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The German-Polish Pact of 1934 As a Factor in Shaping the Relations of Two Neighbour Peoples

Author(s): W. J. Rose

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THE GERMAN-POLISH PACT OF 1934 AS A FACTOR IN SHAPING THE RELATIONS OF TWO NEIGHBOUR PEOPLES¹

By DR. W. J. ROSE

WHEN your Committee did me the honour six weeks ago of asking me to address the Institute on the German-Polish Pact of Non-Aggression, my first impulse was to decline with thanks. The reason was twofold: first, that the signing of this pact was a political event of no small importance for Europe, and I am not in any way competent on matters of international politics; secondly, because I knew that I should have no access to the press of the Powers most interested, nor time to consult it, in order to know what everyone knows—or thinks he knows—about the what and the why and the wherefore of the whole transaction. On reflection I decided that there was one phase of the matter, and a very important one, about which I do know something, viz. the influence of the pact on the direct relations with one another of two neighbour peoples—a theme that is not political but social, cultural, economic; but has, of course, a close connection with questions of State. I therefore consented to address a meeting on this phase of the pact; and shall try in what follows to avoid any references to, or commitments in respect of, either the general and vexed question of European peace as such, or the various possibilities of encouraging or jeopardising it that are the proper sphere of inter-State relations. It may be that the discussion that follows will lead us into these or kindred fields, but I would ask the indulgence of all if I decline to enter them in my paper.

I shall never forget the experience of that last Saturday morning in January, when on the way to the provincial Library in Katowice I met a friend, who thrust in front of me the morning paper with the headline "Peace Pact with Berlin," and asked me with a smile, "What do you make of that?" To say that I was taken aback would be to put it mildly. I will admit that,

¹ Address given at Chatham House on June 25th, 1934, Major B. T. Reynolds, M.C., R.A., in the Chair.

for reasons too long to enter into here, my first thought was, "What will the Czechs say?", and my own conjecture proved later on to be the right one. My second was, "What will France, what will England say?", and here again I foresaw more or less what has happened. Without pursuing this phase of the theme far, I should like to say one thing. It was natural that the reception given by other Powers to such an event—which is known to have startled the world—would be analysed on two lines:

i. that Warsaw was able and willing to conclude such an agreement with Berlin at all—something that can almost be said to reverse the course of history; and

ii. that Warsaw—or any other capital in Europe—would do business and make contracts with the particular régime at present in power in Berlin.

It must not be forgotten that for a century and a half (since the Partitions) the Poles have, rightly or wrongly, had the reputation of being the disturbers of European tranquillity, of being troublesome folk who have used every opportunity of unrest to get a hearing for their grievances. Out of this has come a notion that as a people they have no will to peace, in short, cannot live in harmony with their neighbours. This view I hold to be essentially unjust; but the injustice of it had to be demonstrated openly to the world. The possibility of such a demonstration came when Germany left the League, and it was accepted by Marshal Pilsudski and his advisers with the result we all know. I believe it is true to say that Poland gained by the Pact of January 26th, 1934, precisely the things which her Foreign Minister, Zaleski, had suggested nearly five years before to Stresemann—only then to be ignored.

The surprise we all felt at the unexpected announcement of the Pact need not have been so great if we had taken to heart the succession of events of nearly a year previously. I shall note only those directly relevant here:

i. the meeting of the Polish envoy in Berlin, p. Wislocki, with Chancellor Hitler on May 2nd, 1933; on which occasion the latter declared that Germany recognised a free and independent Poland and was resolved to carry on "in the framework of the existing treaties";

ii. the great peace address in Berlin of May 17th, in which the Chancellor confirmed the will of his Government to cordial and constructive relations with all the Powers "on the basis of honour and equal rights";

iii. a remarkable statement made on May 27th by Hitler in

Königsberg to the effect that "the National Socialist régime rejects any policy of change of frontiers at the expense of other nations";

iv. the meeting on November 15th, 1933, after the overwhelming Nazi victory at the polls, between the Chancellor and the new Polish envoy, p. Lipski, in which were exchanged mutual assurances of good-will between the neighbouring Powers; and the earnest given of collaboration in the working out of ways and means to remove all issues in dispute.

It may be assumed that most of these declarations were received, by a world grown rather sceptical, with more than the proverbial grain of salt; except the last one, which was bound to attract attention as coming right on top of the election. Even this, however, was scarcely taken seriously, although actually, as we shall see below, it was the turning-point of the whole drama. What took place two months later was only the conclusion of the agreement decided on in those November days, but in important respects the results of the new "course" were making themselves seriously felt before the documents were given to the world.

Just what did those documents involve? The following is the text of the Pact translated from the German :

"The German and Polish Governments believe that the time has come to initiate a new phase in the political relations of their two countries on the path of direct understanding. They are therefore resolved by the following declaration to establish a basis for the guidance of these relations in the future.

"Both Governments start from the conviction that the security and maintenance of a lasting peace between their countries is an essential condition of peace in Europe. They have therefore decided to base their mutual relations on the principles set down in the Pact of Paris of August 27th, 1928, and only wish, so far as the relations between Germany and Poland are concerned, to determine here how to apply these principles more closely.

"Both Governments affirm the view that no international obligations laid upon them by other Powers are to disturb the peaceful course of their relations with one another. They neither run counter to the present declaration nor are they altered by its provisions. Both Governments affirm further that this declaration does not concern such questions as according to international law must be considered a domestic affair of either State.

"Both Governments declare their purpose to seek for direct understanding in issues affecting their mutual relations, no matter what their nature. Should there arise conflicts that cannot be settled in this way, other peaceful means will be tried. Under no circumstances

will force be applied to settle points at issue. This guarantee of peace, based on such a principle, will make the task of both Governments easier in seeking solutions of political, cultural and economic problems.

“ Both Governments are convinced that in this way the relations between their States will proceed on fruitful lines; leading to the establishing of a neighbourliness that will bring blessing not only on both their lands but on the other peoples of Europe.

“ The present declaration will be ratified in Warsaw and the necessary documents exchanged as soon as possible. It is valid for a period of ten years. . . .”

The fact is significant that the chief emphasis of this document is on the achieving of a new basis of neighbourliness between two peoples who have for centuries been thought of as *Erbfeinde*—born enemies. And while a few months is too short a perspective over which to pass judgments, the view may be ventured that, whether in respect of the kind of results achieved or their volume, we are faced with something that many would call a miracle. The old order has changed, yielding place to a new one; and I venture the remark that these results ought to be judged on their own merits without regard to the query—always an uncertain one—what will to-morrow bring?

Time does not permit me to review the past of Polish-German—better said, Polish-Prussian—relations. They have been about as bad as they could be, though it is not the case that Poles and Germans never were at peace in the lower Vistula area. The point from which relations became unmanageable is, of course, the reign of Frederick the Great; and I shall risk the assumption that throughout Prussia has been the aggressor. By this I mean that, whether in the case of the seizure of Upper Silesia early in his career or of the First Partition of 1772 which gave him the northern provinces, Frederick knew very well, and his counsellors with him, that they were incorporating into the Protestant Prussian State fundamentally non-German lands and peoples, who in addition to being Slavs were Catholics, and so for a double reason were bound to be the beginning of troubles. What had been said a century earlier of the Polish King, by a play on his title, Jan Cas. Rex, that his initials I.C.R. meant rather *initium calamitatis regni*, became true now for *das Deutsche Reich*, with the Prussian King as the villain of the piece. I share the South German view that no man who during his life made war four times on the German Empire can be magnified for ever into a national hero; and I regard the traditions of the ascendancy of

Prussia thus begun, and carried on a century later by Bismarck, as a misfortune for Central Europe and most of all for the Germans themselves.

We all know how things came to a head in the famous *Kulturkampf* of the 'seventies and 'eighties, in which Catholic Germany was allied with the Poles against Prussian aggression; and how right down to the World War the Centrum refused to be identified with the major measures of repression (*Ausnahms-gesetze*) enforced towards the Polish population of the Ostmarken in respect of their native tongue and of expropriation in favour of German colonisation. It was to be expected that the World War and its outcome would not improve the relations between the two peoples; the more so since then, as now and in fact always, the German people has never known more than a fraction of the truth, either in respect to their eastern neighbours or in regard to the conditions obtaining on their eastern frontiers. Had they been in possession of the facts they could never have held the view that existed for a decade after the War, that the new Polish State was only a temporary arrangement. They would have known that in every single issue for the last fifty years between the two peoples, not the Prussians but the Poles have emerged the victors; and would long since have abandoned their stereotyped attitude of superiority and scorn towards all Slavs, which has done so much harm in our time.

May I assume that all present have read with care the extremely valuable chapter at the beginning of the *Survey of International Affairs*, 1932, dealing with North-Eastern Europe? If anyone has not read it, then I commend it particularly on this point. One of their greatest opportunities in post-War Europe was missed by the Germans through their refusal to do the thing from the start that Herr Hitler announced over a year ago. In this they have shown themselves far less realists than could have been expected of people who had the arch-example of their own Bismarck before them.

I come now to the real issue of the paper, the specific examples of improvement in the relations of these two peoples which I have been privileged to observe during nearly two years of residence and study in Upper Silesia.

They fall into three parts :

1. the cessation of the *Presshetze*—the hostility campaign of the newspapers on both sides of the new frontier, in which for obvious reasons the German press has taken the lead;

2. the end of the tension in the frontier areas, amounting almost to an *entente cordiale* between the peoples;
3. the consideration of certain specific matters concerning Upper Silesia alone, where the influence of the Pact has either not been felt or has wrought surprises.

1. First, then, the campaign of agitation and ill-will: it was inevitable that the very existence of a free and united Poland should be resented by the peoples whose empires had to be broken in order that the Poles might be free. The root of the trouble lay not in any particular frontier but in the fact of the new republic to the east of them, throbbing with national traditions and aspirations, in the place of the colossus of Russia that was at best a fine image with feet of clay. Those informed on the subject will recall the dictum of Stenzel in 1837, "The Prussian Monarchy and the Polish Republic cannot both exist!", and the changes rung on the same theme during the following half-century. Rubbed down into popular currency, this view found expression in the press, over the wireless, on public platforms, in pamphlet and cartoon, in one of the most widespread and violent demands for "revision" (the dimensions of which were variously stated according to the courage of the speaker and the temper of his audience) that our time has known. One has only to see a part of any collection of this propaganda material, and to remember the facilities for reaching their public at the disposal of agitators to-day, to realise how grave a menace this was bound to be to the thus threatened Polish nation. For reasons that will appear on reflection, the chief centre of attack was the area of Pomerania (dubbed the Corridor), though quite plain statements were made on special occasions by men in high position in respect of the lost districts of Upper Silesia, and allusions were made even to the province of Poznan itself. Against all this campaign of protest and outcry the Polish press felt compelled to react—to keep up its end, so to speak. The result was a most lamentable succession of years in which positively nothing good about Poland was learned by the great masses of the press-reading German public, and all too little good about Germany by the Poles in their turn. Notable exceptions did exist, but they were not popular. Among the German exceptions the Catholic papers stand out; and the single example of the *Rhein-Mainische Volkszeitung* might be cited; in which Freiherr Oskar von Soden pleaded again and again for a change of front towards a land and a people of whose place in Europe he had become convinced from years of observation on the spot. I

recall only one prophetic appeal—from about the year 1930—for “*Zehn Jahre Verzicht auf Lärm und Pathos, zehn Jahre friedliches Nebeneinanderlebens*”; a thing that has now come, though hardly from the source and in the way he expected it.

I spent New Year's Day of this year in Vienna. One of my friends there has been for years a close student of the German-Polish impasse. (Note that this was three weeks before the Pact was announced!) He said to me at the outset of a long conference, “Do you know that in the past six weeks my agency has sent me two hundred cuttings from the German press, and every one of them full of fine things about Poland. An extraordinary thing has happened. I couldn't have thought it possible!” Early in March I was in Cracow, and was told by a former colleague of a conversation he had recently listened to between a Polish newspaper man from East Prussia (the Allenstein area) and friends. The latter were asking how the Polish Minority was faring there, and the answer was in effect, “Never better. Especially we journalists are in clover. Our German colleagues by contrast are having a very bad time, since they have orders now to tell precisely the opposite story to that which they told before in regard to everything Polish.”

What concerns us here is, of course, the possibilities for good inherent in the new policy, the hope of an end of the poisoned atmosphere in which people were living on both sides of the frontier, and of a more wholesome atmosphere in which at least something good will be seen in and told about one's neighbour. As a sample of this I have a special number of the *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, the organ of the big German interests in Upper Silesia and the first of the two dailies there to fall in line with Hitler's régime. It was published early in May and has on the front page, side by side, the Black Eagle of the *Deutsches Reich* and the White Eagle of the Republic of Poland, with this legend underneath:

“Two States that are complements each of the other.”

What a change! Among a series of special articles dealing with the prospects of more business cooperation between the two Powers, two are written in Polish.

One word of comment on this change suffices. The power of the press and of kindred agencies to-day is so great that, unless they can be won for an idea or an ideal, the chances of realising it are nil. Reversely, that for which the press and its kindred agencies for dissemination of news and views declares has the

best hopes of being translated into fact. We may like this or not, but in the case under consideration the change for the better has been enormous. It is fair to say that the Polish press has not been as ready to follow the orders from above, has not been as obedient as the German, the reason being that it has always demanded some measure of freedom of expression. Yet even here there is little cause for complaint. I should also add that no one fancies for a moment that no anti-Polish agitation or sentiment exists in Germany since last November, and no anti-German sentiment in Poland. Undoubtedly some of it is going on. But the sting has been taken from it; its power for evil has been broken. In this respect we are facing a new scene in which for the first time "Poland is being shown to the German people"—I quote the phrase used by *Die Woche*, which published in a series of numbers pictures and text about the land of the Vistula that would have satisfied the most ardent of Polish patriots.

2. We come to the Upper Silesian scene and the changes brought in a much-disputed territory where exists the densest population in Central Europe, and where, owing to the high proportion of unemployment, a fertile field exists for the mischief-makers. I asked a group of Polish friends of many years' standing, who were gathered to say good-bye to us in the second week of May, what they saw about them that could be said to have come from the Pact. Like a shot came back the answer, "The excursion trains to Cracow!" By this was meant the taking of fortnightly Sunday excursions from German Silesia to the ancient capital and university centre of Poland, one of the sights of Europe; a practice that had started last Easter and promised to give tens of thousands of Germans a look at their neighbours during the summer. A year ago such a thing would have been unthinkable.

On the German side there are similar proofs of a new spirit. In Beuthen is to be found the only High School (Gymnasium) with Polish as the language of instruction in the German Reich. It had been opened in the fall of 1932, but only after long delays and in the teeth of much opposition from German Nationalists. The 150 boys there come from all parts of the Empire, some as far away as the Rhine itself. The permitting of such an institution in an exposed centre like Beuthen was felt by many Germans to be a mistake, and the conditions under which the work went on were difficult—to put it mildly. Even the charter had to be renewed every half-year and the permission of residence granted

to the professors, most of them Polish citizens, was also renewable only for the same period. Under the new régime, which really began to function in German Upper Silesia (since the War a province in its own right and with the Centrum party in the saddle) from last July onwards, the liberties and courtesies shown to "the young gentlemen" have astonished those in charge.

So too the general atmosphere in German Upper Silesia has improved. Upper Silesia, by the way, has furnished numbers of recruits for the Nazi formations, not a few of whom are drilled in Polish, since they understand almost no German. (For these people, who cannot in any way be fitted into the race theories of the Nazi party, the new epithet has been invented *Kulturdeutsche*.) Notably in the towns, but in general on all the highways of traffic, Poles are met with a welcome unknown before. Two samples of this in anecdotes reveal the popular mind better than much argument.

A Polish traveller in the train to Breslau, approached for his ticket with the salute "*Heil Hitler!*" (pretty usual though not universal), at once replied as he produced that document, "*Heil Pilsudski!*" The official was taken aback only for a moment, then rejoined "*Heil both of them!*" An incident that reveals two things, a certain freedom and sense of humour on the one hand that goes far everywhere to relieve tension, and a totally new mentality towards things Polish. It is precisely here that the great gain has come.

The other incident, which happened at the end of April to one of my own university friends, was this. He was doing two weeks of research that took him to different corners of German Silesia and was astonished at the difference in the reception he got everywhere. One sample touched him in more ways than one. Sitting in a café he was approached, as all the world is every day or oftener, by Nazi people with collecting boxes. In this case it was a young fellow selling post-cards, the proceeds to go to some good cause. As all outsiders (or non-Aryans!) do, my friend remarked quietly that he was a foreigner and ought to be excused. Six months ago that would have meant a bow and being left in peace, but not so now. "You're a foreigner; may I ask where from?" "From Poland." The collector grinned all over. "From Poland? Why you should be the first one to buy my cards now, after the peace pact!" Here, again, a volume of eloquence in the single sentence, and I can say from experience, a *volte-face* from what existed before. By this I do not mean that all Nazis everywhere have been hostile or

impolite to Poles. Their orders have been from the start to show the limit of courtesy to all strangers. What I am concerned with are the orders from above that have reversed the whole approach of people to their neighbours, and those orders have not been in vain, witness far and away the greatest change for the better that I shall have to speak of, viz. the difference between the spring weeks of 1933 in Polish Silesia and those of 1934.

I should explain that the German Minority in the area assigned after the plebiscite to Poland (a large part of which is made up of Germanised or half-Germanised Poles) has dreaded for a decade the weeks that run from the date of the plebiscite, March 21st, to the national holiday, May 3rd, as times when, chiefly in the villages, they were exposed to ill-treatment of various kinds. This came, so they claim, mostly from the ranks of the Insurgents, the Veterans' groups that keep warm the memories of the Insurrections of 1919, 1920 and 1921, notably of the third one which came shortly after the plebiscite itself. I should add that since 1926 there have been two dates added to extend this period, March 19th and May 13th-14th.¹ The burden of their complaint to me has mostly been that during these times of celebration, whether those of a group or of the nation as a whole, excesses and violence were common, and damage to property or even to the person was sure to come of it.

All will remember that April of a year ago was a very trying month in Central Europe. During the preceding weeks the mighty turnover had come in Germany, the Swastika had triumphed, and popular exponents of the new order were proclaiming loudly the speedy realisation of all the major aims of National Socialism, the reunion of all Germans, the recovery of lost territories, etc. This kind of thing could only mean the violating of existing frontiers, and, with that, war. For a few weeks during March 1933, I had (for the only time during the past two years) a fear of attack on Poland. A month later it had all passed over. Meantime the word got about all over Polish Silesia—certainly pushed by agents—“*Hitler kommt!*” and the implication was “Be ready!” A new version of the old song was being sung, and sometimes openly,

“*Polen hat uns Land gestohlen, etc.*”

Tons of pamphlets of the most inflammatory nature were seized as they were being smuggled over the frontier. The German press of Polish Silesia was openly adopting Hitlerism.

¹ The former, Marshal Pilsudski's name-day. The latter, the date of the 1926 *coup d'état*.

No wonder the Silesian Poles were up in arms. They saw every prospect of a return to the old Prussian order and they said, "Not while we are alive to prevent it." The result was both organised and unorganised resistance; the German papers were driven from the open-air stalls; the *Kattowitzer Zeitung* plant was surrounded by the populace; German meetings were hindered; occasionally people talking in German in the trams were insulted; there was window-breaking; there were cases of people being beaten up. One thoroughly unfortunate incident was the disturbing by a band of young irresponsibles of a Passion play put on in the Catholic Church Hall in Orzegow, right on the frontier, by the Young People's Union (among whom were some of my personal friends), in which a number of those taking part were hurt. (On investigating this three weeks later, I found that there were reasons of a local nature for the outbreak, not, of course, of the kind that would justify it in the least.) The unrest had already died down by May 2nd, 1933, the day we returned from a month's visit to Yugoslavia, but the tension in the air lasted right into the summer and found tragic expression in a wretched encounter that took place in Giszowiec, right under our noses, early in July. Two excursions, one Polish and one German, chanced to meet on the highway just at dusk, and a free fight ensued in which a number were wounded. One German died of his wounds.

Apart from the political tension, two other factors enter into all such happenings in Upper Silesia; the dense population, here in truth a *Volk ohne Raum*, coupled with the high percentage of unemployment already prevailing for the third year, and in addition the fact of the roughness and downrightness (*Heftigkeit*) of the mining and foundry workman at any and every time, especially if he has been drinking. This was the source of endless trouble to the Prussian police a generation ago and is no new thing consequent only on the change of boundary.

Over against this picture, of which numberless details could be given, set the year 1934. More than one Minority *Hausvater* has said to me, "Such a spring we have never seen!" I had to reply, "What a Godsend the new order is! But you can see the reason. No provocation, no reprisals!" That does fairly sum up the situation. What the Upper Silesian wants is peace, a chance to repair his losses, to build up his fortune, to secure the future. Like the people of Alsace-Lorraine, where I have just been staying for three weeks, they dread nothing so much as the prospects of war. They object, above all, to the Great

Powers fighting out their differences *auf unseren Rücken*. They know that from any and every war they have nothing to gain and everything to lose; they, in any case, will be the victims!

Hence the relief and the satisfaction in Upper Silesia during the fateful spring months of 1934, in which for the first time in years the populace tolerated German talking films in the cinemas. *Quantum mutatus ab illo!* Not only all local German papers had perfect freedom, but all *Reichsblätter* as well. And why? Chiefly because, by mutual arrangement, no celebrations were organised on either side of the frontier of the glorious (or inglorious) plebiscite and insurrection days. That was the first great step forward. Secondly, the Veterans' Reunion—the Insurgents' Day—was quietly moved forward one day, to May 2nd, so that it was not identified with the national holiday on the 3rd. This action had incidentally another effect. It made possible the sharing of the Polish Opposition, that of Korfanty's party, in the national celebrations in a way that had not been possible for years.

I cite these facts, some of them trifling in themselves, to show with what a sense of relief and release the Upper Silesian people have welcomed the assurance, contained in the Pact of January, of a truce to recriminations and provocations, an end of mutual maledictions and complaints, and a lead from the highest sources towards the kind of *Zusammenleben* that is needful if neighbours are to rise above the ethics of the jungle. Too long it looked as if *die hohe Politik* was on the side of those who took the view that Germans and Poles never have been friends and never can be. At last we have an experiment based on the reverse conviction, that they can be friends; more, that no two peoples in Europe are more called upon by their very make-up and position to collaborate than Germany and Poland, since no two need one another economically more than they.

3. Let me now come to my third point, in which I shall look briefly at three or four specific matters connected with the relations of the two peoples in Upper Silesia, and shall ask in how far and with what fruitage they have been affected by the Pact. If our story has been one of affirmation up to now, it will perhaps be less satisfactory for the few minutes that remain. I confine myself to what I know best, and leave to others in the discussion the noting of additional points.

First, I will deal with the matter of the Geneva Convention and its agencies, whose mission in Upper Silesia is, under the

settlement, to run another three years. I can only note salient points.

For some time the view has been growing among the Poles that the Convention is a serious obstacle to the normal development of their administration in the areas assigned to them in 1921. In particular do they object to the Mixed Commission and its work under President Calonder. One hears less criticism of the Tribunal and of the services of Dr. Kaeckenbeeck. The Germans too have not been satisfied for years with the results obtained from the Convention, and have, of course, by their withdrawal from the League shown their disapproval of its workings in every form. Some people in Upper Silesia at once proclaimed last autumn that now they were through with Geneva and that the costly machinery maintained to help them could be disposed of. This was said to be the only legal and moral conclusion to be drawn.

No such thing has happened. Both heads of the agencies mentioned have said to me that they were perfectly ready to pack their trunks and leave the land the moment they felt assured that the two peoples on the spot could settle the various kinds of outstanding differences on fair lines without the help of any third party. But both felt, and in my judgment rightly, that the onus of proof was on them, and the time had not yet come for such radical action. From the wide field of issues arising I shall pick only one, that of the disputes coming before the Minorities Bureaux on either side of the line, as an example of the progress made under the new order.

It is known that from the start both Powers have accepted the view that much more should and must be done to settle outstanding differences at home without carrying them to any international forum or judgment-seat. In respect of the German Minority in Poland—whose complaints and petitions have kept the Upper Silesian scene constantly before the attention of the world since 1927—I can report the views of both the parties concerned—Dr. Ulitz, executive of the *Volksbund*, as the spokesman of the Minority on the one hand, and Dr. Korowicz, expert for the *Wojewodstwo* and Head of the Minorities Office on the Polish side, on the other hand—that a quite new era has been entered upon. In Dr. Ulitz's words to me early in May, "At last the Minorities Bureau has come to be the thing it should have been from the start." Dr. Korowicz put it thus: "Our German leaders are convincing themselves that when they come to talk to us frankly and with the wish to settle things in the best

way for all parties concerned, they will never go away empty-handed."

What has actually been happening since Easter is this : every ten days the German *Volksbund* people, as representatives of the Minority in Polish Silesia, meet the Minorities Office of the province to consider all cases that have not been settled otherwise. This kind of thing never happened before, all contacts being by correspondence. The result has been the handling in the course of each month of more issues than could be dealt with previously in half a year, and a marked diminution of the number of petitions or complaints sent on to the Mixed Commission. Along with this there has developed a new relationship between the people in office on both sides, who say things about one another that were certainly not said three or five years ago. They now feel that they are partners in an enterprise instead of opponents in a duel that honour bids them fight to the death.

There are two special fields in which this new *modus vivendi* must make itself felt, that of education and that of employment in industry. With the first issue, that of Minority schools and their maintenance, Upper Silesia has been troubled since 1926. I refer you to Professor Toynbee's *Survey of International Affairs* for the facts and the solution offered in the great dispute over "the Maurer children." With the second issue, that of the job and thus of daily bread for wife and children, we enter on the thing that has been the most vital matter at issue in this highly industrialised area ever since the world depression began to make itself felt three to four years ago.

To go into their history here even in outline would require far too much time, and is impossible though it would be most instructive. I shall only note one fact in respect to the school-children and show its implications. Last year the number of registrations of transfer from the State (Polish) schools to the Minority schools was considerably higher than the year before. An analysis of the figures according to locality showed that quite large numbers came from villages where it was notorious that you could not find German families with a searchlight. It has been proved up to the hilt that much of this was due to the fact that the *Volksbund* has greatly extended its social welfare work (with the use of funds coming from Berlin amounting to millions of marks yearly), which means that unemployed workmen whose "dole" is so small that they cannot keep their families on it, join the *Volksbund* in order to get (usually) as much more per week or per month from that source and so manage somehow to

make ends meet. The price of this is that they must send their children to the Minority schools.

The same thing happened this spring at the April registrations, and there are several things about this that need noting. From the German point of view it is good politics—at least they thought so—but on their own admission it is bad pedagogy. I asked the *Schulverein* people last August about the registrations from their point of view, and was told that they had only trouble from it, since hundreds of children were thrust on their hands to be admitted to their private schools who had been two or even four years in school and were well on with their work—but in the Polish language. They were now put by their parents, at the age of nine or eleven, in a German school and expected in some way to “find” themselves in a language most of them knew nothing of whatever!

I said that many thought of it as good politics—this year they are not so sure. The number of registered members of the *Volksbund* has gone up $33\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. since last autumn, rising from about 30,000 to around 40,000. I made bold to ask Dr. Ulitz early in May whether he was gratified at the fact or not. He at once shot me a glance and said he was not. He went on to tell me, what I knew already, that a halt had been called and that for two months no more members were to be admitted. The reason for the rise is clear: the unemployment situation is not better; 40 per cent. of all workers on the dole, and it was in most cases a matter of loaves and fishes! The *Volksbund* knows very well that the people who come in to-day because of hard times will be gone the moment a job comes along. Such people not only do not pull their weight, but they are a serious burden in the boat.

One other remark: realists among the Poles say, “Why worry? If the Germans want to help us take care of our unemployed, so much the better.” Others say, “No, we dare not take that view but must find means to stop this traffic in loyalties!” All the time the local authorities are in trouble, caught between two fires, since their Silesian citizens object to any concessions to the Minority; while the orders from Warsaw, which sees the matter as a part of the whole problem of better relations with Germany, are the exact reverse—give the Minority everything possible; in any case avoid scenes! So difficult was Dr. Grazynski’s position last summer in this respect that he had to make very serious representations in person in the capital, pointing out that one could not go beyond a certain point without pro-

voiking riots. I note this in order to show that all that went before and along with the Pact has not necessarily made everything in Upper Silesia easier.

As for the other point, that of unemployment, it may be said at once that the Pact has not yet been able—one doubts whether it will be able—in any way to affect what is going on. Put in a nutshell there has been in progress for a year a serious reduction of personnel in industry, and the axe has fallen chiefly where it had not fallen up till now, in the “black coat–white collar” area, *i.e.* among those who work with their heads and not with their hands in the business and management of industry. Now it is just here that, even twelve years after the boundary settlement, the Germans number as high as 70 per cent. of those employed in some of the big plants. A fairly large portion of them are German citizens, having opted for the Reich, and so are felt, in view of the seriousness of the labour market, to be “burdensome foreigners.” (These would have to go anyway in 1937.) As a result “the axe” has hit them in the same way as it hit the manual workers two or even three years ago, and a great outcry has resulted. For this kind of thing there is no other name but tragedy: but the charge that these men are being released because they are “Minority” (in the case of those who are Polish citizens), or “foreigners,” is by no means true to the extent that has been alleged. Isolated cases certainly do exist; but one can hardly blame the Poles for taking the position that is conceded to-day the world round, that we must look after our own kith and kin first. With the rights or wrongs of the whole issue we shall not deal here, but only register the fact that the new relation existing between the Powers has done nothing to relieve the lot of those thus thrust out on a cold and rather cruel world.

It is this fact in part that has given rise to the view more than once stated in the past months, that both German and Polish Minorities are being sacrificed in the interest of the new peace. The phrase used by Deputy Graebe on the Polish side, *wir werden geopfert*, has become common parlance, and some Poles on the German side share this attitude. By it is meant the conviction that whereas Berlin and Warsaw (especially the former) lent a willing ear before to the complaints of their fellow-countrymen across the frontier, they no longer do so. Minorities have been the fashion for years in Central Europe, but at least in this area their prospects for the future are no longer rosy. This is being

feared in a concrete way by the people now being released in Polish-Silesian industry, who feel that they have no chance of support in Berlin as they would have had before.

The fear of thus being the goat is a widespread one and justifies a brief examination here. There is without doubt some ground for it, and no one need be surprised. Everything costs its price, and there will be those who pay unjustly in every such settlement. But it may be doubted whether the difficult position in which the German Minority now finds itself in Poland is not the result of an accumulation of causes extending over a decade. It is certainly a fact that all the blunders made by German policy towards Poland since the War have left their marks on the scattered three-quarters of a million Germans living in all corners of the Vistula republic. I shall note only one sample, from 1933, and as seen in Upper Silesia.

You will recall how I spoke of the promise circulated on the Polish side over a year ago, "*Hitler kommt!*" This was in itself nothing new, but there was fresh point to it in view of the known ideas of the Nazi party in respect to *Kulturgemeinschaft*, *Blutgemeinschaft* and *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*—the corner-stones of a reunited brotherhood of all Germans. Unfortunately the summer came, while Hitler did not. Nor did the things that were happening look like an earnest of his coming. Life went on as before, and in November came the crash of such hopes of a turnover. At last it was clear that Hitler was not coming; the 200,000 people who might have welcomed him saw that they had been duped. This was only the last of a series of disillusionments during a decade, but it filled up the cup. The German Minority in Upper Silesia had been split almost from the moment the Nazis came into power into those "for" and those "against"; the latter being chiefly the Catholics (*cf.* the Centrum in the Reich). From now on any hope of healing the breach was gone. On the first Sunday of January the spiritual leader of the *Deutsche Christliche Volkspartei*—Dr. Edward Pant, Senator in Warsaw—made his famous declaration, comparable in its way to that of Luther at Worms, "Here I stand, I can do no other!" The man who for a decade had been editor of the most-read German paper in the land, but had been forced out in the fall, began to publish a few weeks later a modest weekly *Der Deutsche in Polen*, without any money, but with the resolve to save what could be saved of Germanism as a genuine Minority in Poland, that was to be neither dependent for its financial backing on Berlin, nor subject in respect of its ideas and ideals to Berlin. In a long

talk I had with him early in May, I put the question bluntly as to whether the Minority was being sacrificed by the Pact. He admitted that there was some truth in the view, but said quite plainly that the positively tragic situation of the Minority was the result of other forces, notably of the worst possible leadership during a decade. The major defects of this leadership he traces to its complete subjection to the wishes of German governments and its being made a tool for political ends. He then told me what he has since written in his weekly, of how when in March 1933 the leaders of the various German groups in Poland got together in Lodz to take counsel in view of the new régime in Berlin, every last man was agreed that the National Socialist victory in the Reich spelt blue ruin for the Germans abroad, notably in Poland. Nevertheless, when the same men met again two months later in Warsaw, every man had recanted and was lined up with the Hitler party, himself alone excepted. "For me," he said to them, "it is a matter of principle, of life philosophy, and of my hope of salvation." That was the beginning of the breach, and things have got worse rather than better. Only time can show us what the upshot will be.

In conclusion, one general remark that does indeed encroach on the field of politics. I give you the view of a friend who has been a constant observer on the spot of Central European conditions, one of the shrewdest minds I know.

"The Pact is another example of the impatience that is growing at the policy of round table conferences with a large number of Powers represented, in which action is made difficult because every representative is afraid that anything done may some day be used as a precedent to be quoted against him when he does not want it.

"The Pact is a tender plant and needs to be nourished with care. Too much need not be expected of it. But the possibilities are those of a new era in the relations of long hostile neighbours."

For myself, I see no reason why this should not be true.

Summary of Discussion.

QUESTION: Would the lecturer say something as to the present position of the Jews in Upper Silesia? Is it the case that Polish Jews are receiving the same improved treatment that the Poles are receiving, and is it possible that the idea of a Pole becoming a *Kulturdeutscher* will also make it possible for a non-Aryan Jew to become a *Kulturdeutscher*?

Also, what likelihood is there of the Geneva Convention being renewed for a further period?

MR. WICKHAM STEED said that in the west of Europe, where we were all ignorant, it had been assumed that in making the Pact with Poland, Herr Hitler had not only the welfare of Poland in mind. The assumption had been that Hitler probably made some conditions or indicated possible conditions: that these conditions were not absolutely rejected by the Polish negotiators, and that one of these conditions at least was that if Hitler should feel bound to carry his offensive against the Dollfuss policy in Austria to certain lengths, so that perhaps the offensive might be successful, Poland would take no interest in the matter directly or indirectly. That was believed to be one of the conditions. Ought it to be assumed that, should that condition not be fulfilled, as time went on Herr Hitler or those round him would not feel that they had paid for something that they had not received?

Quite recently he had received an impression—it was no more than an impression—of the sort of feeling that prevails in Germany among Herr Hitler's more moderate opponents. He had been told on very good authority by someone who met Dr. Brüning, the late German Chancellor, during his visit to London, that almost the only point upon which Dr. Brüning spoke with passion was in condemnation of the Hitler-Polish Pact, and that he felt that it was a real betrayal of German interests ever to have assented by implication to the idea that the Corridor could be left even for ten years without constant protest.

He thought we could all agree with the lecturer that, whatever the motive might have been, whatever calculation there might have been on one side or the other, the fact that the agreement had been made was of enormous value in international relations, not only locally in East Central Europe as between Poland and Germany, but as a proof of the great change that might be wrought when two nations tried to live in a neighbourly fashion.

He was very glad that the lecturer quoted the *Rhein-Mainische Volkszeitung* and the articles by Freiherr Oskar von Soden. He had a vivid recollection of the one appearing on the 10th November, 1932, in which Baron von Soden, as a prominent member of the Centre Party, made an impassioned appeal to his leader, Dr. Brüning, to try as a Christian gentleman to see if Christian methods could not do something to improve Polono-German relations. There had certainly been since 1925, to his knowledge, attempts on the part of Poland to promote exactly this neighbourly relationship. He preferred not to mention dates, but attempts to encourage a Polish-German commercial treaty were going on for years. He remembered the former Polish Minister in Brussels, Monsieur Filipowicz, proposing, as a general solution of the difficulties between Poland and Germany, that there should be, first, a commercial treaty, and, second, a demilitarised zone along the whole frontier including the Corridor, and at the same time a territorial guarantee by Poland to Germany of the political integrity of East Prussia. It was turned down with contempt. He remembered that

M. Zaleski telegraphed to him personally for publication a renewal of some similar suggestion which he published in February 1929. It was treated at once by the press of Dr. Brüning as a villainous piece of Polish propaganda. He knew Zaleski pretty well as an honest man, and he did not think it was merely a political move.

Linked with this matter there was the question of Lithuania and of Latvia; there was also the future of East Prussia.

One or two persons made an attempt some two or three years ago, not under the auspices of this Institute though they were allowed to meet in this building, to get at the facts of the Polish-German quarrel impartially but with a special reference to the Corridor in the first instance. They decided to admit propaganda from both sides, but to verify the statements made in that propaganda. They decided to work only on pre-War German documents, which had at that time been suppressed in Germany, but of which copies were available in London; and they decided to ask the German and Polish Governments for official statements of their respective cases, not in order to accept them, but to compare them with the results of their own inquiries. Within a very few weeks they had an official Polish statement, and on examination it proved to be fairly near what they thought the truth. Neither by hook nor by crook, nor begging, nor pressure, could they ever extract any statement from the German Government.

Mr. Wickham Steed had asked a prominent member of the "Steel Helmets" why this was and why they could not get anything from Berlin. He looked at me with a contemptuous smile and said, "Do you think we are such imbeciles as to give our case away in advance?" I said, "The Poles are doing so. Are you not running the risk that others may suspect you have no case to give away?" On that point I imagined they were pretty near the truth, for the German Government would not let its own experts loose to give them their views.

Yet there had been this wonderful change. What could it be? Looking at it from a broad European point of view, and not merely from the very interesting and very important local point of view, was it an attempt on the part of Hitler to lessen the cordiality between Moscow and Warsaw? Was it an attempt to give the Poles an opportunity, which he could imagine they would have been very glad to accept, to show they were not satellites of France? Was it also an attempt, or at least an opening for the Poles, which he imagined they would have accepted with equal gladness, to say to Europe and the United States, and British Pacifists in particular, "Aha, you have been saying for years past that there could be no peace in Europe till that wretched Corridor is done away with. We will not take any responsibility for it"? Then suddenly the Polish Corridor was put to sleep for ten years, and Poland made a long nose at the rest of Europe and said, "Now think of other things!"

The appeal of that point of view would have been very potent; but they wanted something a little beyond it. The difficulty was the difficulty of judging both the promise and the good faith of the Hitler

régime itself. He would be very glad if the lecturer, who had been both in Poland and in Germany, could give them an idea of what his Polish friends thought of the future. He had certainly given them an idea of the great local relief that was felt, and the enormous benefit that had accrued to the frontier populations, and perhaps to both peoples. But there still remained the big note of interrogation about the future.

DR. ROSE said that the great issue that Mr. Steed had raised was one that he had refused to deal with in his paper, but he would be glad to make a comment or two and perhaps even venture into the field that Mr. Steed had opened up, which was a very enticing one.

With regard to Lithuania and Latvia, the getting rid of the constant recrimination and agitation about the existing order, and that shouting for revision which kept five hundred miles of a frontier on tenterhooks, was bound to have a good effect on the Baltic area, as it had on Upper Silesia in a general way. That applied, of course, also to Dantzig, about which he could only speak from hearsay, and to East Prussia. Lithuania had been the bone of contention; it was a kind of political football for years after the World War. No one has regretted that more than the Poles, who because of the Vilna business were thought to be in the wrong.

With regard to the position of the Jews, he had spent May and June of last year on the German side of the frontier—during the period of transition from the Centrum to the Nazi régime. He had made it his business to foster contacts with the four major groups of society: the German Catholics, the German Protestants, the Poles and the Jews. He had heard terrible things from some Jews there. Frankly, he could say that while the chances of a Pole being a *Kulturdeutscher* might be fairly good (some of the Poles doubted it), the chances of a Jew were nil. One of his Jewish friends had said to him, "Hitler has done in fifteen days what Pilsudski could not get done in fifteen years—got every Jew in Upper Silesia on the side of Poland."

It was a fact that among the most loyal members of the German minority in Polish Silesia were the Jews who had never been anything else but Germans, the people who controlled most of the business. He was not speaking of the Jews who had come in from without. What had happened had settled the minds of these people, who up to then had been loyal Germans, members of the Minority, sharing the burdens of everything. They saw what was going on just across the frontier and thanked God they were in Poland.

As to the Geneva Convention, he was not a prophet, but he did not think the Geneva Convention would be prolonged. If the spirit and the letter of the Pact developed on the lines that responsible people hoped they would on both sides of the frontier—he was not speaking of the authorities in Berlin or Warsaw because he knew very little about them—the Geneva Convention would not be necessary. He thought that certain things in the Geneva Convention would be

prolonged to meet the needs of a peculiar situation about which he was writing a book, but he did not think that the Convention itself was likely to be prolonged, partly because both parties to it were rather "fed up" with certain clauses, certain phrases, of it, and they felt that it was a big financial burden. The fifteen-year period should suffice to adjust everything, since with the exception of two or three issues the adjustments had long since been made. He had a suggestion or two to make in his book that might help just to make easier what would be a rather serious break.

Mr. Steed had referred to the fact that the Pact got no kind of response in Germany. Opinions expressed in Upper Silesia were of all kinds. One man shrugged his shoulders, another smiled, and so on. Everyone had his own view about it. Most of them took the view that it was the best possible thing under the circumstances. It could not do any harm; it might help. They were not always much disposed to take it seriously. Some were disposed to regard it as a mistake. He had found plenty of people who thought that not a Pact but the very opposite was the thing needful.

He would just like to say two things. Those who had followed the situation knew that Roman Dmowski was no friend of Germany. The head of the National Democratic party, he had always felt that the only hope of Poland was the best possible relations with Russia, and that Germany was the *Erbfeind*. Yet Dmowski said to one of his (the speaker's) acquaintances at Easter-time: "I would not have made the Pact for choice; but I am convinced that we shall have it for ten years, and that at the end of ten years it will be renewed." There was one of the most experienced minds of Central Europe expressing itself in respect to what had happened. A member of the diplomatic corps in Warsaw said to a very highly placed Churchman, with whom he had a long conference shortly before leaving Poland over a month ago, something like this: "I should like you to know that after this Pact, provided it stands for a number of years, the Germans will not get a hearing in the world if they say they have to recover this or that. It has been proved that they can do without it."

As to the question of population pressure, a matter that had not been touched on, no one knew what the future would bring, but at the moment the Polish State with 32,000,000 people was bringing as many children into the world as the German State with 64,000,000. In other words, the Polish birth-rate was twice that of the German people. He did not know that it was a good thing; Poland had more people than she knew what to do with. But in the Lower Vistula area there were two Polish children being born in these days for every one German. He drew attention to this factor. Further, although a great deal had been heard in the last years about the *Drang nach Osten* in Germany, it had been a political thing, and artificial. The population of Eastern Germany that could get out of it had got out of it—westward. That was the major trouble, and the fault was that of the Junkers and their treatment of their tenants and work-people. Youth

had run away to the Rhineland, and who took its place? The *Sachsen-gänger*, i.e. the seasonal labourers from Russia or Poland.

A further point : from the direction in which the National-Socialist party was moving—and he spoke with a very inadequate knowledge of their literature—it seemed to him that they had laid aside for the moment all thought of political frontiers and revision. One of the ablest Poles he had heard speaking on that subject said, “ Not because they wanted to but because they had to.” They had done it because their whole emphasis was going to be for years on a *Kulturoffensiv*, during which time they hoped to recover from the blows they had had of various kinds, and more or less rehabilitate culturally their scattered fellow-Germans of whom twenty-five millions lived outside the Reich.

He had a pet theory—that in the case of Italy on the Adriatic, and in the case of Germany, a notable change had come since the War that neither of these peoples was yet fully conscious of. Both of them had had what one might fairly call ramshackle empires to the East of them before the War. They had not yet learned that since the War their neighbours were something entirely different, viz. solidly knit though economically still poor national States : Yugoslavia on the one hand and Poland on the other.

In conclusion, he suspected that for some time at least the Pact would help on what he fancied was in part achieved, viz. a complete *Verzicht* on the part of the Reich, a rejection of policies that involved changes of political frontiers, with a tremendous stress on cultural, spiritual, intellectual and other forces.