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WAR CABINET.**HERR HITLER'S SPEECH AT DANZIG ON SEPTEMBER 19.***Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.*

I CIRCULATE to my colleagues a note on Herr Hitler's speech which has been prepared in the Foreign Office.

H.

September 20, 1939.

HERR HITLER'S speech (Annex 1) is full of the customary mis-statements of fact. Many of these were dealt with in the commentary which was broadcast by the B.B.C. at 9 P.M. on the day on which the speech was delivered (Annex 2).

The speech does not reveal Hitler at his best, and there are some wild statements which show that he cannot have prepared it with his customary care, or that he is no longer completely master of himself. For example, in one passage he says: "Yesterday morning there were 20,000 prisoners; last night 50,000; and early to-day 70,000. I do not know how many there are now." Two paragraphs further on he says: "There are to-day 300,000 Polish prisoners in our hands." Another example: Talking of German relations with Russia, he says: "We shall never *again* fight a war in the interests of the Western democracies."

These mis-statements apart, the main feature of Hitler's speech is his resentment against England, to whom he imputes the sole blame for the war. Moreover, he makes a savage attack on the blockade, and it must be deduced that he is conscious that this is where the shoe is going to pinch. "Great Britain has already started war against women and children. Her naval arm is there for that purpose." Hitler then goes on to threaten. "The moment may come when we use a weapon which is not yet known and with which we could not ourselves be attacked. Let us hope that we will not be forced to use these means. It is to be hoped that no one will then complain in the name of humanity." In another passage he says: "I need not remind you that I have given orders to keep to the rules of war, but those in the West need not imagine that it must always be so."

The implication is that if the war continues and economic pressure on Germany is not lifted, Hitler is determined to resort to frightfulness.

As to the new weapon, the Foreign Office have no precise information. Hitler has once or twice in conversation with private persons hinted at some new destructive chemical. There are also reports of the construction of two batteries of 24-in. howitzers, which are alleged to be capable of penetrating the Maginot Line to a depth of 75 ft.

In any event, it does not seem that Field-Marshal Göring, at all events, regards this new weapon as decisive, or he would probably not have made such efforts to avoid the outbreak of war.

Contrary to expectation, Herr Hitler makes no attempt to put forward an attractive peace proposal. His general line is that France and Germany will decide the future fate of Poland, and that if the Western Powers thereafter choose to prolong the war, they will deserve the fate which will inevitably befall them.

The intervention of Russia is probably the factor which has prevented a plausible peace offer. It might otherwise have been possible for Germany to claim Danzig and the Corridor and a slice of Silesia, and to offer peace in return for guarantees for the independence and integrity of the remainder of Poland. But this plan, if it ever existed, has been brought to nothing by the rapid advance of the Russian armies.

Foreign Office, September 20, 1939.

ANNEX I.

HERR HITLER'S SPEECH IN DANZIG, SEPTEMBER 19, 1939.

HITLER, speaking in Danzig, addressed the crowd as "My dear fellow-countrymen and women of Danzig," and said (according to Reuter):—

This moment is an experience of joy, not only for you but for the whole German people. I am myself conscious of the greatness of this hour. I am treading for the first time on soil which has been settled by German people for half a millennium.

The World War, that most senseless of all wars of all times, made a sacrifice of this city and of this land. The World War, which nobody won and every one lost, has left in everybody the conviction that such a fate must never be repeated. Germany entered the World War with no "war" aims. She hoped that the ensuing peace would render possible the restoration of Germany and abolish all distress. The Peace of Versailles, instead of being one of free negotiation, was imposed on the German people.

Now I shall say nothing of the injustice of Versailles. The worst thing in the life of the nation was not the injustice, but the stupidity with which a peace that struck at all political and national facts was dictated to the world. This land here was a victim of the madness of that time, and the Polish State, so-called, was a project of this stupidity.

What Germany had to sacrifice for this State of Poland is not known to the world. Only one thing I must say here. All this territory which was then incorporated in Poland is exclusively the product of German industry and German activity. A plebiscite in the province cut away from the German Reich and given to Poland—an action defended on the ground of national necessity—would have shown that nobody there had any desire to become part of this Polish State.

Nevertheless, I have always made the attempt to find a tolerable solution which might lead to an acceptable arrangement. I have striven to shape definitive frontiers in the west and in the south of Germany in order to safeguard the future of peace. I made the same attempt in the east.

At that time there lived in Poland a man of energy and action. I tried in common with Marshal Pilsudski to find a solution that would secure peace. In this we put aside the Versailles Treaty and attempted to reach a temporary solution. After the death of Marshal Pilsudski, however, the mortal fight against all Germans in Poland began anew. This fight naturally embittered and ruined the relations between the two nations. It was possible for us only with difficulty to look on while the German minority was barbarously ill-treated.

As for me, what made me most indignant was that we had to bear this ill-treatment and oppression from a nation standing far below us; for when all is said and done, Germany is really a Great Power, even though the others attempted to exterminate us through the Treaty of Versailles.

Especially intolerable were two circumstances. Here, first, a city, whose German character cannot be doubted, was not only prevented from joining the German Reich but attempts were also made through the years to colonise it for Poland. Secondly, a German province was cut off from the Reich and allowed only one means of communication with it in a way that permitted all kinds of trickery.

No other country in the world would have borne this state of affairs as long as Germany has. I do not know what Great Britain would have said to such a peaceful solution at her cost or what would have been done by France or America. I tried to find a solution. I submitted proposals orally to those in power in Poland at that time. They knew these proposals—they were more than moderate. I tried to reconcile the economic demands of Poland with the German character of Danzig.

At that time I was too modest, and there were moments in which I asked myself the question whether I could demand of my own people that such proposals should be made to the Polish Government. What I did, I did to save the German people and the Polish people from other sufferings.

These demands were repeated by me in the spring. Danzig must return to the Reich; a road must be built through the Corridor, naturally at our expense; Poland should retain the same rights as before in the harbour of Danzig; and finally the Polish minority should have political rights.

I do not know in what state of mind the Polish Government could have been to reject such proposals. I do know, however, that countless Germans gave a sigh of relief when that happened, for they believed I had gone too far to meet the Poles.

Poland's answer was first mobilisation; and then wild terror began. My request to the Polish Foreign Minister to visit me in Berlin was rejected. Instead, every month there were continually increasing threats, which are not bearable when they come from a small State, and in the long run are quite impossible even from a great Power.

Polish papers declared it was not a question of Danzig; East Prussia must also be incorporated. Others wanted, besides East Prussia and Pomerania, to put Poland's frontiers on the Oder; and, finally, they were worrying themselves whether to break our army before Berlin, or beyond it.

The Polish marshal, who has now left his army woefully in the lurch, declared that he would cut our army to pieces.

The martyrdom of our countrymen began. I have put to myself the question: Who could have blinded Poland thus? It is that same place in which the universal warmongers have sat and are still sitting, not only for the last ten years, but for centuries. It was there that the Poles were persuaded to resist Germany. There a guarantee was given to Poland. There the Poles were given the opportunity to begin war.

For these men Poland was only a pawn in the game; to-day these men are calmly saying that it is no longer a question of Poland, but of the German Government. I have constantly uttered warnings against Churchill, Eden, Duff Cooper, and the rest; but I was laughed at.

You know the developments of those days in August. I believe it would have been possible to avoid war were it not for the British guarantee and the incitement of these apostles of war. I was ready to negotiate directly with Poland, but the Poles did not turn up. Instead, there was the Polish general mobilisation, new acts of terror, endless attacks on German soil.

But patience in national affairs must not be mistaken for weakness. I looked on for years until at last I declared that I would talk to Poland in the same language as Poland intended to use with us. Even then peace could still have been secured. Mussolini offered to mediate; France agreed. But Great Britain refused this proposal and thought that she could send the German Reich a two-hour ultimatum.

In November 1918 the English had in Germany a Government which bore with them, and they have confused the present authorities with those of that day. In the last six years I have had to put up with all this, above all from the Poles. Nevertheless, I did not issue any ultimatum. To-day the German Reich is not letting others talk to her in that way.

Poland chose war and had it. She chose war with a light heart because the Western statesmen had cheated her about Germany, because they had told her of the weakness of the German army, of internal defeatism, of the gulf between Leadership and the people, and of their bad organisation. The Poles had been told that it would be easy, not only to hold up the German troops, but to make them retreat. Poland has learned in eighteen days how they have been lied to.

If ever in history, the expression can be applied now, that "the Lord has struck with man, horse and wagon." While I am speaking here our troops are in Brest Litovsk, in Lemberg, and farther south. At this moment endless columns of Polish captives are marching away from the Kutno territory. Yesterday morning there were 20,000 prisoners, last night 50,000, and early to-day 70,000. I do not know how many there are now.

What remains of the Polish army will capitulate or be defeated in the next few days. The German army has given the Western democracies a good object lesson. I thank our infantry, our Navy, and our Air Force for their splendid achievements. As you know, I have ordered our Air Force most strictly to limit themselves only to military objectives. But our opponents in East and West must not take advantage of this. In future we shall take an eye for an eye, and for every bomb we shall answer with five bombs.

The British behave as though they wanted a humane war. I know only too well that their humanity is nothing more than awful fright in face of our achievements.

I will not conceal from you that many of the Polish troops fought bravely. It can be said that the lower command behaved with valour; the middle command was not intelligent enough; the high command was—Polish. As the result of this, there are to-day 300,000 Polish prisoners in our hands, among them 2,000 officers and numerous generals.

Besides this bravery, which I will not deny, there was also horror and cruelty—the filthiest I have ever heard of. I myself fought as a soldier on the Western front; but I have never experienced anything of the sort. I need not again remind you that I have given orders to keep to the rules of war. But those in the West need not imagine that it must always be so. If they want it otherwise, then they can have it. In eighteen days we have won what we have won with humane methods of war.

It was an English paper which reported that I removed one of my generals because I hoped for a *Blitzkrieg* (lightning war) and was disappointed. This report seems to have come from one of those strategists who pushed Poland into the war. In eighteen days we have defeated the Poles, and now we hope to arrange a situation in which a tolerable solution will be found by reasonable means in the future.

Meanwhile, the Russian troops have marched into the Ukraine and White Russia to protect Russia's interests. We have seen that in Great Britain this co-operation between Germany and Russia has been regarded as a crime. One Englishman even writes that this was perfidy—and the English understand something about perfidy.

To these Western outbursts I give this answer: Russia remains what she is—namely, Bolshevik, and Germany remains what she is—namely, National-Socialist. But neither the Russians nor the German Government want to be drawn into war in the interests of the Western democracies. Will the gentlemen in England and France please make a note of this?

Both our nations have learnt their lesson in the four years of the World War. We both know quite well that, in the interests of the Western democracies, we should be incited against one another in turn. But we have found that it is in the best interests of both our nations to have an understanding with each other. Thus the British assertion of the unlimited world political aspirations of Germany is finally contradicted. We shall never again fight a war in the interests of the Western democracies. Make a note of that, my English gentlemen.

Germany's political aims are limited. We shall come to an understanding with Russia about this, as she is the nearest neighbour whom this affects. We shall never go to war about this, because German aspirations are limited. Great Britain ought really to welcome an agreement between Germany and Russia, because such an agreement sets at rest Great Britain's fears of unlimited German expansion.

I repeat once more, we have only limited interests. But we are determined by every means to safeguard those interests. Surely we have shown this in the last eighteen days. It is a matter for the two countries most deeply interested to see how Poland will look, both territorially and politically, in the future.

Germany has limited, but firm, demands and will realise them one way or another. Germany and Russia will take all pains to create in this territory circumstances which will minimise tension.

If they are saying in the West that this must not take place, if it is being said in Great Britain that we must reckon with a war of three or four or eight years, then we will give a suitable answer. Germany has striven with great self-sacrifice to accept definitive frontiers in the west and south. We believe that this would have succeeded if the warmongers had not had an interest in the breakdown of European peace.

I have no war aims against England and France. I have tried to maintain peace with these countries and to establish friendly relations between the British and the German nations. I have also told France that I have no further aspirations in the West. I have especially striven, after the settlement of the Saar transfer, to prevent any conflict or any propaganda which could provoke hostility. You also already know my offer to Great Britain.

Poland will never arise again in the form laid down by the Versailles Treaty. Not only Germany, but also Russia guarantees this. If Great Britain now con-

tinues the war, she reveals her real aims, that she wants war against the German Government. And I have the honour to stand here as representative of this régime. It is for me the greatest honour to be regarded in that way.

Fundamentally, I have so trained the German people that any Government that is praised by our enemies would be rejected by Germans. If a Government were praised by Churchill, Eden, or others like them, then such a Government would only be tolerated by these gentlemen themselves. It is for us only praise to be rejected by these gentlemen. I am proud to be attacked by them. But if they believe that they can divide the German people from me, then they consider the German people as characterless and as stupid as themselves.

They are mistaken in both. The gentlemen must be convinced that they will not prevail over the German people by their ridiculous propaganda. If nations break down, it will not be the attacked German nation, but the others. When Great Britain says that the war will last three years, then I can only say that I am sorry for France.

What is the French soldier fighting for? He does not know. Whether the war lasts three years depends also on us. And if it lasts three years the word "capitulation" will not arise on our side, nor in the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh years.

The generation leading Germany to-day is not the generation of Bethmann-Hollweg. To-day Germany is a Frederician Germany. We do not allow ridiculous propaganda to deceive us into thinking that it is a question of the régime.

What bottomless villainy it is! For this, then, must millions of men be hounded to death? About one thing there can be no doubt—we are taking up the challenge.

Great Britain has already started war against women and children. Her naval arm is there for that purpose.

But do not deceive yourselves: the moment may come when we use a weapon which is not yet known and with which we could not ourselves be attacked. Let us hope that we will not be forced to use this means. It is to be hoped that no one will then complain in the name of humanity.

Now I must thank the German nation. She has in the last few weeks shown a really wonderful sign of her internal unity and courageous mind. Many people will say that the German nation is not so enthusiastic as in 1914. It is indeed much more enthusiastic. It is filled with a fanatical determination. It possesses the enthusiasm of men who know what war is. We do not feed on any artificial jingoism. We know how awful these happenings are; but we are determined to see this event through to a victorious end. We only wish that God Almighty, who has blessed our arms, may enlighten other nations and make them reconsider things.

ANNEX II.

A COMMENTARY ON HERR HITLER'S SPEECH.

AN authoritative commentary issued in London last night pointed out that Hitler's speech was full of the crass misstatements which usually fall from his lips and to which the world has now become accustomed. It is surprising, it was added, that a man in his responsible position should venture to convict himself so palpably out of his own mouth. Thus, for example, we now hear from Herr Hitler:—

“At that time there lived in Poland a man of energy and action. I tried in common with Marshal Pilsudski to find a solution that would secure peace. In this we put aside the Versailles Treaty and attempted to reach a temporary solution. After the death of Marshal Pilsudski, however, the mortal fight against all Germans in Poland began anew. This fight naturally embittered and ruined the relations between the two nations. It

was possible for us only with difficulty to look on while the German minority was barbarously ill-treated. The world, which is always shaken to the depths when a Polish Jew who has recently emigrated to Germany is deported, remained dumb in the face of this ill-treatment."

The world remained dumb in face of this ill-treatment for the very good reason that, from the time of Marshal Pilsudski's death until this spring, Herr Hitler represented his relations with Poland as excellent. No word was said in Germany of the maltreatment of Germans in Poland. On the contrary, this is how Herr Hitler himself described his friendship for Poland in the Reichstag on the 21st May, 1935:—

"We recognise the Polish State as the home of a great patriotic nation with the understanding and the cordial friendship of candid nationalists."

Again in the Reichstag on the 20th February, 1938, he said:—

"In the fifth year which follows the coming into force of the first great international convention concluded by the Reich we state with genuine admiration that our relations with that State, with which we had, perhaps, the greatest antagonism, are not only characterized by a *détente*, but that, in the course of the past years, these relations resulted in a more and more friendly drawing together. I know full well that this is chiefly due to the fact that at that time there was not a Western Parliamentarian in Warsaw, but a Polish Marshal whose commanding personality realized the importance for Europe of such a *détente* between Germany and Poland. The value of this was questioned by many at the time, but it has now passed the test and I may well say that since the League of Nations has ceased its continuous efforts at disturbance in Danzig and appointed a new Commissioner, a man of personality, this most dangerous place for the peace of Europe has entirely lost its menacing significance. The Polish State respects the national conditions in this country, and that city and Germany respect Polish rights. Thus it was possible to find the way to an understanding which, emanating from Danzig, in spite of the assertions of many mischief-makers, has succeeded in removing all friction between Germany and Poland and made it possible to work together in true amity."

Once again, in the Sportpalast on the 26th September, 1938, Herr Hitler said:—

"Poland was ruled by a man and not by a democracy. With his collaboration it was possible to bring about, in less than one year, an agreement which, to begin with, excluded the danger of a clash for a period of 10 years. We are all convinced that this agreement will result in a lasting appeasement. We realize that there are two nations which must live side by side and neither of which is in a position to eliminate the other. A State with 33,000,000 inhabitants will always strive to have an outlet to the sea. It was therefore necessary to find the way to an understanding. This way has been found and will be consolidated. . . . This was really a peaceful action which is worth more than the whole of the babbling at the Palace of the League of Nations in Geneva."

In the present speech, Herr Hitler asks further on, with reference to his proposals for a settlement: "I do not know in what state of mind the Polish Government could have been to reject such proposals."

The answer is that the Polish Government had before their eyes the shameful betrayal of the solemn assurances given by the German Government at Munich. They know that these demands were only the preliminary to further exactions. If Herr Hitler had wished to inspire confidence in his word, he should have been less reckless with his earlier promises. "Germany has no further territorial ambitions in Europe" was an undertaking which had been broken too flagrantly and too often.

The tale of Herr Hitler's broken promises is so long that he can scarcely expect Great Britain to believe that German aspirations are limited and that Germany has no further aspirations in the West.

And now compare what Herr Hitler tells us of Russia with what he told us when it was Herr von Ribbentrop's mission to persuade Great Britain of the Russian peril. This is what he says now :—

“ We have found that it is in the best interests of both our nations to have an understanding with each other. Thus the British assertion of the unlimited world political aspirations of Germany is finally contradicted. We shall never again fight a war in the interests of the Western democracies. Make a note of that, my English gentlemen.”

This is what he said then (in the Reichstag on the 30th January, 1937) :—

“ Bolshevism is the doctrine of world revolution, *i.e.*, of world destruction . . . as far as Germany is concerned I do not want to leave any doubt as to the following :—(1) We look upon Bolshevism as upon an intolerable danger to the world; (2) we shall try and keep this danger away from the German *Volk* by every means at our command; (3) we are therefore endeavouring to make the German *Volk* as immune as possible from this contagion. For this it is necessary that we should avoid all close contacts with the bearers of these poisonous bacilli. . . . I request the German workers to avoid all contacts and relations with these international parasites, and, consequently, it will never occur that one will see me dining and wining with them. Furthermore, any treaty links between Germany and present-day Bolshevik Russia would be without any value whatsoever.”

Again, at the Nuremburg Party Rally on the 14th September, 1937, he said :—

“ I refuse most emphatically to be joined up with those whose programme is the destruction of Europe and who do not even try to conceal this programme. To refuse to collaborate with such elements does not mean to isolate oneself, but to secure oneself.”

Again, in the Reichstag on the 20th February, 1938, he said :—

“ There is only one State with which we have never sought close relationships and with which we do not want to have any close relationships : I mean Soviet Russia. We still look upon Bolshevism as upon the incarnation of the destructive qualities of human nature, and we do so even more than ever before.”

There is no question of Great Britain waging war, as Herr Hitler declares, on German women and children. The German Government has already declared that there are ample stocks of food in Germany, but the restriction of the import of raw materials is not a measure of which the German Government can legitimately complain.

Finally, Herr Hitler's account of the circumstances attending the outbreak of war is a travesty of the facts. He was determined on war, and hoped to the last that Great Britain would not fulfil her treaty obligations to Poland. It was only two days after the invasion of Poland, when no reply had been received to the British communication, that an ultimatum was addressed to the German Government.



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