

POLISH COMMISSION OF WORK PREPARATORY
TO THE CONFERENCE OF PEACE

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GDAŃSK

(DANZIG OR DANTZICK)

INTRODUCTION

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GERMAN CLAIM

The Germans claim Gdańsk (Dantzick) as a German town and they find even among their enemies some supporters who believe that the principle of self-determination forbids the return of that German town to a National Poland. There are Germanized districts, caused by conquest or colonisation, wedged into other countries, as in Transylvania and on the Wolga; several millions of Germans inhabit also Bohemia and this will not be a pretext for depriving Bohemia of her natural frontiers. Thus the supposed German character of Gdańsk cannot be entirely decisive if we prove that Gdańsk belongs naturally and historically to Poland, like the German districts of Bohemia to Bohemia.

THEIR UNIQUE ARGUMENT

And this supposed German character of a city situated in Poland, surrounded by a Polish population, is the unique argument in favour of Germany. The Germans do not pretend that Gdańsk is indispensable for their commerce, as they have other ports of far greater importance. They cannot put forward historical arguments because Gdańsk has only twice belonged to the Germans and both times for a much shorter period than either Bordeaux or Calais have belonged to England. (In both cases moreover it came into German hands by violence and treachery.)

GDAŃSK AND THE PARTITIONS OF POLAND

It has belonged to Poland since the dawn of history. At all events it existed as a Slav settlement in the tenth century, and remained Polish up to 1308. Then it became Polish again by the free decision of its inhabitants in 1454 and remained one of the most important Polish cities up to 1793. Thus during seven centuries Gdańsk was a Polish town, against one hundred and forty-six years domination of the Teutonic Order, which led to the extinction of that Order four centuries ago, and one hundred and twenty-six years of Prussian rule, which led to the world-war. The chief motive of the partitions of Poland was the craving of Prussian kings for the annexation of Gdańsk with the territory of West Prussia, surrounding it, and without the partitions of Poland Prussia could never have become such a paramount military power as to defy the whole world. If the partitions of Poland are considered as a Prussian crime of the same kind as the conquest of Alsace-Lorraine or of Schleswig, then no reparation of that crime will have more far-reaching consequences than a final decision as to the eternal right of Poland to its unique harbour, twice wrested from the Poles for over a century by German violence in utter disregard for treaties and common equity.

GENERAL ASPECT OF THE CASE

The struggle for Gdańsk between Slavs and Germans is the dominant note of the whole secular rivalry between the democratic and liberal Polish Republic and the military Teutonic Order, later transformed into the despotic Prussian State. The temporary triumph of Prussia in the 18th century destroyed in Central Europe all liberty and started that armed competition between the great powers which made a universal war inevitable. The restitution of Gdańsk to Poland is the indispensable condition of the self-determination of nations in Central and Eastern Europe, and as long as Gdańsk remains in German hands neither Poland nor Lithuania, nor even Bohemia can attain real political and economical independence of Germany.

POLISH PUBLIC OPINION

This is perfectly clear to all educated Poles, and public opinion in Poland has always been so unanimous in that respect as on few other points. In order to understand the Polish claim we must go into many geographical, historical and economical details which require a very close attention to be fully appreciated and understood.

I. GEOGRAPHICAL AND ECONOMICAL CONSIDERATIONS

THE BASIN OF THE VISTULA

Poland is known since immemorial times as the land of the Vistula. The river Vistula covers with its many affluents a much wider area than any German river, not excepting even the Rhine. The basin of the Vistula extends from the Carpathian mountains to the Baltic sea on an area of 198.510 square kilometres, while the basin of the Rhine covers only 160.023 square kilometres, that of the Elbe 134.968 square kilometres, that of the Oder 115.000 square kilometres, and that of the Niemen 97.492 square kilometres. The large area of the basin of the Vistula is exceptionally well irrigated because the Vistula changes the direction of her course more times than any other of the great rivers mentioned above, and because the Vistula receives a great number of tributaries. The length of the Vistula is 1.125 km. and the distance from its source in the district of Cieszyn to its mouth at Gdańsk is only 530 km., the Vistula flowing first north, then east, north-east, north, north-west, west, north-west, north-east and north. These windings in the river's course and the great number of its affluents, (one of which, the Narew, having a basin of 73.470 square kilometres, together with her chief tributary the Bug), make of the basin of the Vistula one of the best irrigated areas in Europe. The Vistula receives on its left side the rivers Przemsza, Nida, Opatówka, Kamienna, Ilża, Radomka, Pilica, Bzura, Kamionka, Czarnowoda; on the right side the

Dunajec, Wisłoka, San, Wieprz, Świder, Narew, Wkra, Moltawa, Ossa, Liwna, without counting all smaller streams. Besides these rivers the basin of the Vistula has important artificial waterways, uniting the Vistula with the Oder, the Niemen and the Dnieper. Many other canals can be easily built, because there are not very great differences of level to overcome and the basin of the Vistula is in close connexion with the basins of the Oder, the Niemen, the Dniester and the Dnieper.

ECONOMICAL NECESSITY OF POLITICAL UNITY

The total length of navigable waterways in the basin of the Vistula exceeds 4.120 km., and out of this 842 km. can be made to carry ships up to 600 tons. But the development of this splendid net of communications depends absolutely on the political unity of the whole country which is so exceptionally blessed with waterways. The basin of the Vistula forms one natural whole, and cannot be divided between different states without imperilling the whole system. During the last century one state owned the mouth and lower course of the Vistula, another the middle course and yet another the upper course. The result was that each of these states disregarded completely the commercial interests of the Polish nation, subordinating them to the interests of such distant commercial centres as Hamburg, Bremen, Vienna or Moscow.

ECONOMIC ANOMALIES

Thus for instance since 1906 the Poles of Galicia have spent out of their taxes £12.000.000 on Alpine railways in Austria, from which they cannot draw the slightest advantage, while the very important Galician canal between the Vistula and the Dniester which would draw a part of the Black Sea commerce to Galicia, awaits its execution since 1901, when its construction was decided. The basin of the Vistula owns an enormous wealth of coal, and more than one fifth of that wealth is situated around Cracow, where no coal mines are worked, though the deposits of coal around Cracow are four times larger than all the other coal mines of Austria-Hungary taken

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together. On the other side, Austria-Hungary, neglecting the Cracovian coal out of fear of an economical dependence on Galicia, paid a yearly tribute of £12,000,000 to Prussian coal mines. Galicia owns very rich oil wells, but the Poles of the province of Warsaw had to buy every year 160,000 tons of oil from the Caucasus at an expense of £880,000. If Poland owned the whole basin of the Vistula it could export through Gdańsk 320,000 tons of oil yearly and sell it much cheaper abroad than the Poles had to pay for Caucasian petroleum in Warsaw before the war.

EMIGRATION FROM POLAND

Poland has sent for the last generation a large emigration to the United States, to South America and other distant countries. Almost the whole of this emigration went by way of Bremen or Hamburg, and the Polish working men had to pay expensive railway fares instead of embarking at Gdańsk as they will do in an united and independent Poland.

UNITY OF GDAŃSK WITH POLAND

Such economic anomalies resulting from an unnatural division of a natural geographical whole could be enumerated by the thousand, but these few examples are sufficient to show how the population of the basin of the Vistula suffered in many ways because during the last 125 years it was not united under one government in one state.

And not only the Poles suffered but also the German merchants of Gdańsk, who saw the flourishing harbour ruined by the partitions of Poland. In 1764-72 they exported annually an average of 117,500 tons of wheat alone, in 1773-85 only 57,500 tons. There are only two alternatives open if the great natural wealth of the basin of the Vistula is to be fully utilised for the benefit of the world's trade—either the Poles must own Gdańsk, or a German Gdańsk will dominate the whole of Poland. The latter alternative was the purpose of the partitions of Poland. As it has failed, the natural conclusion is that Gdańsk must be returned to Poland.

GDAŃSK AND GERMAN PORTS

How much Gdańsk has lost by the political severance from the basin of the Vistula can be seen if we compare the growth of the German ports commanding the basins of their rivers with the decay of Gdańsk severed from the basin of the Vistula.

The population of Stettin, at the mouth of the Oder, has increased in the last hundred years by 900 ‰, that of Hamburg at the mouth of the Elbe by 800 ‰, that of Bremen at the mouth of the Weser by 600 ‰, while the population of Gdańsk has increased only 230 ‰, which is much less than the growth of any other important Polish city. Between 1860 and 1910 the increase of the population has been in Warsaw 350 ‰, in Wilno 300 ‰, in Mińsk 320 ‰, in Witebsk 317 ‰, in Kieff 870 ‰, in Cracow 267 ‰, and in Gdańsk only 94 ‰.

The import into Hamburg was in 1874 34 ‰ of the total imports into Germany, in 1910 it was 41 ‰. Gdańsk which imported in 1874 6 ‰ of all German imports, had only 3 ‰ in 1910. Between 1875 and 1910 the trade on the Rhine has risen from 882 million tons to 8,869 million tons, which means an increase of 900 ‰, on the Elbe in the same time the trade increased by 800 ‰, on the Oder by 1,300 ‰, on the Weser by 850 ‰, and on the Vistula within Prussia only by 6 ‰. Gdańsk has scarcely had any share in the considerable development of the German trade since the formation of the German empire in 1871. Gdańsk had in 1913 an import of 937,590 tons with an export of about the same size, while Hamburg imported and exported more than fourteen million tons.

GDAŃSK NEEDS THE VISTULA

As long as Gdańsk has not the trade of the whole Vistula basin, it can only remain a third rate German harbour. In a free Poland it will rapidly rise to the first rank and beat all records not only of its own past, but of other ports on the Baltic sea and perhaps even of Hamburg if all the projected canals between the Vistula and the Niemen, the Oder, the Dniester, the Dnieper are constructed and the

existing canals are brought into better form. Then a great part of the commerce of the Black Sea would be drawn through the Vistula to Gdańsk, and Gdańsk would naturally become one of the great centres of trade between Asia and Europe. The Polish economists estimate the probable exports of Gdańsk (as soon as the whole basin of the Vistula is in Polish hands), at from 3 to 6 million tons, with similar imports, rapidly increasing.

NO USE FOR NEUTRALITY

This cannot be effectuated by any internationalisation or neutralisation of Gdańsk, because the Germans have always found means to evade all contracts. The whole basin of the Vistula from her source in the district of Cieszyn, to her mouth at Gdańsk must belong to one and the same state. Only such a state could regulate and improve the navigation on the Vistula, now utterly neglected, improve the existing canals and construct new ones, whereby the whole basin of the Polish river would become a living whole again, instead of being, as for the last century, a decaying body eaten up by parasites.

POLAND IN CONTRAST WITH WESTERN COUNTRIES

The western nations of Europe have each a well defined territory within certain natural limits, as Spain, Italy and France. There is no such well defined frontier between Poland and Germany or Russia, but at least the basin of the Vistula forms one geographic whole, which ought not to be divided. Parts of the basin of the Oder, the Dniester and the Dnieper are in very close connection with the system of the Vistula and there may still await us many struggles as to the final eastern or western frontier of the Polish State. But there can be no doubt that Gdańsk, whether inhabited by Poles or Germans, must belong to that Polish state for its own sake, and for the sake of the world's trade which needs the utilization of the great wealth accumulated in the basin of the Vistula.

GDAŃSK MORE INDISPENSABLE THAN POSEN

This wealth has been concealed since the partitions of Poland and could not be wisely used by three states ha-

ving conflicting interests. Such an unique river system as is formed by the Vistula is a natural organism and the head of that organism is the port of Gdańsk. To deprive the body of the nation of its unique riverhead amounts almost to a decapitation. Bismarck understood it well and he said in his speech of September 23rd, 1894, to a deputation from West Prussia that, for an independent Poland, Gdańsk would be more indispensable than even Posen, and that in the case of a German defeat the Poles are sure to claim their harbour. In November 1918 the anti-Polish 'Ostmarken Verein' complains that West Prussia must return to Poland, if President Wilson's points are accepted. And since the armistice the prices of the houses in Gdańsk are rising because the owners foresee a great development of the city after its return to Poland.

NATIONS LIVING IN THE BASIN OF THE VISTULA

If several different nations were living in the basin of the Vistula, they would be obliged to a mutual understanding in order to form a single state. Happily this area is inhabited by more than twenty millions of one nation and only a few hundred thousands of another. The Germans in the valley of the Vistula are not autochthonous, they settled among the Poles a few centuries ago and they always have been treated with the greatest tolerance by the Poles who respected their religion, their language, their laws and customs. Other cities in Poland, and among them some of the most important, had in past centuries a predominant German population, for instance Posen and Cracow. They needed skilled working men who came from Germany. But the descendants of those immigrants became Poles and no German can now claim Posen or Cracow as German towns, though numerous Poles in these cities bear German names, showing their origin. Gdańsk was half Polish in 1793 and would have become entirely Polish without the artificial laws which prevented Poles from settling in their natural port, and gave exceptional privileges to settlers from the Rhine and other parts of Germany. The Polish population of the villages around Gdańsk emigrated to Germany or America while Germans were attracted to Gdańsk.

HOW THE GERMANS ACTED TOWARDS POLAND

The Germans in Poland being an insignificant minority formed in 1657 an independent state within Poland, surrounded by Polish territory. This state, born of the treason of a vassal against his King, undertook the conquest of Poland and succeeded almost completely in this incredible task, but failed at last. The perturbation brought into the economic conditions of a fertile and rich country by the boundless ambition and greed of a few foreign settlers shows the necessity for a complete reconstitution of the unity of Poland instead of sacrificing thirty million Poles to a few hundred thousand Germans at the mouth of the Vistula.

II. HISTORICAL FACTS

STRANGE TALE

It is not generally known how that very strange anomaly of an apparently German town in a Polish country, at the mouth of a Polish river, on the Polish sea shore, has become possible. The case is so unique in the history of nations that it seems incredible to foreigners, almost as if it were a cleverly concocted tale invented by the Poles in order to obtain by false pretences a German town. Therefore it is necessary to go into some details, if we wish to understand how all this happened.

KINGDOM OF THE THREE BOLESŁAWS

The Polish sea shore extended once from the Vistula to the Oder and farther west. At the beginning of the eleventh century Gdańsk and the whole shore of the Baltic sea as far as the isle of Rügen belonged to the kingdom of Bolesław I of Poland. In the twelfth century all Pomerania still belonged to the direct descendant of Bolesław I, Bolesław III. After the death of this great king in 1138 Poland was divided among his sons in several principalities. Gdańsk remained still a Polish town and the centre of an important commerce.

CONRAD OF MASOVIA

A grandson of Bolesław III, Conrad of Masovia, had great difficulties with the pagan tribe of Prussians, akin to Lithuanians, and dwelling east of Gdańsk. They made wild raids into Masovia, destroying property and life. The Prussians had killed in the tenth century St. Adalbert, who made the first attempt to convert them to the Christian faith. The same fate befell St. Bruno in 1009. In later times Cistercian missions had a better success and in 1215 the Cistercian monk Christian became the first bishop of Prussia. He was richly endowed by Polish princes. But Conrad of Masovia was young, and rash, and he had killed in a fit of anger his wisest adviser Krystyn in 1217. The Prussians once came so far as Płock on the Vistula, the capital of Masovia, and they destroyed 250 churches on their way. Conrad followed then the unlucky advice of his cousin's wife, St. Hedvige, a German princess from Meran in Tyrol.

THE TEUTONIC ORDER

She thought much of the Teutonic Order, founded in Palestine, and seeking then a new refuge, after a short unsuccessful trial in Transylvania, from which the Knights were expelled by the King of Hungary. Conrad invited them to Poland and they settled in 1228 far from the sea, on the Vistula between the rivers Drwęca and Ossa. Very soon they extended their rule northwards to the sea, and east beyond the Pregel and Niemen within fifty years of their coming to Poland.

GDAŃSK POLISH IN THE XIVth C.

But Gdańsk remained Polish until the fourteenth century and had a flourishing trade carrying a great part of the trade from Poland, Lithuania, Hungary and even Asia before the discovery of the sea way to East India. It is the only port in that part of the world which is free from ice in the winter.

When by the will of Prince Mestwin of Pomerania, Gdańsk, with Pomerania, accrued to King Przemysław of Posen in 1295, the Teutonic Order feared a deserved punishment for its encroachments and prepared for war.

GERMAN VIOLENCE

Przemysław was murdered by the Germans very soon after he had assumed the title of King. But his successor Władysław Łokietek was a more dangerous adversary. Then the Teutonic Order could not endure any longer the flourishing trade of Gdańsk, so near to their dominions. They suddenly raided the Polish city on the 4th of August 1308, when the population was celebrating the feast of St. Dominic, and they murdered more than 10,000 men, women and children; and that was nearly the whole population of the city. Many took refuge in the church and monastery of St. Dominic but they were burnt together with the buildings. The Teutonic Order then imported settlers from Germany and thus Gdańsk became a German city, but never completely. The great Master of the Teutonic order, Siegfried von Feuchtwangen, who until then had resided in Venice, settled then in Marienburg, close to Gdańsk, and a long struggle began between Poland and the Teutonic Order for the possession of the Polish sea shore.

VAIN APPEALS TO THE POPE

The Polish king appealed to the Pope. Already in 1312 Clemens V condemned the iniquity of the Teutonic Order. John XXII nominated in 1320 a commission to investigate the claims of the Poles. In 1321 the verdict was given, condemning the Order, under the threat of excommunication, if Pomerania were not returned. As the Teutonic Order did not obey, the Polish King Władysław Łokietek went to war and obtained a great victory at Płowce over the German Knights, but could not recuperate the lower course of the Vistula. The Germans had besides occupied the mouth of the Niemen and also Riga on the Duna.

NEW APPEALS AND COMPROMISE

The successor of Władysław Łokietek appealed again to the Pope. In 1339 a new trial was conducted at Warsaw and 126 witnesses were heard by the legates of the Pope. Again the Teutonic Order was condemned to the full restitution of Gdańsk and Pomerania, but they disregarded

papal justice and the threat of excommunication. King Casimir the Great entered then into a compromise and by the peace of Kalisz in 1343 he obtained from the Teutonic Order the districts of Dobrzyń and Kujawy, leaving the rest in the hands of his enemies.

NEW WARS

The population was dissatisfied and already in 1397 the secret Lizard Union was formed among the people in order to prepare the emancipation of Gdańsk from the Germans. Later in 1440 we see in Gdańsk the Prussian Union for the same purpose. In a great war at the beginning of the fourteenth century, after the union of Poland with Lithuania, the Teutonic Order was beaten in 1410 at Grünwald, but the treaty of Thorn in 1411 left them still in possession of Gdańsk. They ruined the trade of the city by their extravagant exactions. In 1414 the war broke out again and the Teutonic Order asked the German emperor Sigismund to act as umpire in 1420, but his verdict was so manifestly unjust that the king Jagiello appealed again to the Pope and in 1422 renewed the war without definitive results.

REVOLT OF PRUSSIA

After 146 years of oppression the German inhabitants of Gdańsk revolted and, in 1454, fifty-six Prussian cities sent their delegates, elected by the nobility and the municipalities, to Cracow, asking King Casimir and the Polish Diet for the incorporation of Prussia into Poland, reminding the King that the whole country was a lawful possession of Poland and had been torn away by violence and treachery. The spokesman of that memorable delegation, Jan Baysen, narrated before the Diet the long tale of German atrocities suffered by the peaceful population. He complained not only of many cruelties, but above everything of the faithlessness of the German knights and of their contempt for law, justice and treaties.

PACIFIST BISHOPS

Several bishops were opposed to a new war for the sake of Gdańsk which was, according to them, in the hands

of a Christian Order of Knighthood, at peace with Poland at that time.

WAR OF LIBERATION

But after weeks of deliberations the appeal of the Prussian cities prevailed and a new war began which was called later the thirteen years war, as it lasted nearly thirteen years 1454-1466. The Prussian cities and especially Gdańsk, Toruń (Thorn), Elbląg spent their wealth and their manhood in this war of liberation, showing thus clearly their Polish feelings and their wish to be reunited with the Polish republic.

FINAL DEFEAT OF THE TEUTONIC ORDER

The war ended by the final defeat of the Teutonic Order, and Gdańsk, together with the whole basin of the Vistula, returned to Poland, according to the stipulations of the treaty of Toruń (Thorn) in 1466, which established a permanent settlement, leaving however 13 Polish districts in East Prussia under Prussian rule. It was a great mistake at that time that the Teutonic Order was left in possession of East Prussia with Königsberg. But the great Master of the Order took the solemn obligation that he and his successors would for ever remain vassals of the King of Poland.

The trade of Gdańsk increased, chiefly the export of wheat. Towards the end of the fifteenth century Gdańsk exported 21,250 tons of wheat and rye and in the middle of the sixteenth century twice as much. In the seventeenth century the export of wheat and rye alone rose to over three hundred thousand tons in 1618.

PROSPERITY OF GDAŃSK

The prosperity of Gdańsk lasted only as long as the prosperity of Poland. When Poland was ruined by the Swedes in the seventeenth century, the export of wheat and rye fell about 1675 to 77,500 tons. The prosperous reign of Sobieski brought it to 100,000 tons. The misrule of two German kings in Poland in the eighteenth century brought the wheat export down to 60,000 tons. A ton of wheat was paid in 1638 to the producer three Polish

florins and sold to foreign marchants 5 1/2 Polish florins. This example shows how great were the profits made by the merchants of Gdańsk in the times of Poland's independence. They had the exclusive right to buy and sell whatever came into their harbour. In the fifteenth century ships were coming to Gdańsk from Venice and Genoa, in the seventeenth century from America. They brought wine, olive-oil, southern fruits, rice, fish and especially herrings, furs, wool, linen, cloth, salt, and they took wheat, flax, hemp, wood, ashes, furs. Gdańsk had in the fourteenth century only 10.000 inhabitants, in the fifteenth century 20.000, in the beginning of the seventeenth century 50.000, which during the Swedish wars fell to 25.000.

GDAŃSK AND ENGLAND

There were friendly relations between Gdańsk and England. Already in 1404 there was in England a Prussian Company trading with Gdańsk. Later, when there was an economic war between England and the Hansa, Gdańsk was excepted from the proscription against the hanseatic merchants. The great Polish statesman Olbracht Łaski came to the court of Queen Elizabeth in order to obtain for Gdańsk a part of the English trade which then was directed to the White sea.

POLISH FEELINGS IN GDAŃSK

The Polish feelings of the merchants of Gdańsk were shown on many occasions. Already in 1411 the Teutonic Order, after its defeat, beheaded three mayors of Gdańsk for their friendliness to Poland. In the thirteen years war (1454-1466) Gdańsk alone spent a million florins and lost 2.000 of its citizens. On both occasions when the Polish king Leszczyński was elected to the throne of Poland, Gdańsk supported him against his German adversaries, Augustus of Saxony and his son. In 1734 Gdańsk was the last place in which Leszczyński with his French and Polish supporters fought against the Germans. The centenaries of 1454 and 1466 were celebrated in Gdańsk with great solemnity, and in 1766 a great number of German publications appeared in Gdańsk in com-

memoration of its union with Poland, all praising the Polish liberty as contrasted with German oppression. In 1767 and 1772 Gdańsk resisted against Prussian aggression and even the shameless Friedrich II did not dare to take Gdańsk at the first partition, though the conquest of Gdańsk was the chief object of the whole scheme of the partitions of Poland.

LAST STRUGGLE FOR LIBERTY

When at last, after twenty-one years of Prussian misrule all around Gdańsk, including Neufahrwasser, the Prussian General von Raumer asked the town council to surrender in March 1793, the population arose against the Prussians and fought for one week (28th March to the 4th of April 1793) against overwhelming forces. The arsenal was taken by the people and many Prussians were killed despite the prohibitions of the town council who saw the hopelessness of the struggle. This popular protest of Gdańsk against the Prussian occupation occurred at a time when in the rest of Poland the second partition was effectuated without any immediate resistance. Many old settlers of Gdańsk left then the city, and among them the father of the philosopher Schopenhauer, who said that the Prussian conquest put an end to every liberty. The Prussian king complained in 1793 in a public proclamation of the hostility of Gdańsk against Prussia and accused the inhabitants of complicity with the French Revolution.

TWO SIEGES

In 1807, when Gdańsk was besieged by the French, four thousand of its defenders crossed the lines and submitted to the enemy, so that the town was taken after four months because it preferred to be Polish rather than German. But when in 1813 the Russians and Prussians invested Gdańsk, the city resisted for ten months and capitulated only a month after the defeat of Napoleon at Leipzig, Gdańsk being the last place in Poland where Poles and French fought against Prussia.

LAST WISH OF FREE CITIZENS

In 1813 the town council of Gdańsk elaborated a me-

morial for the coalition, and proved that the best solution was the reunion of Gdańsk with Poland, and not its complete independence as a free town, nor its incorporation into Prussia.

POLISH SPIRIT IN GDAŃSK

Even as late as 1848 there was a popular rising against Prussian rule near Gdańsk, under Floryan Ceynowa. There are now according to Polish estimates about 20.000 Poles in Gdańsk, the official statistics being entirely unreliable. Polish names are met frequently in the inscriptions on the shops, Polish papers are published, Polish banks do business and all kinds of Polish associations prosper despite the most severe persecution.

POLISH PAPERS

One of the oldest Polish newspapers was published in 1656 by Jacob Weiss at Gdańsk, and in 1918 the *Gazeta Gdańska* counts many subscribers.

POLISH CHURCHES AND SCHOOLS

Since 1480 a Polish Church was founded in Gdańsk and some of the pastors of that Church, like Volkmar, Gurovius, Mrongovius are known by their studies of the Polish language. In the schools of Gdańsk Polish was taught until 1850 and Polish sermons have been preached even in the twentieth century. Polish historical monuments abound in the city while the Prussian rule left no vestiges worth mentioning. Statues of Polish kings, white eagles painted or carved in wood or stone speak everywhere of the Polish past of this Polish city artificially germanised.

III. STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

FUTURE WARS

It is a fact that the Germans, though defeated, shew still many signs of their warlike spirit which has not been killed by the great defeats of the past and will not be entirely extinguished by the last war. They will certainly

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remain a standing peril to the peace of Europe. Without West Prussia, Poland would be cut off from its occidental Allies. If the port of Gdańsk remained in German hands, the allied armies could not easily come to Poland, nor could the Poles send their armies to help the Allies in a case of sudden aggression. And what is worse, Poland remaining in economic dependence on Germany, an economic blockade of Germany would be impossible for the Allies, as the Germans could draw food through Gdańsk from Poland and Russia.

USE FOR CONDEMNED WARSHIPS

But if the German warships, instead of being destroyed, are given to Poland and remain at Gdańsk, then Poland becomes suddenly a great sea power on the Baltic. In the beginning the Polish navy would need help from the Allies but within a generation a sufficient number of Polish sailors could be trained to man that fleet, built for aggression, and best used for the defence of the basin of the Vistula against future German aggressions. The Kashoubs from the neighbourhood of Gdańsk furnished during the war the very best sailors to the German navy and admiral Böhncke was one of them.

If Gdańsk is not Polish, the Baltic sea becomes a German sea, for there is no other nation except the Poles able to resist the Germans on the Baltic. They have shown their power of resistance not only throughout their history but even recently, when without any help from without they have liberated a great part of their territory. Finland, Esthland, Kurland, or the Scandinavian states, are not strong enough by themselves to hinder the rule of Germany on the Baltic, but they might form later an invincible alliance with a strong Poland, if Poland extends to the sea and owns a great port. Without such a Poland these smaller states will be obliged to count with Germany, and they will be inevitably drawn into an economic and political dependence on Germany.

POLISH NAVY NEEDED

Gdańsk is the only great port open to Poland, and is indispensable for the growth of a Polish navy and for the

defence of Poland in the case of future conflicts with Germany.

A power without a navy can never become a great power and the interest of western civilisation requires that Poland should be a great power. The Germans, even if deprived of West and East Prussia, would still have a much more extensive sea shore than the Poles.

IV. THE ISOLATION OF EAST PRUSSIA FROM GERMANY

EAST PRUSSIA AS AN ALSATIA

It has been objected to the return of West Prussia to Poland on the ground that the separation of East Prussia from Germany would be intolerable to German feelings and might lead to new interminable conflicts. This objection can easily be refuted. First of all East Prussia would not really be sundered from Germany, because having access to the sea, the inhabitants of East Prussia would be able to maintain, if they wished, the closest relations with Germany, while if West Prussia does not return to Poland the Polish sea shore would really be separated from Poland. East Prussia as a German country exists only since the thirteenth century and in all this time it has remained for five centuries separated from Germany, while the territorial connexion exists only since 1772.

JUNKERS OF EAST PRUSSIA

East Prussia has been affected in a similar way by its separation from Poland as West Prussia and it remains the poorest province of Germany, with a great emigration, few small land-holders and many big landlords, the typical Junkers, who are the makers of modern Prussia. If one of the aims of the war was the destruction of Prussian militarism, it must not be forgotten that East Prussia is the original home of that militarism. The Teutonic Order attracted the most greedy, the most self-willed, the most ambitious *Raubritter* from Germany and elsewhere. Their concentration in Prussia; where everything was

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permitted against the despised pagans, their inbreeding, their very close organisation under an able dynasty, created such a special caste as has rarely appeared anywhere in the history of Europe. Their pride forbade them mixed marriages and they took the name of Prussians from the country which they had conquered, because they felt themselves different from the other Germans. They looked upon themselves as a race apart, destined to rule over Germany and the world. Their dynasty led the way and educated generations of Prussian generals, born of East Prussian families.

PRUSSIAN POISON

First the contagion spread over northern Germany, then the whole of Germany, Austria, Turkey and Bulgaria submitted to modern Prussia. But the Prussians are liked nowhere, and they remain hated foreigners not only in Bavaria, Baden, Württemberg, Saxony, Austria, but also in Hanover or Hesse.

NO NATIONAL FEELING FOR EAST PRUSSIA

Therefore no national feeling of patriotic emotion exists in Germany with reference to East Prussia, such as exists in Poland towards Gdańsk, in France towards Alsace-Lorraine, in Denmark towards Schleswig. East Prussia is not, in Germany, the object of tender emotion, but it is rather an accursed land from which came the mistaken leaders who led Germany to shame and ruin. We have not to fear a German crusade for the sake of East Prussia. Only a few Junkers of Mecklenburg or Pomerania will shed tears over the pretended isolation of East-Prussia, but they will have no wide influence in Germany, where Prussian Pan-Germanism is discredited for ever.

POLAND AND PRUSSIA

It was not a natural aspiration of Germany which led to the partitions of Poland, to the annexation of West Prussia, and finally to the world-war, but only the ambition and greed of a single dynasty, shared by a narrow circle of soldiers and merchants. The defeat in the great war

is the final refutation of that theory and practice which created the Prussian state at the expense of Poland. If East Prussia remains independent, the Junkers will very likely emigrate and the people, after a few generations, will ask for the union of East Prussia with Poland or Lithuania as the West Prussian cities did in 1454, when they repudiated the German domination. The East Prussian sea shore needs political unity with the basin of the Niemen, just as West Prussia can live only in union with a state on the Vistula. The defeat of Germany, the reconstitution of Poland, mean first of all the disintegration of Prussia. We cannot consider East Prussia as a national state or a part of a national state, as it has never been the home of a nation, but only the temporary home of a military organization intended for conquest. Isolation would be a deserved and mild penalty for the offspring of such a race.

CONCLUSIONS

The harbour of Gdańsk (Danzig) must belong to Poland for the following reasons :

I. **The whole basin of the Vistula** can only be fully utilised for the trade of the world if it **belongs to one State**. It has an area of 198510 sq. km. and more than 4120 km. navigable waterways, all leading to a river of a length of 1125 km., the distance from source to mouth being only 530 km. There is no similar area so well irrigated in Western or Central Europe. It has been utterly neglected since the partition of this country between three states, and can flourish again only under a single government. If **several nations** inhabited this area, they would be led to form **one state**. But there are in the basin of the Vistula over 20 millions autochthonous Poles, with a few hundred thousand Germanized Slavs and very few real Germans and it would not be fair to sacrifice a whole

nation to the greed and ambition of a few foreign settlers.

II. Gdańsk is indispensable to Poland :

1) Because it is the **only important harbour** which Poland can possess in order to entertain free communications with its Western Allies.

2) If it belonged to the Germans, the whole of Poland would fall into **economical dependence** on Germany, and this would lead to **political dependence**.

3) If it were **neutral** or **international**, the Germans, as the most powerful nation interested in it, would soon dominate the whole trade of Poland.

4) The unanimity of **public opinion** in Poland as to the national need of Gdańsk is such, that **no lasting peace** would be **possible**, as long as Gdańsk remains in foreign hands.

III. Gdańsk needs union with Poland.

1) It has been twice **separated** from Poland by violence and **treachery**, in 1308 and in 1793. In neither case did the inhabitants voluntarily accept the foreign rule.

2) The **prosperity** of Gdańsk was lost under German rule. Under Polish rule it was **parallel** to the prosperity of **Poland**. Poland never used nor will use **violence** against the Germans in Gdańsk, while the Germans have always used violence against the Poles.

3) On many **solemn occasions** the inhabitants have manifested their wish for their union with Poland and their fidelity to Poland, in 1397, in 1410, in 1454-1466, in 1626-29, in 1655-60, in 1734, in 1772, in 1793, in 1813.

4) Gdańsk in Poland must become a **first rate port**, in Germany it has been always subordinate to Hamburg and Bremen.

IV. The Germans do not need Gdańsk :

1) They have **other more important ports**.

2) They have **greatly neglected the Polish port** to the advantage of their own ports.

3) The Germanization of Gdańsk is superficial, and as soon as the surrounding Polish population is allowed to settle in the city, Gdańsk **will become Polish**, as Cracow and other towns in Poland have become Polish, though they had once a predominant German population.

V. Without a Polish navy, and a Polish port on the Baltic, the **Baltic** will remain a **German sea**. No other state on the borders of the Baltic is strong enough to **resist Germany** without a free and powerful Poland. But if Poland obtains a real access to the sea, all other Baltic States will naturally find in Poland a **counterpoise to Germany**.

VI. The territorial **isolation of East Prussia**, the home of Prussian militarism, is necessary for a **lasting peace**, and must lead inevitably to the progressive and voluntary **degermanization** of that **strategically important territory**, from which the Prussian Dynasty set out for the conquest of the world. There is no such national feeling for East Prussia in Germany as there is for Gdańsk in Poland.

VII. The **partitions of Poland** have been recognized by such English and American writers, as Lord Eversley and Mr. Howard Lord, as a **crime** without precedent in history. The **full restitution** of what the Germans have taken, including Gdańsk, will prevent similar crimes in the future, because it will become evident that they do not pay, and also because Poland as a great Power will never allow any small nation to be wronged, even if such a wrong done to a neighbour did not seem to threaten her own security.

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This report, written by W. Lutosławski, is a synthetic summary, made after careful indexing of the papers written for the Polish delegation by Fr. Bujak, A. Chołoniewski, R. Ingarden, J. Jabłoński, J. Kernbaum, St. Kętrzyński, Al. Kraushar, Łęgowski, Porębski, E. Romer, M. Rudnicki, Rummel, J. Rutkowski, W. Sobieski, A. Taraszkie-wicz, Trampeczyński, Wakar, Zwierkowski.