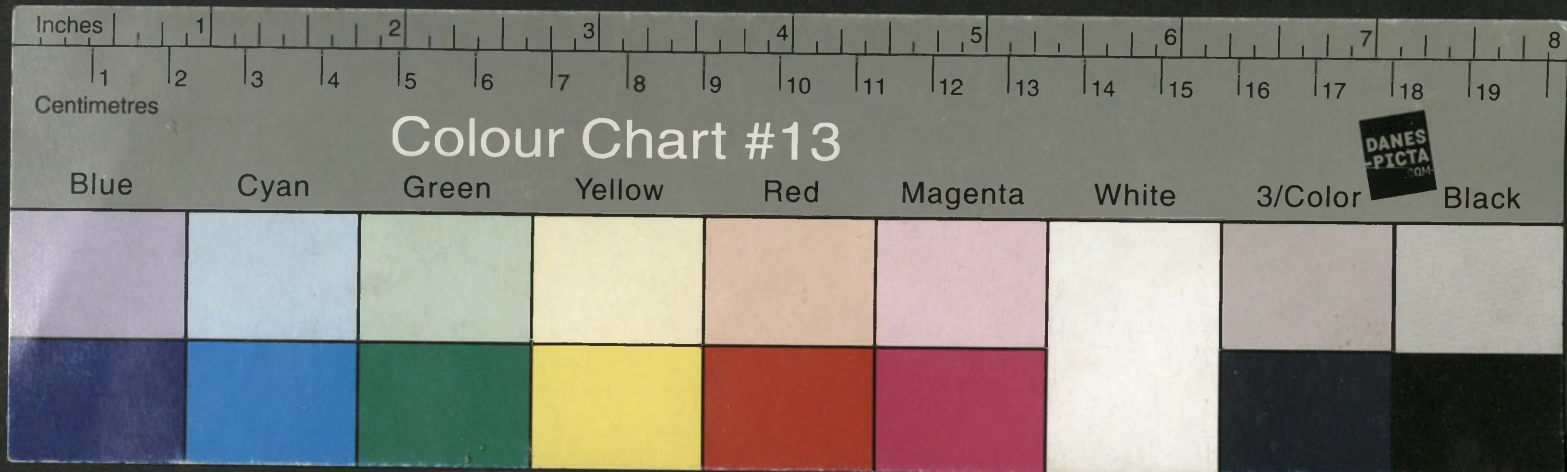




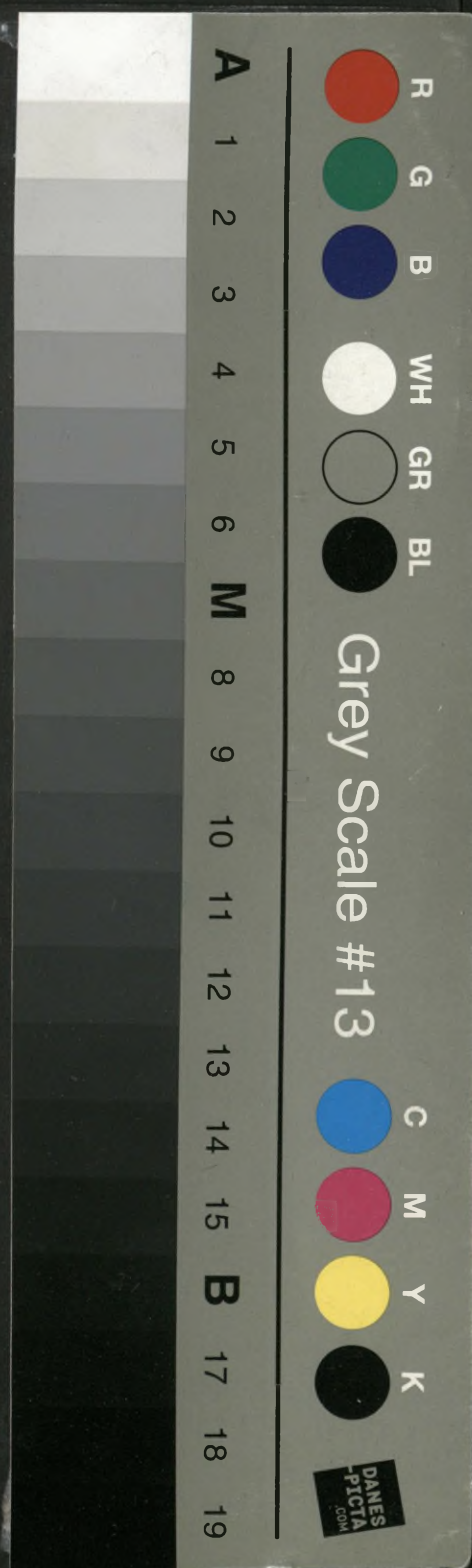
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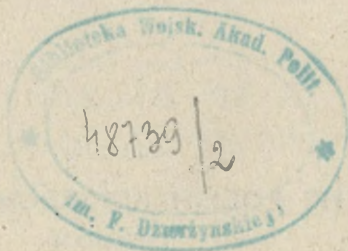
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I

A HISTORICAL OUTLINE

*"No person of Polish nationality was spared, whatever his condition, sex or age might be, but they put to death without mercy individuals of age and under age, including children and infants at the breast, so that the news of this cruelty should spread and break the nerve of others who would fear to offer resistance in other towns and fortified places, and thereby render secure their occupation of the said land. Seldom was the spilling of Polish blood attending the conquest of any place more profuse, seldom the slaughter more inhuman."*¹

These sentences are not a quotation from some "Black Book" on German atrocities in Poland during the present war. They happen to be a translation from Długosz, the great Polish chronicler of the fifteenth century, and they refer to the "occupation" of Danzig by the Teutonic Knights on November 14th, 1308. The cited text shows two things: that, in the opinion of Długosz, Danzig was a town largely Polish, and that German methods of dealing with their Eastern neighbours have not changed since six centuries. And if we consult the documents of the case brought before the Holy See in consequence of this outrage by Ladislas the Short, King of Poland, we read statements vividly reminiscent of reports issued nowadays by German news agencies.

Clement V, having by a Bull dated Avignon, June 19th, 1310, drawn up a long list of charges against the Teutonic Order, in which he denounced among many other offences the massacre of more than ten thousand people in the city of Gdańsk, the procurators of the order alleged that *"the mentioned citizens destroyed the houses of the town of their own free will and went to live in other parts."*²

When these bloody events took place, Danzig already looked back on an existence of about three centuries under the sovereignty of the Kings of Poland, at one time supplanted by the rule of local

¹ Długosii Joannis canonici Cracoviensis Historiae Polonicae, libri XII. Cracoviae 1876, III, p. 44 s.

² Lites ac res gestae inter Polonos Ordinemque Cruciferorum I. Posnaniae 1890, pp. 423 and 428.

dukes, and the blood-bath of 1308 marked the beginning of German domination in Danzig.

For a century and a half the city remained subject to the rapacious Teutonic Order. Even the complete rout suffered by these strange Crusaders at the hands of the united forces of Poland and Lithuania at Tannenberg changed nothing in its lot. But about the middle of the fifteenth century a "Prussian League" having been formed by the cities and the nobility of Pomerania, it appealed to the ancient Sovereign of the land against the Teutonic oppressor. A twelve-years war was waged in which Danzig took a most active part, and the Order having succumbed, Danzig, with the whole of Pomerania, was restored to the Polish Crown. The city received from Casimir Jagellon the fullest measure of self-government and entered on a period of great prosperity.

Although no more in power over the land, the Teutonic Order remained a troublesome neighbour. Some evidence of its depredations is to be found in appeals addressed to Sigismund I, King of Poland, by a canon of the Chapter of Varmia at the time engaged in administrative work—Nicolaus Copernicus.

The Reformation in Danzig brought about grave disturbances. The King re-established Catholic worship and Church property, at the same time restoring an overthrown burgomaster to power. But he also widened the basis of the municipal government by erecting a Third Order or Council representing the population at large. And this remained characteristic of Polish policy towards Danzig in that the successive Kings, whether Sigismund Augustus, Sigismund III or Sobieski consistently sought support from the people as against the merchant oligarchy. In 1569 the Diet of Lublin enacted the incorporation of Royal Prussia with Danzig into the Polish Commonwealth. The Constitution of the city was changed several times by Royal initiative, in spite of considerable resistance. Nor was the attitude of a commercial city towards its patrons in those days always one of disinterested benevolence. Danzig claimed and maintained a severe monopoly of trade with Poland in its exclusive interest and violently opposed the King himself when he tried to elude it. Polish efforts for the formation of an independent fleet were also viewed most unfavourably. These all too convenient ways of carrying on business ended in weakening Danzig itself, as it neglected its own merchant marine, satisfied with the role of an emporium much visited by Danish, Dutch and English merchantmen.

In spite of all that, the loyalty of the great seaport town towards

the Polish Crown proved to be unshakeable in the hour of trial. The Danes were the first to propose to Danzig that it should abandon its Polish allegiance and submit to their King. The Swedes twice attempted to draw it over to their side under Gustavus Adolphus and under Carolus Gustavus. Not only were these proposals rejected, but the refusal was upheld arms in hand, the King of Poland at the same time receiving important war loans. In the disastrous "flood" of invasion which broke over Poland in the middle of the seventeenth century, Danzig was the only post in Polish territory besides the famous monastery of Częstochowa which never surrendered to the invader. In 1658 the Diet carried a special bill of thanks to the faithful and generous city. This firmness in the attitude of the people of Danzig may partly be explained by the fact that before the outbreak of the cataclysm Danzig's trade with Poland had attained the maximum of its development. Timber and wheat were the chief objects of export, Netherland and English cloth the commodity foremost in import.

It was during the Swedish war that a new danger first loomed over Danzig. In 1655 the Elector of Brandenburg, at the same time Duke of Prussia, offered Danzig his alliance and a garrison for its protection against the Swedes. The city was hard pressed and the Council began negotiations with the Elector. It was the popular Third Order which discarded the idea of such an alliance and in the next year the Elector's collusion with the King of Sweden became apparent.

When peace was concluded in Oliva, Poland had regained sufficient strength to maintain her position in Royal Prussia unimpaired, and the Elector had to content himself with refusing his vassalage as Duke of Prussia to the King of Poland. But ten years of war and invasion had put an end to the Golden Age of ancient Poland. She emerged from them an exhausted nation and entered on a period of decline. It was her evil fate that simultaneously three neighbouring monarchies began a career of great ambitions and territorial expansion. Danzig was an object of special covetousness on the part of the House of Hohenzollern, since 1701 invested with royal dignity in the former Duchy of Prussia, whose possessions thus flanked Royal (i.e. Polish) Prussia on two sides. In 1704, during the Northern War, the King of Prussia concluded an alliance with the Council of Danzig offering to garrison the city for its protection against the Swedes. And again, as half a century before, the people of Danzig revolted and enforced the disrapture of the alliance. During the

Seven Years War Danzig, with great difficulty, avoided occupation first by the Prussians and later by the Russians. Having, however, secured his prey in Silesia, Frederic II proceeded to carry out his further plans of aggrandisement by means more powerful and direct. Thus he became the originator of the First Partition of Poland. By that Act he seized not only Royal Prussia but also a large stretch of country to the South on the river Noteć and united his Eastern to his Western possessions. But in a major point he did not obtain satisfaction. Catherine II, who had views rather on the whole of Poland than on any particular parts of it, would not consent to the annexation of Danzig by Prussia.

Frederic knew and said that : "*whosoever possesses the mouth of the Vistula and the city of Danzig will be more master of Poland than the King who reigns there.*"¹ His plans being frustrated for the present, he immediately undertook a fierce struggle for the city by other means. The Port of Danzig was seized by the Prussians under a far-fetched pretext, and both from there and from a Customs boundary established on the Vistula in the newly acquired territory a ruthless economic war was waged against Danzig. It lasted as long as the reign of Frederic II and was continued by his successor. It is significant that these efforts remained vain and that the people of Danzig stood up to this pressure and their ensuing impoverishment with astonishing endurance and countered most tenaciously all attempts at detaching them from Poland. When at last the fate of Danzig was sealed by the Act of the Second Partition of Poland they still followed their old tradition and rose against their Council and against the Prussian troops. It was by force of arms that Prussian domination was established in Danzig.

In 1807 Danzig was taken by the French under Marshal Lefebvre, supported by a Polish corps commanded by General Giełgud, and erected as a Free City. In 1813 it was taken by the Russians after a heroic defence of ten months, conducted by General Rapp. In May 1814 it was handed back to the Prussians. During the Congress of Vienna the Senate made most strenuous efforts to preserve the union of Danzig with Polish lands, but was not successful, and Prussian sovereignty was definitely extended to the once proud city. In this way Danzig entered upon the long period of peace which followed the Congress of Vienna as a somewhat insignificant provincial

¹ Comp. Smogorzewski, *Poland's Access to the Sea*, p. 229. London 1934. Allen & Unwin. Under the present war conditions it has not been possible to verify all quotations in the original sources.

town. The contrast between a grand and glamorous past, to which the very stones of the city bore witness, and the gloomy efficiency and monotonous routine of Prussian administration was nowhere more striking. Through all that period, extended over a century, Danzig remained a monument of a vanished order of things. Its economic importance declined relatively and even absolutely as compared with the paramount situation it had enjoyed at the mouth of the Vistula in former times. Whereas the export of wheat from Danzig through the Sund in the prosperous years of the seventeenth century had attained about 250,000 tons, the average for the years 1814-30 was approximately 72,000, and between 1831-36 only 42,000 tons. In 1819, in 1821 and 1822 hunger riots broke out in Danzig, whose prosperity was now entirely dependent on the state of economic relations between Prussia and the Russian Empire.

This state of things also found expression in the figure of population, which in 1817 sank as low as 48,000, and it was only in 1864 that Danzig again reached 78,000, which is the number of inhabitants it had already attained in the seventeenth century. Even when the Kingdom of Prussia first and the German Empire thereafter entered on their career of extraordinary prosperity and rapid economic development the share of Danzig in the fruits of this evolution was not what might have been expected. Not only was the city cut off from its natural sphere of commercial activity by the Russian frontier, but there seemed to subsist in governing circles in Berlin a residue of resentment or misgiving about this city which had been so unwilling to become Prussian. The Danish toll in the Sund was paid by the Prussian State for ships bound for Stettin since the Congress of Vienna. Not so for ships going to Danzig. Hamburg was linked to Berlin by rail in 1846, but Danzig did not become connected with the Prussian railway system till 1869. This system running entirely parallel to the Baltic coast as well as the canal of Bydgoszcz, deepened in the "sixties," diverted towards the West many cargoes, which would otherwise have gone to Danzig. Although as years elapsed the old thoughts of discrimination against Danzig doubtless disappeared, making way for the tender care of the Prussian Government for the Eastern Provinces threatened by the "Polish danger," the outbreak of war in 1914 found Danzig's total sea-borne traffic equalling one-tenth of that of Hamburg, one-third of that of Stettin.

The "Polish question" was in those days carefully kept out of all international discussions, but history and geography continued to convey their teachings to attentive minds. Bismarck certainly

belonged to this category, and Poland appears to have been one of those political nightmares from which he habitually suffered. When no more in power he headed a great anti-Polish movement. On September 23rd, 1893, he received a delegation of his new followers and then told them textually: "*For a Polish State with Warsaw, Danzig is a greater necessity than Poznan.*"¹

¹ Bismarck. *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. by Wilhelm Schüssler. Berlin, 1930, vol. XIII, p. 544.

II

DANZIG AT THE PEACE CONFERENCE

IF such was the opinion of Bismarck, no wonder that when the end of the Four Years War came in sight the representatives of Poland in Europe and America, when explaining to Allied Governments what they considered to be the essential conditions of their country's restoration, laid the greatest stress on the necessity of returning to the old tradition and including Danzig in Poland's re-established frontiers. The Polish National Committee in Paris insisted on the urgency of sending the Polish army formed in France under General Haller to Danzig, and allowing it from there to bring its support to the new State, then in the first stage of its organisation and in a condition of helplessness, situated as it was between a revolutionary Russia and a convulsed Germany. In December 1918 I. J. Paderewski landed in Danzig from a British cruiser and undertook a truly triumphant voyage to Poznan and Warsaw in company of two British officers,¹ the first representatives of the victorious Powers in that part of Europe.

When the Peace Conference in Paris assembled and a "Polish Commission" was appointed under the chairmanship of M. Jules Cambon, this Commission, when instructed to report on the frontiers between Poland and Germany, unhesitatingly recommended the inclusion of Danzig in the Polish State (March 12th, 1919).² A special conference of British and American experts assembled on February 21st, had been of the same opinion.³

It is highly instructive to consult the impartial English record of the Peace Conference on the motives of the Commission in this particular case. We read there :—

"By far the greater part of Polish trade must pass by the way of the Vistula and the port of Danzig. Surely, if any nation has a claim to direct contact with the outer world it is the nation which is certainly

¹ Colonel Ward and Commander, present Rear-Admiral H. B. Rawlings, D.S.O.

² Conf. A History of the Peace Conference, ed. by the late Prof. Temperley, vol. VI, p. 259.

³ Conf. David Hunter Miller, Diary, vol. XIX, p. 85.

the largest and perhaps the most highly developed of all the new nations established or re-established by the Peace. Nor is this merely an economic question. If a powerful nation like Germany, whose history has not shown her to be over-scrupulous, is to control the main outlet of Polish trade, she will in the end make Poland a mere vassal. It is bad enough that the corridor given to Poland should be so inadequate in comparison with her economic needs, and it is a regrettable necessity that both sides of that corridor should be held by a hereditary enemy. Poland may, however, be able to live with German fingers on either side of her windpipe. She cannot live with a German finger in her throat. For the Polish nation the possession of Danzig in some form or other is a matter not of mere economic convenience but rather of life and death.

*On the other side it is impossible to claim that the retention of Danzig is essential to the existence of the German State. So far is this from being the case that it has been a deliberate German policy to restrict the development of Danzig, with the result that a city, which has a situation not incomparable to that of Hamburg, remains considerably smaller than the East Prussian garrison and university town of Königsberg, a result which is obviously not due entirely to the Russian system of tariffs. The German interest is, therefore, primarily one of national sentiment, and there is no doubt that, as a result of the historic connection of Poland with the town, her sentiment for Danzig is as strong as that of Germany." "It is only by artificial means that Danzig can be prevented from becoming what nature intended it to be—a Polish port."*¹

Unfortunately, these artificial means were to be devised by the Peace Conference itself. One member of the Supreme Council refused to be convinced by the Commission's report and its arguments. On March 19th Mr. Lloyd George decidedly and stubbornly opposed Danzig's inclusion in Poland, arguing that the transferring of more Germans to any other State was to be avoided, and being especially distrustful of Poland's capacity to establish a stable government.² The "Polish Commission," when called upon to formulate its opinion in view of the objections raised in the Supreme Council, repeated its former conclusions on March 20th and once more declared itself in favour of the union of Danzig with Poland, the British representative, Sir William Tyrrell, speaking in the name of his colleagues to this effect. The Inter-Allied Commission, under the chairmanship of M. Noulens, which in the meantime had

¹ Temperley, *ut supra*, pp. 258-259.

² David Hunter Miller, *ut supra*, p. 88 ; Temperley, p. 239.

visited Poland, on April 17th unanimously issued the same recommendation.¹ But the British Prime Minister failing to change his mind, a compromise had to be sought for, and it is this compromise which figures in the Treaty of Versailles.

In virtue of Article 100 Germany renounced in favour of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers all rights and titles over the town of Danzig and a territory which the Treaty proceeded to describe in detail. In virtue of Article 102 the Principal Allied and Associated Powers undertook to establish the town of Danzig, together with the rest of the surrounding territory ceded by Germany as a Free City placed under the protection of the League of Nations. The Constitution of the Free City was to be drawn up in agreement with a High Commissioner of the League of Nations, who was at the same time entrusted with the duty of dealing in the first instance with differences arising between Poland and the Free City (Article 103). According to Article 104 the Principal Allied Powers "undertook to negotiate a Treaty between the Polish Government and the Free City." This Treaty was to contain the following capital points :—

(1) To effect the inclusion of the Free City within the Polish customs frontiers.

(2) To ensure to Poland without any restriction the free use and service of all waterways, docks, basins, wharves and other works within the territory of the Free City necessary for Polish imports and exports.

(3) To ensure to Poland the control and administration of the Vistula and of the whole railway system within the Free City, and of postal, telegraphic and telephonic communication between Poland and the Port of Danzig.

(4) To ensure to Poland the right to develop and improve the waterways, docks, basins, wharves, railways and other works and means of communication . . . as well as to lease or to purchase through appropriate processes such land and other property as might be necessary for these purposes.

(5) To provide against any discrimination within the Free City of Danzig to the detriment of citizens of Poland and other persons of Polish origin or speech.

(6) To provide that the Polish Government should undertake the conduct of the foreign relations of the Free City and the diplomatic protection of its citizens.

¹ D. H. Miller, p. 85.

These provisions to be imposed on Danzig in favour of Poland were to form a substitute of the "free and secure access to the sea," of which President Wilson had spoken in his "Thirteenth Point." But the difference was very great and remained so. The working of this (Poland's only port) was to be dependent on an elaborate international machinery co-ordinating the rights of three different agencies: the Free City, Poland and the League of Nations. This arrangement had to be devised because its authors did not credit Poland with the capacity of organising a stable and efficient administration, but eventually they put upon her a task which would have been embarrassing for the departments of any old and experienced government.

If a truly happy collaboration of Danzig with Poland was to take place it was clear that the city would have to adapt herself to the new conditions and become as much as possible blended with the life of the vast country whose sea-borne trade was to be centred on her wharves. The setting up of this sea-port as a distinct body-politic helped to render rigid the state of things which existed in 1919, and to baffle such tendencies as might exist in Danzig towards progressive fusion with Poland, all the more so as German nationalistic passions and political calculations grasped every opportunity of countering that country's interests.

Among the principles of future relations between Danzig and Poland, as laid down in Article 104 of the Treaty of Versailles, one wholly failed to be put into practice, and that was the equality of rights for Polish citizens and persons of Polish speech (Art. 104, point 5). The authors of this article never seem to have suspected that the rights conceded to the State in post-war times would render it extremely easy for public authorities to deprive individuals of every possibility of action without incurring the charge of formally discriminating against them, especially if those individuals did not possess the right of citizenship. As for the Germans, they were past masters in taking every opportunity afforded them by the letter of the law for promoting their political plans; and in this instance they were careful to have the law on their side.

The rules of naturalisation in Danzig were based on the Convention with Poland signed in Warsaw on October 24th, 1921, in which Danzig undertook to grant the rights of citizenship to Poles in so far as their naturalisation was not injurious to the Free City "in any economic, national, social, religious or other respects." Such a restriction provided the German city officials with the easy means

of radically holding up Polish settlement in the Free City, which was to be foreseen as a natural consequence of the development of the port, and which would have contributed most effectively to the fusion of Danzig with Poland. On the other hand, it was sufficient to obtain an official post in Danzig to receive the right of citizenship, a provision which prepared the way for an almost unlimited influx into Danzig of persons of German provenance and a regular exchange of civil servants between the Free City and the Reich.¹

If the other points mentioned in Article 104 of the Peace Treaty came somewhat nearer to their execution than did point 5, they nevertheless underwent strange vicissitudes, always to the disadvantage of Poland. Point 1 prescribed the inclusion of Danzig within the Polish customs frontier. In the Paris Convention of November 9th, 1920, this simple provision was transformed into an elaborate Customs Union as between State and State, Danzig being called upon to form its own customs directory and personnel.

As for Poland's rights to the free use and development of the Port of Danzig, of the waterways, the railway system, etc., as laid down in the Peace Treaty, they were eventually also curtailed. On May 7th, 1920, the Conference of Ambassadors decided to suggest to the interested parties that it would be most useful to organise in Danzig an administrative council composed of representatives of Poland, Danzig and the League of Nations for the management of the port, the waterways, the warehouses and other installations. This was for the moment only advice.

But most unfortunately the negotiations of the Treaty between Poland and Danzig had to be carried on during the most disastrous phase of the Polish-Soviet war. On July 10th, 1920, the then Polish Premier, M. Ladislas Grabski, met the Supreme Council in Spa to ask that help should be given to his hard-pressed country, diplomatic in the first place, military if that was of no avail. It was then that among the conditions of intervention in the war with Soviet Russia, an intervention which was never to take place, M. Grabski was faced with the demand that the terms of the treaty to be concluded with Danzig should be left to the Supreme Council to lay down. Having been weak enough to consent to this demand, he learnt the next day that it was decided that the control of the Port of Danzig, with its appurtenances, would be entrusted to a Harbour and Waterways Board composed of an equal number

¹ Comp. F. D. Morrow. *The Peace Settlement in the German-Polish Borderlands*. Oxford University Press. 1936, p. 160 s.s.

of Polish and Danzig delegates under the chairmanship of a representative of the League of Nations. That Danzig should maintain a separate Customs service had been decided at the same time.¹

The procedure was truly an uncommon one, and the result was scarcely compatible with the provisions of the Peace Treaty. Rights which were conceded to Poland her Government was now compelled by undisguised pressure to abandon to a new entity in which she was only a partner. The inevitable result was the additional complexity of the conditions under which Poland was expected, "without any restriction," to make "free use" of Danzig's waterways and land communications. These half-hearted solutions concerning one of Poland's most vital interests made her, in the years which followed, one of the most importunate clients of the League of Nations and caused a formidable jurisprudence to spring up, the texts of which at the outbreak of the present war had filled as much as 18 volumes published by the Polish Commissioner-General in Danzig. An eminent French student of these matters declared some years later that it would be an exaggeration to say that the Paris Convention of November 9th, 1920, organised a permanent conflict between Poland and Danzig, but that it would be only just to state that it multiplied the occasions of conflict partly by what it settled incompletely, partly by what it left for later negotiations to settle.² And this was imposed on Poland by the authority of the Supreme Council of the Allied Powers.

If the main points of the status of Danzig laid down in the text of the Peace Treaty were allowed to undergo such unforeseen alterations, other laws and regulations were formulated quite visibly on the lines of Prussian traditions and German interests. The Constitution of the Free City subjected all education to the most strict supervision by the authorities, rendering private initiative entirely dependent on the good will of the City officials. Characteristically enough, in Article 105 it explicitly forbade the founding of private preparatory schools and enforced the abolition of those which existed.

Another important point which was left astonishingly vague in the status of Danzig was that of the defence of the Free City. The Peace Treaty placed it under the protection of the League of Nations (Art. 102), but failed to give any precise indications how this protection would be assured in practice. The Council of the League took

¹ Comp. Kutrzeba. Gdańsk. Warsaw, 1928, pp. 201-202.

² Charles Dupuis. *Le Statut International de la Ville Libre de Dantzig. La Pologne et la Baltique.* Paris, 1931, p. 185.

up this question on June 21st, 1921, and concluded that "the Polish Government was specially fitted to ensure, if circumstances required it . . . the defence of Danzig by land." It was also recognised in the same resolution that if Poland was prevented from exercising her rights in the territory of Danzig, that would be a major reason for military intervention. But precautions which would have made those rights secure in practice were neither taken by the League nor provided on the part of Poland. In case of urgent need the High Commissioner of the League would be authorised to invite the Polish Government to "ensure the defence of Danzig" or to "maintain order." That was the only defensive measure devised by the Council.¹ The Military Advisory Commission of the League of Nations had shown more foresight and given on December 1st, 1920,² the frank and plain opinion that Poland must be allowed to build fortifications on Free City territory in order to assure its defence.

Article 36 of the Paris Convention provided the possibility of unifying the Danzig and Polish monetary system, but Danzig opposed this as she opposed all measures binding her more closely to Poland, and in the end nothing was done to bring about a realisation of this reasonable plan. Eventually Poland found herself in the strange situation that in her main and only port a foreign currency was sole legal tender. At the same time, different provisions for State monopolies and a different system of indirect taxation prevailing in Danzig, forced Poland to maintain between herself and her "free access to the sea" a frontier for goods under monopoly as well for those affected by indirect taxation, in addition to a system of control of currency and draft.

The period which a recent writer has called the Twenty Years Armistice has certainly taught even far-sighted men many startling things and brought them many surprises. It was a period unprecedented for the rapidity with which apparently far-off possibilities developed into overpowering forces. But even if we make ample allowance for the limitation of the human outlook we needs must conclude that the Danzig settlement as laid down in the Treaty of Versailles was a monument of levity and of bad workmanship. The historian of the Peace Conference already quoted thinks that the "unnecessary vagueness of the solution adopted was no doubt

¹ League of Nations Official Journal, 1921, p. 671.

² Comp. Morrow, pp. 60-61.



deliberate.”¹ Vagueness, instead of a clearly established order, where opposed interests confronted each other and political passions were sure to be stirred, was bound to lead to endless trouble.

The “ Polish ” Commission at the Peace Conference showed foresight and wisdom when recommending decidedly and repeatedly the incorporation of Danzig in the Polish State. The decision made by the Supreme Council was not so much a compromise as an inconsistency. The Germans were asked to give up the city without having to abdicate their claims to unchallenged supremacy in its administration, while Poland was expected to carry on and to develop one of the chief branches of her national life outside the range of her executive power. A careful and impartial British student of the subject passed the following judgment on the situation thus created : The Peace Conference in Paris in 1919 “ did not by means of the solution contained in Articles 100-108 of the Treaty of Versailles effectively secure to Poland that free and secure access to the sea that had been promised to her by President Wilson in his Thirteenth Point.”²

¹ Temperley, vol. VI, p. 260.

² Morrow, p. 180.

III

DANZIG AFTER THE PEACE OF VERSAILLES

THE new order of things as provided by the Peace Treaty was not yet established in Danzig when it became startlingly apparent how very precarious Polish rights in that city might become, especially at moments of emergency when the very existence of the State would depend on their being exercised without hindrance. At the end of July 1920 when the Polish armies on the whole front were in retreat before the Russians, shipments of ammunition for Poland arrived in the harbour of Danzig. But the dock labourers refused to unload the munitions and threatened to proclaim a general strike of harbour workers if Polish workmen were brought in to do it. Fortunately for Poland, Danzig at that moment was garrisoned by British troops who, under orders from General Sir Richard Haking, unloaded the munitions which were subsequently transferred by barge to Polish territory. But this did not put an end to the riots and demonstrations in Danzig. The head of the temporary administration, Sir Reginald Tower, was so much impressed by them that he announced his intention of forbidding vessels laden with munitions to enter the port, a measure which would have been a direct infringement of the Treaty of Versailles.¹

These incidents lost much of their immediate importance through the rapid and complete victory of the Polish armies on the Vistula (August 1920), but they exercised considerable influence on Polish policy in later years. The eight articles in which the Supreme Council had tried to lay down as a basis for neighbourly and fruitful relations between Danzig and Poland were supplemented by the 40 articles of the Paris Convention signed on November 7th, 1920. To this again were added the 244 articles of the agreement concluded at Warsaw on October 21st, 1921. But these successive documents were not sufficient to clarify a situation which was complex and inconsistent in its essence. The result was that, as time elapsed, new points continued to come up for solution which could only be

¹ Morrow, *l.c.*, pp. 67-76.

solved by wearisome proceedings often drawn out for years and almost invariably implying appeals to the highest international authorities, the Council of the League of Nations and the Permanent Court of International Justice.

According to Article 104 of the Treaty of Versailles, Poland was to enjoy, "without any restriction, the free use and service of all waterways in Danzig for her imports and exports." When the conflict over the unloading of ammunition broke out, even Mr. Lloyd George, not remarkable for any special tenderness towards that country, declared emphatically that Poland had a right to receive her supplies through Danzig. Whether these were food or munitions made no difference.¹ Nevertheless it took eight years of laborious negotiations and legal controversies before a definite solution was arrived at. A depot was assigned to Poland on the Westerplatte, and all the conditions for its use were settled by an agreement of August 4th, 1928.

Another difficulty which soon emerged was to decide whether Poland would have the right to use Danzig, at the time her only serious harbour, as an anchorage for her ships of war. This question, known as that of the *Polish Port d'Attache*, passed through many phases and produced many fine legal distinctions. It came up several times before the Council of the League of Nations and was examined by the Permanent Court at the Hague. An agreement was arrived at in August, 1932, which was acceptable to Poland. It implied that sovereign rights over the port of Danzig reposed in the Harbour and Waterways Board.² But it took eleven years to introduce this convenient if somewhat singular fiction.

The Treaty of Versailles provided also that Poland should have the control of the postal, telegraphic and telephonic communications between her territory and the Port of Danzig. The agreement of Warsaw expressly provided that Poland would be entitled to establish a postal service with all the necessary installations. But around this there arose a vast controversy, which was settled in favour of Poland, but only after having been protracted many months, in the course of which the Council of the League of Nations was called upon to pronounce a decision, the Permanent Court of International Justice was consulted, and the Polish Prime Minister exchanged heated arguments with the President of the Danzig Senate in Geneva. Materially the whole

¹ *The Times*, August 29th, 1920. Despatch from Lucerne.

² *Morrow*, p.107.

thing resulted in the setting up a few post-boxes and assigning a sorting room at the Danzig railway station to the Polish postmen. If such were the difficulties of attaining working agreements where, according to all appearance, the Peace Treaty had laid down plain principles, it is clear that bringing about co-operation between Poland and the Free City was still more arduous where new rules had to be established, and where the texts of the treaties placed the advantage of actual power in the hands of the Free City.

As has been related above, Danzig had every reason to consider the establishment of the Harbour and Waterways Board as a marked concession to its interests and ambitions. Instead of the free use of those objects going to Polish authorities, as was provided by the terms of the Peace Treaty, it was put into the hands of an institution of which Danzig was a partner. What is more, it was stipulated in Article 20 of the Paris Convention that the Board would maintain the former personnel of the Port Services. This was entirely in favour of the German element in Danzig. In spite of this, or rather taking advantage of this privileged position granted them, the Danzig authorities and its representatives on the Harbour Board stubbornly resisted every measure tending to establish parity between Polish and German interests and influences in the management of the Port of Danzig.

Thus the introduction of Polish as the second official language in the documents and offices of the port authorities, the appointment of a Polish Director beside the German one, the formation of a separate Police Force for service in the Dock area, even the design of the Board's flag showing the Polish arms beside those of Danzig, met with unrelenting and partly successful opposition. Danzig further tried to exclude from the Board's sphere of action certain parts of the harbour under the pretext that they had in former times been dependent not on the State, but on municipal administration, and wished to forbid the Board to keep and publish statistical records, complaining of this as an infraction of the "statistical sovereignty" of the Free City. Whereas the Harbour Board possessed the character of an international institution so designed as to reduce the friction of the opposed national interests facing each other in Danzig, the Senate of the Free City never slackened in its endeavours to place it in the position of some private concern subject to control by their officials. How stubborn was the struggle between the Polish and Danzig members of the Harbour Board is illustrated by the fact that between 1921 and 1934 the president of the Board, a

neutral enjoying diplomatic privileges, was called upon more than 250 times to arbitrate on points at issue between them. A very important part of these litigious questions concerned the admission of a reasonable percentage of Poles to the services of the Board, a thing which the Poles always demanded and Danzig as constantly opposed. But this point formed part of a larger problem, namely, that of the Polish minority and the treatment of Polish nationals in Danzig, which was perhaps the most important hindrance to harmonious collaboration between Poland and Danzig.

After a hundred years of Prussian domination and severance from Polish lands, Danzig was no more the important emporium it had still been in the eighteenth century. Its population had begun by declining markedly, and when in the later years of that century the general increase of population in European countries had found its expression also in the figures concerning Danzig, the character of that city's inhabitants underwent a far-going change. While its seaport scarcely could claim more than a second-rate importance even among the harbours of the Baltic, Danzig had become (in 1878) the capital of the province of Western Prussia, then the seat of the command of the XIII Army Corps and been endowed with a series of offices and institutions characteristic of a big Prussian administrative centre: a district postmaster's office, a treasury office, a school board, a board of public health, a regional railway administration, a record office, a series of schools, including a college of engineering. This brought about a strong flow of immigrants from all parts of Germany, most of whom continued to draw their income from the Prussian State or from other sources not connected with Danzig.

The authors of the Treaty of Versailles did not fail to understand that, if a "Free City" was to be established in Danzig, something definite would have to be done to dissociate its inhabitants from their former dependence on Germany, and a special article of the Treaty (105) declared that all persons resident in the territory assigned to Danzig would *ipso facto* lose their German nationality. But this text remained a dead letter, as it was not provided with any effective sanctions, and both Danzig and Germany were only too eager to deprive it of any practical meaning.

In 1926 there were in Danzig 9,100 regular officials, not including persons temporarily engaged in government work, a figure very high for a municipal republic of 400,000 inhabitants. In addition to that, 16,000 retired German army officers and civil servants, as well as

30,000 people receiving old-age and invalids' pensions, resided in Danzig, the vast majority paid, not by the Free City, but by Germany, which transferred to Danzig about £1,000,000 yearly to meet these obligations.¹ At the same time the Polish minority in Danzig, which was not large, appeared to be decreasing instead of growing in numbers, although Danzig belonged to the Polish Customs area and was drawing most of its profits from Polish trade. In 1920 the number of Polish votes cast in Danzig was 9,000, ten years later only 6,000.

A group of population which grew in numbers in spite of all obstacles was that of "Polish-speaking foreigners." In 1929 they were 19,660,² ten years later they were estimated at about 30,000. But these were Poles residing in Danzig only on toleration and mostly engaged in unskilled labour. Among the obligations solemnly imposed on the Free City by the Peace Treaty (Art. 104, p.5) was that of abstaining from any discrimination "to the detriment of citizens of Poland and other persons of Polish origin or speech." But this principle remained in the sphere of pure theory. The same obligations were formulated in the Paris Convention between Poland and Danzig (Art. 33) in a way admitting endless argument, while in the Constitution of the Free City, as has already been pointed out, Danzig was allowed to bestow on its authorities rights amounting to discretionary powers in the question of naturalisation. The practice of expelling Polish citizens from Danzig and of refusing to register Polish firms, was one of the first subjects of Polish-Danzig controversy. On December 30th, 1922, the freedom of economic enterprise in Danzig was further reduced by a law forbidding the acquisition of real estate without a special permit, which could be refused without reasons being given.

In September 1930 the Polish Commissioner-General brought a decided and comprehensive action before the High Commissioner of the League of Nations concerning the treatment of Polish nationals and persons of Polish origin and speech. In addition to the questions pointed out above, he raised a number of further complaints about the management of linguistic affairs, matters of education and the general situation of actual inferiority in which persons faithful to the Polish language were placed in the Free City. The Commissioner-General charged Danzig with keeping up the worst traditions

¹ Morrow, p. 165, note.

² *Ibid.*, p. 109.

of national oppression which in pre-war days had prevailed in the Eastern Provinces of Prussia.

After an exchange of arguments before the High Commissioner in Danzig, the case eventually was brought before the Council of the League of Nations. The Council for its part asked the Permanent Court of International Justice to deliver an Advisory Opinion. This was done on February 4th, 1932, and the Court's opinion was not favourable to Poland. Such a result was to be foreseen, as the Peace Treaty had failed effectively to safeguard the rights which Poland was to enjoy. Her claim that, in a sea-port constituting her recognised access to the sea, her citizens should have equal rights with the inhabitants of that sea-port certainly appealed to common sense, but did not find confirmation in documents.

Although certain points connected with the treatment of Polish nationals in Danzig ended in being settled by way of agreement between the two Governments, nevertheless the legislative measures which Danzig adopted were the artificial means to prevent that gradual assimilation of the city to its new background and that progressive alteration in the character of its inhabitants which would have undoubtedly taken place under similar conditions in any other part of the world. For Poland this meant that she was deprived of the possibility of drawing full advantage from the fact that she now had a sea-port at her disposal. To achieve that end, complete liberty of settlement, of acquiring property and of founding commercial enterprises would have been necessary. Discouraged by the endless difficulties which they encountered at every step in Danzig, the Poles soon arrived at the conclusion that their best answer to the game played by the Free City would be to found a harbour in which they would enjoy the full right of sovereignty denied them in Danzig. This trend of thought led to the foundation of Gdynia.

IV

DANZIG AND GDYNIA

THE History of the Peace Conference has preserved a detail not lacking irony. Before the question of Danzig was settled, experts were called upon to make certain whether the construction of another harbour on the Polish coast was practicable. They answered in the negative.¹ It was perhaps fortunate for Poland that such an opinion was expressed at the time, otherwise her rights in Danzig would have been limited even more than they were. But it was still more fortunate that the opinion proved to be quite inaccurate. The idea of founding a Polish port independent of hindrances and complications likely to occur in Danzig first sprung up in 1920 as a consequence of the "munitions strike" of that summer. The whole attitude of Danzig, as it has been briefly described above, necessarily strengthened that wish. The motives were not only psychological and political, but also of a strictly objective order. The Free City, guarding its character as a German city much more jealously than its economic interests, did not offer encouraging conditions to Polish initiative for the increase of sea-borne trade. A most scrupulously impartial British student of Danzig-Polish affairs does not hesitate to say outright: "Danzigers had themselves to blame for the existence of the rival port."² And further, he explains his meaning in greater detail:—

"Under Prussian rule Danzig had largely lost the power of independent initiative. Hence Danzig merchants neglected to study the special requirements of the new Polish markets. Instead, they adopted the imperious attitude towards Poland displayed by their forefathers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries."³

And the requirements of the Polish markets were of no common character in the years which followed the reconstitution of the Polish State. Before 1914, industry in Russian Poland had worked for the vast Russian and Asiatic markets. Western Polish agriculture had

¹ Temperley, pp. 257-258.

² Morrow, *l.c.*, p. 125.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

provided the German Reich with its produce, Upper Silesia had co-operated with German industry, while Galicia had adapted itself as best it could to the economic conditions of Austria-Hungary. Now the country was reunited, while Russia, disorganised by revolution and civil war, ceased to be an important customer. Germany complained bitterly at having had to give up the provinces of Poznan and of Western Prussia, which she declared to form an indispensable part of her granary, and Upper Silesia, which formed part of her industrial equipment. It could have been reasonably expected that she would maintain her commercial connections with these districts with the greatest care. But the very contrary occurred. In 1925, at the expiration of the Polish-German agreement allowing the export of Polish coal to Germany, that country embarked upon a stubborn economic war with Poland, whose Western frontier, in addition to the Eastern, became practically closed to commerce.

It was then that sea-borne trade through the Baltic revealed its full significance for Poland and that the vast possibilities it offered began to be developed in an increasing measure. Coal was now shipped to Scandinavia, rye to Holland and Denmark, eggs and bacon to Britain and the United States. These new markets having been opened to the country's trade, they not only absorbed the existing surplus of goods, but helped the growth of new branches of production. The available harbours had to be developed, not only as to equipment, but also in their organisation. Gdynia, situated in Polish territory, presented facilities to the country's spirit of enterprise which did not exist in Danzig, where every step was balked and hampered by the prevailing spirit of political tension and suspicion. Danzig, which had the advantage of priority, of old connections, and well-established organisation, certainly held its own, but utterly failed to take the lead in Poland's economic progress, a part for which it seemed to be predestined. Gdynia, still in the phase of construction, became a great centre of varied activity. Not only were several new shipping companies formed there, but a number of establishments were built which Danzig did not possess, such as refrigerating plant, oil mills, a huge rice husking factory, vast fruit storage buildings, etc.

The attitude of Danzig in this instance was highly characteristic. The first contract for the construction of Gdynia was made in 1924, another in 1926. The first section of the harbour was finished in 1930, a second in 1934. The business-men of Danzig had many years to adapt themselves to the new conditions, to take advantage

of the new possibilities in addition to the many old assets of which they disposed. They might have in many ways forestalled the development of Gdynia and secured for themselves a first-rate situation in the economic life of Poland. In a report presented to the League of Nations on May 10th, 1929, the High Commissioner, M. van Hamel, expressly pointed out these great possibilities. He very judiciously added that, for the attainment of that end, loyal collaboration with Poland would be necessary.

But Danzig preferred an entirely different line of conduct. On May 9th, 1930, it made an appeal to the new High Commissioner, Count Gravina, in which it undertook to prove that by virtue of binding treaties the harbour of Danzig must for ever remain Poland's sole outlet to the sea, that Poland was under the obligation of contributing towards the extension and development of the port of Danzig and did not possess the right of making use of any other harbour otherwise than as a temporary reserve.¹ In a word, Danzig, which always insisted that it was a sovereign State, in no way dependent on Poland, at the same time raised the claim that it possessed a right of monopoly on all Polish foreign trade not passing the Polish frontiers on land.²

The legal case, as it was put, was certainly an uncommon one, and it proved too much for the High Commissioner, who appealed to the League of Nations for an advisory opinion by a Committee of Jurists. Their findings did not satisfy either side: the case returned before the Council of the League and was entrusted for further examination to a Committee of Experts. The report of this Committee was adopted by the Council of the League of Nations on May 10th, 1932. The report was not unfavourable to Danzig, as it stated that Poland was under the obligation of making full use of the harbour of Danzig and of not favouring Gdynia unfairly in the way of railway tariffs, harbour dues, import and export measures, or exceptional Customs rebates. On the other hand it very wisely abstained from endorsing any extreme interpretation of the term "full use," and went on to acknowledge that Poland's persistent encouragement of sea-borne trade had done much to spare Danzig the effects of the economic crisis which at the time was weighing in full on world-economy. The whole proceeding ended where it should have begun, namely by a direct Polish-Danzig agreement concluded in Warsaw on September 18th, 1933, providing for the

¹ Conf. Morrow, p. 131.

² *Ibid.*, p. 129.

repartition of traffic between the two ports on a basis of equality and the establishment of a Joint Committee for the harmonising of their development.

The documents connected with that controversy seem to show the hopelessness of basing economic co-operation on legal constraint, and they also put into evidence that the terms on which Polish-Danzig relations were established completely failed to create a clear legal situation. The Committee of Experts was of the opinion that goods produced by the Polish State, as well as imports destined for the Polish State, must pass through Danzig. Such rules are always apt to lead to further controversies, and Poles in general persisted in their opinion that the agreement reached in 1933 would have been impossible to attain had not the existence of Gdynia rendered Poland less dependent on the good will of Danzig. But in view of the Danzig complaint that the Free City was being "crushed out of existence by Gdynia,"¹ it is interesting to specify the actual state of affairs.

The representatives of the Free City were in the habit of alluding to the Prussian period as a time of unmingled prosperity and exemplary economic balance. But the average of goods cleared in Danzig in the three most prosperous years of the Prussian period was 2,500,000 tons. This amount was very far from consisting exclusively of piece-goods. It contained for a large part goods in bulk, and especially coal and coke imported from overseas. The totals of imports and exports certainly corresponded pretty exactly, but it is quite unfounded to present that relation as indispensable to the prosperity of a port. The volume of traffic is certainly more important, and a number of flourishing ports stand up exceedingly well to a strong disproportion between imports and exports. The relation between these two classes of traffic in 1928 was: 1:3 in Copenhagen, 4:1 in Cardiff, 1:5 in Genoa, 1:6 in Stockholm, 1:8 in Rouen, 9:1 in Los Angeles, 11:1 in Houston.

The lowest level of traffic in Danzig was recorded in 1922, when the total volume only attained 970,000 tons. But in the following years it rose rapidly: in 1923 it was 1,718,000, in 1924 it attained 2,374,000, and amounted to 6,300,000 in 1926. In 1928 it reached 8,616,000, and remained above 8,000,000 tons in the three following years, a figure considerably surpassing the triple of the best pre-war years. The economic crisis only told on Danzig in 1932, when the total of cargoes cleared fell to 5,476,000. This figure remained near

¹ Morrow, p. 134.

the average of the following years till 1936, but in the last two years before the present war broke out, 1937 and 1938, the total of Danzig trade was again over 7,000,000 tons. As for the Free City's share in Polish foreign trade, it oscillated with striking stability around 33 per cent., only once, in 1935, sinking to 28.9 per cent.

German writers on Danzig affairs, not being able to deny the remarkable increase in the city's trade in regard to volume, were wont to complain about its allegedly decreasing value. On this point it must be urged that the intrinsic value of goods transhipped in a harbour is in no way proportionate to the profit derived by the sea-port town from handling them. A consignment of gold is very precious, but there is not much to be earned on its passage through a sea-port. It was therefore on very good grounds that in 1937 a special Polish-Danzig commission made a study of what they termed the "trans-shipment value" of the different commodities in relation to Danzig and Gdynia. This value is composed of the harbour dues, forwarding costs, transshipment costs and other handling expenses. Other profits result if the given commodity not only passes the port but is an object of trade in the sea-port town itself. From this point of view the situation of Danzig was very advantageous, as it possessed a highly developed commerce, especially in the corn and timber branches.

The commission mentioned above concluded that timber, corn, colonial goods, herrings and hides were among the commodities which assured the largest profits to the City of Danzig. If we classify Danzig trade on this basis and distinguish "valuable" goods from less valuable ones, we discover that the traffic in "valuable" goods showed an uncommon stability.

In 1922, when the total of trade was only 970,000 tons, it represented 867,000; in 1924 it rose to 2,000,000 tons, and in the following fourteen years maintained itself in the vicinity of that level, only once, in 1932, descending somewhat below 1,500,000 tons. Three times, in 1926, 1928 and again in 1936, the sum of "valuable" goods transhipped in the harbour of Danzig rose above 2,500,000 tons, in this way equalling the total amount of the city's trade in its most prosperous years under Prussian rule; 71 firms in Danzig carried on the export of timber, while 11 sawmills handled over 100,000 tons of wood yearly; 70 per cent. of the corn shipped in the harbour passed through the hands of Danzig merchants, over 100 firms being interested in that branch of trade. The fact that these extensive concerns enjoyed remarkable stability of conditions all through the

years of the worst depression in the world markets was more than most sea-port towns could boast of at the same period.

But the big profits made by Danzig on the trans-shipment of "valuable" goods is no reason for admitting the thesis put forward by the Senate in its numerous complaints about Polish maritime policy, culminating in the assertion that the handling of goods in bulk only left dust for the benefit of the Free City. The Polish-Danzig Commission already mentioned found that the clearing of one ton of coal in Danzig brought in 1.4 gulden to the different agencies concerned. The amount trans-shipped in 1938 being 4,000,000 tons, the profit of the Free City from this one source was about 6,000,000 gulden. The profit was much higher in the case of bunker coal supplied to ships coaling in the harbour. In the same year the amount of coal thus disposed of was 800,000 tons, and the Danzig earnings on this activity amounted to about 4,000,000 gulden. These calculations did not, and could not, take into account the manifold advantages a sea-port town derives from the general traffic in its harbour and from which a vast number of people make their living.

In 1912 the number of ships which entered the Port of Danzig was 2,992, with a total tonnage of 970,000 N.R.T. In 1938 the corresponding figures were 6,601 ships and their tonnage 4,768,000 N.R.T., which means that the tonnage of ships cleared in Danzig increased five-fold since the Prussian days. Such figures do not seem to denote anything like decay or "being crushed out of existence." Of course, Danzig missed a great occasion when it failed to attract the whole of Polish sea-borne trade in the years of its strongest development. It has been shown above how much the Free City's attitude was to blame for that negative result. But perhaps the case was hopeless once Danzig was expressly placed outside the political frontiers of Poland. No country could be blamed if it refused, as Poland did in this instance, to make the biggest investments it could afford on territory outside its control.

On the other hand, when Danzig spokesmen put forward the complaint that the prosperity of Gdynia was built up on the decline of Danzig, this assertion was contradicted by facts. The development of sea-borne trade was Poland's biggest economic success during the "twenty years armistice," and there was certainly room enough for two harbours in a country of an area of 155,000 square miles and a population of nearly 35 million. The total figure of cargoes cleared in Danzig in pre-war days was 2,500,000. The sea-borne

trade of Poland in its most prosperous years (1928-31) was nearly exactly ten times that amount, and about eight times that amount again in the last years before the war (1937-8). Gdynia was not built on the decline of Danzig, but on the new-born sea-spirit of Poland.

The material development of Danzig harbour certainly testified to a flourishing activity, especially when compared with its state before the Four Years War. The port was completely modernised, the water along the wharves deepened from 4.5 to 9 metres on a front of several miles. In the place of 18 out-of-date cranes, 93 new cranes and conveyors were set up on the wharves. Two great new docks were built. Numerous loading and unloading appliances for timber were established. Many modern store-houses for corn were constructed. In order to meet the demands of growing traffic the port installations were being extended and improved incessantly. Quite recently the navigable channel was brought from 7 or 8 to 11 or 12 metres depth to render the harbour accessible to large vessels. At the same time the city itself was much embellished and enlarged by many thousand new houses, the population rising simultaneously from 350,000 to 420,000—*i.e.*, by 20 per cent.

In its manifold complaints about Polish policy, especially in the economic field, the Senate of Danzig entirely passed over in silence such difficulties and breakdowns as were its own doing. In its short history the Free City underwent as many as five financial crises—in 1923, 1926, 1929, 1935 and 1939. The detail of these affairs would be tedious to relate, but their general background is clearly discernible. Only the first period of difficulty in Danzig finance was to be explained by disorganisation of the post-war period and the devaluation of German money. In 1924 both Danzig and Polish currency were established on new bases and trade entered on a stage of rapid development. But Danzig at the same time took itself all too seriously as a "sovereign State." The Senate held the rank not of a city council but of a ministry. It was composed of 22 members, and the Diet of 120 deputies. Government departments were multiplied without any regard for economy, and the civil servants paid salaries considerably higher than in Germany, three times as high as the ones paid in Poland. Two years of life in this style were enough to force the Free City to appeal to the League of Nations for financial help, which it did in 1926.

The crisis of 1929 seemed to be somewhat more dependent on economic causes, as it coincided with the great depression of that same year. The High Commissioner of the day, Count Gravina,

when reporting to the League of Nations (March 31st, 1930), pointed out a certain decline in the Customs income and the difficulties experienced by all countries, Poland included, but at the same time he quoted the director of the Danzig Shipyards, who declared that for years a severe control of public expenditure had been necessary if a catastrophe was to be avoided. Meanwhile Danzig obtained an important benefit. In January 1930 at the Reparations Conference held at the Hague, its debts towards the Allied Powers, to the amount of 160 million gold marks, were completely cancelled. At the same time official salaries were cut down and the number of senators and deputies reduced.

But these improvements again were not to have lasting effect. On May 28th, 1933, the National Socialist Party took over power in Danzig. This was a signal for a new spell of reckless prodigality under the impulse of the "Gauleiter" Forster. Within two years the finances of the Free City had reached a critical point. In 1935 there was no other way out but to lower the value of the Danzig gulden to the level of the Polish zloty. This was done on May 1st, 1935. At the same time strenuous measures were taken to secure for the Free City a favourable balance of payments and in this way protect the rate of exchange of its currency. This was strongly advocated as a means of "preserving the economic independence and the Teutonic character of Danzig." It certainly might occur to an observer that the defence of a currency in the territorial limits of a single city was something particularly paradoxical. It led, as a result, to strong restrictions on the import of agricultural produce from Poland, where it was abundant, a strange state of affairs between a big country and its principal sea-port.

It certainly was a disappointment to some people to find that the Free City of Danzig, with its complete self-government, failed to become a stronghold of German liberalism when the rising tide of National Socialism flooded the entire Reich. Danzig legally linked with Poland, and not with Germany, might have, so it seemed, remained outside the upheaval of which this last country was the scene. But men who had a closer knowledge of things German knew that from the beginning there had been a complete misunderstanding between the founders of the Free City and the majority of its inhabitants. The authors of the Peace Treaty appear to have thought they could revive at the mouth of the Vistula a not inglorious past. They imagined they were establishing there a Polish sea-port of German language. They did not realise that Swiss, Alsatian or

Canadian examples, and historical reminiscences were completely lost on Germans reared in the school of Bismarck. An English author, often quoted above, very pertinently remarks : "*It is hardly too much to say that the Senate of the Free City has become to all intents and purposes a German provincial administration.*"¹

This was in no way a new symptom. Never did the Free City develop anything like an independent spirit or show any desire to build on the foundations laid by the Peace Treaty. Its political life showed no deviation from the course of events in Germany. It was willing to enjoy any advantages offered by the new conditions, claimed the monopoly of Polish sea-borne trade, but did not consider that this entailed any change of attitude on its part. All the rights conceded to Danzig continued to be used against Poland, but never produced any reaction against German tutelage.

Scarcely had Hitler become master of the Reich (January 30th, 1933) when his party triumphed in Danzig (May 28th). And at the time of the elections which carried them to power the Chancellor of the Reich unhesitatingly delivered a speech to the Danzig electorate.² The improvement of relations between Germany and Poland, most skilfully staged by Hitler and culminating in the Pact of Non-Aggression signed on January 26th, 1934, in no way restricted the ruthlessness of Nazi policy in Danzig.

Members of the opposition, often assaulted by Nazis, ceased to enjoy any protection on the part of the police, their newspapers, one by one, were forbidden, the political parties dissolved, arbitrary arrests occurred more and more frequently, rumours of political murders circulated, membership of the National Socialist Party was declared obligatory for civil servants and Government employees, and the Constitution of the Free City became a dead letter. In June 1936 the High Commissioner was deliberately disregarded by officers of the German cruiser *Leipzig*, and the President of the Senate, Herr Greiser, being summoned to Geneva to give explanations on the conditions prevailing in the Free City, plainly defied the League of Nations, pronounced truculent speeches and raised demands in the name "of the whole German people" for the revision of the status of Danzig. The High Commissioner's attitude appeared to be particularly resented because he protested against the ill-treatment of the opposition parties. In August 1936 every visitor wishing to enter his door was obliged to present his identity papers

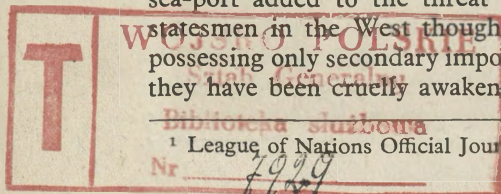
¹ Morrow, p. 160.

² *Ibid.*, p. 467.

to a police officer. Soon war began to be waged on the Jews, and the numerous Jewish firms were forced to liquidate. The assurances given to Poland in this respect in Clause VI of the Agreement of September 18th, 1933,¹ proved as deceptive as so many others have since done. An important part of Danzig economic life was wantonly destroyed in that way. At the same time an abnormally large sphere of enterprise was subjected to State control and State management.

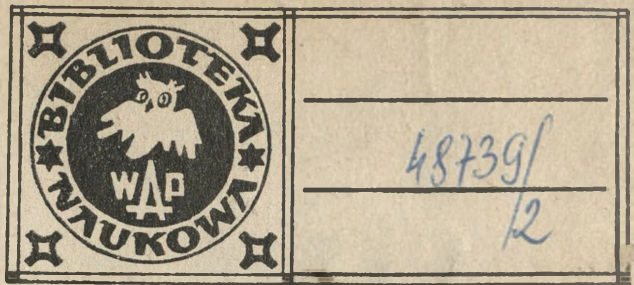
After the incidents of 1936 the League of Nations, according to the Peace Treaty, called upon to extend its protection to the Free City of Danzig, practically ceased to count in Danzig affairs. Poland, prevented from ever adopting rigorous measures where Danzig was concerned by her desire to remain on good terms with Germany, was for some time yet to be deluded by the assurances often repeated, by representatives of Danzig that all outstanding questions would most easily be settled by way of direct negotiations between the two Governments. However, months and years passed without the points at issue ever being settled, until at last, in 1938, the Senate declared that it was not in a position to consent to any of the Polish demands. In 1939, making a mockery of its Constitution which prohibited it ever becoming a military base, the Free City began military preparations on a grand scale, at the same time raising the charge against Polish Customs inspectors of carrying on espionage. Since the spring of that year the situation was tense to breaking point and the course of events pointed plainly towards an inevitable outbreak—inevitable because of Germany's decision to tear up another scrap of paper, her Pact of Non-Aggression with Poland, and bring that country into subjection by surrender or by conquest. Danzig was only a pretext for bringing about the conflict, and it is vain to speculate what course events might have taken if, twenty years before, the problem of Danzig had been solved with more courage and consistency, perhaps with a keener sense of responsibility as well. But doubts will always subsist on this point, as the intricate state of affairs in Danzig unquestionably served Hitler's plans, and the denial of any military safeguard for Poland in the area of this sea-port added to the threat to her Northern confines. If some statesmen in the West thought this was a distant point of Europe possessing only secondary importance for the safety of their countries, they have been cruelly awakened to a more correct view.

¹ League of Nations Official Journal, November, 1933, pp. 1542-5.



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