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NEW ZEALAND

DOCUMENTS IN CONNECTION WITH THE GERMAN-POLISH DISPUTE.

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Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command.

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(1) LETTER FROM MR. CHAMBERLAIN TO HERR HITLER, DATED 22nd AUGUST, 1939.

YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

Your Excellency will have already heard of certain measures taken by His Majesty's Government and announced in the press and on the wireless this evening. These steps have in the opinion of His Majesty's Government been rendered necessary by the military movements which have been reported from Germany, and by the fact that apparently the announcement of a German-Soviet Agreement is taken in some quarters in Berlin to indicate that intervention by Great Britain on behalf of Poland is no longer a contingency that need be reckoned with. No greater mistake could be made. Whatever may prove to be the nature of the German-Soviet Agreement, it cannot alter Great Britain's obligations to Poland which His Majesty's Government have stated in public, repeatedly and plainly, and which they are determined to fulfil. It has been alleged that if His Majesty's Government had made their position more clear in 1914 the great catastrophe would have been avoided. Whether or not there is any force in that allegation, His Majesty's Government are resolved that on this occasion there shall be no such tragic misunderstanding. If the case should arise they are resolved and prepared to employ without delay all the forces at their command and it is impossible to foresee the end of hostilities once engaged. It would be a dangerous illusion to think that if war once started it will come to an early end, even if a success on any one of the several fronts on which it will be engaged should have been secured. Having thus made our position perfectly clear I wish to repeat to you my conviction that war between our two peoples would be the greatest calamity that could occur. I am certain that it is desired neither by our people nor by yours, and I cannot see that there is anything in the questions arising between Germany and Poland which could not and should not be resolved without the use of force, if only a situation of confidence could be restored to enable discussions to be carried on in an atmosphere different from that which prevails to-day. We have been, and at all times will be, ready to assist in creating conditions in which such negotiations could take place and in which it might be possible concurrently to discuss the wider problems affecting the future of international relations including matters of interest to us and to you. The difficulties in the way of any peaceful discussion in the present state of tension are, however, obvious and the longer that tension is maintained the harder will it be for reason to prevail. These difficulties, however, might be mitigated if not removed provided that there could for an initial period be a truce on both sides, and indeed on all sides to press polemics and to all incitement. If such a truce could be arranged then at the end of that period, during which steps could be taken to examine and deal with complaints made by either side as to the treatment of minorities, it is reasonable to hope that suitable conditions might have been established for direct negotiations between Germany and Poland upon the issues between them (with the aid of a neutral intermediary if both sides should think that that would be helpful). But I am bound to say that there would be slender hope of bringing such negotiations to successful issue unless it were understood beforehand that any settlement reached would when concluded be guaranteed by other Powers. His Majesty's Government would be ready if desired to make such contribution as they could to the effective operation of such guarantees. At this moment I confess I can see no other way to avoid a catastrophe that will involve Europe in war. In view of the grave consequences to humanity which may follow from the action of their rulers I trust that your Excellency will weigh with the utmost deliberation the considerations which I have put before you.

Yours sincerely,

NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN.

(2) REPLY FROM HERR HITLER TO MR. CHAMBERLAIN, DATED 23rd AUGUST, 1939.

YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

The British Ambassador has just handed to me a communication in which Your Excellency draws attention in the name of the British Government to a number of points which, in your estimation, are of the greatest importance. I may be permitted to answer your letter as follows:—

(1) Germany has never sought conflict with England and has never interfered in English interests. On the contrary she has for years endeavoured although, unfortunately, in vain to win England's friendship. On this account she voluntarily assumed in a wide area of Europe the limitations on her own interests which from a national political point of view it would have otherwise been very difficult to tolerate.

(2) The German Reich, however, like every other State possesses certain definite interests which it is impossible to renounce. These do not extend beyond the limits of the necessities laid down by former German history and deriving from vital economic prerequisites some of these questions held, and still hold a significance both of a national, political and psychological character which no German Government is able to ignore. To these questions belong the German city of Danzig, and the connected problem of the Corridor. Numerous statesmen, historians, and men of letters even in England have been conscious of this at any rate up to a few years ago. I would add that all these territories lying in the aforesaid German sphere of interest, and in particular those lands which returned to the Reich eighteen months ago, received their cultural development at the hands not of the English but exclusively of the Germans, and this moreover already from a time dating back over a thousand years.

(3) Germany was prepared to settle the questions of Danzig and of the Corridor by the method of negotiation on the basis of a proposal of truly unparalleled magnanimity. The allegations disseminated by England regarding a German mobilization against Poland, the assertion of aggressive designs towards Roumania, Hungary, &c., as well as the so-called guarantee declarations which were subsequently given, had, however, dispelled Polish inclination to negotiate on a basis of this kind which would have been tolerable for Germany also.

(4) The unconditional assurance given by England to Poland that she would render assistance to that country in all circumstances regardless of the causes from which a conflict might spring could only be interpreted in that country as an encouragement thenceforward to unloosen under cover of such a charter a wave of appalling terrorism against the one million and a half German inhabitants living in Poland. The atrocities which since then have been taking place in that country are terrible for the victims, but intolerable for a great Power such as the German Reich, which is expected to remain a passive onlooker during these happenings. Poland has been guilty of numerous breaches of her legal obligations towards the Free City of Danzig, has made demands in the character of ultimata, and has initiated a process of economic strangulation.

(5) The Government of the German Reich therefore recently caused the Polish Government to be informed that it was not prepared passively to accept this development of affairs, that it will not tolerate further addressing of notes in the character of ultimata to Danzig, that it will not tolerate a continuance of the persecutions of the German minority, that it will equally not tolerate the extermination of the Free City of Danzig by economic measures, in other words, the destruction of the vital bases of the population of Danzig by a kind of Customs blockade, and that it will not tolerate the occurrence of further acts of provocation directed against the Reich. Apart from this the questions of the Corridor and of Danzig must and shall be solved.

(6) Your Excellency informs me in the name of the British Government that you will be obliged to render assistance to Poland in any such case of intervention on the part of Germany. I take note of this statement of yours and assure you

that it can make no change in the determination of the Reich Government to safeguard the interests of the Reich as stated in paragraph (5) above. Your assurance to the effect that in such an event you anticipate a long war is shared by myself. Germany, if attacked by England, will be found prepared and determined. I have already more than once declared before the German people and the world that there can be no doubt concerning the determination of the new German Reich rather to accept, for however long it might be, every sort of misery and tribulation than to sacrifice its national interests let alone its honour.

(7) The German Reich Government has received information to the effect that the British Government has the intention to carry out measures of mobilization which, according to the statements contained in your own letter, are clearly directed against Germany alone. This is said to be true of France as well. Since Germany has never had the intention of taking military measures other than those of a defensive character against England and/or France, and as has already been emphasized has never intended and does not in the future intend to attack England or France, it follows that this announcement as confirmed by you, Mr. Prime Minister, in your own letter, can only refer to a contemplated act of menace directed against the Reich. I therefore inform Your Excellency that in the event of these military announcements being carried into effect I shall order immediate mobilization of the German forces.

(8) The question of the treatment of European problems on a peaceful basis is not a decision which rests on Germany but primarily on those who, since the crime committed by the Versailles Dictate, have stubbornly and consistently opposed any peaceful revision. Only after a change of spirit on the part of the responsible Powers can there be any real change in the relationship between England and Germany. I have all my life fought for Anglo-German friendship, the attitude adopted by British diplomacy, at any rate up to the present, has, however, convinced me of the futility of such an attempt. Should there be any change in this respect in the future nobody could be happier than I.

ADOLF HITLER.

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(3) SUPPLEMENTARY VERBAL COMMUNICATION MADE BY HERR HITLER TO SIR NEVILE HENDERSON ON 25th AUGUST, 1939.

The following is a translation of the text of a verbal communication made to Sir Nevile Henderson by Herr Hitler at his interview on the 25th August.

By way of introduction the Fuhrer declared that the British Ambassador had given expression at the close of the last conversation to the hope that, after all, an understanding between Germany and England might yet be possible. He (the Fuhrer) had therefore turned things over in his mind once more, and desired to make a move as regards England which should be as decisive as the move as regards Russia which had led to the recent agreement. Yesterday's sitting in the House of Commons and the speeches of Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax had also moved the Fuhrer to talk once more to the British Ambassador. The assertion that Germany affected to conquer the world was ridiculous. The British Empire embraced 40 million square kilometres, Russia 19 million square kilometres, America 9½ million square kilometres, whereas Germany embraced less than 60,000 square kilometres. It is "clear who it is who desires to conquer the world." The Fuhrer makes the following communication to the British Ambassador:—

(1) Poland's actual provocations have become intolerable. It makes no difference who is responsible. If the Polish Government denies responsibilty that only goes to show that it no longer itself possesses any influence over its subordinate

military authorities. In the preceding night there had been a further twenty-one new frontier incidents; on the German side the greatest discipline had been maintained. All incidents had been provoked from the Polish side. Furthermore, commercial aircraft had been shot at. If the Polish Government stated that it was not responsible it showed that it was no longer capable of controlling its own people.

(2) Germany was in all the circumstances determined to abolish these Macedonian conditions on her eastern frontier and, what is more, to do so in the interests of quiet and order but also in the interests of European peace.

(3) The problem of Danzig and the Corridor must be solved. The British Prime Minister had made a speech which was not in the least calculated to induce any change in the German attitude. At the most the result of this speech could be a bloody and incalculable war between Germany and England. Such a war would be bloodier than that of 1914 to 1918. In contrast to the last war Germany would no longer have to fight on two fronts. Agreement with Russia was unconditional and signified a change in foreign policy of the Reich which would last a very long time. Russia and Germany would never again take up arms against each other. Apart from this the agreements reached with Russia would also render Germany secure economically for the longest possible period of war. The Fuhrer had always wanted an Anglo-German understanding. War between England and Germany could at the best bring some profit to Germany but none at all to England. The Fuhrer declared that the German-Polish problem must be solved and will be solved. He is, however, prepared and determined after the solution of this problem to approach England once more with a large comprehensive offer. He is a man of great decisions. And in this case also he will be capable of being great in his action. He accepts the British Empire and is ready to pledge himself personally for its continued existence, and to place the power of the German Reich at its disposal, if—

(1) His colonial demands which are limited and can be negotiated by peaceful methods are fulfilled and in this case he is prepared to fix the longest time limit.

(2) His obligations towards Italy are not touched, in other words he does not demand that England gives up her obligations towards France and similarly for his own part he cannot withdraw from his obligations towards Italy.

(3) He also desires to stress the irrevocable determination of Germany never again to enter into conflict with Russia. The Fuhrer is ready to conclude agreements with England which, as has already been emphasized, would not only guarantee the existence of the British Empire in all circumstances as far as Germany is concerned, but also, if necessary, an assurance to the British Empire of German assistance regardless of where such assistance should be necessary. The Fuhrer would then also be ready to accept a reasonable limitation of armaments which corresponds to the new political situation and which is economically tolerable. Finally the Fuhrer renewed his assurances that he is not interested in Western problems and that a frontier modification in the west does not enter into consideration. Western fortifications which have been constructed at a cost of milliards were the final Reich frontier on the west. If the British Government would consider these ideas a blessing for Germany and also for the British Empire might result. If it rejects these ideas there will be war. In no case would Great Britain emerge stronger, the last war proved this. The Fuhrer repeats that he is man of *ad infinitum* decisions by which he himself is bound and that this is his last offer. Immediately after solution of the German-Polish question he would approach the British Government with an offer.

(4) REPLY FROM HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM TO HERR HITLER, DATED 28th AUGUST, 1939.

1. His Majesty's Government have received the message conveyed to them from the German Chancellor by His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin and have considered it with care which it demands. They note the Chancellor's expression of his desire to make friendship the basis of relations between Germany and the British Empire, and they fully share this desire. They believe, with him, that, if a complete and lasting understanding between the two countries could be established, it would bring untold blessings to both peoples.

2. The Chancellor's message deals with two groups of questions—those which are matters now in dispute between Germany and Poland, and those affecting the ultimate relations of Germany and Great Britain. In connection with these last, His Majesty's Government observe that the German Chancellor has indicated certain proposals which, subject to one condition, he would be prepared to make to the British Government for a general understanding. These proposals are of course stated in very general form and would require closer definition, but His Majesty's Government are fully prepared to take them, with some additions, as subjects for discussion and they would be ready, if the differences between Germany and Poland are peacefully composed, to proceed so soon as practicable to such discussion with a sincere desire to reach agreement.

3. The condition which the German Chancellor lays down is that there must first be a settlement of the differences between Germany and Poland. As to that, His Majesty's Government entirely agree. Everything, however, turns upon the nature of the settlement and the method by which it is to be reached. On these points, the importance of which cannot be absent from the Chancellor's mind, his message is silent, and His Majesty's Government feel compelled to point out that an understanding upon both of these is essential to achieving further progress. The German Government will be aware that His Majesty's Government have obligations to Poland by which they are bound and which they intend to honour. They could not, for any advantage offered to Great Britain, acquiesce in a settlement which put in jeopardy the independence of a State to whom they have given their guarantee.

4. In the opinion of His Majesty's Government a reasonable solution of the differences between Germany and Poland could, and should, be effected by agreement between the two countries on lines which would include the safeguarding of Poland's essential interests, and they recall that in his speech of the 28th April last the German Chancellor recognized the importance of these interests to Poland. But, as was stated by the Prime Minister in his letter to the German Chancellor of the 22nd August, His Majesty's Government consider it essential for the success of discussions which would precede agreement that it should be understood beforehand that any settlement arrived at would be guaranteed by other Powers. His Majesty's Government would be ready, if desired, to make their contribution to the effective operation of such a guarantee.

In the view of His Majesty's Government it follows that the next step should be the initiation of direct discussions between the German and Polish Governments on a basis which would include the principles stated above, namely, the safeguarding of Poland's essential interests and the securing of a settlement by an international guarantee. They have already received a definite assurance from the Polish Government that they are prepared to enter into discussions on this basis, and His Majesty's Government hope that the German Government would for their part also be willing to agree to this course. If, as His Majesty's Government hope, such discussions lead to agreement, the way would be open to negotiation of that wider and more complete understanding between Great Britain and Germany which both countries desire.

5. His Majesty's Government agree with the German Chancellor that one of the principal dangers in the German-Polish situation arises from reports concerning the treatment of minorities. The present state of tension, with its concomitant

frontier incidents, reports of maltreatment, and inflammatory propaganda is a constant danger to peace. It is manifestly a matter of the utmost urgency that all incidents of the kind should be promptly and rigidly suppressed and that unverified reports should not be allowed to circulate, in order that time may be afforded, without provocation on either side, for a full examination of the possibilities of settlement. His Majesty's Government are confident that both Governments concerned are fully alive to these considerations.

6. His Majesty's Government have said enough to make their own attitude plain in the particular matters at issue between Germany and Poland. They trust the German Chancellor will not think, because His Majesty's Government are scrupulous concerning their obligations to Poland, they are not anxious to use their influence to assist the achievement of a solution which may commend itself both to Germany and to Poland. That such a settlement should be achieved seems to His Majesty's Government essential not only for reasons directly arising in regard to the settlement itself, but also because of the wider considerations of which the German Chancellor has spoken with such conviction.

7. It is unnecessary in the present reply to stress the advantage of a peaceful settlement over a decision to settle the questions at issue by force of arms. The results of a decision to use force have been clearly set out in the Prime Minister's letter to the Chancellor of the 22nd August, and His Majesty's Government do not doubt that they are as fully recognized by the Chancellor as by themselves. On the other hand, His Majesty's Government, noting with interest the German Chancellor's reference in the message now under consideration to a limitation of armaments, believe that, if a peaceful settlement can be obtained, the assistance of the world could confidently be anticipated for practical measures to enable transit from the preparation for war to normal activities of peaceful trade to be safely and smoothly effected.

8. A just settlement of these questions between Germany and Poland may open the way to world peace. Failure to reach it would ruin the hopes of better understanding between Germany and Great Britain, and would bring the two countries into conflict, and might well plunge the whole world into war. Such an outcome would be a calamity without parallel in history.

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(5) REPLY FROM HERR HITLER TO HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, DATED 29th AUGUST, 1939.

The British Ambassador in Berlin has submitted to the British Government suggestions which I felt bound to make in order: (1) To give expression once more to the will of the Reich Government for sincere Anglo-German understanding, co-operation, and friendship; (2) to leave no room for doubt as to the fact that such an understanding could not be bought at the price of a renunciation of vital German interests, let alone the abandonment of demands which are based as much upon common human justice as upon national dignity and the honour of our people.

The German Government have noted with satisfaction from the reply of the British Government and from the oral explanations given by the British Ambassador that the British Government for their part are also prepared to improve the relationship between Germany and England and to develop and extend it in the sense of the German suggestion. In this connection the British Government are similarly convinced that the removal of German-Polish tension, which has become unbearable, is prerequisite for the realization of this hope.

Since autumn of the past year, and on the last occasion in March, 1939, there were submitted to the Polish Government proposals, both oral and written, having regard to the friendship then existing between Germany and Poland which offered the possibility of a solution of the questions in dispute acceptable to both parties. The British Government are aware that the Polish Government saw fit in March last finally to reject these proposals. At the same time they used this rejection as a pretext or an occasion for taking military measures which have since been continuously intensified. Already in the middle of last month Poland was in effect in a state of mobilization. This was accompanied by numerous

encroachments in the Free City of Danzig due to the instigation of the Polish authorities; threatening demands in the nature of ultimata, varying only in degree, were addressed to that City. A closing of the frontier at first in the form of a measure of Customs policy, but extended later in a military sense affecting also traffic and communication, was imposed with the object of bringing about the political exhaustion and economic destruction of this German community.

To this were added barbaric actions of maltreatment which cry to Heaven, and other kinds of persecution of large German national groups in Poland which extended even to the killing of many resident Germans or to their forcible removal under most cruel conditions. This state of affairs is unbearable for a Great Power. It has now forced Germany, after remaining a detached passive onlooker for many months, in her turn to take necessary steps for the safeguarding of justified German interests. And, indeed, the German Government can but assure the British Government in the most solemn manner that a condition of affairs has now been reached which can no longer be accepted or observed with indifference.

The demands of the German Government are in conformity with the revision of the Versailles Treaty in regard to this territory which has always been recognized as being necessary—viz., return of Danzig and the Corridor to Germany, the safeguarding of existing German national groups in territories remaining to Poland. The German Government note with satisfaction that the British Government under the circumstances are in principle convinced that some solution must be found for the new situation which has arisen.

They further feel justified in assuming that the British Government can have no doubt that it is a question now of conditions for the elimination of which there no longer remains days, still less weeks, but perhaps only hours. For in the disorganized state of affairs obtaining in Poland the possibility of incidents intervening, which it might be impossible for Germany to tolerate, must at any moment be reckoned with. While the British Government may still believe these grave differences can be solved by way of direct negotiation, the German Government, unfortunately, can no longer share this view as a matter of course. For they have made attempts to embark on such peaceful negotiations, but, instead of receiving any support from the Polish Government, they were rebuffed by the sudden introduction of measures of a military character in favour of the development alluded to above.

The British Government attach importance to two considerations: (1) That the existing danger of an imminent explosion should be eliminated as quickly as possible by direct negotiation, and that (2) the existence of the Polish State in the form in which it would then continue to exist should be adequately safeguarded in the economic and political sphere by means of international guarantees.

On this subject the German Government makes the following declaration:—

Though sceptical as to the prospects of a successful outcome, they are nevertheless prepared to accept the English proposal and to enter into direct discussions. They do so, as has already been emphasized, solely as the result of the impression made upon them by the written statement received from the British Government that they too desire a pact of friendship (*freundschaft sabkommen*) in accordance with the general lines indicated to the British Ambassador. The German Government desire in this way to give the British Government and the British nation a proof of the sincerity of Germany's intentions to enter into a lasting friendship with Great Britain. The Government of the Reich feel, however, bound to point out to the British Government that, in the event of a territorial rearrangement in Poland, they would no longer be able to bind themselves to give guarantees, or to participate in guarantees, without the U.S.S.R. being associated therewith.

For the rest, in making these proposals the German Government have never had any intention of touching Poland's vital interests or questioning the existence of an independent Polish State. The German Government accordingly in these circumstances agree to accept the British Government's offer of their good offices in securing the despatch to Berlin of a Polish emissary with full powers. They count on the arrival of this emissary on Wednesday, 30th August, 1939. The German Government will immediately draw up proposals for solution acceptable to themselves and will if possible place these at the disposal of the British Government before the arrival of the Polish negotiator.

(6) SUMMARY OF TELEGRAM FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO HIS MAJESTY'S AMBASSADOR AT BERLIN, DATED 30th AUGUST, 1939.

(6) We shall give careful consideration to the German Government's reply, but it is of course unreasonable to expect that we can produce a Polish representative in Berlin to-day, and the German Government must not expect this. It might be well for you at once to let this be known in the proper quarters through appropriate channels. We hope you may receive our reply this afternoon.

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(7) MESSAGE FROM MR. CHAMBERLAIN TO HERR HITLER SENT THROUGH HIS MAJESTY'S AMBASSADOR AT BERLIN AT 2.45 P.M., 30th AUGUST, 1939.

We are considering the German Note with all urgency and shall send an official reply later in the afternoon. We are representing at Warsaw how vital it is to reinforce all instructions for the avoiding of frontier incidents, and I would beg you to confirm similar instructions on the German side. I welcome the evidence in the exchanges of views, which are taking place, of the desire for the Anglo-German understanding of which I spoke yesterday in Parliament.

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(8) TELEGRAM FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO HIS MAJESTY'S AMBASSADOR AT BERLIN, SENT AT 5.30 P.M., 30th AUGUST, 1939.

In informing the German Government of the renewed representations which have been made in Warsaw, please make it clear that the Polish Government can only be expected to maintain an attitude of complete restraint if the German Government reciprocate on their side of the frontier, and if no provocation is offered by members of the German minority in Poland. Reports are current that Germans have committed acts of sabotage which would justify the sternest measures.

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(9) TELEGRAM FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO HIS MAJESTY'S AMBASSADOR AT BERLIN, SENT AT 6.50 P.M., 30th AUGUST, 1939.

We understand that the German Government are insisting that a Polish representative with full powers must come to Berlin to receive the German proposals. We cannot advise the Polish Government to comply with this procedure, which is wholly unreasonable. Could you not suggest to the German Government that they adopt the normal procedure, when their proposals are ready, of inviting the Polish Ambassador to call, and handing the proposals to him for transmission to Warsaw and inviting suggestions as to the conduct of the negotiations. The German Government have been good enough to promise that they will communicate the proposals also to His Majesty's Government. If the latter think they offer a reasonable basis they can be counted on to do their best in Warsaw to facilitate negotiations.

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(10) REPLY FROM HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM TO HERR HITLER'S NOTE OF 29th AUGUST, DATED 30th AUGUST, 1939.

1. His Majesty's Government appreciate the friendly reference in the declaration contained in the reply of the German Government to the latter's desire for an Anglo-German understanding and to their statement of the influence which this consideration has exercised upon their policy.

2. His Majesty's Government repeat that they reciprocate the German Government's desire for improved relations, but it will be recognized that they could not sacrifice the interests of other friends in order to obtain that improvement. They fully understand that the German Government cannot sacrifice Germany's interests, but the Polish Government are in the same position, and His Majesty's Government believe that the vital interests of the two countries are not incompatible.

3. His Majesty's Government note that the German Government accept the British proposal and are prepared to enter into direct discussions with the Polish Government.

4. His Majesty's Government understand that the German Government accept in principle the condition that any settlement should be made the subject of an international guarantee. The question of who shall participate in this guarantee will have to be discussed further, and His Majesty's Government hope that to avoid loss of time the German Government will take immediate steps to obtain the assent of the U.S.S.R. whose participation in the guarantee His Majesty's Government have always assumed.

5. His Majesty's Government also note that the German Government accept the position of the British Government as to Poland's vital interests and independence.

6. His Majesty's Government must make an express reservation in regard to Europe, particularly the demands put forward by the German Government in an earlier passage in their reply. They understand that the German Government are drawing up proposals for a solution. No doubt they will be fully examined during the discussion. It can then be determined how far they are compatible with the essential conditions which His Majesty's Government have stated and which in principle the German Government have expressed their willingness to accept.

7. His Majesty's Government are at once informing the Polish Government of the German Government's reply. The method of contact and arrangements for discussions must obviously be agreed with all urgency between the German and Polish Governments, but in His Majesty's Government's view it would be impracticable to establish contact so early as to-day.

8. His Majesty's Government fully recognize the need for speed in the initiation of the discussion and they share the apprehension of the Chancellor arising from the proximity of two mobilized armies standing face to face. They would accordingly most strongly urge that both parties should give assurances that during the negotiations no aggressive military movements will take place. His Majesty's Government feel confident that they could obtain such an undertaking from the Polish Government if the German Government would give similar assurances.

9. Further, His Majesty's Government would suggest that a temporary *modus vivendi* might be arranged for Danzig which might prevent the occurrence of incidents tending to render German-Polish relations more difficult.

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(11) MESSAGES COMMUNICATED BY THE GERMAN STATE SECRETARY TO HIS MAJESTY'S AMBASSADOR AT BERLIN IN THE EVENING OF 31st AUGUST, 1939. (TRANSLATION.)

His Majesty's Government informed the German Government, in a note dated the 28th August, 1939, of their readiness to offer their mediation towards direct negotiations between Germany and Poland over the problems in dispute. In so doing they made it abundantly clear that they, too, were aware of the urgent need for progress in view of the continuous incidents and the general European tension.

In a reply dated the 29th August, the German Government, in spite of being sceptical as to the desire of the Polish Government to come to an understanding, declared themselves ready in the interests of peace to accept the British suggestion of mediation. After considering all the circumstances prevailing at the time, they considered it necessary in their Note to point out that if the danger of a catastrophe

was to be avoided, then action must be taken readily and without delay. In this sense they declared themselves ready to receive a personage appointed by the Polish Government up to the evening of the 30th August, with the proviso that the latter was in fact empowered not only to discuss but to conduct and conclude negotiations. Further, the German Government pointed out that they felt able to make the basic points regarding the offer of an understanding available to the British Government by the time the Polish negotiator arrived in Berlin. Instead of a statement regarding the arrival of an authorized Polish personage, the first answer the Government of the Reich received to their readiness for an understanding was the news of the Polish mobilization, and only towards 12 o'clock on the night of the 30th August, 1939, did they receive a somewhat general assurance of British readiness to help towards the commencement of negotiations. Although the fact that the Polish negotiator expected by the Government of the Reich did not arrive removed the necessary condition for informing His Majesty's Government of the views of the German Government as regards possible bases of negotiation, since His Majesty's Government themselves had pleaded for direct negotiations between Germany and Poland, the German Minister for Foreign Affairs, Herr Von Ribbentrop, gave the British Ambassador on the occasion of the presentation of the last British Note precise information as to the text of the German proposals which would be regarded as a basis of negotiation in the event of the arrival of the Polish plenipotentiary. The Government of the German Reich considered themselves entitled to claim that in these circumstances a Polish personage would immediately be nominated, at any rate retroactively. For the Reich Government cannot be expected for their part continually not only to emphasize their willingness to start negotiations, but actually to be ready to do so, while being from the Polish side merely put off with empty subterfuges and meaningless declarations. It has once more been made clear, as a result of a demarche which has meanwhile been made by the Polish Ambassador, that the latter himself has no plenary powers either to enter into any discussion or even to negotiate. The Fuhrer and the German Government have thus waited two days in vain for the arrival of a Polish negotiator with plenary powers. In these circumstances the German Government regard their proposals as having this time, too, been to all intents and purposes rejected, although they considered that these proposals, in the form in which they were made known to the British Government also, were more than loyal, fair, and practicable. The Reich Government consider it timely to inform the public of the bases for negotiation which were communicated to the British Ambassador by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Herr Von Ribbentrop. The situation existing between the German Reich and Poland is at the moment of such a kind that any further incident can lead to an explosion on the part of the military forces which have taken up their position on both sides. Any peaceful solution must be framed in such a way as to ensure that the events which lie at the root of this situation cannot be repeated on the next occasion offered, and that thus not only the east of Europe but also other territories shall not be brought into such a state of tension. The cause of this development lie in (1) the impossible delineation of frontiers as fixed by the Versailles Dictate, (2) the impossible treatment of the minority in the ceded territories. In making these proposals the Reich Government are, therefore, actuated by the idea of finding a lasting solution which will remove the impossible situation created by frontier delineation, which may assure to both parties their vitally important line of communication, which may as far as it is at all possible remove the minority problem, and, in so far as this is not possible, may give the minorities the assurance of a tolerable future by means of a reliable guarantee of their rights. The Reich Government are content that in so doing it is essential that economic and physical damage done since 1938 should be exposed and repaired in its entirety. They, of course, regard this obligation as being binding for both parties. These considerations lead to the following practical proposals :—

(1) The Free City of Danzig shall return to the German Reich, in view of its purely German character as well as of the unanimous will of its population.

(2) The territory of the so-called corridor, which extends from the Baltic Sea to the line Marienwerde–Graudenz–Kulm–Bromberg (inclusive), and thence may run in a westerly direction to Schonlanke, shall itself decide as to whether it shall belong to Germany or Poland.

(3) For this purpose a plebiscite shall take place in this territory The following shall be entitled to vote: all Germans who were either domiciled in this territory on the above day (the 1st of January, 1918) or born there up to that day. The Germans who have been driven from this territory shall return to it in order to exercise their vote. With a view to ensuring an objective plebiscite, and also with a view to ensuring the extensive preparation necessary therefor. The above territory shall, as in the case of the Saar territory, be placed under the supervision of an International Commission to be formed immediately, on which shall be represented the four Great Powers—Italy, the Soviet Union, France, and England. This Commission shall exercise all the rights of sovereignty in this territory. With this end in view the territory shall be evacuated, within a period of the utmost brevity still to be agreed upon, by the Polish armed forces, the Polish police, and the Polish authorities.

(4) The Polish port of Gdynia, which fundamentally constituted Polish sovereign territory so far as it is confined territorially to the Polish settlement, shall be excluded from the above territory. The exact frontiers of this Polish port should be determined between Germany and Poland and, if necessary, delimited by an International Committee of arbitration.

(5) With a view to assuring the necessary time for the execution of the extensive work involved in the carrying-out of a just plebiscite, this plebiscite shall not take place before the expiry of twelve months.

(6) In order to guarantee unrestricted communication between Germany and East Prussia and between Poland and the sea during this period, roads and railways shall be established to render free transit traffic possible. In this connection only such taxes as are necessary for the maintenance of the means of communication and for the provision of transport may be levied.

(7) The question as to the party to which the area belongs is to be decided by simple majority of the votes recorded.

(8) In order to guarantee to Germany free communication with her province of Danzig - East Prussia and to Poland her connection with the sea after the execution of the plebiscite, regardless of the results thereof, Germany shall, in the event of the plebiscite area going to Poland, receive an extra-territorial traffic zone approximately in a line from Butow to Danzig or Dirschar in which to lay down an autobahn and a four-track railway-line. The road and the railway shall be so constructed that the Polish lines of communication are not affected—*i.e.*, they shall pass either over or under the latter. The breadth of this zone shall be fixed at one kilometre and it is to be German sovereign territory. Should the plebiscite be favourable to Germany, Poland is to obtain rights analogous to those accorded to Germany, to a similar extra-territorial communication by road and railway for the purpose of free and unrestricted communication with her port of Gdynia.

(9) In the event of the Corridor returning to the German Reich, the latter declares its right to proceed to an exchange of population with Poland to the extent to which the nature of the Corridor lends itself thereto.

(10) Any special right desired by Poland in the Port of Danzig would be negotiated on a basis of territory against similar rights to be granted to Germany in the Port of Gdynia.

(11) In order to remove any feeling in this area that either side was being threatened, Danzig and Gdynia would have the character of exclusively mercantile towns—that is to say, without military installations and military fortifications.

(12) The Peninsula of Hela, which as a result of the plebiscite might go either to Poland or to Germany, would in either case have similarly to be demilitarized.

(13) Since the Government of the German Reich has the most vehement complaints to make against the Polish treatment of minorities, and since the Polish Government for their part feel obliged to make complaints against Germany, both parties declare their agreement to have these complaints laid before an International Committee of inquiry, whose task would be to examine all complaints as regards economic or physical damage and any other acts

of terrorism. Germany and Poland undertake to make good economic or other damage done to minorities on either side since the year 1918, or to cancel expropriation, as the case may be, or to provide complete compensation to the persons affected for this and any other encroachments on their economic life.

(14) In order to free the Germans who may be left in Poland and the Poles who may be left in Germany from the feeling of being outlawed by all nations, and in order to render them secure against being called upon to perform action or to render services incompatible with their national sentiments, Germany and Poland agree to guarantee the rights of both minorities by means of the most comprehensive and binding agreement, in order to guarantee to these minorities the preservation, the free development and practical application of their nationality (*volkstum*), and in particular to permit for this purpose such organization as they may consider necessary. Both parties undertake not to call upon members of the minority for military service.

(15) In the event of agreement on the basis of these proposals, Germany and Poland declare themselves ready to decree and to carry out the immediate demobilization of their forces.

(16) The further measures necessary for the more rapid execution of the above arrangement shall be agreed upon by both Germany and Poland conjointly.

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(12) TELEGRAM FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO HIS MAJESTY'S AMBASSADOR AT BERLIN, SENT AT 11 P.M., 31st AUGUST, 1939.

1. Please inform German Government that we understand that Polish Government are taking steps to establish contact with them through Polish Ambassador in Berlin.

2. Please also ask them whether they agree to the necessity for securing an immediate provisional *modus vivendi* as regards Danzig (we have already put this point to German Government). Would they agree that M. Burckhardt might be employed for this purpose if it were possible to secure his services ?

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(13) REPLY FROM HIS MAJESTY'S AMBASSADOR AT BERLIN TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, RECEIVED IN THE EARLY HOURS OF 1st SEPTEMBER.

Written communication was made to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs early this morning in the sense of paragraph 2 of your telegram.

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(14) EXPLANATORY NOTE UPON THE COURSE OF EVENTS TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE ABOVE DOCUMENTS.

The reply to the German Government of 28th August was, before its delivery, communicated to the French and Polish Governments. The Polish Government authorized His Majesty's Government to inform the German Government that Poland was ready at once to enter into direct discussion with Germany. It will be seen that paragraph 4 of the British reply of 28th August made plain the attitude of the Polish Government on this point. The British reply was handed to Herr Hitler at 10.30 p.m. on 28th August, and he promised to give a written reply the following day. The German reply in writing was handed to His Majesty's Ambassador at 7.15 p.m. on 29th August. Apart from the complete distortion of events

leading up to the crisis, the German Government's reply demanded the arrival in Berlin of a Polish emissary with full powers during the course of the following day. The reply of the British Government is self-explanatory. It was communicated by His Majesty's Ambassador to the German Minister for Foreign Affairs at midnight on 30th August. Herr Von Ribbentrop's reply was to produce a long document which he read out rapidly in German. It was apparently the sixteen-point plan which the German Government have since published. When Sir Nevile Henderson asked for the text of these proposals, in accordance with the undertaking in the German reply of 29th August, Herr Von Ribbentrop asserted that it was now too late, as the Polish plenipotentiary had not arrived in Berlin by midnight, as had been demanded by the German Government in their communication of the previous evening. The Polish Government, on learning of these developments, informed His Majesty's Government during the afternoon of 31st August that they would authorize their Ambassador to inform the German Government that Poland had accepted the British proposals for negotiations. The Polish Ambassador in Berlin (M. Lipski) was not received by Herr Von Ribbentrop until the evening of 31st August. After this interview the German Government broadcast their proposals forthwith. M. Lipski at once tried to establish contact with Warsaw, but was unable to do so because all means of communication between Poland and Germany had been closed by German Government.

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