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GERMAN DESIGNS ON POMERANIA

BY

DR HENRY STRASBURGER

FORMER COMMISSIONER GENERAL OF POLAND
IN DANZIG



PUBLISHED BY THE BALTIC INSTITUTE
TORUŃ (POLAND)

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AN ANALYSIS OF GERMANY'S
REVISIONISTIC POLICY

BY

DR HENRY STRASBURGER

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CHAPTER 1

WHY GERMANY AIMS AT THE ACQUISITION OF POMERANIA

THE GERMAN OFFENSIVE

"If German policy can be summed up in the single word revision, French is similarly comprehended in the term security" declares Frank Simonds,¹ America's most keen-sighted authority on conditions in Europe. The central point of Germany's revisionist policy is the revision of her eastern frontier by the annexation of Pomerania.

The above statement has become too obvious to require proof, although not long ago it appeared doubtful to so experienced an authority on German-Polish relations as the *Times* correspondent, Augur,² author of "Eagles Black and White." The German demand for the surrender of Pomerania appeared to him then so fantastic that he considered it a mere tactical move, put forward in order to obtain in return for its withdrawal the renewal of the Convention concerning minority rights and the equal use of the German language in Upper Silesia, provided for up to the year 1934 by the League of Nations.

This theory had already become difficult to believe in at the time when Augur put it forward.

¹ F. Simonds: *Can Europe Keep the Peace?* Hamish Hamilton, London — New York, 1932, p. 154.

² Articles printed in *Kurjer Poranny* (Warsaw, 1931).

Public opinion in Germany had been whipped up to such a fever-heat on the question of the annexation of Pomerania, that it appeared hardly probable that any German government would withdraw the demand in return for other legal or political concessions. Since that time political documents have been published putting it beyond doubt that Germany considers the revision of her eastern frontier the main object of her policy.

An objective critic might expect Germany's post-war policy, tending to the rebuilding of her economic power and influence in the East, to follow a completely different road; that of peaceful economic co-operation with Poland. Germany's eastern policy, however, is directed primarily by emotion and sentiment. Had it been directed by economic reason, Poland's initial economic and commercial dependence on Germany and her difficulty in setting up the whole administrative machinery of government, might have supplied a splendid field for such a policy. In 1922 Germany absorbed 50 per cent. of Poland's exports and accounted for 43 per cent. of her imports. In particular she afforded a market for the two principal exports of coal and agricultural produce and supplied the bulk of Poland's import of manufactured goods. Possessed, however, by her belief in the Poles incapacity to govern themselves and avoid economic disaster if deprived of German support, Germany decided to make immediate and overbearing use of her economic preponderance.

In 1925 the treaty allowing Poland to export 500,000 tons of coal monthly from Polish Upper Silesia into Germany expired. Its renewal was made dependent on Poland's granting Germany non-economic concessions. This revealing of the mailed fist had the contrary effect of awakening Poland to the danger of economic dependence on Germany and driving her to seek an outlet for her exports elsewhere. From this time, indeed, dates the rapid increase of Poland's maritime trade and the development of her port and merchant fleet. Poland replied to the embargo on her coal by the restriction of certain imports from Germany and this provoked a complete German boycott of Polish goods. The Polish-German frontier remained closed for most classes of goods until 1930 and for some is closed still.

Germany, then, did not aim at peaceful penetration and ascendancy; she based her hopes on a complete downfall of the Polish State, such as the German contempt for Slavonic peoples encouraged her to anticipate. This is still further illustrated by the fact that on the restoration of the Polish State the Poles, having been excluded from official positions and deprived of administrative experience during the century and a half of the Partition of Poland (except in the Austrian provinces) appealed to Berlin for permission to retain a certain percentage of the former German civil servants. Germany refused the permission in her certainty of a complete Polish failure, thereby turning down one more opportunity of peaceful ascendancy.

This certainty has ceased to exist. Even in Berlin the Polish State is recognized as a fact that has come to stay. The road is open to Germany, no longer for economic ascendancy, but for a mutually profitable economic alliance. Germany's ambitions of territorial advancement to the East still stand in the way of this.

GERMAN POLITICAL MYSTICISM

What sort of policy, however, might be expected to answer best to Germany's economic interests remains a theoretical question. The important point is that a policy of economic co-operation is rendered impossible by German post-war psychology and Germany's internal development.

Germany has never accepted the facts and realities created by the War; she has not, therefore, undertaken the gradual reconstruction of her former influence and importance, but has set herself a great and distant task of doubtful practicability — the reconstruction of her former power by the complete overthrow of the political organisation of Europe, which arose out of the War. A sort of mystical crusading spirit against the Treaty of Versailles exists in Germany. Briand declared to Stresemann:³ "There is a mystical policy in Germany. You have people who are awaiting some sort of miracle. If you ask them what miracle it is to be, they cannot tell you, but they are awaiting it. In looking to a distant and nebulous future they lose clear sight of the present."

³ *Les papiers de Stresemann*, French edition. Paris, Plon, 1932. vol. II p. 200.

It has become clear now that German political mysticism possessed a twofold aspect, internal and external. The craving for an internal miracle was the easier of appeasement and has been appeased by Hitler. The question now remains, whether this will satisfy Germany, or whether the new Germany will strive with redoubled energy to overthrow the existing order of things in Europe.

This mystical character of German policy is due to the suddenness of Germany's defeat, following too immediately upon a period of victories and successes to permit the Germans to accustom themselves gradually to the idea of catastrophe. They refused to realise what had happened and sought relief in distant ideal constructions, a proceeding, indeed, to which the German nature is much inclined. Keyserling⁴ so describes this German characteristic: "All these qualities spring from the fact that in the Germans imagination takes precedence over reality. It may be an ideal or reason of state or interest or an idea of right or some personal rancour that guides them. I know of Germans whose word can be relied upon, who were actually glad to have a weapon to their hand in the Treaty of Versailles and trembled at the very thought that a revision of frontiers might deprive them of the inner security they felt."

This mystical faith in a guiding star, in the ultimate restoration of Germany's power by the destruction of the Treaty of Versailles, is at the

⁴ H. Keyserling: *Spectrum Europas*, Heidelberg, 1928, p. 129.

same time the source of Germany's strength and the cause of her mistakes. So great and distant an aim gives her power and endurance. While Europe seeks for methods of conciliating Germany by various concessions and so drawing her into the general orbit of international co-operation, Germany looks upon every such concession merely as a step nearer to her great ultimate aim. Such a political attitude inevitably induces frequent clashes with reality or violence to existing facts and to the psychology and interests of other nations. It leads to mistakes and failures which the Germans then ascribe to the perfidy of other nations and which do not deter them from further pursuance of their ends.

The full policy of revision, which aims at results probably not attainable, but which by its unwavering insistence gains, step by step, larger results than could be attained by a more realistic policy taking rather into consideration immediate and attainable ends, is based, then, on the nature of the German people. Its explanation and prototype can indeed be found even in the character of Faust, which can be applied literally to the policy of post-war Germany: "I have merely desired and attained and still craved and so come through my life, never for any instant satisfied".

RACIAL PRIDE

Such a psychical state and resulting political tendency are based on the inordinate German national pride. The views expounded before the War by German scholars and taken up now by the

Nazis as to the semi-divine superiority of the German nation and its resultant rights and obligations are familiar to all. Such avowals, giving the impression at times of abnormality, cannot but offend the representatives of other nations; for instance one of Clemenceau's works⁵ quotes an extraordinary series of German statements from before and during the War.

The War itself had no success in pruning this overgrowth of national pride, possibly owing to the manner of its conduct and the fact that it took place almost entirely on non-German territory.

This overgrowth of national pride goes hand in hand with a misunderstanding of and even contempt for other nations. The Germans have no appreciation of the psychology of other nations, as frequently becomes apparent from the action of German diplomacy. Not understanding others, they have a constant tendency to underrate them and ignore completely their opinion or will. To this quality may be ascribed the frequent German failure to awaken any feeling but hatred and rebellion in the minds of peoples whom they have at any time governed — and oppressed, in the sincere conviction that by violently Germanizing they were civilizing them. It is well known what an unfavourable opinion the Germans have always held of the Italians. Before the war they considered the French a degenerate people and the English played out. They had

⁵ Clémenceau: *Grandeurs et Misères d'une Victoire*, Paris, Plon, 1930, chap. 15.

always the greatest contempt for Czechs, Serbs and other Slavonic peoples. This contempt was the most pronounced with regard to the Poles, as a certain section of them had been under German government. The opinion was indeed frequently expressed in Germany that the German policy of denationalizing and even exterminating the Polish element in every way possible was in the true interest not merely of the Germans but also of the Poles themselves, as in this manner the latter obtained the boon of a higher, German culture.

It was considered also an axiom in pre-war Germany that the Poles, on account of racial inferiority, would be incapable of creating and maintaining their own state. This belief was in fact so firmly held that when a part of the German population left Poland in 1919 they halted just across the frontier, on the instructions of the German government, to await the downfall of the Polish State as a signal for return. This basic error in German opinion was also the reason, as mentioned above, why Germany did not employ her economic and commercial position with regard to the newly established state of Poland in order to perpetuate her predominance there. The Germans, indeed, are reconciling themselves only very slowly and gradually to the very existence of the Polish State, whose restoration they consider in any case a great historical injustice and a national misfortune for Germany.

In 1920, during the Bolshevik War with Poland, Germany was quite certain that Poland's end was approaching and tidings of the fall of Warsaw were placarded about every country in the world in consequence of telegrams sent out by a German agency. It proved, as so often with the Germans, that the wish was father to the thought. That is to say that anti-Polish feeling was so strong in Germany that when Poland was resisting the western advance of Bolshevism, the triumph of Bolshevism was considered by Germany an outcome preferable to the firm establishment of the Polish State.

No secret was made of Germany's intention of renewing as soon as possible the partition of Poland. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* of June 14th. 1925 writes on the occasion of the outbreak of the economic war: "Either Poland will embark upon an absolute economic war with us (which will injure us also, but which we shall come through) and a great part of her coal and timber industry will be ruined or she will sign a treaty such as we desire. In either case Poland will come out of this war mortally wounded. She will lose her strength and finally also her independence — and then in a few years, together with Russia, we shall administer the *coup de grâce*."

Poland has survived the economic war. She has survived her early administrative difficulties. She is recognized as a permanent member of the European Commonwealth of States. The Nazi government in Germany has declared its readiness

to leave Poland to live her own life. The German mystical policy, envisaging the complete destruction of the Polish State, has been replaced by a more realistic policy demanding merely the surrender of the Polish province of Pomerania. It remains to be seen whether this demand will suffice, as did Germany's former wider ambitions, to withhold her from a mutually profitable economic alliance with Poland.

THE GERMAN SET-BACK IN POMERANIA

German hopes of the swift downfall of Poland proved illusory. In spite of all difficulties the Polish State endured and grew in strength. There were two features calculated to cause Germany more immediate uneasiness: the replacement of Germany by other countries in Poland's foreign trade and the decrease in the amount of property held in Poland by the German minority.

The first of these two features could awaken no surprise in Germany, being the result of her above-mentioned attempt to subject Poland to economic violence. Germany's dominant influence in Polish foreign trade disappeared. Up to the year 1915 she had enjoyed an almost monopolistic position, as trade with her accounted for over half of Poland's total foreign trade. This percentage has been reduced to the level of that of other states and now Germany occupies only the second place in Poland's import trade.

The Germans, however, attach far greater importance to the swift and violent fall in the number of Germans in Poland and especially in Pomerania. This indeed constitutes the main sub-

ject of German claims and accusations against Poland. According to Rauschnig,⁶ the decrease amounts to 67.9 per cent. in Poznań, 66 per cent. in the district of the Noteć and 72.2 per cent. in Pomerania. To-day one does not hear much more German in the streets of Poznań or Toruń than Polish in Berlin, writes Max Hodann.⁷

This process is considered in Germany a great blow to German policy. Various measures have been taken to check it, but as yet without great result.

This phenomenon of the decrease of German population and property in Poland has been ascribed by the Germans to the following three causes. First, the cultural level of the former German provinces, now Polish, has fallen, rendering them unfit for Germans to live in. Then also the German exodus is declared to have been hastened by numerous subterfuges and injustices on the part of the Polish administration towards German residents. Thirdly, the lack of commercial relations with Germany has rendered the position of the German minority in Poland difficult; this third cause they ascribe to the mistaken policy of Germany herself.

The real cause of the decrease of the German population in Poland lies somewhat deeper. A government can at the most exercise but a limited influence on the ethnographical structure of the prov-

⁶ H. Rauschnig: *Bedeutung und Entwicklung der abgetretenen Gebiete. Volk und Reich*, Berlin, 1931, p. 440.

⁷ M. Hodann: *Der slavische Gürtel um Deutschland*, Berlin, 1932, p. 252.

inces governed. Were it not so, the pre-war German government would certainly have exterminated very swiftly the Polish population in the provinces of Poznań and Pomerania seized by Prussia at the time of the Partitions. Also the Polish administration, to which Germany ascribes such power and activity, would apply similar methods in the East of Poland, whereas the eastern provinces were most intensively Polonised during the 19th century, under Russian rule, and now Poland has considerable difficulties there. The real reason for the swift Polonisation of Pomerania lies in the fact that the Germans never formed the indigenous population in the provinces acquired by them at the Partitions, but were merely colonists, like the Russians in Siberia and the Italians in Dalmatia. And it is the inevitable lot of colonists that a moment comes when the indigenous population attains a sufficient economic and cultural level to push them out.

Colonists mainly occupy the position of civil servants, large landowners and townsmen. The civil service changes with the government. Large landowners, at any rate, until they have been for several generations on the same spot, (as statistics show that very few German families in Pomerania were) are less attached to the soil than peasants and small farmers; experience has also shown that towns change their population far more easily and rapidly than do country districts. Colonists in a town are usually either merchants who will follow the economic call or professional men attached rather to profession than place. The "Drang nach

Osten" period appears to have been followed in our times by a contrary process of "Rückgang nach Westen" which may be observed not merely in the western provinces of Poland but also in other districts, as for instance the Baltic States. The rapid proportional decline of the German element in Pomerania is due also to the birth-rate being higher in Polish than in German families.

This ethnological process is taking place (and, as pre-war German maps and official statements show, was taking place even while Pomerania was under German rule) in just that area which Germany makes the subject of her demands for revision. The living bridge which Germany strove to create by colonisation, between the Reich and East Prussia, is fast crumbling. This is not, however, interpreted by Germany as a reason for desisting from her revisionist activities but rather for speeding them up.

ECONOMIC SITUATION IN EAST PRUSSIA

"The living German bridge in the Polish-German Corridor and the German element in the lost province of Poznań save East Prussia from isolation. Our aim is to preserve this bridge upon the basis of that German element," declared the German foreign minister Curtius⁸ in his speech of March 10th 1930.

This declaration of Curtius' clarifies still further the idea behind German policy. Germany fears that an unfavourable development on the

⁸ M. H o d a n n : *Der slavische Gürtel um Deutschland*, Berlin, 1932, p. 256.



German-Polish frontier may weaken her position further by increasing Polish influence in Danzig and loosening the connection of East Prussia with the Reich. East Prussia, indeed, remains only with difficulty a part of the German Reich. Its distance from all German centres and the cost of transport render difficult the interchange of goods. The climate, harsh in comparison with that of other German provinces, discourages people from settling or remaining there. The economic situation is still further impaired by the present situation in Russia, with which country the East Prussian port of Königsberg had extensive commercial relations before the War. Commerce with Poland is also rendered difficult by Germany's economic policy. The economic situation of East Prussia would demand special treatment for this province in any general German-Polish commercial treaty and to this German policy is opposed. East Prussia has to be subsidised and supported by Germany in the form of "Ostpreussenhilfe," "Osthilfe." In the course of 5 years (1925—1930) 5½ thousand German peasant colonists have been established there. Subsidies are also granted to induce industrial development. In spite of all such measures the decline of population amounts to 10—15 thousand yearly. Landlords demand cheaper, Polish labour, but for political reasons the expansion of Polonism is resisted. Constant subsidies for East Prussia form a heavy burden on the German Exchequer. Although there are no signs of any planned or systematic Polish expansion into East Prussia, still less of any schemes of

annexation, anyone who has lived there and studies the press, sees that fear of a Polish advance is very much in evidence.

The most obvious means of counteracting the decline both of the prosperity and of Germanism in East Prussia, is the signing of a commercial treaty with Poland; but this is cast aside by Germany which can see but this one form of remedy for her eastern difficulties, that of getting all necessary territory into her own hands in order to shape Eastern Europe as it wishes.

Naturally, of some importance also, is the fact that Poland's territorial access to the sea involves the division of the territory of Germany by separating the province of East Prussia, formerly colonised by Germans from the main body of Germany. The effects of this separation on commerce and economic development are not, however, very considerable. Of German goods transported to East Prussia by rail only one third goes through Pomerania, the other two thirds taking other routes across Polish territory. That there are no great difficulties in the way of transport may be seen from the fact that the present goods transport exceeds in bulk that of the years before the War. It should be mentioned also in this connection that whereas transit through Pomerania is necessary to Germany for trade with the outlying province of East Prussia, it is necessary to Poland for her whole overseas trade i. e. Polish overseas trade passes entirely through Pomerania and constitutes two thirds of her total foreign trade. Only one third of German overland

goods traffic to East Prussia goes entirely through Pomerania and for the years 1928—1931 this complete goods traffic amounted to only 20 per cent. of Poland's goods transport to and from the sea.

More important in the German mind is the emotional feeling of injured pride and prestige at seeing on the map a Polish strip dividing German territory. This, indeed, induced Mrs Rachel-Conrad Nason⁹ to put forward in her lecture on The Polish Corridor the witty, but somewhat naïve, suggestions, that Pomerania should be coloured Polish on maps but have the German colour superimposed to express Germany's internationally guaranteed rights of transit: "I offer the suggestion that a line in the German colour should be drawn across the "Corridor" on maps over the Polish colour of the territory, leaving frontiers as they stand at present, in order to express the fact that while Poland administers the territory and has uninterrupted access to the sea, Germany at the same time possesses rights of transit."¹⁰

Were it merely a question of appeasing German sentiment Mrs Nason's project would indeed supply a solution of the question. In fact, however, Germany's attitude makes it clear that she considers unthinkable the co-existence of a truly

⁹ *Report on the Polish Corridor.* — National Committee on the Cause and Cure of War. New York 1932.

¹⁰ Quotation from the Nason paper in the book: *Dantzig et quelques aspects du problème polono-allemand*, Centre Européen de la Dotation Carnegie. Bulletins No 1—5. 1932. Paris.

independent Poland possessing, as the essential condition of her independence, her own, territorial, unhindered access to the sea.

THE GERMAN POINT OF VIEW

Polish access to the sea is Germany's chief obstacle to the attainment of the goal to which the overthrow of the Treaty of Versailles is to lead her — German control of the East. This is to be the starting point of the reconstruction of Germany's power. Faith in Germany's mission in the East has that mystical quality of which the great French statesman spoke. The accomplishment of this mission is the main end which the German nation has set itself in history. The idea of this mission can be traced to Hegel, whose philosophy is beginning once more to exercise a creative rôle in German society. In recent centuries the eyes of Prussia and of her kings and statesmen have been directed constantly to the East. They declared in unison that the growth of Germany is incompatible with an independent Poland. "These gentlemen," Bismarck declared, speaking of the pro-Polish element, "do not know the Poles or realise that an independent Poland could not cease to be an enemy of Prussia." Bülow also said: "It is a question not merely of internal policy but of general importance whether we can hold what we possess in the East, if our policy is to develop. An unfavourable answer would decide not only Germany's fate in the East but also the future of Prussia, the Reich and the whole German world." A similar opinion was expressed by the former chancellor Hans Luther: "History's third

great examination of the German nation as a State of world importance will be the test whether Germany can hold and secure to herself the East, which is the source of her strength as a Great Power."

Political events since the War have also seemed to support the theory that Germany should seek the source of her regeneration and power in the East, the paths of expansion in other directions being closed to her. Her wider, non-European policy was crippled by the seizure of her colonies and the destruction of her fleet. The power of France bars all advance to the West, and in any case German ambitions in that direction were formally given up at Locarno. Curtius' attempt to expand to the South was checked by France at the Hague and Geneva. The firm stand made by Austria promises equally little success to Nazi ambitions in this direction. Germany, in fact, counts on meeting with the least resistance in that direction to which her instinct has for centuries guided her — to the East.

Germany's traditional policy with regard to Russia is one of peaceful influence and penetration. Her post-war policy follows the same course, but finds the road barred by a Poland not amenable to influence or penetration. The chief obstacle to Germany's command of the East is the restored State of Poland; the essential condition for supremacy over Poland is to cut short her unhindered access to the sea, replacing it by facilities through German ports dependent in the last instance on the will of Germany. Were Poland's territorial access to the sea to be placed in German

hands 80 per cent. of Polish foreign trade, and therefore the whole economic, political and even cultural and intellectual life of Poland, would be under German control. In 1925 Germany displayed already her inclination to use economic advantages for the attainment of non-economic ends. True, she would be pledged by treaty to allow the free transit of Polish trains to the sea, but recent history has not manifested either Poland's failure to accord similar treaty rights to Germany for her far less essential transit with East Prussia, or Germany's determination to honour treaties which she finds inconvenient. Poland, while preserving the fiction of independence, would become in effect a German province. This is the real aim of German policy.

The general trend of international and economic policy seemed to be favourable to Germany's realisation of her ambitions until Herr Hitler stripped naked in the eyes of the world the policy which his predecessors had veiled in a certain diplomatic subtlety, thereby unwittingly performing Poland a service. On the other hand, in the territory which is to be the subject of revision, matters are taking a turn unfavourable to Germany. Both these considerations have induced Germany to speed up her revisionist policy.

"In this eternal struggle," — says Frank Simonds,¹¹ "it is the stronger which is losing, and the weaker which is winning, measured by the numbers and wealth of the two nations."

¹¹ F. Simonds: *Can Europe Keep the Peace?* p. 69.

CHAPTER 2

GERMAN METHODS OF ATTACK

THE "CORRIDOR" AS A FORM OF PROPAGANDA

The first point in Germany's revisionist policy was an attempt to prevent the conditions of Polish German co-operation laid down at Versailles from working smoothly, in order to be able to obtain the support of world opinion. There is material enough for this obstruction if only in the Minorities Treaty, the Convention of Geneva and the various treaties and arrangements concerning Danzig. Already at the Conference of Versailles the German delegate declared that: "The attempt to make Danzig a Free City and to give her rights of communication but to give Poland control of her internal affairs would lead to violent opposition and constant war in the East."

This state of war in the East is maintained especially in Danzig, where every Polish attempt to establish normal, workable conditions is met by the German revisionist policy. In fact the policy of Danzig constitutes another instance of the triumph of sentiment over economic reason in the formation of policy. Danzig is one of the two ports of the Polish hinterland. Its hinterland must always be not East Prussia or Pomerania or Germany but Poland. Its goods turnover for 1932 exceeded that of all other Baltic ports, with the

Polish port of Gdynia a close second, and very considerably exceeded also that for the year 1913, and for the pre-war period in general, when its natural Polish hinterland was divided between different Empires and its produce absorbed into them. Danzig's total goods turnover in 1913 amounted to 2,112,101 tons; in 1932, despite the general economic crisis, to 5,476,052 tons. So well was this need of the Polish hinterland formerly understood by Danzig that, although ethnographically a German enclave, it fought for Poland both in the 14th and 15th Century against the Teutonic Order of East Prussia and in the 18th Century against Prussia.

The least friction has arisen over the question of the right of transit through Pomerania guaranteed to Germany. Only when Polish policy turned to pointing out in various publications that the transit traffic functioned in a manner completely satisfactory to both sides did German complaints begin to appear before the Polish-German-Danzig Tribunal for questions of transit, although at this same time the Polish railways began to carry out a series of improvements. Former High Commissioner of the League of Nations, J. A. van Hamel,¹² wrote that the Danzigers often refuse to adjust questions at issue with Poland (even where a settlement would be of advantage to Danzig), in order to call attention to the evil results of the

¹² J. A. van Hamel: *Observations et suggestions au sujet de Danzig et le "Corridor polonais"* — an article in the book: *Danzig et quelques aspects du problème germano-polonais*. Paris, 1932, p. 288.

present treaties; and when an arrangement has been made they consider it a misfortune that a source of dispute had been removed.

This state of affairs enabled Germany to create and to keep alive the question of the "Polish Corridor," making use at need of glaring but constantly repeated inaccuracies calculated to catch the attention of the crowd and of detailed expositions based on the research work of scholars. Wholesale propaganda is also carried on through the press and by separate studies and treatises by persons whose opinion are of weight and whose declarations are used for constant quotation. German propaganda against the "Corridor" also gains constant partisans and representatives in various countries both through its formidable intellectual and economic resources and by common bribery and corruption. Declarations by partisans of the German cause are published and taken up by the propaganda organization at suitable intervals in order to create the illusion of a *communis opinio* as to the necessity of revision of frontiers. The great success attained in this respect is used as a proof that the problem of Pomerania is still open and possesses an international character, as it is connected with the cause of peace and must interest all those interested in the preservation of peace.

It would be a great error to close one's eyes to the considerable amount of success obtained by German propaganda in various countries by these methods. English and American opinion appear in particular to have been very largely

won over to the German point of view, though the open revealing of Germany's hand by the Nazi Government has done something to sway opinion the other way, undoing in this the more subtle work of its predecessors. Such an unbiassed observer as Frank Simonds¹³ expresses himself on the question as follows: "The British have, then, measurably accepted the German point of view in respect to Poland. They would willingly agree to a new partition if the result would be a reconciled Germany. They are sharply critical of the French policy, which seeks to consolidate Poland within its present limits, because they hold that this is to perpetuate German unrest and revolt. And German and British opinions have contributed much to the shaping of the American, where the familiar opinion finds support, the opinion that the peace of Europe is conditional upon the suppression of the Polish Corridor."

This led to a certain moral and political isolation of Poland in face of Germany's for annexation claims. Germany's initial preparation of the ground for her revisionist action was skilfully and successfully carried out. This first stage of the action was necessary to Germany independently of what method she should select for the final attainment of her ends. The second stage, the actual annexation, could not be planned definitely in advance; its method must depend upon circumstances and upon the international political situation at the moment of action.

¹³ F. Simonds: *Can Europe Keep the Peace?* p. p. 177, 178.

It is not to be supposed that Germany counts seriously on Article 19 of the League of Nations Pact, as a means of obtaining Pomerania. Apart from any other considerations, the difficulty of obtaining a unanimous vote of the Council of the League of Nations would be too great.

POLAND'S ACCESS TO THE SEA

A considerable, though in recent years decreasing, rôle has been played in the German revisionist campaign by the idea of inducing Poland to consent to a voluntary or semi-voluntary exchange of Pomerania for some other territory giving access to the sea. It may be that the consideration prompting Germany to this was the fact that in accepting the Thirteenth Point of President Wilson's peace terms they recognized the necessity for an independent Poland to possess free access to the sea. German politicians have declared frequently that they do not accept the Treaty of Versailles as binding because it is not an exact execution of the Wilson Programme as they understood it when they accepted it.

Although the idea of such a voluntary exchange of territory errs somewhat on the side of naivety, there are signs that it has been entertained quite seriously by German politicians. In his article quoted above J. A. van Hamel relates that when, as High Commissioner of the League of Nations at Dantzig he visited the Wilhelmstrasse, Stresemann consulted him on the possibility of such an exchange. Stresemann's idea was that Poland should receive territorial access to the

sea via Memel (in Lithuania) and East Prussia would no longer be cut off from the Reich. A similar suggestion is to be found also in Stresemann's Papers.¹⁴ After the Treaty of Locarno of Feb. 9th 1925 the Lithuanian minister Sidzikauskas approached Stresemann for information as to the project of giving Poland access to the sea via Memel instead of Pomerania and recompensing Lithuania with the town and district of Wilno.

There appear to be two forms of the German project of giving Poland an outlet to the sea through Lithuania instead of Pomerania. In conference with Lithuania the latter was promised Wilno in exchange for Memel and for Polish transit to the sea through Lithuania. In conference with friends of Poland Germany expressed her readiness to sacrifice Lithuania and give Poland the entire territory of Lithuania in exchange for Pomerania.

Another plan was put forward by Herr Hitler in his conversations with Count Gravina, late Commissioner of the League of Nations. In return for concessions in Pomerania he consented to leave Poland a free hand in the Ukraine.

All these German plans for exchange possess one common feature, namely, that in exchange for Polish territory, Germany proposes to give not German territory but that of a third State and of a third State in friendly relations with Germany. The political morality behind the idea is complet-

¹⁴ *Les Papiers de Stresemann*, vol. II p. 178.

ely German; it is that which led to the Partition of Poland in the 18th Century — that if a State (Poland then, Lithuania to-day) is too weak to defend its territories they are open to the first comer who chooses to seize them. Poland, having suffered the bitter effects of Partition herself, does not propose to join with Germany in a partition of Lithuania.

Such German projects are indeed wholly impracticable. From the point of view of international propaganda they are also unfavourable to Germany as they propose the exchange of territory inhabited by Poles for territory inhabited by other peoples. The distance of the territories suggested from Polish economic centres renders the propositions completely impracticable from an economic point of view also. M. Coudenhove-Kalergi, under the influence of German revisionist propaganda, has also put forward a suggestion for a change in the *status quo* on the Baltic. He does not advocate the cession of Pomerania but the construction of technical apparatus such as bridges and tunnels which would secure to Germany direct access to East Prussia. He proposes also the union of the Free City of Danzig with Germany. This, however, would form merely one argument more for Germany to claim the annexation of Pomerania. Danzig, separated from Poland and deprived of her Polish hinterland, would become an economic burden on Germany and would be used to instance Germany's need to annex Pomerania. Indeed, according to Stresemann's well known

letter to the Crown Prince of Sept. 7th 1925, the acquisition of Danzig was to be a mere prelude to the annexation of Pomerania.

For some time rumours have ceased to be heard of any plan for such an exchange of territory. It is difficult to believe that German politicians ever treated such plans very seriously. They were probably put forward rather to create a diversion and keep the discussion alive, accustoming international opinion to consider the question of Pomerania still open.

GERMAN METHODS OF COMPULSION

German actions and declarations frequently reveal the desire to exercise peaceful pressure, political or economic, upon Poland in order to induce her to surrender Pomerania. The attempt at economic pressure was the tariff war begun in 1925, when the German press proclaimed quite openly Germany's intention of destroying and partitioning Poland. Germany's action resulted in her favourable balance of trade with Poland, 200.6 million zlotys in 1923, becoming an unfavourable balance of 72 million in 1931. The pressure of the economic crisis in Poland at present is also very largely attributable to the closing of the German market for her coal and agricultural products. At the same time this tariff war injured German industry no less than Polish and forced Poland to establish immediate economic relations with other countries, weakening thereby Germany's economic influence in Poland.

Other ideas have been entertained for exerting political pressure. In payment for an amicable understanding with Germany, France was to exert such pressure on her Polish ally as to induce the latter to surrender Pomerania. This project, however, betrays a complete misunderstanding of Poland's policy. It was abundantly clear to all keen-sighted politicians that no advice from the side of France could ever bring Poland to such a surrender. Frank Simonds¹⁵ writes "Poland has escaped the control of friend and foe alike. She can be crushed by war. She cannot be partitioned in peace." In order to encourage France to exert the required pressure on Poland, Germany puts forward in conversations with foreign journalists and politicians the suggestion that Poland is prepared to make concessions and is hesitating only as to their form and extent. The purpose of such rumours is to weaken French faith in the power of endurance of her Polish ally. France could, however, never embrace such a project. She realises that were she to do so she would obtain no concessions in this direction from Poland but merely lose an ally, thrusting her into the orbit of German influence. The whole policy of present day France is based upon resistance to the increase of Germany's power, which would threaten her frontiers, by alliances with Poland and the Little Entente. France's attempts at basing her security upon other systems of alliance — with America or the former Allied Powers — have met as yet with no success.

¹⁵ F. Simonds : *Can Europe Keep the Peace?* p. 186.

All German projects of exerting economic or political pressure on Poland to drive her to the surrender of Pomerania reveal themselves on closer study to be completely impracticable.

PROJECTS OF MILITARY ACTION

Much more serious until recently was Germany's plan of annexing Pomerania by means of her Russian policy. She wished to return to the classic German policy of peaceful penetration of Russia and a political alliance with Russia against Poland. The "Corridor" question was the chief reason for the formation of an alliance with the Soviet. Von Kries declares,¹⁶ "Poland's possession of the Corridor drives Germany to the dangerous and unnatural but necessary step of a union with the Soviet." In other words Russia was to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for Germany. The Russo-Polish conflict awaited by Germany was to provide an opportunity for the military but bloodless occupation of Pomerania. As with the proposed Lithuanian solution, a second version of this project existed. This was anti-Russian; in case of a Russo-Polish war Germany promised Poland assistance in return for the cession of Pomerania. It is probable that this German assistance would have been limited to diplomatic intervention. The idea of such a convenient solution of the whole question probably occurred first to Stresemann in 1928 when, after

¹⁶ W. von Kries: *Deutschland und der Korridor*, a study published in the collective work, *Deutschland und der Korridor*, p. 462.

the murder of the Soviet representative at Warsaw, Austin Chamberlain and Briand requested him to intervene in Moscow to avert the threatened outbreak of a Russo-Polish war.

It is certain, in any case, that in all projects for the annexation of Pomerania the possibility of a Russo-Polish war played the chief part. Moscow was to provide the key to Torun and Danzig. The possibility of a peaceful arrangement between Russia and Poland was not taken into consideration.

It was formerly an axiom of German policy that Poland neither would nor could establish friendly relations with Soviet Russia. She must, therefore, maintain an armed force equal to the combined armaments of Germany and Russia (*Zweimächtige Standard*). This in German opinion, being too great an economic burden for Poland to bear, must thrust down her standard of living and lead slowly but inevitably to communism. That is why the recent development of affairs in Russia made such a profound impression on Germany. Her occupation in the Far East, her pacts with France and Poland and the little Entente, robbed Germany of her principal trump card against Poland in the struggle for Pomerania. All hope of obtaining Pomerania through Russian action has disappeared.

All German schemes (based probably upon faulty political reasoning and an underrating of her opponents) to induce Poland to cede Pomerania and thereby her independence by peaceful means or by the armed intervention of a third Power

have by now shown themselves impracticable. As a result, however, of German financial and military international advances the idea of German armed invasion of Pomerania is coming more and more to the fore. The more perspicacious politicians have indeed for long past realised that this is the only practicable method.

Would Germany go to the length of declaring war on Poland in order to acquire Pomerania? It is naturally difficult to reply with any degree of certainty to this question. It must be remembered, however, that for Germany to take such a step would be for her to risk all upon one throw. Neither the course of the war nor the international complications it might involve can be prophesied. It is hardly propable that a step involving a degree of risk out of keeping with the German character is a seriously entertained plan.

The matter would appear in a completely different aspect in German eyes were the possibility to present itself of an armed occupation of Pomerania without a formal declaration of war. Russia is no longer likely to create such a possibility. It could arise only in the case of internal difficulties breaking down Poland's power of resistance. In such a moment of powerlessness the political isolation of Poland would also appear probable.

In conclusion, the only practicable method of German annexation of Pomerania appears to be armed occupation at a moment when Poland is paralysed by internal difficulties and politically isolated. Germany studies minutely the internal

political and economic development of Poland and searches for signs of the dissolution or breakdown of the Polish State. The international taboo on unprovoked or unannounced assaults on foreign territory is not treated by Germany too seriously. A valuable hint as to the tactics probably to be employed may be gathered from the words of Stresemann,¹⁷ winner of the Nobel Peace Prize: "When Frederick the Great began his first Saxon War he led his army through Saxony.... before beginning his march he sent a note to the courts of different countries, not to justify his infringement of neutral territory but to proclaim his right of marching through. That is true policy. I hold that the usual method is to occasion an exchange of shots in some place and then announce that one is marching to the assistance of the attacked party".

Such a solution of the Pomeranian question is considered in Germany now the only probable one and more practicable than the open declaration of war on Poland, in which case the Polish army would be able to offer powerful resistance. Even were Germany absolutely convinced of the superiority of her own army the risk would be too great and the intervention of other powers too probable.

THE KEY TO THE PROBLEM

The decision as to the fate of the "Corridor" does not rest with Berlin or Moscow; London and even Paris can have but slight influence over it.

¹⁷ *Les Papiers de Stresemann*. Vol. II. p. 196.

The real key of the whole problem rests only in Poland. Everyone who knows anything of Polish affairs realises that her voluntary surrender of Pomerania is outside the bounds of possibility. The waging of a regular war to settle the question seems exceedingly improbable. That leaves only the internal breakdown of the Polish State as a circumstance on which Germany would be able to count for her to annex Pomerania. The constantly progressing internal consolidation of Poland and the consequent strengthening of her international position are therefore the surest guarantee against such a war. Attempts to satisfy German imperialistic cravings by the mutilation of Poland in the manner of the Partitions of Poland at the end of the 18th Century would only endanger the whole political system of Europe. Poland stands for and protects world peace.

SUMMARY

Germany will spare no effort to recover Pomerania. Certain sections of the German press treat this as a preliminary to a renewed Partition of Poland, but the official programme embraces only the recovery of Pomerania and possibly also Upper Silesia. There are three main points to be considered: those of population, of the needs of commercial transit and also of general foreign opinion.

The population was in majority Polish even before the Great War. The German element being a superimposed, colonist element, has now largely disappeared — mainly during the first two years of Polish rule, while choice of nationality was open to members of minorities. Their place has been taken by Poles and also (largely owing to the building of the new port of Gdynia) the total, mainly Polish, population has increased.

Goods transit through Pomerania is needed both by Poland and Germany; by Poland to the sea and by Germany to East Prussia. Either Germany or Poland must have mere rights of transit. The Wilson Declaration promising the Poles an outlet to the sea, the Treaty of Versailles fulfilling this promise, the question of population, all point that it is to be Germany. There might be an argument for reversing this state of affairs and giving Poland transit rights through German ter-

ritory were it established that German transit through Pomerania is enormously in excess of Polish and that Poland does not fulfil her treaty obligations with regard to rights of transit. As a matter of fact these duties are more than fulfilled. The Germans have special duty free trains and special road and rail privileges and transit to East Prussia is unhampered. Moreover German goods transport to East Prussia amounts to less than 20 per cent. of that of Poland to the sea. Were this transport ever to be cut off Germany would suffer a certain inconvenience; were Poland's transport to the sea to be cut off her effective independence, economic and afterwards political, would disappear.

Germany has, however, by skilful and persistent propaganda, succeeded in spreading abroad the opinion that with regard to Pomerania the restoration of Poland is an injustice to her former partitioner. The purpose of this propaganda is obvious: Germany aims at having the opinion of the world sufficiently on her side to be able to seize Pomerania at an opportune moment without involving herself in a general war.

In this regard there is one point of supreme importance even apart from the question of justice. In pursuance of her aim Germany has assiduously spread the opinion that Pomerania may be recovered by her peaceably. This encourages the opinion held in certain quarters that Eastern Europe still, as in 1918, resembles a chessboard on which the pieces may be moved about at pleasure by the diplomats in congress. As a matter of

fact Poland, of necessity a highly militarised State in consequence of the threats constantly levelled at her, would fight to the uttermost for the preservation of Pomerania. Which way victory would go cannot be predicted; it can, however, be asserted that Poland's resistance would at least last long enough for the local war to spread into a general conflagration. This is to say, that those who advocate the restoration of Pomerania to Germany in the interest of peace are misled by unpractical and misinformed policy. On the other hand Germany's idea of an occupation of Pomerania without the open declaration of war would become practicable only in case of a breakdown in the Polish State or if Poland were engaged in war with Russia; and these contingencies are becoming more remote from year to year.

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