish White Book, pp. 17-19.

⁴⁹ Baynes, II, 1149.

⁵⁰ Wiskemann, p. 178.

⁵¹ See Namier, p. 15; François-Poncet, pp. 113-114.

At least one writer thought that for the six weeks prior to the signing of the Pact of January 26, 1934, Pilsudski was busy sounding France on the possibility of common action against Germany.⁵² On the other hand, a German official told François-Poncet that Poland had rejected a German proposal that France should be a third party to the agreement.⁵³

In the German-Polish Declaration of January 26, 1934, the two powers stated that it was their intention to inaugurate a new phase in their political relations by means of direct negotiations. This, they considered, was essential for the general peace of Europe. It was given as their intention that their mutual dealings would, for a period of ten years, be conducted on the principles laid down in the Pact of Paris of 1928. Obligations undertaken toward a third party, it was stated, did not prevent the peaceful development of their mutual relations, did not conflict with the Declaration itself, and were not affected by it. All mutual problems that failed of solution by means of direct negotiation would nevertheless never be solved by the "application of force."⁵⁴

⁵² Namier, p. 15.

⁵³ François-Poncet, p. 114.

⁵⁴ See Republic of Poland, Polish White Book, pp. 20-21, for the text of the Declaration of January 26, 1934.

In the talks preliminary to the Declaration of January 28 the German negotiators had made the express reservation that the agreement should not be understood to imply German recognition of the frontier; but, the Germans promised, the agreement itself would be the basis for settling the frontier problem.⁵⁵

Four days after the signing of this accord, in a speech to the Reichstag, Hitler concentrated his remarks on the newly reached understanding with Poland. After stating that the Nazi racial idea constituted no threat to other peoples,⁵⁶ and after pledging that his Government would not meddle with the political institutions of other countries,⁵⁷ Hitler averred that since his rise to power he had been constantly engaged in efforts to improve German relations with all other states, and that it had been his special desire to stabilize conditions in Eastern Europe by a system of pacts, of which the Polish Pact was an example.⁵⁸ The territorial clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, charged Hitler, had threatened to make traditional foes of Germany and Poland, but since warlike attempts to remove the admittedly grave German-Polish problems could

⁵⁵ Ribbentrop, p. 97.

⁵⁶ Baynes, II, 1158.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 1159.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 1160-61

only have produced "catastrophic results," he had chosen this means to "promote the peace and prosperity of both nations."⁵⁹

The Führer concluded his observations on the situation in the East by expressing gratification that Danzig, too, had been able to clear up its relations with Poland, and by extending the hope that German-Polish relations would enter a new period of economic understandings and "useful cooperation."⁶⁰ Hitler ended this address to the Reichstag by expressing the desire for peaceful understandings with Austria⁶¹ and France,⁶² and by welcoming the good offices of Britain in securing the latter.⁶³ The Chancellor remained firm in his demands for German equality⁶⁴ but his tone was moderate and reasonable. Here was another Friedensrede!

The German-Polish accord led to a series of supplementary accords, and, in general, to a drawing together of Berlin and Warsaw. Frontier incidents were no longer reported in the press, and Poland began to display a growing coolness toward France.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Baynes, II, 1161-62.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 1162-63.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 1167.

⁶² Ibid., p. 1169.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 1170.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 1170-71.

⁶⁵ François-Poncet, p. 116.

There is evidence enough that the rapprochement was never popular in certain quarters; there is evidence, too, that Hitler was quite insincere in his protestations of peaceful intentions toward Poland.

Many members of the National Socialist Party were at first opposed to the rapprochement. The Fuhrer delegated Hermann Rauschning to make it clear to them that the non-aggression pact was merely a temporary measure which would be torn up when Germany was strong enough to recapture the Prussian districts of Poland without fear of Western intervention. Rauschning, when writing of this, stated that he had then considered Hitler's remark no more than a reassurance to the Party, and that he had believed the Fuhrer could be influenced toward a moderate policy of political and economic penetration of Eastern Europe.⁶⁶ Rauschning reported to Hitler that the Poles were dreaming of re-establishing the old, multi-national Kingdom of Poland. Hitler replied that he would never tolerate that, and once more stated that he needed Poland as a friend only so long as Germany was menaced in the West.⁶⁷ His policy, said the Chancellor, entailed the ultimate annexation of Austria, Bohemia, Moravia and Western Poland, and after

⁶⁶ See Rauschning, p. 115, for the substance of this material.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 119.

the realization of that goal, alliance with the remnant of Poland, and with the Baltic states, Hungary and the Balkans.⁶⁸ Months later, in November of 1934, Lipski told Ambassador Dodd, United States representative in Berlin, that Poland considered the Pact of January 26 a temporary thing, since Germany policy included the annexation of Austria and Czechoslovakia and the re-annexation of part of Poland and Alsace-Lorraine.⁶⁹

Assuming that both Rauschnig and Dodd were informed and truthful reporters, events after 1934 can only be interpreted as further evidence of Hitler's perfidy and of the confidence of the Polish leadership in its diplomatic genius. For, after a period during which Poland seemed uneasy in its understanding with the Third Reich, the two powers embarked upon an unnatural partnership in aggression.

⁶⁸ Rauschnig, p. 115.

⁶⁹ William E. Dodd, Jr. and Martha Dodd, eds. Ambassador Dodd's Diary, 1933-1938, Introduction by Charles A. Beard (New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1941), p. 192.

CHAPTER SIX

The Years of Preparation, 1934-1938

Adolf Hitler, addressing his military chieftains on November 23, 1939, summarized the considerations which had guided him in the conduct of the Reich's foreign relations in the period 1933-1938, saying:

I had to reorganize everything, beginning with the mass of the people and extending it to the Armed Forces. First, reorganization of the interior, abolishment of the appearances of decay and defeatist ideas, education to heroism. While reorganizing the interior, I undertook the second task: To release Germany from its international ties. Two particular characteristics are to be pointed out: Secession from the League of Nations and denunciation of the Disarmament Conference. It was a hard decision....After that the order for rearmament.... In 1935 the introduction of compulsory armed service. After that, militarization of the Rhineland....Then, beginning of the fortification of the whole country, especially in the West. ¹

For more than three years after January 28, 1934, the Government of the Third Reich was occupied with the reorganization of Germany, the release of the Reich from many of its international ties, and rebuilding the armaments of the country. Not until the middle of 1937 did the military men feel safe in asserting that Germany no longer had a defense problem. Not until early in 1938 was Hitler ready to undertake adventures beyond the fron-

¹ International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal, 42 vols. (Nuremberg, Germany, Secretariat of the International Military Tribunal, 1949), VI, 102-103.

tiers of the Reich. During these years of preparation Nazi foreign relations were directed at keeping the potential foes of Germany from launching a preventive attack. In pursuance of this end the non-aggression pact with Poland had been negotiated that the Reich's exposed Eastern flank might be covered. By January, 1934, Germany had indeed seceded from the League and denounced the Disarmament Conference, and had begun on its rearmament program. But Germany had yet a long way to go before her fight for "equality" could be regarded as won, before she would once more be a truly great military power. Accordingly, the uneasy German friendship with Poland was carefully nurtured after 1934; the courtship flowered into nothing approaching a "partnership" for several years.

The Declaration of January 26, 1934, had greatly enhanced Polish prestige; almost at once Warsaw began to strike an arrogant attitude toward France. This was in part derived from a growing Polish lack of confidence in France, and in part from Polish fears of the Soviet Union. Warsaw's doubts concerning French policy date from no later than Daladier's failure to inform the Poles of the Four-Power Pact negotiations.² Russian admission to the League of Nations had met with disfavor in Warsaw; at least one writer saw in Beck's renunciation of the League

² See above, pp. 64-65.

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system of minorities protection the fear that, at Geneva, Russia might ask embarrassing questions relative to its minority in Poland.⁴

While Polish confidence in Germany was by no means complete or unwavering after the signing of the non-aggression pact, the general drawing-together of the two powers gained momentum. German need of Polish friendship continued, and the reappearance of Russia upon the stage of international politics together with the French policy of courting the Kremlin dictated that the Polish policy of "balance" required a German orientation.

After the failure of the Disarmament Conference in June, 1934, M. Louis Barthou abandoned the unbelligerent policy of Briand and the uncertain policy of Daladier. In cooperation with Soviet Foreign Commissar Litvinof, Barthou attempted to raise an "Eastern Locarno" which would include both Poland and Germany.⁵ Pilsudski, distrusting French intentions, and believing that France aimed at keeping Poland in a subsidiary position and at

³ See below, p. 84.

⁴ Elizabeth Wiskemann, Prologue to War (New York, Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 180.

⁵ John W. Wheeler-Bennett, Munich, Prologue to Tragedy (New York, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1948), p. 285.

subordinating Polish interests to those of France, balked at the idea.⁶ Accordingly, while Barthou found the atmosphere friendly in both Prague and Bucharest, he found Beck "anything but warm."⁷ Hitler, of course, refused to consider the Barthou Plan, which could only have threatened his designs on Eastern Europe.⁸ This was the first major instance of Polish cooperation with Hitler, but it is too far removed by time and events from the later collaboration between the two powers to represent an instance of Polish aggression. However, the unfortunate result was that, in the long run, Hitler alone profited from the failure of the Barthou Plan.

Throughout 1934 Hitler paid elaborate lip service to his friendship with Poland.⁹ On January 22, 1935, Lipski reported to Colonel Beck that "Le Chancelier a relevé en termes particulièrement cordiaux l'importance du rapprochement entre les deux nations."¹⁰ On January 31 Count Szes-

⁶ Wheeler-Bennett, p. 285.

⁷ Andre Francois-Poncet, The Fateful Years, Memoirs of a French Ambassador in Berlin, 1931-1938, tr. Jacques LeClercq (New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949), p. 129.

⁸ Ibid., p. 185.

⁹ Norman H. Baynes, ed. The Speeches of Adolf Hitler April 1922-August 1939; an English Translation of Representative Passages, 2 vols. (London, Oxford University Press, 1942), II, 1181; 1190; 1191-92.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.1201.

bek, Polish Deputy Foreign Minister, was told by Göring that General von Schleicher, upon turning over the reins of power to Hitler, had suggested to the Führer an entente with France and Russia. Hitler replied, "...und ich werde das Gegenteil machen."¹¹ Probably the many Nazi reassurances to Poland during the last half of 1934 and in the early weeks of 1935 had been in part intended to prepare the Poles for Hitler's next bold step.

On March 16, 1935, the German Government announced the introduction of military conscription for all males over twenty years of age. In the proclamation announcing conscription Hitler made special reference to the pact with Poland as evidence of his good intentions.¹² A few days after this flagrant violation of the Versailles Treaty Hitler referred to another portion of that Treaty, a portion which he had on many occasions castigated. In an interview with G. Ward Price, a British newsman, the Führer said:

The German Government is quite clear that a revision of the territorial dispositions of international treaties can never be effected by unilateral measures.¹³

¹¹ Republic of Poland, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Official Documents concerning Polish-German and Polish-Soviet Relations, 1934-1935 (Polish White Book) (London, Hutchinson, 1940), p. 47.

¹² Baynes, II, 1208-09.

¹³ Ibid., p. 1212.

Whether or not Poland was really reassured by Germany is doubtful; no later than April, 1935, Lipski told Dodd that despite the Pact of 1934 Poland was uneasy, and trying to get along with both Germany and Russia in order to avoid attack from either quarter.¹⁴

Certainly revisionism remained strong in Germany, despite the Führer's promises not to seek an alteration of frontiers by unilateral measures. Hitler's speech at the Kroll Opera House, on May 21, 1935, contained only slightly veiled hints at ambitions to annex Lithuania and Austria.¹⁵

From 1935 on Goring was entrusted by Hitler with the task of improving relations with Poland, and was instructed to play on the theme that Germany needed a strong Poland as a barrier between itself and Russia. And if, beginning in 1935, Hitler laid stress on finding solutions to the problems of Danzig and the Corridor, he also thought that the time would come when Poland would acquiesce in a retrocession of certain areas to Germany in return for compensation elsewhere.¹⁶ Hitler even seems to have desired an English alliance, based on British recognition of German revision in Central Europe.¹⁷

¹⁴ Willian E. Dodd, Jr. and Martha Dodd, eds. Ambassador Dodd's Diary, 1933-1938, Introduction by Charles A. Beard. (New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1941), p. 235.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 246.

¹⁶ International Military Tribunal, IX, 309.

¹⁷ Joachim von Ribbentrop, The Ribbentrop Memoirs, Introduction by Alan Bullock, tr. Oliver Watson (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1954), p. 43.

During the course of the year 1935 Poland was further estranged from France by a strong sense of disillusionment in French policy. Poland's German orientation was greatly strengthened in May of that year, when the Franco-Czech-Russian alliance was concluded. This alliance furnished the German propaganda machine with an opportunity to reap new harvests in Poland.¹⁸ Hitler told Lipski, on May 22, that while Germany ¹⁹ indeed needed Lebensraum, she needed "...espace que la Pologne ne possède pas et ne puet donner."¹⁹ The Corridor, said Hitler on this occasion, represented a problem which would one day admit²⁰ of a peaceful solution.

In July, 1935, Colonel Beck himself visited Berlin, where he held a conversation with the Führer in an "atmosphere of frankness," which revealed an extensive agree-²¹ment in the points of view of the two leaders. Hitler was once more following his characteristic tactic: slowly and carefully, over of a period of months, he waged a subtle campaign to reassure Poland, for the Third Reich was planning another coup which would require Polish inactivity.

¹⁸ Wiskemann, p. 180.

¹⁹ Baynes, II, 1249.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 1240.

²¹ L.B. Namier, Diplomatic Prelude, 1936-1939 (London, Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1948, p. 32.

In preparation for his next move Hitler also undertook measures calculated to convince the rest of Europe of his reasonableness. Typical of his speeches in the latter half of 1935 was an address he gave to the Nazi Party congress at Nuremberg, on September 11, when he said:

National Socialism has no aggressive intentions against any European nation. On the contrary, we are convinced that the nations of Europe must continue their characteristic national existence, as created by tradition, history and economy: if not, Europe as a whole will be destroyed.²²

1936 found Europe both weak and divided. It is well known that at that time there was neither a strong association of powers that could stop Hitler's forward march, nor a strong nation that would do so. On New Year's Day Adolf Hitler announced as his aim for the dawning year the protection of Germany's "rediscovered national life" in her foreign relations.²³ Hitler implied that Germany would seek its Lebensraum in colonies.²⁴ Toward the end of February, while speaking with Bertrand de Jouvenal of the Paris Midi, Hitler said that eternal enmity between France and Germany was absurd, and that the German people understood this, just as they had understood and followed

²² United States Department of State, National Socialism; Basic Principles, Their Application by the Nazi Party's Foreign Organization, and the Use of Germans Abroad for Nazi Aims (Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1943), p. 55.

²³ Baynes, II, 1257.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 1262.

him into the "...réconciliation infiniment plus difficile,
la réconciliation de l'Allemagne avec la Pologne."²⁵

On March 7, quite without warning, German troops began entering the demilitarized Rhineland. In a speech to the Reichstag, on that day, the Führer spoke of the Polish Corridor as something Germany abhorred, but, he added,²⁶ it would be impossible to deny Poland access to the sea. In this very long speech Hitler reaffirmed Germany's vital need for Lebensraum as representing the true German problem.²⁷ After speaking of France in cordial tones, he refused to consider any possibility of cooperation with Russia.²⁸ Hitler continued, praising his own efforts in behalf of peace.²⁹ He lauded the Locarno Pact, but charged that the Franco-Russian alliance constituted a unilateral violation of Locarno; France, he said, had aimed the Russian alliance at Germany.³⁰

After proposing a new demilitarization of the Rhineland, to be accompanied by French and Belgian demilitari-

²⁵ Baynes, II, 1267.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 1272.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 1274-76.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 1281-83.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 1183-85.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 1287-97.

zation of areas contiguous to Germany, Hitler suggested Britain and Italy might guarantee twenty-five year non-aggression pacts between Germany on the one hand, and France, Belgium and possibly the Netherlands on the other. In the East Hitler offered pacts similar to the Polish Pact to the countries bordering on Germany. Upon the realization of these aims, said Hitler, Germany would
 31
 re-enter the League of Nations.

In perhaps the most significant part of this speech Hitler informed the Reichstag that the struggle for German equality had been concluded, and that Germany had no territorial claims to put forward in Europe.
 32
 In reality German policy was about to enter into a new phase, directed at the full integration of the Deutschtum into the German Reich.

In so far as German-Polish relations are concerned, it may be said that the end effect of the Rhineland coup was to throw Poland even deeper into Germany's embrace. Very early in 1936 François-Poncet had returned from Paris to Berlin and, in the name of the French Government, had told Lipski that France would mobilize in the event of a German military coup in the Rhineland. French General Gamelin had told substantially the same thing to General Sosnkowski in London during the previous December. While the "colored books" are entirely silent on this affair, a

31 Baynes, II, 1298-99.

32 Ibid., p. 1300.

reliable secondary source states that on March 9 Poland officially offered to assist France if Paris took steps against the Rhineland remilitarization; Berlin, according to this source, knew of the Polish offer, and France's failure to act left Warsaw in a delicate position.

Lipski told Dodd, on March 12,

We are with France if it comes to war, but we have a treaty with Germany which is valuable as long as peace prevails. Our treaty with France takes precedence in case Germany attacks France. ³³ 34

During the remainder of 1936 both the French and the Germans were busy wooing the Poles, but the French indecision in March had further alarmed Warsaw, and the Polish-German orientation continued. Indeed, the Rambouillet Agreement of September, 1936, whereby France undertook to make a military loan to Warsaw, remained unhonored by Paris owing to ever increasing Polish cooperation with Berlin in 1937 and 1938. ³⁴

If Berlin did in fact know of the Polish offer to aid France in resistance to the Rhineland goup, the Hitler Government gave no outward sign of it. Hitler had, for the time being, silenced his revisionist sentiments, and had refused to take offense at Poland's loyalty to the French alliance. In the realm of minority affairs, too, the Führer remained patient during these years of preparation.

³³ Wheeler-Bennett, p. 267.

³⁴ Dodd, p. 321.

³⁵ Wheeler-Bennett, p. 267.

The fact that there was a wide divergence in views between Germany and Poland was thrown into bold relief in 1937, when the German Government initiated talks with Warsaw relative to the problems that would probably arise with the expiration of the Convention of 1922, which had established a minorities régime for the German and Polish regions of Upper Silesia.

Between 1934 and 1937 the problem of the minorities had received very little official attention; like the other great matters at issue between Germany and Poland, it did not become acute until 1939.

The Polish Germans, who had never been altogether loyal to Poland, and who throughout the years of the Weimar Republic had been the cause of no little trouble between Berlin and Warsaw, had grown less restive beginning in 1934. Fundamentally, however, the situation had not materially altered as a result of the rapprochement. The Warsaw Government had never permitted the establishment of an official National Socialist organization among the Polish Germans; Nazi ideas had nevertheless spread among them rapidly.

In Germany the V.D.A. and the Bund Deutsches Osten, which had existed mainly for anti-Polish purposes, diverted their attention to the Sudeten German question, although

³⁶ Hugh Seton-Watson, Eastern Europe Between the Wars, 1918-1941 (Cambridge, England, At the University Press, 1946), pp. 282-283.

they continued to preach irredentism among the Germans in Poland. The rapprochement had actually served to assist the Nazis in this work: it had encouraged a pro-German view in Poland and it had facilitated Nazi propagandizing among the German minority.³⁷

The Polish Government, which had always opposed international control of minority affairs, had unbelievably seen fit to declare through Colonel Beck, in September, 1934, that,

Pending the introduction of a general and uniform system for the protection of minorities, my Government is compelled to refuse...all co-operation with the international organizations in the matter of the supervision of the application by Poland of the system of minority protection.³⁸

The German Government maintained an official silence about this Polish step for several years; only when Hitler's Government cited minority problems as among the factors requiring a new German-Polish agreement did Berlin take official cognizance of the Polish action of 1934.³⁹ Throughout most of the period from 1934 to 1938 the German press was restrained from discussing minority affairs.⁴⁰

But while it served Hitler's purposes to make no trouble over this issue, Germany took care to remind the

³⁷ Wiskemann, p. 190.

³⁸ Inis L. Claude, National Minorities, an International Problem (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1955), p. 30.

³⁹ Ribbentrop, p. 97.

⁴⁰ Ernst von Weizsäcker, Memoirs of Ernst von Weizsäcker, tr. John Andrews (Chicago, Henry Regnery Company, 1951), p. 112.

world that it had not dissociated itself from the Germans abroad. In his forward to the 1936 official yearbook of the Alliance of German Societies Abroad Goring proclaimed, "...so that it may be heard and understood by the people beyond our borders....Protection of German culture and German nationality is the foremost duty of the Reich."⁴¹

There is no question but that all through the 1930's both the Polish minority in Germany and the German minority in Poland were guilty of provocative acts and victimized by terrorism. But the Polish Germans displayed remarkable discipline, while maintaining contact with such agents of the Reich as the Gestapo chiefs.⁴² Their training must have been quite thorough, for it was later learned that:

One of the main causes of the rapid Polish collapse was the perfection with which the extensive espionage system of the German minority in Poland carried out its function (during hostilities).⁴³

The Polish Government spent those years nationalizing the economic life of its minorities, Polonizing their educational and cultural institutions, excluding the minori-

⁴¹ United States Department of State, National Socialism, p. 78.

⁴² Seton-Watson, p. 283.

⁴³ Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, 8 vols. (Washington, United States Printing Office, 1946), VIII, 48.

ties from civil service lists, and so on. In Upper Silesia the notorious "School Campaign" (1927-1937) resulted in a two-thirds decrease in the number of students attending the German minority schools.⁴⁴ After 1937 the situation of the Polish minority in Germany grew worse, too, as the result of a systematic Germanization program undertaken among them by the Reich Government. Here again, it was the minority schools which were especially hard hit.⁴⁵

The Geneva Convention of May 15, 1922, which governed the minorities regime in Upper Silesia, was scheduled to expire in July, 1937. As early as January, therefore, the German Government began attempts to reach an agreement with Poland which would provide a substitute treaty capable of fending off the serious problems which could arise after July. Von Neurath labored assiduously to effect a definite convention providing for a mixed commission to hear minorities' complaints, but Poland displayed a continuing distaste for any kind of an agreement incorporating international control over minorities affairs. Warsaw favored nothing more than a simple declaration which would leave each Government entirely and solely responsible for the fulfillment of its undertakings "within the framework of

⁴⁴ Raymond Leslie Buell, Poland: Key to Europe (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1939), pp. 248-249.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 249.

its sovereignty." ⁴⁶ By June von Moltke was expressing his "disappointment" and "serious apprehensions" over the ir-
reconcilability of the opposing views. ⁴⁷

Not until November 5, 1937, did the two Governments make their joint declaration. It was, as the Poles had wanted, nothing more than a simple statement of what the two parties regarded as essential in the treatment of their minorities. The signatories stated that they would make no attempt to assimilate their minorities by force, that they would not question the character of a minority, nor hinder the right of an individual to claim membership in a minority. They recognized the right of the minorities to the free use of their languages in speech and writing, in personal and economic relations, in the press and in public meetings, and in their churches. The right of the minorities to unite into cultural and economic associations was recognized, as was their right to establish and maintain schools in which instruction would be given in their respective languages. The right of the minorities to full religious freedom was reaffirmed, and minorities were recognized as possessing the same economic rights as

⁴⁶ Republic of France, The French Yellow Book, Diplomatic Documents (1938-1939); Papers relative to the events and negotiations which preceded the opening of hostilities between Germany on the one hand, and Poland, Great Britain and France on the other (New York, Reynal and Hitchcock, 1940), p. 140.

⁴⁷ L.B. Namier, Diplomatic Preludes, 1938-1939 (London, Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1948), p. 28.

all other citizens. Special mention was made of the right of the minorities to acquire and retain property. Finally, it was declared that each minority owed loyalty to the State in which it enjoyed citizenship.⁴⁸

This declaration recognized those same rights that had been recognized in the Convention of 1922. But the Declaration of 1937 was devoid of any pretense of international supervision of minority affairs; it was lacking in any kind of sanction whatever. This fact alone would probably have foredoomed it to failure. The record of both Poland and Germany in their treatment of the minorities after November, 1937, suggests that the Declaration of 1937 was probably quite insincere. Weizsäcker has written that the agreement remained inoperative from the start.⁴⁹

And so, as Europe approached 1938, and the time when Hitler would begin to undertake the integration of the Deutschum into the Reich, the status of the major German-Polish problems remained unchanged. Until 1938 the Third Reich had kept alive its claims against Poland, but it had done so with the voice of reason and moderation. Only after a further delay, during which time Poland became Hitler's partner in aggression, did the Nazis throw aside their mask and offer Poland the alternatives of coming to terms and becoming a satellite, or destruction.

⁴⁸ See Republic of Poland, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, The Polish White Book, pp. 40-41, for the full text of the Declaration of 1937.

⁴⁹ Weizsäcker, p. 112.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Partners in Aggression, 1938-1939

By 1939 the aim of the first, preparatory stage of National Socialist foreign policy had been realized: Germany had seceded from the Disarmament Conference and from the League of Nations, the Rhineland had been remilitarized, the nation armed, the entire country fortified. Hitler had long since been able to declare the struggle for German equality won.¹ The General Staff had been able to declare that Germany had no defense problem.² The second stage of Nazi foreign policy had been reached: Germany was ready to undertake the integration of the Deutschtum into the Reich, and would shortly be prepared to embark upon the conquest of Lebensraum. Efforts to achieve the two goals overlapped, and were parts of a coordinated whole, but that fact was not at first apparent to the majority of observers. In the fearful and perhaps decisive crises of 1938 Poland proved to be Hitler's partner in aggression.

As he made ready to embark upon his foreign ventures Adolf Hitler continued to court the willing Polish Government. On January 14 Colonel Beck visited Hitler, and later reported that "...le Chancelier confirma son point de vue,

¹ See above, p. 81.

² See below, p. 98.

qui est que toute correction de frontière serait en disproportion avec les sacrifices qui devraient être consentis et que, partant, elle n'avait aucune espèce d'importance." ³ Beck was reassured, and five days later remarked that German-Polish relations were "hardly capable of improvement." ⁴ On February 20 the Führer told the Reichstag that the "poison" had finally been removed from relations between the two countries, and that a sincere and friendly cooperation was growing between Berlin and ⁵ Warsaw.

When in March the Anschluss with Austria shook Europe, Hitler reassured Poland once again; he told G. Ward Price:

I am a realist. Look at my relations with Poland. I am entirely ready to admit that Poland - a land of 33,000,000 inhabitants - needs an outlet to the sea.

It is a bitter thing to us that this has to be obtained at the expense of a corridor through German territory, but we realize what it means to the Poles.

There are Germans living under the Polish government and Poles living under the German government.

- ³ Norman H. Baynes, ed. The Speeches of Adolf Hitler April 1932-August 1939; An English Translation of Representative Passages, 2 vols. (London, Oxford University Press, 1942), II, 1375.
- ⁴ United States Department of State, Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, from the Archives of the German Foreign Office; Series D (1937-45), "From Neurath to Ribbentrop (Sept. 1937-Sept. 1938), 6 vols. (Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1949), V, 40.
- ⁵ Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Axis Criminality, Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, 8 vols. (Washington, United States Printing Office, 1946), I, 679.

If the two countries quarreled, each would oppress its minorities. It was far better to settle our differences by agreement.

I hope that all nations will recognize from what has happened in Austria the folly of oppressing their national minorities.⁶

The Polish Government first recognized the inevitability of the Anschluss no later than November, 1937, when Beck told French Foreign Minister Yvon Delbos that it could not be opposed.⁷ The German Government noted with satisfaction that Warsaw regarded the events in Austria with "complete calm."⁸ Indeed, Poland took advantage of the Austrian crisis to settle accounts with Lithuania; a frontier incident on March 11 was followed by a Polish ultimatum, and Lithuania was compelled to restore diplomatic relations with Warsaw and to make concessions relative to postal and railway traffic.⁹

Some years later General Jodl told the Gauleiters that the Austrian Anschluss represented the fulfillment of an old national aim, that it had served to greatly reinforce the fighting strength of the Reich and improve its strategic position, and that it had placed Czechoslovakia

⁶ Baynes, II, 1424-25.

⁷ John W. Wheeler-Bennett, Munich, Prologue to Tragedy (New York, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1948), p. 288.

⁸ United States Department of State, Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series D, V, 46.

⁹ Raymond Leslie Buell, Poland: Key to Europe (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1939), pp. 326-327.

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in a German pincers. By May, 1938, a new European crisis was growing out of Nazi designs on the Czechoslovakian Republic.

The "May Crisis" first revealed the extent of the German orientation of Polish policy; in May it became clear that there would be no united front that could be opposed to the German aggression against Czechoslovakia. As German designs on the Central European republic became known, Paris made inquiries in Bucharest and Warsaw as to what support those capitals would render Prague, only to learn that neither would permit the passage of Soviet troops across their soil or the flight of Soviet warplanes over their territory. Moreover, Rumania refused to take any action whatever without a prior agreement with Poland. At this point Colonel Beck revealed that Polish policy was dictated by more than mere fear of Soviet Russia or doubts concerning the fighting strength of the West; he made it clear that he would not oppose the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, and that he entertained hopes of actually acquiring some of the spoils.¹¹ Between May and September, when the first great Czechoslovakian crisis broke, Germany drew still closer to Poland.

¹⁰ Office of United States Chief of Counsel, I, 504-505.

¹¹ Wheeler-Bennett, p. 57.

In September, at Godesberg, Hitler announced that acceptance of his first demands on Czechoslovakia would no longer be enough, for Poland and Hungary had made demands of their own which now had to be met. The Führer said that his friendship with Warsaw and Budapest required his full support of their claims. It was this new factor, together with the plight of the Sudeten Germans, which had been deliberately worsened by the Nazis themselves, that gave Hitler the pretext for breaking his Berchtesgaden promise to Prime Minister Chamberlain.¹²

In making public his support of the Polish and Hungarian claims on the Czechs Hitler curiously expanded the master race thesis, and characteristically, once again made the peacemakers of Versailles the responsible parties for a critical situation. The London Daily Mail for September 19, 1938, quoted Hitler as observing:

To set an intellectually inferior handful Czechs to rule over minorities belonging to races like the Germans, Poles, Hungarians, with a thousand years of culture behind them, was a work of folly and ignorance.¹³

Relations between Poland and Czechoslovakia had been strained during most of the two decades following the emergence of those countries from the ashes of the First World War. Both countries had wanted the industrially valuable

¹² Neville Henderson, Failure of a Mission; Berlin, 1937-1939 (New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1940), p. 158.

¹³ Baynes, II, 1503.

Teschen area, which was claimed on ethnical grounds by the Poles and on historical grounds by the Czechs. When the Powers proposed a division of the area along ethnical lines, in 1918, neither party to the dispute had been satisfied. Only in July, 1920, had the matter been settled by the Conference of Ambassadors, and their decision had given to the Czechs an area in which resided some 80,000 Poles. Resentment in Poland mounted, during the Polish-Soviet War, when Prague refused to permit the passage of arms through Czechoslovakia. The Treaty of Friendship of 1921 was never ratified, and in 1923, when Poland suggested that the Little Entente be expanded to include Poland, nothing came of the proposal. In 1925 the implications of the Locarno agreements brought Warsaw and Prague together, and the two governments entered into an arbitration agreement which did not, however, cover territorial disputes. A 1926 proposal for a military alliance came to nothing, and with the accession to power of Pilsudski all real attempts at friendship between the two countries were abandoned.¹⁴

The German-Czech crisis of 1938 offered the Poles an opportunity to reverse the decision of 1920, and it was an opportunity which Warsaw seized without delay. When the

¹⁴ Hugh Seton-Watson, Eastern Europe Between the Wars, 1918-1941 (Cambridge, England, At the University Press, 1946), pp. 364-365.

bitter German press campaign against Czechoslovakia began, a similar newspaper campaign began in Poland and Hungary, and the Hungarian Regent and Polish Foreign Minister lost no time in rushing to see Hitler.¹⁵

The first Polish demands against Czechoslovakia did not exceed the area around Teschen, where the population was largely Polish. But no sooner had these ambitions been satisfied than Beck proceeded to annex some districts farther west which were indisputably Czech, and which had never been claimed by Poland. By mid-November Polish annexations in Teschen and Slovakia included territories containing some 228,000 people, over half of whom were Czechs, and another 20,000 of whom were Germans.¹⁶ Among the areas annexed by Poland was Oderberg (Bohumin), a strategic railway junction near Teschen which Germany had coveted.¹⁷ During this first Czech crisis Poland had tried unsuccessfully to annex Mährisch-Ostrau, a concession Germany was not willing to make,¹⁸ and another conflict in interests appeared as the Poles began to sponsor Hungarian claims to the Carpatho-Ukraine.¹⁹ This Polish desire for

¹⁵ Henderson, p. 155.

¹⁶ Wheeler-Bennett, p. 338.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Wiskemann, Prologue to War (New York, Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 183.

¹⁸ United States Department of State, Documents of German Foreign Policy, Series D, V, 92.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 98-100.

a common frontier with Hungary ran afoul of German ambitions; François-Poncet noticed that it was "obviously" not to Hitler's liking.²⁰ Poland failed to heed any warning signs in the German attitude, which had, after all, prevented the realization of extreme Polish ambitions. When the second Czechoslovakian crisis struck in March, 1939, Poland tried to play the jackal once again.

Even before Dr. Hacha learned of his country's fate at Hitler's Chancellery, German troops had already occupied parts of Czechoslovakia, where on the pretext of forestalling a Polish occupation of Mährisch-Ostrau, they had themselves seized that mine-rich area.²¹

In March, 1939, the Hungarians occupied all of Ruthenia, thus establishing the common frontier with Poland that both countries had ardently desired. But Slovakia, in theory independent, became in reality a German protectorate, with its foreign relations and armed forces under German control.²² Colonel Beck, with what sentiments we do not know, recognized Slovakia's "independence" on the very day it was proclaimed.²³

The Spring of 1939 also witnessed the German recovery of Memel. Fully three months before the event the Polish Government reminded von Moltke that Poland had certain

²⁰ André François-Poncet, The Fateful Years, Memoirs of a French Ambassador in Berlin, 1933-1938, tr. Jacques LeClereq (New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949), p. 284.

²¹ Henderson, p. 217.

²² Wiskemann, p. 183.

²³ Wheeler-Bennett, p. 371.

economic and shipping interests in Memel, and that no matter what happened she assumed those interests would be respected. About Memel the Poles had nothing more to say, and indeed, there was no German-Polish dispute²⁴ over German seizure of the territory.

The Austrian Anschluss, the German recovery of Memel, and the annexation of the Sudeten areas of Czechoslovakia represented a partial fulfillment of the Nazi program of incorporating German areas outside the Reich into the "folkish State." The further realization of that goal waited upon a new German-Polish settlement. The incorporation of Bohemia and Moravia into the Reich and the reduction of Slovakia to the status of a puppet-state represented the beginnings of a new "Drang nach Osten," the conquest of Lebensraum. The pursuit of that goal, too, required a new relationship between Germany and Poland. During the first Czechoslovakian crisis, while Poland was Hitler's willing accomplice in crime, Germany made its first attempts to secure new arrangements on the German-Polish frontiers. By March, 1939, the Reich had probably already determined upon the obliteration of independent Poland. Definite plans for aggression against Poland were already a year old when the great German-Polish crisis began to take form late in 1938.

²⁴ Ernst von Weizsäcker, Memoirs of Ernst von Weizsäcker, tr. John Andrews (Chicago, Henry Regnery Company, 1951), p. 178.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Plot Against Poland, 1937-1939

From November, 1937, the Nazis had a definite plan for action against Poland, and while the evidence will not support the thesis that this plan necessarily entailed military aggression, it is fair to say that essentially the German plans presented the Poles with only two alternatives: either they would have to yield to certain German demands, and accept the role of satellite, or they would have to face the full force of a German onslaught.

On June 29, 1937, in his "Directive for unified preparation for War," the Reich-Minister for War and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces reported:

The general political position justifies the supposition that Germany need not consider an attack from any side. Grounds for this are, in addition to the lack of desire for war in almost all Nations, particularly the Western Powers, the deficiencies in the preparedness for war of a number of States, and of Russia in particular. ¹

Within a few months Adolf Hitler was to decide that the period of German preparation for action had come to an end, and that the time for action itself had arrived.

¹ Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, 8 vols. (Washington, United States Printing Office, 1946), I, 613.

On November 5, 1937, the Führer met in the Reich Chancellery with his top military and political aides, Hermann Göring, Constantin von Neurath, Admiral Erich Raeder, General von Fritsch, and Generalfeldmarschall von Blomberg. Colonel Hossbach, Hitler's adjutant, prepared a memorandum on this meeting at which the Führer proposed as the subject of discussion "fundamental ideas on the possibilities and necessities of expanding foreign policy..."² Hitler stated that if he died, the ideas he was about to advance were to be understood as constituting his "last will and testament."³

The policy aim of Germany, said Hitler, must be to achieve the security of the Reich and the preservation and propagation of the nation; it was, he said, therefore a question of Lebensraum. Hitler then proceeded to argue that neither a policy of autarchy nor an increased share in world industry and commerce could guarantee to the German nation the necessary foods for its preservation. Mixed results might be expected from either of those policies, he said, but in the long run neither policy could satisfy German requirements.⁴ After an almost unintelligible discussion of geopolitical and economic theories,

² Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, I, 377.

³ Ibid., p. 377.

⁴ Ibid., p. 377.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 378-379.

the Führer concluded that German policy had to aim at acquiring more Lebensraum.⁶

In considering the questions of where, how and when this "living-space" was to be obtained Hitler cynically observed that "The question for Germany is where the greatest possible conquest could be made at the lowest cost."⁷ The coveted area was, generally, in Central Europe, and since both England and France were recognized as "hateful foes" who would oppose both German overseas expansion and a "German colossus in the center of Europe,"⁸ he concluded that "The German question can be solved only by way of force....We must place force with risk at the head of our program."⁹

Hitler then proceeded to weight the relative strength of Germany and her prospective foes, and finally remarked that Germany could wait no longer to act.¹⁰ The "security" of the Reich, he said, demanded that Austria and Czecho-slovakia be conquered first, since they flanked Germany; furthermore the large German populations in those countries would provide the Reich with troops, and the fields would supply it with foodstuffs.¹¹ It was quite clear, from the

⁶ Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, I, 380.

⁷ Ibid., p. 380.

⁸ Ibid., p. 380.

⁹ Ibid., p. 382.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 383.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 383.

whole tenor of Hitler's statements, that the proposed conquests of Austria and Czechoslovakia were not seen as ends in themselves, but rather as means for the realization of even more ambitious conquests.

On the very day of this fateful meeting in the Chancellery the Polish Ambassador in Berlin was received in audience by Hitler, and in the communique issued after the interview it was stated that the two powers should continue to live at peace.¹³ Yet, before eight weeks had passed Mackensen became the new German Ambassador to Rome; before leaving to take up his post, Mackensen saw Hitler, and later told von Weizsäcker that the Führer had told him that the Sudetens and Baltics were Germany's goal, and that the Corridor and border states were "eventually" of interest to Germany. On this occasion Hitler disavowed any desire to rule over non-Germans, but stated that if he did in fact come to do so, it would be over non-Germans in the border states. The Führer told Mackensen that Italy was to receive a free hand in the Mediterranean and Germany in the North-east.¹⁴

¹³ International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal, 42 vols. (Nuremberg, Germany, Secretariat of the International Military Tribunal, 1949), XIX, 408.

¹³ Office of the United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, I, 677.

¹⁴ Ernst von Weizsäcker, Memoirs of Ernst von Weizsäcker, tr. John Andrews (Chicago, Henry Regnery Company, 1951), p. 129.

In March, 1938, just after the Austrian Anschluss, German shop windows began to display maps setting forth the eventual boundaries of the Third Reich. Included within these frontiers were portions of Czechoslovakia and Poland, German Switzerland, most of Holland, Alsace-Lorraine and Flemish Belgium.¹⁵ A Luftwaffe map appearing in May depicted German air bases within "assumed" frontiers of the Reich; these bases were located in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Austria and Hungary.¹⁶

On April 15, 1938, Göring pointed out to Mussolini and Count Ciano that possession of Bohemia and Moravia would make possible an attack on Poland.¹⁷ Polish collaboration in Nazi aggression in no way won the gratitude of the Reich. After the Austrian crisis, during which Poland had remained unalarmed, the German Foreign Ministry suspected that Warsaw was seeking to establish hegemony over Lithuania.¹⁸ Despite the fact that during the "May Crisis"

¹⁵ John Chamberlain, Sidney B. Fay and Others, eds., Mein Kampf, Complete and Unabridged, Fully Annotated, by Adolf Hitler (New York, Reynal and Hitchcock, 1939), p. 601.

¹⁶ Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, I, 679.

¹⁷ International Military Tribunal, XIX, 411.

¹⁸ United States Department of State, Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, from the Archives of the German Foreign Office; Series D (1937-45), "From Neurath to Ribbentrop (Sept. 1937-Sept. 1938), 6 vols. (Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1949), V, 41-48.

of 1938 Poland had shown that it would not permit Russian forces to cross Polish soil en route to the defense of Czechoslovakia, in August the Ribbentrop Ministry noted that,

After the settlement of the Czechoslovakian question, it will be generally assumed that Poland will be next in turn. 19

During the first Czechoslovakian crisis Polish ambitions, as we have seen, caused annoyance in Berlin, and so during the second crisis the Germans took steps to prevent Poland from seizing certain areas.²⁰ These Polish ambitions caused Moltke to suspect, as early as the first week in October, 1938, that Poland entertained dreams of leading a block of Eastern States against both Germany²¹ and the Soviet Union.

Even after Munich there were men in Warsaw who apparently believed that they could trust Hitler's pledges not to threaten Poland. They had the Führer's promise of September to rely upon. In a speech delivered during the course of that month Hitler expressed his conviction that the Pact of January 26, 1934, "...will bring with it a

19 International Military Tribunal, XIX, 411.

20 See above, p. 96.

21 United States Department of State, Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series D, V, 65-88.

permanent pacification."²² It was the old, old theme, repeated to the point of tediousness.

Meanwhile, the major German-Polish problems had been developing along lines inimical to peace between the two countries. In these developments, too, evidences of a German plan of aggression against Poland can be found.

Despite the German-Polish Minorities Declaration of November, 1937, the condition of the German minority in Poland made no material change for the better in the months that followed. On November 25, 1937, the German Foreign Office noted that Polish Germans in Upper Silesia were being dismissed from industrial employment; on January 11, 1938, the Ministry considered that there had been no progress on the issue of the minority.²³ The growth of Nazi influence among the Polish Germans after the Austrian Anschluss was marked.²⁴ But on May 21 Herr Forster, National Socialist leader in Danzig, was instructed not to concern himself with the minority in Poland;²⁵ the time had not yet come for risking antagonizing the Poles. Still, there was

²² Norman H. Baynes, ed. The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April 1932-August 1939; an English Translation of Representative Passages, 2 vols. (London, Oxford University Press, 1942), II, 1513.

²³ United States Department of State, Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series D, V, 29-31.

²⁴ Raymond Leslie Buell, Poland: Key to Europe (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1939), p. 252

²⁵ United States Department of State, Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series D, V, 51.

a gradual worsening of the situation; by June 9, 1938, the Polish press was complaining of the treatment of the Polish minority in Germany,²⁶ and by June 17 the German Government was busy collecting a dossier on the condition of the German minority in Poland.²⁷

German documents prove that the German minority in Poland was being used, by 1938, to subvert the Polish State. A memorandum by the Office of Cultural Policy Department noted that the Foreign Ministry opposed the use of the minority by German military intelligence because it exposed the German element to too many dangers.²⁸ Too, in the autumn of 1938 the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle complained to General Haushofer that the position of the Germans in Poland was "intolerable;" in reporting this to the Führer, Haushofer suggested intervention in Poland, and Hitler replied that he "...did not intend to put up any longer with the conduct of our Eastern neighbors toward his fellow Germans."²⁹

By late 1938 Adolf Hitler was also anxious to bring an end to the Danzig problem in a manner satisfactory to Germany. Danzig, too, had frequently featured in Hitler's reassurances to Poland. In August of 1938 he had repeated

²⁶ United States Department of State, Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series D, V, 52.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 54..

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 112-113; document is dated June 9, 1938.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 125; document is dated November 12, 1938.

his pledge not to violate the status of Danzig or the position of the League there; on this occasion he once more played on Polish fears of Russia by reminding Warsaw of the perils of Bolshevism.³⁰ In January, 1937 the Führer told Lipski that National Socialism in Danzig would prove a guarantee of peace there and of good relations between the Free City and Poland.³¹

In September and October, 1937, while the German-Polish discussions relative to the Upper Silesian minorities regime were under way, the Poles made efforts to win over Berlin to the idea of a joint declaration on the status of Danzig. This Berlin refused to consider.³² On October 18, 1937, von Neurath told the Poles that Danzig had eventually to return to the Reich,³³ but on November 6 the Führer promised that there would in any event be no fait accompli in the Free City.³⁴ In

³⁰ Republic of Poland, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Official Documents concerning Polish-German and Polish-Soviet Relations, 1933-38 (Polish White Book) (London, Hutchinson, 1940), pp. 33-34.

³¹ Baynes, II, 1334.

³² United States Department of State, Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series D, V, 2-15, for the documents covering these remarks.

³³ Ibid., pp. 19.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 26-27.

January, 1938, Hitler told Colonel Beck that Danzig, as a problem, had "entirely lost its menacing character."³⁵

Later in January the Germans were surprised that the Poles expressed willingness to consider ousting the League

High Commissioner in Danzig;³⁶ in July Burckhardt, the

High Commissioner, exulted that Nazi control over Danzig

was complete.³⁷ So it was that during the period when Hit-

ler needed Poland's friendship he was lavish in his re-

assurances to Warsaw. But the Nazi tiger had not changed

its stripes: on October 21 Hitler ordered that, in certain

circumstances, German troops might occupy Danzig by sur-

prise; he commanded that preparations be made for this

eventuality.³⁸

In October, 1938, Hitler instructed Ribbentrop to open negotiations with the Polish Ambassador relative to settling all questions outstanding between the two countries. Talks were first held on the twenty-fourth of the month, and the problems then considered were those of Danzig and the Corridor. Unbelievably, Lipski took advantage of the occasion to press Polish ambitions with regard to Ruthenia. Ribbentrop promised to consider the

³⁵ Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, I, 679.

³⁶ United States Department of State, Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series D, V, 40.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 67.

³⁸ International Military Tribunal, III, 211.

Polish desires, and then proceeded to outline a proposed general German-Polish settlement.³⁹ Four days later, in a speech to the Reichstag, Hitler informed the world of the nature of these German proposals: Danzig was to return to the Reich, Germany was to receive an autobahn and a railway through the Corridor, both of which would have extraterritorial status for Germany; Germany would recognize Polish economic rights in Danzig, ensure Poland a free harbor in Danzig and free access to the sea, the boundaries between Germany and Poland would be regarded as "ultimate," and Germany would conclude a twenty-five year non-aggression treaty with Poland; Slovakian independence would be guaranteed jointly by Germany, Poland and Hungary.⁴⁰

Colonel Beck instructed Lipski to reply to Ribbentrop that Poland felt that the agreement of 1934 had passed the test, and to remind him that Poland had helped Germany during the critical days of the Czech crisis. After thus reminding Germany of Poland's friendship, Lipski observed that Danzig was vitally important to Polish interests as a

³⁹ Joachim von Ribbentrop, The Ribbentrop Memoirs, Introduction by Alan Bullock, tr. Oliver Watson (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1954), pp. 97-98.

⁴⁰ Foreign Office, Miscellaneous No. 9 (1939), The British War Blue Book: Documents concerning German-Polish Relations and the Outbreak of Hostilities between Great Britain and Germany on September 3, 1939 (New York, Farrar and Rinehart, 1939), p. 30.

Free City, and that for this as well as for domestic reasons Poland could not agree to "turn it over" to Germany. The Poles suggested, though, that the League of Nations statute concerning Danzig be replaced by a German-Polish agreement which would recognize Danzig as a German city while leaving it free; the Polish proposal would have continued the Danzig-Polish customs union. In this first reply to the German proposals the Poles made no official answer concerning the autobahn or railway, but Lipski⁴¹ thought that his superiors might not object to them.

Between October, 1938, and January, 1939, the German-Polish negotiations were in suspense. However, the German Foreign Office was none-the-less exceedingly busy. Moscow and Berlin agreed to reduce attacks upon one another in the public press.⁴² In December, 1938, Franco-German discussions produced a Declaration which, in the German view, "depended" on France dissociating herself from her Eastern alliances.⁴³ Weizsäcker believed, however, that Bonnet's understanding of the Declaration of December 6 was quite different from Ribbentrop's; Weizsäcker believed that the Franco-German talks of December, 1938, represented an

⁴¹ Ribbentrop, pp. 99-100.

⁴² Dewitt C. Poole, "Light on Nazi Foreign Policy," Foreign Affairs; An American Quarterly Review, XXV, No. 1 (October, 1946), p. 141.

⁴³ Ribbentrop, p. 92

effort on the part of the Führer to cover himself in the West, prior to new adventures in the East, just as in 1934⁴⁴ he had covered himself in the East.

It is difficult to understand how Ribbentrop could have thus interpreted the brief Declaration of December 6, 1938, unless in the discussions themselves some secret and as yet undisclosed understanding was made, or at least hinted at. In the Declaration the two powers declared their belief that their mutual friendly relations were essential for the general peace, that there was no territorial question outstanding between them, and that each was resolved "...without prejudice to their special relations with third Powers..." to consult together whenever peace⁴⁵ seemed to be threatened.

The Franco-German Declaration did nothing to reassure the Poles, of course, and on December 17, 1938, Polish Ambassador Lukasiewicz, reporting from Paris, told Beck:

...If the actual situation is analyzed from a purely political viewpoint, it must unfortunately show that neither the attitude of the government represented by Bonnet nor among Parliamentary politicians nor in the press is there anything to indicate the giving of new, vital

⁴⁴ Ernst von Weizsäcker, Memoirs of Ernst von Weizsäcker, tr. John Andrews (Chicago, Henry Regnery Company, 1951), p. 171.

⁴⁵ Republic of France, The French Yellow Book, Diplomatic Documents (1938-1939); Papers relative to the events and negotiations which preceded the opening of hostilities between Germany on the one hand, and Poland, Great Britain and France on the other (New York, Reynal and Hitchcock, 1940), p. 35.

force to the alliance with us...in case, for some reason or other, France should see herself forced to comply with her obligations to us as a result of the alliance that greater efforts would be made to break away from them than to fulfill them.⁴⁶

In January, 1939, Beck accepted an invitation to go to Berlin for a resumption of German-Polish conversations. In the course of these discussions both Hitler and Ribbentrop once more promised Beck that there would be no faits accomplis in Danzig.⁴⁷ Ribbentrop felt that "The results (of these talks) were not particularly encouraging, although Beck's attitude was not altogether negative."⁴⁸ Beck believed that relations between the two countries remained satisfactory.⁴⁹

Toward the end of January von Ribbentrop paid a friendly visit to Warsaw; afterwards Beck was convinced in his own mind that good relations between Germany and Poland would, as a result, be strengthened.⁵⁰ Hitler paid special tribute to the firmness of German-Polish friendship in a Reichstag speech on the thirtieth of the month.⁵¹ In reality relations between the two countries suffered a sharp setback as a result of the January negotiations, for Poland

⁴⁶ Germany, Foreign Office, The German White Paper; Full text of the Polish documents issued by the Berlin Foreign Office; with a foreward by C. Hartley Grattan (New York, Howell, Soskin and Company, 1940), p. 26.

⁴⁷ International Military Tribunal, III, 212.

⁴⁸ Ribbentrop, p. 100..

⁴⁹ Republic of France, French Yellow Book, p. 50.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 53-54.

⁵¹ Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, I, 619.

offered to go no further toward meeting the German proposals than promising to "ease and simplify" German transit through Pomerania; Poland would consider no "corridor through the Corridor," no autobahn or railway there that would be German property. ⁵² A note of complaint began to creep into German diplomacy: von Ribbentrop lamented the treatment of the German minority in Poland, and protested that the "...Corridor affronted German dignity." After the January visit of von Ribbentrop to Warsaw the Foreign Minister considered that a German-Russian understanding had become inevitable. ⁵³

In effect, German-Polish negotiations were deadlocked after January, 1939, and the talks were once more in a state of suspension during February. On February 1 Ambassador Lukasiewicz reported from Paris that French political opinion had undergone a profound change, but, he warned,

It would be dangerous and incorrect to assert that the French Government already fully appreciate (sic) the alliance with Poland and is determined to make it an important element in its policy. For the time being, it can only be ascertained that the French Government which avoids trying to bind itself too categorically, is showing goodwill...⁵⁴

On February 19 Poland concluded a trade agreement with Russia containing the most-favored-nation clause, and

⁵² Republic of France, French Yellow Book, pp. 53-54.

⁵³ Ribbentrop, p. 101.

⁵⁴ Germany, Foreign Office, The German White Paper, p. 40.

began to explore the possibility of an entente with Rumania and Jugoslavia.⁵⁵ Toward the end of February Count Ciano found Poland basically anti-German, but still dedicated to a policy of harmony with Berlin and still possessed of imperialistic aims all her own in Central Europe.⁵⁶

The German entry into Prague, in March, and the German occupation of towns coveted by Poland further compromised relations between the two countries. Lipski informed von Ribbentrop that the Nazi coup in Czechoslovakia was a blow directed against Poland which seriously affected relations.⁵⁷ Poland ordered partial mobilization at that time,⁵⁸ and its fear of Germany became apparent to foreign representatives in Warsaw.⁵⁹

On March 21 von Ribbentrop once again took up the German demands on Poland, telling Lipski that Hitler was prepared to guarantee Poland's frontiers once the question of Danzig and the autobahn was settled. Beck, meanwhile, had been invited to Berlin; instead he journeyed to London,

⁵⁵ Buell, pp. 349-350.

⁵⁶ Galeazzo Ciano, The Ciano Diaries, 1939-1943; The Complete, Unabridged Diaries of Count Galeazzo Ciano, Italian Minister For Foreign Affairs, 1936-1943, ed. Hugh Gibson, Introduction by Sumner Wells (New York, Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1946), pp. 34-35.

⁵⁷ See above, p. 98.

⁵⁸ International Military Tribunal, III, 215.

⁵⁹ Republic of Poland, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Polish White Book, p. 70.

⁶⁰ Republic of France, French Yellow Book, pp. 94-95.

where the British Government had proposed a "formal declaration" by Britain, France, Russia and Poland, announcing the immediate opening of discussions looking toward their collective resistance to any threat to the independence of any European state.⁶¹

There can be no question but that the German-Polish discussions entered a critical stage after March, 1939. By the end of that month, Ribbentrop claimed, Lipski had told him that "To pursue the German plans, in particular that for the return of Danzig to the Reich, any further, means war with Poland."⁶² The Italian Foreign Minister wrote that the Polish Ambassador in Rome told him that Poland would fight "if the Germans follow their usual unyielding procedure..."⁶³ *Nevile* Henderson asserted that from March on the Germans began concentrating troops and supplies along the Polish frontier, and that there was much talk in Berlin of reconstructing the old Austro-Hungarian Empire under the rule of Berlin.⁶⁴ Lipski telegraphed to Beck, on March 31, that "...the Germans have decided to

⁶¹ Ribbentrop, pp. 101-102.

⁶² Ibid., p. 103.

⁶³ Ciano, p. 58.

⁶⁴ *Nevile Henderson, Failure of a Mission, Berlin, 1937-1939* (New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1940), pp. 225-226.

carry out their program to the east without loss of time." ⁶⁵

Lipski saw von Ribbentrop on March 26, and found the atmosphere in the German Foreign Office very cold; the German demands on Poland were put forward again, and with insistence. ⁶⁶ Later in March von Moltke told the Rumanian Ambassador in Warsaw that the return of Danzig to the German Reich was "absolutely essential," and that the Führer's ⁶⁷ prestige was at stake.

In a lecture delivered at Munich, in 1943, General Jodl stated:

The bloodless solution of the Czech conflict in the autumn of 1938 and spring of 1939 and the annexation of Slovakia rounded off the territory of Greater Germany in such a way that it now became possible to consider the Polish problem on the basis of more or less favorable strategic premises. ⁶⁸

The first documentary evidence for planned German military aggression against Poland dates from April, 1939. On the third of the month a "Directive for the Armed Forces 1939-40" was issued by the German High Command over General Keitel's signature. Part II of that document is "Case White," code name for the operation against Poland.

⁶⁵ Grigore Gafencu, Last Days of Europe: A Diplomatic Journey in 1939, by Grigore Gafencu, Former Rumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Ambassador to Russia, tr. E. Fletcher-Allen (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1948), p. 42.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 44.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 45.

⁶⁸ International Military Tribunal, III, 171.

To the provisions of "Case White" the Führer personally attached three addenda, ordering that military operations must be prepared to begin any time after September 1, calling for a precise time-table, synchronising all three forces, and requiring completion of the entire plan by May 1.⁶⁹

On April 6, 1939, the unilateral British guarantee to Poland was transformed into a reciprocal, bilateral agreement,⁷⁰ and the Franco-Polish Alliance was confirmed, with mutual aid against aggression being promised.⁷¹ On the seventh Italian troops occupied Albania, and on the thirteenth Britain and France extended guarantees to Greece and Rumania, and on the sixteenth to Denmark, Holland and Switzerland.⁷² Meanwhile, on April 6 von Ribbentrop told Tiso that "...Poland must give way and accede to demands which we cannot renounce."⁷³ On the eleventh, when signing the "Directive for the Armed Forces 1939-40" in its final form, Hitler wrote that quarrels with Poland should be avoided "...unless Warsaw change her present policy and adopt a threatening attitude."⁷⁴

⁶⁹ International Military Tribunal, III, 216-217.

⁷⁰ John W. Wheeler-Bennett, Munich, Prologue to Tragedy, (New York, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1948), p. 377.

⁷¹ Ribbentrop, p. 103.

⁷² Wheeler-Bennett, p. 377.

⁷³ Republic of France, French Yellow Book, p. 118.

⁷⁴ Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, I, 622-623.

On that same occasion the Führer also wrote:

I shall lay down in a later directive the future tasks of the Armed Forces and the preparations to be made in accordance with these for the conduct of the war.⁷⁵

On April 19 the touring Rumanian diplomat, Grigore Gafencu, was told by Hitler that by entering into the new understandings with Britain and France Beck had "...joined up with the West," and had "sealed his own fate."⁷⁶ On this occasion Hitler also stated that Germany wanted the return of her colonies,⁷⁷ and boasted, "I intend to extend the German Reich to its natural limits, and no more..."⁷⁸ Just a day earlier von Ribbentrop had told Gafencu that the Reich had already reached its natural frontiers, thus filling its vital Lebensraum, and wanted only to consolidate and develop its "empire."⁷⁹ A few days later Göring told the Rumanian that Germany fully intended to recover its colonies.⁸⁰ Either Hitler's aides were not fully appraised of his intentions or Gafencu, as so many others, was lied to in Berlin!

On his way to Germany Gafencu had passed across Poland and spoken with Colonel Beck. Gafencu's record of

⁷⁵ International Military Tribunal, III, 217; italics mine.

⁷⁶ Gafencu, p. 72.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 73.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 74.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 59..

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 63.

Beck's remarks makes an interesting comparison with his record of the statements of the German leaders. Beck told Cafencu that, while he had always been more sympathetic to the West than to Germany, the Pact of January 26, 1934, acquired "special significance" from the "affinities of thought" between himself and the Nazi leadership.⁸¹ Beck admitted that he and the Nazi leaders had had an understanding to facilitate their mutual escape from "the complications of the Geneva procedure."⁸² The Polish Foreign Minister, finally, reaffirmed that "If they touch Danzig, it means war."⁸³

On April 28 Chancellor Hitler appeared before the Reichstag to answer President Roosevelt's peace appeal. In the course of his address the Führer saw as the one problem with Poland that demanded an immediate solution the question of Danzig.⁸⁴ Once again Hitler proposed a comprehensive German-Polish settlement; it was, basically, identical to the "unique, magnanimous offer" of October, 1938. The Führer found Poland's rejection of his proposals "incomprehensible."⁸⁵

⁸¹ Cafencu, p. 29.

⁸² Ibid., p. 32.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 41.

⁸⁴ Baynes, II, 1629.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 1631.

On that same day, April 28, 1939, the German Foreign Office handed a memorandum to Lipski terminating the German-Polish agreement of 1934; grounds for this action was given as being Poland's agreement with Britain. This agreement, said the Germans, amounted to acceptance of political obligations towards a third power which, in effect, unilaterally breached the Pact of 1934. Additional German grievances were Poland's rejection of the proposed Danzig settlement and its rejection of "good neighborly relations."⁸⁶

By May the more sensitive ears had detected the sounds of war. Polish Ambassador Wienawa, accredited to Rome, told Ciano that he considered war inevitable.⁸⁷ Neville Henderson considered that the Germans had become adamant in their views, and that only Beck could reopen the door on negotiations.⁸⁸ The so-called "Little Schmundt Report," which is undated, reveals that by May 33 the real issue at stake was not Danzig, but the extension of the German Lebensraum; according to this evidence Hitler recognized, by May, that the Polish problem entailed war with the West, but that he nevertheless determined to attack Poland at the first opportunity.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Ribbentrop, p. 103.

⁸⁷ Ciano, p. 82.

⁸⁸ Henderson, p. 243.

⁸⁹ International Military Tribunal, XIV, 37-38.

The "Little Schmundt Report" carries internal evidence that the Nazi leadership foresaw a possible delay of from fifteen to twenty years in the settlement of the "Polish Problem."⁹⁰ But, as already noted, that report was undated. Other evidence indicates, beyond a doubt, that by the spring of 1939 the Reich Government was fully determined upon an immediate settlement, satisfying all German demands, even at the cost of war.

During the summer of 1939 the German Army circles⁹¹ stated that an autumn invasion of Poland was certain. At that time General Keitel said that even the date for such an action had been set.⁹² On August 11 Count Ciano asked von Ribbentrop if Germany wanted the Corridor or Danzig; Ribbentrop answered, "Not any more...we want war."⁹³ So, while the tortured diplomatic maneuverings of the last crisis were maintaining at least a hope of peace, Hitler had apparently already determined upon war, unless, of course, he could by some last minute stroke of fortune win another Munich.

On August 22 the Führer called together his military captains, to give them a picture of the political

⁹⁰ International Military Tribunal, XIV, 37-38.

⁹¹ Weissacker, p. 189.

⁹² Ciano, p. 557.

⁹³ International Military Tribunal, IV, 567.

situation. At this meeting Hitler said:

It was clear to me that a conflict with Poland had to come sooner or later---I had already made this decision in the Spring...I wanted to establish an acceptable relationship with Poland, in order to fight first against the West...⁹⁴

The words "in order to fight first against the West" strongly suggest that even had Germany been able to realize an "acceptable relationship with Poland," that country would nevertheless have remained on Hitler's list of potential victims. This conjecture is given credence by a statement made by Hitler in November, 1939:

...I have doubted for a long time whether I should strike in the east and then in the west. Basically I did not organize the armed forces not to strike. The decision to strike was always in me. Earlier or later I wanted to solve the problem. Under pressure it was ⁹⁵ decided that the east was to be attacked first.

Hitler's final act of preparation for the war with Poland, a war which, he finally knew, would probably mean war with the West, was the conclusion of a non-aggression pact with Soviet Russia.

The reasons which impelled Hitler to enter into an agreement with the Soviet Union can only be surmised. Among the causes, certainly, was the refusal of the West to appease him any further; German dreams of hegemony in Central and Eastern Europe had, in 1939, finally aroused Britain and France to a willingness to fight. Too, Poland's

⁹⁴ International Military Tribunal, II, 287.

⁹⁵ Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, I, 152.

advance indicated that a piecemeal destruction of that country was not to be considered. Germany had either to abandon her demands or pursue them at the cost of going to war. Apparently, what the West was unwilling to give Hitler, Stalin would concede. The non-aggression pact with Russia, moreover, meant that a repetition of the two-front war of 1914 could be avoided.

It is impossible to trace here the Nazi-Soviet negotiations leading up to the Pact of August 23. Ribbentrop, as seen, thought that the failure of his January talks with the Poles made some such understanding with Moscow inevitable.⁹⁶ Stalin, in the spring of 1939, had in a public address remarked that even violent ideological differences between governments need not prevent their practical cooperation where they had common interests in common matters.⁹⁷ By July 27 a Soviet representative had agreed with an official of the German Foreign Office that Danzig should return to the Reich and that the Corridor issue, somehow,⁹⁸ should be settled in Germany's favor.

⁹⁶ See above, p. 113.

⁹⁷ Poole, p. 141.

⁹⁸ Germany, Foreign Office, Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941; Documents from the Archives of The German Foreign Office as Released by the Department of State, eds. Raymond James Sontag and James Stuart Beddie, Introduction by James Reston (New York, Didier, n.d.), p. 34.

The ultimate fate of Poland was more than hinted at in the "Secret Additional Protocol" to the German-Soviet Non-aggression Pact of August, 1939. This protocol contains the following provision:

2. In the event of a territorial and political rearrangement of the areas belonging to the Polish state the spheres of influence of Germany and the U.S.S.R. shall be bounded approximately by the line of the rivers Narew, Vistula and San.

The question of whether the interest of both parties make desirable the maintainance of independent Polish state and how such a state should be bounded can only be definitely determined in the course of further political developments.⁹⁹

Within a few weeks Poland was overrun by the Wehrmacht and the Red Army, and the Third Reich set about imposing a "New Order" upon most of that unhappy land.

⁹⁹ Germany, Foreign Office, Nazi-Soviet Relations, p. 78.

Summary and Conclusion

The re-creation of Poland at the end of the First World War was effected at great cost to Germany: Danzig, a German town of vital importance to Poland as an independent city, was detached from the Reich; the Corridor, Poland's avenue to the sea, cut Germany in two; Upper Silesia was divided along lines unfair to Germany, and, as a result of all this, a large German minority was left stranded behind the borders of the new Poland. Each of these facts gave rise to a serious problem, and for these problems no peaceful solution was ever found.

Polish policy was uncompromising in its determination to maintain the territorial status quo; nearly all elements in Germany were dedicated to a policy of revision of the treaties. Since neither country ever wavered from its policy, the two powers were never able to enjoy truly normal relations. But, during the years of the Weimar Republic Germany possessed neither the will nor the means to use force against Poland. The rising National Socialist movement, however, had no patience with the pacific policy of the Republic. Nazism was possessed of an inherently imperialistic and martial ideology; its rise to power in Germany in 1933 augured ill for Poland.

The foreign policy implicit in National Socialist ideology was that of a superior race, captained by an

absolute Führer, entitled by reason of its superiority to other peoples to the acquisition of Lebensraum at their expense, and obedient to no moral law, to no constraints other than Hitler's injunction to serve Germany. This policy entailed liberating Germany from the restrictions imposed upon it by the post-First World War treaties, the integration of the Deutschtum into the Reich, and then expansion to the East. This Nazi foreign policy was never changed. However, the relations of the Third Reich with Poland went through three clearly distinguishable phases.

From 1920 until well into 1933 the Nazi attitude toward Poland was frankly hostile and aggressive. Feder's Party program, written in 1920, called for an expansion of German frontiers to include German minorities within the Reich.¹ Many of Hitler's earliest speeches were devoted to castigating the settlement with Poland.² Mein Kampf³ contained a tacit denunciation of Poland's very existence; this fundamental Nazi antipathy to Poland was very vocally expressed all through the 1920's and during the first months of Hitler's rule in Germany. Then, beginning in the spring of 1933, German relations with Poland entered a new

¹ See above, p. 20.

² See above, p. 8.

³ See above, p. 54.

phase, intended to harmonize with the Reich's fight for "equality" with the other powers.

The struggle for equality was, essentially, a struggle to free Germany from the limitations placed upon it at Versailles. In this campaign Hitler anticipated possible resistance on the part of the West, and therefore he perceived the need for protecting himself in the East. Therein lay the basic cause for the German rapprochement with Poland, and under the protection of this understanding with Warsaw Hitler faced West, seceding from the Disarmament Conference and from the League of Nations, rearming Germany, and finally, in 1936, remilitarizing the Rhineland. With the Rhineland coup the Führer was able to proclaim the struggle for German equality won.⁴

In 1937 the German military leaders were able to report to their Führer that the Reich need fear no attack, that the potential foes of Germany lacked both the will and the means to fight.⁵ Hitler then decided that the time had come to integrate the Deutschtum into the Reich and to prepare for expansion into the German Lebensraum in the East.⁶

⁴ See above, p. 81.

⁵ See above, p. 98.

⁶ See above, pp. 99-100.

The Austrian Anschluss, the annexation of the Sudeten German areas of Czechoslovakia, and of Memel, represented the gathering of the Deutschtum into the "folkish state;" these actions were examples of Alfred Rosenberg's volkische Imperialismus,⁷ but they were also acts preparatory to the conquest of Lebensraum. The Austrian coup helped prepare the way for the assault upon Czechoslovakia,⁸ and that, in turn, made possible the aggression against Poland; Hitler boasted, in November, 1939:

The next step was Bohemia, Moravia and Poland....It was clear to me from the first moment that I could not be satisfied with the Sudeten-German territory. That was only a partial solution. The decision to march into Bohemia was made. Then followed the erection of the Protectorate and with that the basis for the action against Poland was laid.⁹

But until the very moment arrived for pressing his demands upon Poland Hitler needed to keep Europe divided. Polish neutrality at the time of the Austrian crisis matured into Polish collaboration in aggression at the time of the Czech crises. All this while Hitler seemed to be playing Warsaw's game: he supported, within limits, Polish imperialistic ambitions, he officially ignored the situation of the German minority in Poland, and he repeatedly assured

⁷ See above, pp. 47-48.

⁸ See above, pp. 91-92.

⁹ Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, 8 vols. (Washington, United States Printing Office, 1946), I, 563.

the Poles that he would never attempt to use force in revision of the German-Polish frontiers.

When, finally, Hitler made his demands upon Poland they appeared to be relatively modest ones. The Führer called for the return of Danzig to the Reich, and for an autobahn and railway across the Corridor. As the crisis developed it seemed that Danzig was the issue. In reality, though, Hitler's Reich was seeking to realize a fulfillment of the expansionist policy contained in its ideology. On May 26, 1939, two months after the crisis became acute, and more than three months before the start of the war, Hitler told Göring, Raeder, Keitel, and others, that

Danzig is not the subject of the dispute at all. It is a question of expanding our living space in the East. There is, therefore, no question of sparing Poland, and we are left with the decision to attack Poland at the earliest opportunity. 10

On August 22, 1939, while last minute negotiations were still under way, Hitler told his generals:

Destruction of Poland is in the foreground. The aim is the elimination of living forces, not the arrival at a certain line....Have no pity. Brutal attitude. Eighty million people shall get what is their right. 11

10 International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal, 42 vols. (Nuremberg, Germany, Secretariat of the International Military Tribunal, 1949), III, 125.

11 Ibid., II, 290.

In this order to his military chiefs Hitler revealed clearly his continuing devotion to the National Socialist theory of morality.

One has only to consider the fate of conquered Poland to realize the extremes to which Hitler went to fulfill the objects of his foreign policy with regard to that country. The four western provinces were incorporated into the Reich, the Government General in central Poland was put under German military occupation; plans for the thorough Germanization of the annexed areas included the deportation of the Polish intelligentsia, Jews, and dissidents to the Government General for eventual "elimination," the confiscation of Polish property, the shipment of Polish land-owners to Germany as forced laborers, and the settling of German colonists on Polish lands. Within the Government General the Polish population was to be exploited, the material resources of the country seized, and the whole area to be "vassalized."¹²

On June 19, 1943, it was reported to Hitler that there was widespread unrest in the Government General owing to the rigors of the German régime there. Among the offenses of which the Germans accused themselves, nine are noteworthy: it was reported that the Polish

¹² For the substance of this paragraph see International Military Tribunal, IV, 547.

population suffered from "entirely insufficient" nourishment, that a "great part" of the Polish estates had been confiscated without compensation, that there were encroachments and confiscations in Polish industry, commerce and trade as well as in other fields of private endeavor, that there were mass arrests and shootings by the German police, a rigorous method of recruiting workers, an extensive paralyzing of Polish cultural life, widespread closings of Polish high schools, colleges and universities, that there was a "complete elimination" of Polish influence from all spheres of government administration, and that there was a persecution of the Catholic Church in Poland.¹³

Very early in his public career Adolf Hitler had campaigned for a complete revision of the post-First World War settlements. With regard to Germany and Poland that meant recovery of all that Germany had lost to Poland. This goal was reached by the Government of the Third Reich. Nazi ideology, formulated long before the rise to power of National Socialism, was essentially imperialistic; in their relations with Poland the Nazis followed that policy with remarkable consistency. In the fullness of time the Führer sent the legions of the

¹³ For the substance of this paragraph see International Military Tribunal, V, 79-80.

master race smashing into Poland; gone was all pretense at mere revision of the settlements of 1919-1921. In its place there was a frank adherence to the Lebensraum theory, with the attendant systematic enslavement of the "inferior" Poles. The fanatical nationalism of the Nazis brought ruin to Poland; it brought destruction to the Third Reich, as well.

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