



IE DCUA C1/3

Seán Lester Diary - PDF

May 1936 - February 1937

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Jul 1936  
Don Foster

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Pages of diary

July 9 36

(how in diary)

The following fragments are the only notes I have of my last six months in Danzig, apart from very few personal letters to Avenol. The reason they are so fragmentary and that I have only now attempted to assemble them was that the crisis in Danzig developed so quickly and in such uncertainty that I could not safely keep any record of certain matters, either in my house or my Office. For three months at any rate I was not at all sure that my house and Office might not be occupied any day by the political Police or the Storm Troopers. There always remained the normal danger of espionage, notably from Borchard, the Butler, who had been in close communication with Forster, or from Laemmer, the minor clerk in my Office, whom I had caught in the act of espionage with regard to my letters (the story had appeared on the front page of one of the popular English Sunday papers and was copied round the world; a newspaper from Hong-Kong for example, was sent to me with the full account.)

Copies of my personal letters to Avenol and my diary notes I transmitted to my friend Robinson, the British Consul General, who was good enough to lock them up in his safe for some months.



May 26

Not feeling inclined to write for a week or so I find that it easily becomes a habit. The international world has been developing crises, in the same way as has marked the last year or two. from month to month. Addis Abeba occupied by the Italians and the Emperor in flight out of the country and a most infernal puzzle for the League. French elections over with results showing successes on the Left, which probably means an increased support for the League and a greater tendency towards English cooperation, but which probably comes too late to have any effect on the Italian aggression. The League has so far completely failed to prevent the aggression being successful in the most flagrant case which it has yet dealt with. References by important public men have been made in France and England, threatening to abandon the League - these are only threats but the new situation must be dealt with and it seems possible the next year may see a revision of the international guarantees concerned in the League idea. It seems difficult to foresee whether this means a weakening or a strengthening of the League. If it means a strengthening how can the Italian incident be buried? If it means a weakening that would seem only to speed up the policy of alliances with all the dangers involved. No new League can bring in the United States, unless it were so attenuated as to be useless in Europe except as a meeting-place for Foreign Ministers.

The tangle of the Rhineland question has, as was expected, been very useful and it only this week that the British Government is expected to put the questionnaire which was to be prepared at the last meeting of the Locarno Powers, before the German Government. I am interested to see to what extent the question of Germany's intentions in the East will be included.

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Vietnamese

In Danzig the new Government policy of cooperation with the League, which was initiated following the January Council, has on the whole been followed. The first point in influencing this is the determination of the Senate that no Danzig problem shall go before the Council at its May Session. I have absolutely no doubt that this was on orders from General Göring, on whom apparently the Führer has conferred the duty of dealing with Danzig questions in so far as German influence is concerned. Forster has been comparatively quiet and the public attacks on the League and the High Commissioner have completely ceased. Some points which I have raised with Greiser have been met in a very reasonable way but I have pointed out to him that the policy of cooperation with the League which is expected has to be based on the maintenance of the Constitution, and that the administration in my view is still very far from complying with the Council's views in this respect. There has been, compared with any equal period of last year, little interference with the Press and I have said to the Senate I hoped this policy would not end with the May meeting of the Council.

I was speaking alone with Greiser on this occasion and he said that he couldn't imagine any reason for changing it; that Danzig was bound to remain for at least very many years in its present position of a Free City, and added that the people who talked about the Rhineland coup being repeated in Danzig were mad, because Germany required to keep on good terms with Poland. I said to him that it appeared to many observers, including myself, that any use of force in Danzig would almost certainly lead to military action on the Polish side, with the consequence that war might very easily occur. As he had himself expressed the view as to the immediate future I took the occasion to say to him that in these circumstances would he not think that National Socialist policy in Danzig would be more wisely directed if it were aimed at securing the free and willing cooperation of the various German Parties, and also was it not the fact that the division between German people in Danzig was deeper than it had been at any time during the past fifteen years? Greiser jumped to the point and remarked: "Yes, what we need in Danzig is a Deutsche Front, such as they had in the Saar." I remarked that if that were his ambition it could only be achieved with a great deal of patience and very slowly, and with the abandonment of elements in the National Socialist Party programme. It could only come by real cooperation and not by absorption. Again Greiser agreed.

There are various possibilities as to how far this represents the genuine intentions of the people behind Greiser in Berlin. As it would be an intelligent and intelligible policy, I feel inclined on the whole to accept it. It is true that Hitler has described himself as acting in major matters as a somnambulist, and I suppose there is always some incalculable element about a man of his very sincere and emotional type, but there are other elements involved besides the local one of bringing Danzig under German sovereignty, which provide a check. It is always possible that Hitler may yet prove, in spite of the philosophy of violent nationalism and the pan-German ideals which he has formally expressed, to be the man to increase European stability. One cannot write a remark of this kind without very much hesitation. It is merely a hope not yet given up in quarters which are not anti-German. One must not overlook the internal difficulties which he has to face. There have been alarms in Austria and Checo-Slovakia, and in Austria feeling is growing that a coup in that direction only requires a situation as favourable as that in which the Rhineland was reoccupied. This suggestion and the military alarm on the frontier last week have been indignantly denied in Berlin.

My friend O. R. a few days ago said to me that in his view a war was only a matter of a short time, and some public man in England has prophesied that the life of the present Parliament would not have run its course before war broke out. If, therefore, the more immediate and acute anxiety following the Rhineland affair seems to have been avoided, Europe is still under a cloud of fear.

*Orancke?*



Poland has been having some rioting as a result of economic difficulties, and anti-Semitic feeling is growing especially amongst the younger people. Poland in the past had no middle class; the Jews controlled commerce and finance to a great extent because Polish aristocrats were not interested. With the growth of the new Polish State young Poles find themselves faced by barriers and competition both in commerce and the professions. The uneasiness in Jewish circles which followed this partly accounted for the flight of capital lately, with the consequent restrictions which were published a fortnight ago. It may also be partly accounted for by the fact that Poland is proceeding to strengthen her armaments, on which she expends a very high percentage of her budget.

*Polen*  
In a personal conversation with P. a short time ago I asked him if there was any anxiety in Warsaw as to the immediate future. They were always opposed to the Locarno Pact which left the East on the outside and while they were therefore not much distressed by events affecting the Locarno guarantee they were naturally concerned that further arrangements should not be so exclusive. As to whether there was any nervousness regarding the international status of Danzig, it was remarked that France, in facing the coup in the West had made a great mistake. One battalion of troops placed just over the frontier would have left them in a very strong position to negotiate, at any rate, and would not, it was confidently felt, have led to any war. That was not a mistake which Poland would make in similar circumstances. As I am only concerned with the prevention of crises I said it would be very much important to know if Germany were aware of that, and the reply was "I have reason to believe so".

It would seem to confirm my first reaction following the Rhineland coup that that was the last that could be safely undertaken because it was within the political frontiers of the Reich.

Yesterday I had another long session with the Senate. An order has been consequently issued that no flag but the Danzig flag shall appear on public buildings. I regard this as of considerable psychological importance, apart from the restoration of the legal situation. The argument that the Swastika was no longer a Party flag since it had become officially the flag of the Reich was obviously untenable. Some concessions also have been made with regard to the question of education.

*Greiser*  
The Council will consider the question of renewing my mandate and two newspapers in close connection with the Wilhelmstrasse have publicly balloons d'essai suggesting that in view of the improved situation in Danzig I might reconsider my decision not to accept a second term. P. has told me that the Polish Government would be delighted; so has V.R. and President Greiser has asked me if there is anything he could do to further my wishes in the matter! I shall not make up my mind definitely about another short appointment until I am in Geneva.

Private  
Group  
July 1936

A stormy fortnight - the European crisis centred in Danzig and possibilities of all kinds in the offing.

I think Germany came to the conclusion about the end of May to reorient her policy. The League was in collapse and in disarray; English prestige had suffered through the Italian victory, which came more quickly than military experts had expected; and France with a Popular Front Government faced a lot of internal difficulties. Perhaps the first sign of its effects here was the organised attack on an Opposition meeting, followed by Forster's threats to take over the streets. The ground was not particularly good in any case, but Germany officially took a hand when a few days afterwards, the local crisis having been settled, the "Leipzig" Commander, under orders, omitted to call on the League Commissioner.

Unknown?

LEIPZIG  
23 June  
p13

Even a week before this I had been told by von Radowitz that the day had not come when Germany wanted to raise the Danzig question. Some days after his return from Berlin, however, he said to Papée at one of the "Leipzig" receptions that he did not know anything about his Government's plans. This was in reply to an enquiry as to whether the "Leipzig" incident was to have any special significance. The propaganda Ministry in Berlin opened a fierce attack on me, beginning with a Forster article declaring that the High Commissioner interfered in internal affairs and that but for the League of Nations all the Opposition Parties here would long ago have disappeared. The article demanded revision of the Statute in so far as the League guarantee of the Constitution was concerned. The Poles then began to be somewhat more concerned. Papée told me that he would suggest to his Government his abstention from at any rate the German Consul General's reception, as a mark of disapproval of the German Government's action, but this did not materialise. I was convinced that the cruiser incident had considerable significance. I would have in due course to report the matter to Geneva, but I did not write a word for three or four days and then drafted a report which I aimed to make a model of objectivity and restraint. I took the precaution, however, to summarise with equal objectivity recent events in Danzig, so that the Council might judge if and to what extent the incident had arisen from those events. I gave Papée an outline of the Report on the night of the 29th June, when I went to ask him for permission to quote his Note relating to attacks on Poles the previous week. He seemed impressed with its moderation. The following day, and before I had the Report quite finished, an urgent telephone message from Geneva on behalf of Eden as President of the Council, summoned me to travel there by the quickest route. I left within two hours, arriving at 11 p.m. on July 1st. I was met by Walters, Stevenson and Krabbe, etc. and whisked off for a two hours discussion. They read my draft Report with approval. I also had a short talk the same night with Count Lubinski.

July 3  
5 pm  
30



It appears that the cruiser incident had been regarded as serious and that discussions had taken place between Eden, Beck and Delbos, the new French Foreign Minister. Beck had agreed that he would undertake the mission of demanding an explanation from Berlin, as Poland had charge of Danzig's foreign affairs.

On Wednesday I had further discussions, including one with Beck, and the Council that evening at a special meeting decided to place my Report on the Agenda of the Special Session.

I should remark here that my caution in handling this opening phase had led me to report "for the information of the Council" and I had not asked that the matter should be discussed, leaving that responsibility to the Council. President Greiser was informed by the Secretariat that the matter would be on the Agenda, but it was also indicated to him that his presence was not regarded as essential, as it was a matter between the League and Germany. The press began to publish rumours of German concentration on the East Prussian frontier and of an unexpected coup.

On July 2nd I had further conversations, and that evening one with Lubienski, Beck's personal lieutenant. Everyone knew that Germany would at some time raise the Danzig problem. The question was whether a better settlement could be made now on broad lines, with some hope of stabilising affairs here for a longer period. I was convinced personally that the first move had been made. Developments might be slow but they were coming. I did not know how genuine and real was the Polish view that Danzig under the present regime was vital to the life of the Polish nation, but although it was outside my actual duties I could not refrain from suggesting that this opportunity should be taken by Poland to go more deeply into the question than the mere cruiser incident, and see if greater stability in this part of Europe could not be reached. Lubienski half hinted to me that this idea was not absent from Beck's mind.

The German press attack continued and the "Diplomatische Korrespondenz", the mouthpiece of the Wilhelmstrasse, joined in with an article saying that I was personally psychologically unsuitable and moved by animosity and partiality. I refused to make any comment to the innumerable press people who approached me, on the grounds that the main charge was that I had carried out the duties entrusted to me by the League, and that the question was not at all a personal one.

Both Eden and Beck told me <sup>that their</sup> Ambassadors had been seen by Baron von Neurath who had assured them that the Danzig incident would not be developed and would pass quietly. Then came the news that Greiser was coming to Geneva. He had long conversations in Berlin and arrived on July 4th in Geneva. The Poles and the British were still more or less satisfied that a short formal discussion would finish the matter at the Council that evening. To both of them I expressed some anxiety as to what instructions Greiser had got in Berlin. Beck had a talk with Greiser before the meeting, but nobody expected the violent tirade which Greiser delivered at the Council table. A certain amount of personal abuse of myself was mingled with insulting remarks about the League. He certainly created a sensation both by the matter and the manner of his speech, as can be seen from the press cuttings. The Council

adjourned immediately after his speech, with only two brief interventions by Beck and the President of the Council, Eden.

I was not particularly pleased or satisfied with the short formal statement Beck made. I said so to Lubienski, and indicated that I had pulled together some previous situations in Danzig but this did not look to be possible on this occasion, and it did seem to me that my mission in Danzig had ended. Lubienski, somewhat alarmed, went immediately to Beck. He came back to tell me that Mr. Beck would speak again when the Council re-assembled.

Before the Council met again Lubienski came to me and I once more, in the presence of Walters and Stevenson, expressed the view that the Danzig situation had got beyond the possibility of action by a High Commissioner with the limited powers at present given to him. My object in both these matters was quite deliberately to "put it up" to Poland. Lubienski had another talk with Beck and came to me to point out that any move on my part would cripple any League action and play completely into the hands of the people in Berlin who had initiated the trouble, and he begged me as a very special favour not to consider any action without further conversations with him. I of course agreed, and Lubienski said they would not forget this and seemed very much relieved.

When the Council met again Greiser's speech was deplored and a vote of confidence unanimously passed. Greiser then wound up the discussion with a bombshell even more effective than the first one, declaring that he expected the Council to proceed within the next few months to a revision of the Statute, and that he would no more be called to Geneva to discuss the affairs of the sovereign State of Danzig. He ended by declaring that he spoke in the name of the entire German nation. He certainly got a greater sensational effect than previously. The Council, after pointing out that the only matter on the Agenda was the warship incident, hurriedly broke up.

The story of Greiser's salute to the Council and how he "cocked a snook" at the press and public gallery made him world famous within 24 hours. The Council met in secret immediately afterwards and I was invited to be present. I do not think I have been present at a more impressed meeting of the Council - impressed with the gravity and danger of the situation. Beck shared this fully. He suggested to the Council that I might defer my return to Danzig for a short time in order to give him an opportunity to warn the Danzig Senate that any incident affecting the High Commissioner would lead to intervention by Poland. A short discussion on this followed and I said that it had not occurred to me to think of any other course but an immediate return to Danzig, and agreed with the Secretary General that any delay might be regarded as equivalent to abandonment of the post by the League. I pointed out that in the normal course of events I would not leave for 24 or 48 hours, as I usually had some business with the Secretariat. I proposed to leave, therefore, on Monday night, and Mr. Beck agreed that this would be sufficient time. He also made two statements, formal assurances that Poland would, if and when necessary, come to the support of the High Commissioner. Towards the end of the meeting I directed the Council's attention to the fact that while the Council was not in Session



very serious responsibilities would rest upon me in connection with the possibility of disturbances in the Free City and said that in this connection I would propose to have a consultation with the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs.

I had had an unpleasant experience the previous morning, when I sat for three and a half hours at the telephone, trying to get through to Danzig. Wild rumours were circulating and I was anxious about the family. The obstruction was deliberately put in my way at the Danzig Central, and it was not till I asked the Poles to communicate with the Senate through their Minister here demanding an immediate communication, that I finally got through, and found that things were quite quiet. As I left the secret Council meeting on Saturday night at about 10 o'clock I was surrounded by about 20 journalists, who informed me with all the callousness of their tribe that it had been announced on the radio that my house in Danzig was in flames and my family in flight. Two who were of the decenter type said that as this had been announced on Radio Luxembourg it should be discounted, as that station was notoriously inaccurate. An hour later I had got Elsie out of bed to confirm that everything was still peaceful.

The following Sunday morning I saw Beck again. He had had a talk with Greiser, who, he said, had been somewhat deflated, and whom he had warned that if Polish interests or the High Commissioner were interfered with there would be intervention by Poland. Greiser had fully disclaimed either intention, but he appears to have sent prompt instructions for a police guard to surround my house.

I have had many conversations with Beck, but never have I seen him so affected, indeed overcome. Twice in the course of his conversation with me he said: "Hier était un jour dur pour moi!" I reminded him that I was empowered to call on Polish troops in certain circumstances and he said that Poland would fulfil her obligations. Preparations were made and that very morning his ships were under steam, although they had not left Gdynia. He recalled his promptness two or three years ago in a minor affair of the Westerplatte. I said that I would mention this matter also to his representative in Danzig when I arrived. He agreed that there were dangers and that it would be absurd to put one's head in the sand, and expressed his satisfaction that in this crisis it was I and not my predecessor who was at the post. I talked to him for a time about his position and that of Poland. He said that their position was of course extremely difficult and notably now when the League was so weak. It was either he or Lubinski who also made the remark to me that Poland had to consider whether or not she would be left alone to face Germany. I said to him that I was often asked by quite responsible diplomats what was Mr. Beck's policy. There seemed to be much uncertainty and that perhaps added to the general difficulties of the situation. He replied: "Well, after my two declarations at the secret meeting of the Council last night, I think no one there would be under the impression that there was anything else in the Polish-German relationship than what appeared on the surface. There is no secret understanding, and relations between us have merely been normalised."

As for his personal position, neither he nor his colleagues made anything out of politics. They were serving their country, and he added with some passion that he would cooperate with the devil to serve his country. He himself was an active colonel and if war came he would soon be in uniform.

At one point in the conversation I said that discussions would probably go pretty deep between him and Berlin, and asked him had he any other cards to play. He answered that of course he had the final card of Russia.

This will indicate, I think, something of the impression created by Greiser's dictated actions. I met no one who for a moment imagined that the Greiser declarations were not made on instructions from the highest quarters in Berlin, and indeed that was evident from the subsequent German press. Stevenson, of the British delegation, wanted to see me and when I left Beck I went on to him. He told me that before Eden left for London the previous night he left orders to see that there was a clear understanding between the High Commissioner and Beck as to the machinery for putting into force the cooperation required in the case of disturbance in Danzig which could not be controlled by the local Government. I repeated to Stevenson some of the points of my conversation with Beck, but we decided to ask Lubinski to join us. Lubinski was informed of the question put to me and was asked if the machinery was complete. He repeated that Polish preparations were complete and that they were ready if necessary. As for the machinery for putting it into force, presumably a word given to Mr. Papée would be sufficient. Stevenson asked me to make this point certain when I got to Danzig, if necessary in writing.

On the following morning, July 6th, I had a long talk with Avenol in his house on the hill. I informed him pretty fully. I should say that in my first conversation with him before the Greiser bombshell he had repeated again his view that the League's position was becoming impossible in Danzig; that our main mission here was to act as a buffer between Danzig and Poland or even Germany and Poland; that the accords between these parties and the elimination of the League left us to carry out an actual mission regarding the Constitution; that this in the present circumstances tended to give the League an anti-National Socialist flavour which was regarded in Germany as an anti-German flavour. In the meantime Poland sat back and declared her interest was only one-fourteenth in such matters.

On the previous night, after the meeting, he had said to me in passing, "Well, Mr. Beck can't be feeling so self-glorious now."

On this Sunday morning we again recalled Poland's attitude to the League in its recent difficulties in Danzig: how on each occasion when I had discussed it there had been a formal approval of ~~General~~ action, accompanied as well by a pat on the back for the National Socialist Government. I pointed out the difficulties with which Poland was faced between her two big neighbours. Avenol expressed the view that Poland had given very important help to Germany as a result of her agreements and as against the development of the League idea.

Secondary

X I told him my policy when I returned would be to go slow and to give every opportunity to the Powers interested to deal with the situation. I could not foresee the future or what part Polish-German friendship, however superficial it had been, would play in delaying developments in the East. It had hitherto dominated the situation but I was convinced the first move in policy regarding Danzig had been made. The hand had been stretched out if it had not been closed. The claim had been staked. ~~It~~ was inclined to think that if Poland were really determined to defend the Statute and if this were known in Berlin the development of the situation might be restricted to diplomatic discussions. I could not believe that Germany would risk war at the present time.

X The Danzig affair flared in the newspapers round the world. The "News Chronicle" in an article complained that "the actions of an ignorant clown had obscured the poignant tragedy of the week: the disappearance of Abyssinia as a State."

X I was interested to note the different reactions to my own intervention at the public Council table. I spoke without notes and was mainly concerned to say nothing. I aimed, and it was not difficult, to provide a contrast with Greiser. The English press on the whole was good enough to say I produced an effect of dignity, but some organs in the French press merely remarked that I had replied ineffectively or "avec timidité". On the whole I was not dissatisfied. The play was in other hands.



Danzig, July 8th 1936.

After the incident of the German cruiser I expressed to Mr. Papée, the Polish Minister in Danzig, the view that the incident was bound to be followed up and that it was the beginning of a big development with regard to the whole position in Danzig. It was with the conviction that I began to frame my Report to the Council and although that Report is very far from complete I took every precaution that it should be completely objective and devoid of any feeling or word which might render more difficult any efforts to have the situation again controlled through diplomatic means if that were possible.

My conviction was of course increased when the German Propagandist Ministry lost its campaign with Herr Forster's article demanding a revision of the League's relations with the Free City. In normal cases it would have been my duty to have placed so important and significant an incident on the Agenda of the Council for discussion, but as I felt that developments would rapidly follow I believed it was right and desirable that the Council unanimously should take the step necessary to have it discussed. I arrived in Geneva late on Wednesday night (July 1st) and although it was intimated shortly afterwards by the German Foreign Minister through diplomatic channels that Danzig was not to be brought into the foreground of European affairs at this stage, in my discussions with Colonel Beck I put forward the entirely personal view that the mandate which the Council proposed to give him would, in fact, enable him to discuss the problem as between Germany and Poland on a wider basis. He knew, as did everyone connected with the immediate prospects in Danzig, and German official quarters made no secret of it, that the future of Danzig would be a matter to be discussed at some time with Poland. It did seem to me that a little more stability in the situation might even now be reached and I had in mind that although I spoke quite personally, the relations of the League with Danzig had somewhat changed in character and that this was connected with the Polish-German rapprochement and consequent Polish-Danzig rapprochement.

In the interval between the first part of the Council meeting on Saturday, July 4th, and the second part which was held an hour or two later, I remarked to Count Lubinski, Chef de Cabinet of Colonel Beck, that after President Greiser's speech I was afraid the situation in Danzig would become impossible for the League and that although I had helped to pull together difficult situations during the past year or two I was afraid that this declaration of President Greiser left no elasticity and no room for any such attempt. He most clearly spoke on orders from Berlin and the first stage towards raising the entire Danzig question had been reached. I was afraid that in the circumstances my own mission in Danzig was ended and that I would not be able to be of much further use to the League of Nations. Count Lubinski said clearly the matter was very serious, but hoped that I had no idea of resigning. I said that would partly depend upon the Polish attitude and that in the short statement made by Mr. Beck prior to the adjournment I saw very little that was helpful. He went and discussed the matter with Colonel Beck and returned to me again, when in the presence of Mr. Stevenson and Mr. Walters I made a somewhat similar remark, adding that it seemed to me that it was now a question of whether the League could continue to exercise any function in Danzig unless there was some means of dealing with the challenge thrown down by the Senate. Count Lubinski, after a further talk with Colonel Beck, again approached me and said that in Colonel Beck's view any move on my part would be merely to play the game which was wanted by Berlin and the Senate. They (the Poles) were very much alarmed at the situation and were more than delighted that it was I who was holding the position in Danzig. They thought that any suggestion that I should not remain would be fatal. At his urgent request I agreed that I would not consider any step of the kind without further consultations and certainly not until I knew what position the Council would take up both with regard to the personal element and to the problem raised in a critical way by the Danzig declarations.

I may recall that even during the preceding days when it was understood that the cruiser incident would pass through the Council into the hands of the Polish Government without difficulty, I had twice informed the Poles through Count Lubinski and Mr. Beck that I was not in any way taking the German attitude to be a personal one. I was offered a great deal of personal abuse, but as the main charge was that I had carried out the Council's orders I would not allow myself to be used as a sacrifice to save anybody's face. On the two occasions when this was suggested the very idea was treated as an impossible one.



Personal and  
Confidential

Danzig, July 11th 1936.

Dear Avenol,

I enclose herewith a note of part of my conversation with Colonel Beck, the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs, on Sunday, 5th instant, at Geneva. I have confined it more or less to the precise point, but from the rest of the conversation, of which I also have a note, there was no doubt as to the anxiety with which Colonel Beck viewed the situation and the significance he attached to the declarations at the secret meeting of the Council the previous evening.

I saw Mr. Papée, the Polish Minister, on Thursday, the 9th instant. I recalled to him the declarations made by Mr. Beck and his statements to me personally and said that the only thing which remained in this connection was to make arrangements as to communications with him in case the final emergency should arise. I handed him a note, of which I enclose a copy. Having read it Mr. Papée said that in such circumstances he would of course at once communicate with his Government and he had no doubt that they would fully comply with all their obligations. As the only question which remained to be settled here was the clear understanding as to the method of communication, I withdrew my note some hours later on the understanding that arrangements were complete and that the note was therefore unnecessary. The copy was retained by Mr. Papée in order to be destroyed. The fact, however, that it was on paper remains a record of the nature of the conversation.

Mr. Papée as well as Colonel Beck, appreciated that the responsibility conferred on me by the Council, and to which I drew the Council's attention a week ago, was regarded by me as of the utmost gravity, and to be undertaken in the end if necessary only with a very heavy heart.

Mr. Papée agreed with my view that the situation would probably develop by stages: the first stage was the defiance of the League with regard to the Constitution and a demand for a revision of the Statute in that respect. This was immediately followed by a number of declarations by President



Greiser that he would not in future answer any summons to  
X Geneva in regard to "internal matters", and that the Govern-  
ment would completely ignore the High Commissioner in any  
X case of intervention regarding the Constitution.

The Senate met on Tuesday evening 7th instant).

X All three Opposition newspapers have now been suppressed for  
long periods in connection with their reports and comments  
on the Geneva discussions. (The documents showing the precise  
grounds in all these cases are not yet available.) You will  
recall that newspapers in such circumstances have the right  
to appeal to the Press Court, which must give a decision  
within a limited period. From a good source I am told that  
reference was made at the Senate meeting to the attitude of  
the Courts in such cases as might appear before them, and  
the requirement that the Courts would bear in mind the  
"Weltanschauung" of the Party.

In my conversation with Mr. Papée on the 9th instant  
he told me that he had gone by aeroplane to Warsaw the  
previous day and returned within a few hours, having heard  
that various general measures were to be taken against the  
Opposition, including the suppression of Parties. He re-  
ceived instructions and had seen President Greiser that  
morning (9th instant) and had again emphasised to him that  
Poland would take a grave view of any general measures in  
disaccord with the Constitution. President Greiser gave  
him assurances that no general measures were contemplated,  
that the Government would remain within the Law and its  
actions would be subject to the Constitution. In this  
connection I may recall that following President Greiser's  
declarations of November 27th last (see my Annual Report  
for 1935) Mr. Papée had made an intervention in which he  
had pointed out to the Senate on instructions from his  
Government that the High Commissioner and all his functions,  
including those relating to the Constitution, were regarded  
by Poland as an essential part of the Statute of the Free  
City. ( I think you will find a Diary Note sent by me referring  
to this and dated December 17th 1935.)

Mr. Papée expressed the view that President Greiser  
had exceeded his instructions in Geneva. His first speech  
was undoubtedly prepared for him but the second was, he  
thought, undertaken without the pre-knowledge of Berlin.  
I think myself this is possible, just as his disdainful  
gesture to the foreign press was unforeseen. I estimated  
myself that President Greiser was told why he was making the  
first speech, i.e. that it was the first stage towards the

revision of the Statute, and that Germany was behind him. Mr. Greiser would appear at least to have disclosed the basis of his instructions publicly. The fact remains, of course, that the words were said.

I made an enquiry of Mr. Papée as to the conversation Mr. Lipsky had in Berlin, and he told me that it concerned measures specifically confided to Poland by the Council regarding the warship incident, which <sup>had been</sup> ~~was~~ the opening move in this affair.

*Blomberg  
5/10/38*

The Poles seem to be anxious and are not perhaps uninfluenced by their view that the League of Nations at the present time is weak. A distinguished and competent observer of Poland informs me that he has never seen such strong consistent pressure on the Polish Government by the press as in the present circumstances, and that while there is a tendency in official quarters to minimize the seriousness of the situation, behind that he senses a very grave anxiety. There is a feeling in some quarters here that there may be a certain relaxation <sup>in the</sup> after the Olympic Games. Perhaps that will be the case. In the meantime, however, it is clear that the Senate is determined and has already begun to make Danzig National Socialist.

*2*

Only one man of the Opposition has called on me since my return and he volunteered the opinion that the Opposition would stand fast, that they still had an actual majority and that the future depended largely upon Poland. I of course expressed no opinions of any kind. Since my return I have remained quiescent and observant. The problem has moved to a big international plane and I shall take no initiative of any kind which might affect any efforts being made in other quarters. The preventive work which I have been doing for two and a half years is now rendered impossible by the attitude of the Senate. ~~and~~ <sup>the</sup> If and when it should be necessary, ~~in view of~~ <sup>the</sup> decisions and declarations of the Senate regarding "League interference" ~~it~~ should be sufficient to enable the situation to be considered without any specific case relating to the non-observance of the Constitution, with regard to the liberty of the press, etc.

I am resisting many proposals ~~for~~ interviews with the press and to broadcast, and I am allowing the Government's very provocative attitude to pass in silence in so far as I am concerned.



I am waiting with a deep sense of the big issues involved.

For your personal information.

Yours sincerely,

(s) *hester*

P.S. An intelligent Polish journalist suggests to me that it might still be possible to have an agreement between Germany and Poland with regard to the situation, and that this agreement would eliminate or change the nature of the League's guarantee of the Constitution and the duties of the High Commissioner in this respect.

Although I mention this I have myself no knowledge of the attitude of the Polish Government beyond what I have reported, together with their semi-official declaration a few days ago.

Monsieur J.A. Avenol,  
League of Nations,  
Geneva

Personal

Danzig, July 14th 1936.

Secret

Dear Avenol,

Owing to the limitations in my methods of communication with you the letter which accompanies this one will not reach you until a fortnight after it was written.

Public order continues to be well maintained in Danzig. So far there have been no public manifestations. The order forbidding public meetings and demonstrations still remains in force. I expect however, that it will be raised within a short time in order to permit the National Socialist demonstrations to take place.

7. One small weekly paper of the Opposition continues to appear, having proclaimed that it will not in future express political views of any kind. I count upon the administration being tightened up in every possible direction in order to establish complete National Socialist domination, but for the present I do not expect any action by way of law or decree. The flood of journalists who invaded the town expecting a Putsch, or assassination, has to a great extent withdrawn.

X Half a dozen policemen have been round my house since Greiser made his speech in Geneva. There never was one before that. I do not believe I am personally in any danger from the non-National Socialist people in Danzig and the other organisations are well under control. An incident of this kind, which you will remember was discussed, could therefore in my opinion only happen under orders. The police protection may be a precaution therefore on the part of the Senate after Mr. Beck's warning but it may also be a demonstration. I am merely putting this view on record, and it does not reflect any anxiety on my own part. A detective stands at my office door and asks every person entering, including some of my staff, for their credentials. X No such "precaution" is taken at the door of my residence. I am afraid there is therefore an ulterior motive in this.

Perhaps it is a consequence that the Opposition leaders have not been near my office.



The Polish negotiations no doubt continue. I have not heard anything for a few days, but Mr. Beck has been reported to be here and if so I did not see him. He had told me he would be visiting his seaside house on the Polish side of the frontier, and would take an opportunity to have a talk with me.

X I heard on good authority yesterday that during the weekend three thousand Polish troops moved into Gdynia. This was said to have been a counter move to troops alleged to be on the Polish frontier, but I have had as yet no official information. I am quite convinced that if the next few weeks are to be comparatively tranquil, the next few months will be exceedingly anxious and difficult for all concerned, but as you know I am isolated as far as inside information is concerned, except such as I may obtain from the Poles. The developments elsewhere in Europe as reported in the newspapers do nothing to shake my conviction that the events which began with the cruiser incident will be succeeded by others tending towards the same object. The immediate object remains in my view the elimination of the League guarantee of the Constitution, the cohesion of Danzig into a National Socialist unit and then - I hope - nothing more dangerous than a hear-to-heart talk between Berlin and Warsaw as to the future of the Free City. In this direction, no doubt, the pressure will begin to be intensified after the Olympic Games. I am hoping that there will be no incident involving the use of force, but I am not making any prophecies and you can judge as well as I what the prospects and dangers are.

I continue to remain completely passive as I believe that is the best service I can render at the present time.

Mr. Greiser is reported to have been in Berlin on Friday and Saturday.

The German press campaign appears to have temporarily eased off, but the Senate still gives interviews freely to journalists.

I sent you yesterday by Air Mail an article in the National Socialist Party's organ here, the "Vorposten". It bears no marks of having been prepared by anyone I know in Danzig, and is the most reasoned case which has been so far made. I do not think, however, it will be altogether pleasing to the Poles.

In this connection the weekly paper "Volk und Staat", which is the organ of the Danzig State officials (it has reappeared this week with the Swastika!) publishes an article referring to the categorical statement of Mr. Greiser that: "the League of Nations activities need no longer necessarily extend to Danzig, which has tended more and more to become exclusively a subject to be dealt with within the framework of German-Polish

agreement. As a logical consequence of this fact the superfluousness of the League of Nations Commissioner was emphasised and a current <sup>question</sup> ~~action~~ of the highest importance from the point of view of political conditions in Eastern Europe was thus raised." The article refers to the "grave discomfort" of the Council following Greiser's speech, and says that "those around the Council table recovered from their shock sufficiently to be able with some show of dignity - this applies to Lester and to Eden - to ignore Greiser's move, which course, as we know, is always regarded by public opinion as a sign of weakness." The article further says that "a considerable cooling off of the High Commissioner's relations with official Danzig will be inevitable, but that there is no question of Lester's being 'cut'." On the other hand the general situation contains many of the conditions for an unmistakable <sup>move</sup> ~~move~~ against Opposition fault-finders. "A further reference to the possibility of a revision of the Danzig Statute brings the writer to the consideration that Poland is not only appearing on the scene as mediator but may also prefer certain definite claims on Danzig which have on several occasions been confirmed by the Danzig Government. "On the other hand the pronouncedly German character of Danzig requires a clear cultural movement in the direction of the German Fatherland which can only be guaranteed by the National Socialist movement." The article concludes with a reference to "The inevitable course of the German freedom movement which has now more decidedly than ever drawn Danzig into the sphere of influence." This article, which has just reached me and which appears in a responsible paper with official State connections, seems rather to confirm the common analysis of the immediate situation.

I am sending this note by the courtesy of the French Consul.

For your personal information.

Yours sincerely,

Monsieur J.A. Avenol,  
League of Nations,  
Geneva

P.S. I remain in Danzig for the present but have booked for a 12 days cruise in the Baltic from about August 7th.



11  
Danzig, July 17th 1936.

A French newspaper this morning has a paragraph suggesting that a Danzig settlement is well in view, and a report from Danzig says that some of the Polish counter-proposals to replace the existing system have caused uneasiness. There is a suggestion that Greiser may resign and that this would be conditional upon the High Commissioner being given a prolonged holiday.

I have no hint of this from any other quarter, but the fact that I warned Beck and later Papée against any bargain concerning myself will show that I have not omitted to consider the possibility. The attitude of people like Avenol, and perhaps even the British, who believe an opportunity might be taken to get me out of Danzig, suggests a development of this. I hardly think Beck would so misunderstand my character as to think that I would quietly submit to any indignity from him or the Council such as I have had to stand from the people who have been fighting the League. Although the Lord knows I would be very happy to be anywhere else.

I have just reread the rough notes I made at Geneva in December of last year as a basis for my conversations with Avenol and the principal members of the Council. The rereading pleased me very much. If I can have all my papers securely in the event of having to make a true and undiplomatic picture of the situation and events here I seem to have a good deal of material.

A few days ago Count Ponzone, the Italian Consul General who replaced di Lieto, rang up to make an appointment, but as I could not see him in the morning I fixed an afternoon hour for him. Unfortunately, in the stress of my other preoccupations I forgot all about him and went bathing. The character of Ponzone has been mentioned previously in these notes. His behaviour on this occasion was entirely up to form. He was met in the hall by the bull-dog and Georg, and the dog's friendly advances made him frantic. When the dog was safely removed and the Consul General learned I was not present he seemed to have become somewhat hysterical, and Georg formed the impression that Ponzone thought I was hiding in some room in the house in order to avoid him. Then my highly-strung clerk Beier was called over. I am afraid they must have made a wonderful duet. They waved their arms at each other and Beier entered into all sorts of completely irrelevant explanations, and eventually the Consul General left with the suggestion that he would call on me at dinner-time to be sure I was in. Georg confided to me that he thought the gentleman had "little birds upstairs", which I take to be the German equivalent for "bats in the belfry". This young footman was only pleasantly excited by the incident.

I wrote a note to Ponzone, expressing my regret that owing to a misunderstanding he had come at 3 o'clock on Monday when he was expected at 3 o'clock the next day, and I added a little pointed reminding him that it was the first visit during his nine months in Danzig. I knew, and it was not without my consent that Giustiniani probably kept him informed of general events, but other Consul Generals come to see me regularly.

The next day an appointment was made for 12 o'clock, but I had also an appointment with the French Ambassador in Warsaw, Monsieur Noel, at 11.30. Monsieur Noel was coming from Gdynia and was delayed en route. As midday approached I began to be alarmed that another contretemps would ensue, with disastrous results on Count Ponzone, so I postponed my interview with the Ambassador in order to receive the Consul General! Ponzone was quite mild and my point as to his failure to visit me had been well made, as he offered many explanations. He is not a man of very great substance politically but he spent a reasonable proportion of the time persuading me to interrupt Giustiniani's holiday. He also tried to prolong the interview quite obviously in order to meet the French Ambassador, but Georg, who I suspect had an ear at the keyhole in anticipation of more theatricals, interrupted him at the time the Ambassador was due, which was very sad. During his conversation he asked me about the situation here and when I told him how little I knew of what was going to happen he kept on emphasising that Italy (a permanent member of the Council) had announced a complete neutrality in the matter, with the suggestion that I might quite safely tell him everything.

Noel is one of the finest French diplomats I have met, and indeed he has that reputation in his Service. He seems to be of the northern French type and the man to create a feeling of confidence. After I had talked to him for a time he said he was meeting General Rydz-Smigli, Pilsudski's successor, the following morning and asked if he might convey to him my estimate of the situation. I said I did not object, but would be glad if he would keep in mind my feeling that it is Poland's national interests which are vitally concerned and that I would not like anything I said to affect the decisions of the Polish Government. Noel in parting said that there were seven or eight dangerous points in the European situation but that I was sitting at the most dangerous point. I told him that that was also my opinion and that I was very conscious of my responsibilities.

These two meetings took place on July 10th.

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It was the latter statement which seems to have made more impression. It was subsequently referred to by Papée during an interview I had with him a few days later. He at the same time remarked that France had done nothing.



Danzig, July 23rd 1936.

Relations with Greiser  
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VON NEUBAUER

Mr. Greiser became President of the Senate in circumstances not very auspicious for cooperation on a basis of the Constitution. He succeeded Dr. Rauschnig, who was ejected from his post following a quarrel with Mr. Forster as to his policy of maintaining the Constitution and good relations with the League.

That was in the early winter of 1934. The following year the Council was informed in my Annual Report of an intense development of the policy intended to make Danzig a National Socialist State, in spite of the Constitution. Relations between the High Commissioner and the Senate during this year were at times extremely difficult and for the first time I was compelled to draw the Council's attention to alleged breaches of the Constitution, which were subsequently established by an international legal committee and by <sup>the</sup> International Court at the Hague.

Several times this year President Greiser, speaking in public as well as to me personally, said he was more of a soldier than a diplomat, and it was clear to me that the military virtue of obedience to those who were his superiors in the National Socialist Party was not unobserved by him. Argument and persuasion had borne very small crop and at the end of November a critical stage was reached when the Senate, through its President, announced that they would not carry out certain recommendations of the Council of the League, which had been based upon the highest legal opinion. It was apparent that a new stage had been reached. If formal decisions of the Council could be flouted, the preventive policy which I had been following in Danzig could certainly lead to no further results. I realised that the source of authority in Danzig was and had been Mr. Albert Forster, the leader of the Party, and believed that the Senate had no real independence. I had more than once remarked to President Greiser that when speaking to him I did not really know if I was speaking to the Government. Mr. Forster was a German official and Reichstag Deputy. I came to the conclusion that when I reported on the declarations of the President of the Senate and the general situation in Danzig I could no longer merely hint at the position occupied by Mr. Forster, which was well-known and recognised in all political circles. I mentioned this

to the German Consul General in Danzig and said that as he knew I did not want to say anything which would add any further complications to the situation, but Mr. Forster drew his authority in turn from Germany, and Danzig's defiance of the League was due to Mr. Forster. President Greiser in his speech had himself referred to the difficult situation which now existed in view of the resurrection of Germany, and had said that this would no doubt be borne in mind at Geneva. It was not I who was raising the question, therefore, it had been raised officially by the Danzig Government.

The Consul General returned to me in a few days and said he had been authorised by his Government to state that the statements made in Danzig were not in accordance with German policy. He also urged me to see Baron von Neurath, who would himself confirm this. I pointed out that a visit by me to the German Foreign Minister might be misunderstood in many quarters, on the grounds that Germany had no legal interest in Danzig and as Germany was not now a member of the Council of the League. After further discussions, however, I eventually agreed that I would have a personal talk with Baron von Neurath. This talk took place in Berlin about the middle of December 1935. I was aware that I was taking a certain political risk in agreeing to this interview, even though it was understood that it was without prejudice on either side. I took the risk of my visit being misunderstood in some quarters in the hope that it might lead to a situation which would be agreeable to Poland and would help to smooth the problem which the League would have to face of the open defiance of the Free City's Government. Furthermore, I confined my conversation to the activities of Mr. Forster, a German national and official. I am not at liberty to disclose anything more of the conversation, but I left on the understanding that if nothing could be done to keep Mr. Forster's activities within correct and legal limits imposed by the Constitution and the Statute of the Free City, I would put the situation pretty clearly before the Council of the League. In order to prevent any misapprehension I subsequently informed the Polish Government confidentially of my visit. It had, however, unfortunately no sequel, and the following month (January, 1936) I had to report to the Council without any hope of immediate amelioration.

In view of subsequent events and the nature of the attack made upon me some months later in the semi-official and controlled press of Germany, I think it right to record this one amongst many other efforts to secure conditions in which I could carry out my mission from the League of Nations.



Danzig, July 23rd 1936.

Mr. Papée called to see me today to inform me of an interview he had with President Greiser yesterday.

Papée asked Greiser if he believed the recent decrees were compatible with the declaration of policy made to him a week before, that is, that the Senate's policy would be to remain within the Constitution, within the laws, and submissive to the Courts. President Greiser replied that he certainly believed that to be the case, and he maintained that his decrees were within the Constitution. Mr. Papée asked him if he was prepared to defend this belief, and Greiser answered "Yes". This reply, however, seems to have been rendered very vague by subsequent conversation. Papée recalled Greiser's declarations to newspapers that he would go no more to Geneva to discuss internal affairs. In reply to this Greiser was rather vague and evasive and gave Papée the impression that he did not wish at the moment to be more precise. He said that the Senate did not wish condominium with the High Commissioner (Mitregierung).

When I asked Mr. Papée again if he could be more precise as to what the intentions of Greiser were, he said that it was not possible to say more than that the position in his mind was left very vague.

Mr. Papée had already received a copy of my note to the Senate, but when he mentioned it to President Greiser, the latter gave Mr. Papée to understand that he had not yet seen it.

The interview, therefore, seems to have had no result except to elicit the fact that the Senate pretend their actions are within the Constitution, and nothing was said to lead one to believe that they would present their observations for the information of the Council or, secondly, appear before the Council should the latter wish to discuss the matter.

Danzig, July 24th 1936.

One of the difficulties created in Danzig by Mr. Forster was due to the fact that there appeared to be two German policies. One was the official policy, as conveyed to me on various occasions, that for the time being it was the German Government's wish that difficulties between Danzig and Poland, and Danzig and the League of Nations, should be avoided here; but Mr. Forster, claiming to speak in the name of the Führer, represented in his actions a different policy. I was frequently told that his claim to speak for the Führer was unfounded, but there never was any action or declaration which did in fact support this official argument. <sup>as long as</sup> While the official policy remained as officially indicated to me, Mr. Forster seemed to represent a danger for Germany and German policy as well as a danger to Danzig and even to Danzig-Polish relations, in view of the complications which might ensue <sup>because of Forster's claim</sup>.

Mr. Greiser's oath of loyalty to the Führer and to those nominated by him involved him in unquestioned obedience to the Gauleiter. It was only after the January meeting of the Council that a consolidation of <sup>German Policy</sup> activities here seemed to take place. Direct instructions were, in January, given to Greiser, and Mr. Forster's activities restricted. This situation continued more or less until some time in June, and I had no indication of any change in official policy until the demonstration made by the cruiser "Leipzig". Even a week before this my contact with Greiser and von Radowitz gave me very clearly the impression that they were unaware of any reason to reconsider the policy of cooperation with the League of Nations. So much so that on June, when I informed President Greiser of my interview with the German Consul General concerning Forster's threats, President Greiser asked me if I would write to him in the same sense as I had spoken to the German Consul General in order to give him a ground on which to make representations in certain quarters. He also asked me if I would give him a copy of the full text of another of Forster's speeches which had reached me from other quarters <sup>for the same purpose</sup>. During the following days both Mr. Forster and Mr. Greiser were in Berlin. Then came the cruiser incident, a wide-spread attack on me in the German press, my Report to Geneva and the demonstration made by President Greiser. I do not know that I was surprised very much, in spite of the contrast between Greiser's policy a fortnight previously and that outlined at the League meeting.

0127/1/43

*use*  
Danzig, July 24th 1936.

Dear Secretary General,

You will recall that some time ago the question of a special insurance for the High Commissioner in Danzig was raised, but it was decided by the Secretariat that there would be no justification in this case.

You will also recall that when I was in Geneva last the question of the insurance of the furniture and personal belongings of my wife and myself was raised. Subsequently the Treasury were good enough to undertake, if possible, to secure an immediate cover against all risks. I am now informed by Mr. Bieler that both English and Swiss Insurance Companies refuse absolutely to consider risks of riots and similar troubles in Danzig in all circumstances, and that in view of this the matter has been allowed to drop for the moment.

The monetary value is about three thousand pounds. If I were a private individual I would not take the risk which the Insurance Companies refuse, apparently at any premium, but would remove the more valuable, at any rate, of my belongings at once. To do this, however, would accentuate the critical political situation. I am sure you will agree, therefore, that that is impossible, but I presume you will also agree that I am not expected personally to take the risk of losses in this connection.

I am, dear Secretary General,

Yours sincerely,

The Secretary General,  
League of Nations,  
GENEVA.



Danzig, July 28th 1936.

On Tuesday 21st July Mr. Papée called to see me. I had told him on the previous Saturday that I would speak to him before taking any action about the new decrees. On the previous day I had sent him a note saying that unless his Government saw some advantage in delay I proposed to forward the documents to the Committee of Three for examination.

During his visit we exchanged information and he twice repeated the phrase "Chacun prend ses responsabilités".

I recalled to his mind the resolution passed by the Council in January, in which each member pledged himself to support the High Commissioner in carrying out his duties, and pointed out that Poland had been very specially indicated in this connection. In the circumstances which existed at the moment I would therefore ask what his Government could do to support me in connection with my duties here at the present time.

Mr. Papée replied that he would refer this matter to his Government.

I saw him again on Thursday 23rd instant, when he informed me of his interview with President Greiser the previous day, and again on the 27th, when he called for the purpose of keeping in contact. On neither of these occasions did he inform me of the result of his reference to Warsaw.

In our conversation on the 27th instant the Polish Minister told me that he had the previous day had a casual conversation with President Greiser and had asked him if he proposed to take advantage of the opportunity of presenting observations on the constitutionality of the decrees. The reply was evasive. [At one stage in our conversation I remarked to Papée that it seemed to me the Council might find it difficult to divide the League commitments in Danzig into two categories and accept the unilateral denunciation by the Free City of one part of the League guarantee. Mr. Papée said that of course the whole Statute constituted a unit. (This is interesting as showing that the point of view put by the Polish Government to the Free City last year is still theoretically held.)

Personal

Danzig, August 1st 1936.

My dear Avenol,

I hope that the procedure I have followed with regard to recent events has not been incorrect. I have reported on one or two events for the information of the Committee appointed by the Council. I take this to be the best way of dealing with matters. The decrees appeared to me to be of a nature which in ordinary circumstances would fully justify me myself in asking that the Council should consider them. If I have not done this it is merely in order to leave a certain amount of elasticity at your end, as here I have always been somewhat isolated, and am more so than ever at the moment.

I have refrained from making observations or any report in dealing for the present with the general situation here or with the position of the High Commissioner in Danzig as between the duties confided to him by the Council and the attitude of the Danzig Senate. I am prepared to do this, however, when the Council comes to consider the matter, or prior to that if the Committee wishes to have such material for a final report to the Council. The nature of such a report from me will naturally be determined by events and the situation here, but it seems inevitable that the Council will wish to reconsider the whole case from bottom upwards. In this event I shall have to make some quotations from my last Annual Report, and then state exactly what the present position is and probably consider without reserve the elements which created it.

Now no more than formerly can the position here be isolated from the general European situation and as I have read of events in newspapers I have understood that the Council Committee may not wish to consider the situation here as isolated phenomena. Any postponement, however valuable and useful it may be in other connections, will, I am afraid, make the Danzig situation itself more difficult to deal with and it seems that the Council may be faced at a later stage with a fait accompli, with a situation in which it will be even more difficult to retrieve the position of the League in Danzig. Spokesmen of the Senate are informing journalists that the High Commissioner will disappear from Danzig in the autumn.



Mr. Papée, the Polish Minister, called on me some days ago and told me that a reply from the German Government had been received to the Polish Note, and that apparently his Government considered it satisfactory. He had no information as to its contents, except that it included a declaration that Germany had no intention to do anything affecting the Statute of Danzig. I said that no doubt if the Polish Government were satisfied the Council and I myself would also be, but that naturally I would be interested as soon as possible to be informed of the text of the Note. Mr. Papée indicated that he expected this shortly and would no doubt be authorised to inform me. I have since received no information.

In the meantime you will recall that another German warship is due here at the end of August. I propose to make an enquiry of the Polish Representative as to what the position will be in view of the reported satisfactory settlement of the "Leipzig" incident. I shall inform you of the result, if any.

I enclose for your information an extract from my Diary reporting a conversation with the Polish Minister on July 28th, in which I recalled to him the terms of the Council Report in January as to support being given to the High Commissioner in carrying out his duties.

On Thursday I caused a telephone enquiry to be made as to whether and when the Senate proposed to answer my suggestions regarding their observation on the recent decrees, but no indication of any kind was received from them. (On the same occasion reference was made to the particular articles of the Constitution more likely to be affected by the decrees.)

On Sunday last the Polish Minister and President Greiser met and the same question was put to the President of the Senate, when, I am informed, he gave an evasive answer.

The period of transition in view of which I accepted a renewal of my office in May seems to have developed rather more quickly than was expected. I cannot see the conclusion but it seems pretty certain that changes of some kind will be unavoidable. There may be a certain degree of withdrawal on the part of the forces demanding revision and I am inclined to expect that an effort will be made to concentrate the attack ostensibly on the person of the High Commissioner, with a view to rendering impossible the operation of the League guarantee of the Constitution.

For your personal information,

Yours sincerely,

M. J.A. Avenol,  
League of Nations,  
GENEVA.



Personal

Danzig, August 1st 1936.

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For your personal information,

Yours sincerely,

M. J. A. Avenol,  
League of Nations,  
GENEVA.



Personal

Danzig, August 1st 1936.

My dear Avenol,

Shortly after my return from Geneva in July a member of the Danzig political police was stationed outside the door of my office.

This was done without my consent and without any explanation from the Danzig Government.

A detective bars the door to every visitor with a request for proof of identity and the purpose of the visit.

Three Consuls de Carrière in Danzig were prevented from entering last week until they had established their identity. Other visitors were interrogated.

An American journalist coming to see me a few days ago, having produced his passport and other documents, was asked what he was coming for. He answered that he wanted to see the High Commissioner. The policeman then enquired if the journalist had already made an appointment, and he was allowed to pass when he said that he was going in to my office to do so.

During the present week another visitor, this time a lecturer at a British University, was held up at my office door. According to his statement to me a few minutes later the detective stretched his arm across the door and asked the visitor who he was. When this had been established the detective asked him where he was going. The visitor replied that he thought this was the League of Nations Office. The man replied that that was so, and asked what he wanted there. "The reply was: "I want to see the High Commissioner and get some information about Danzig, as I lecture on international affairs." The detective then suggested that it would be better if he went to the Senate instead, but the visitor insisted that he would also like to see the League Commissioner.

As I have said, I have no information officially as to the purpose of this action by the Government, but the circumstances are sufficiently unusual in diplomatic life to put on record. I do not know if the facts as reported to me by my various visitors could support a plea that the purpose of this action is for the "protection" of the High Commissioner, but if that point of view were to be considered I should add one or two remarks, apart from drawing attention to certain public declarations by leading personages in the Free City.



You are already informed of one recent declaration by the head of the Party supporting the Government, which might well be interpreted by his supporters as direct incitement. Until this and other declarations were made it apparently was not considered necessary to establish so close a check upon my visitors, and it could be held that if any danger of an incident existed it could only come from those subject to and directly influenced by official and quasi-official declarations. On the other hand the control seems to be entirely at my office and I have been able to move about the streets of the Free City without surveillance.

In view of the nature of the police control, of the public statements which have been made, and one of the decrees of July 16th, you will be interested to know that I have received no visit from any of the Opposition political Parties in Danzig since the police control was established.

For your information.

Yours sincerely,

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I called to see the Polish Minister this morning, when we had a short discussion on the Danzig situation.

I told him that representatives of the Senate were telling journalists that the High Commissioner would have disappeared from Danzig in the autumn. Mr. Papée said that in one of his recent interviews with President Greiser he had again emphasised the Polish point of view that the High Commissioner and his duties regarding the Constitution were an essential part of the Statute of the Free City, which Poland was not prepared to allow to be changed by any unilateral action.

Mr. Papée told me that the text of the Notes exchanged between Warsaw and Berlin would shortly be transmitted to the President of the Council ( "within a few days" ).

He recalled the expression used during our last discussion that Poland felt satisfied, and volunteered the explanation that Poland was satisfied that the German Government had declared they did not have any intention to affect the Statute of the Free City. Nevertheless it was Poland's intention to continue conversations with a view to further clearing up the situation, and Ambassador Lipsky had received instructions to this effect.

I mentioned that another German warship was due on August 28th or 29th, and that I was naturally concerned as to what the position would be. If the same policy were followed by the German Government I was afraid it would make things more difficult for Poland and everybody else concerned. It was perhaps a pity there was to be another visit so quickly, but as it had been arranged I thought it would either aggravate the situation or give an opportunity for a settlement.

I am not very optimistic about that aspect of the situation, but felt it to be desirable formally to draw the attention of the Polish Government to the fact that the situation required urgent handling. Mr. Papée replied that we still had three weeks and that perhaps something would come out of the further discussions to take place in Berlin. He indicated with a good deal of reserve that if they were unsuccessful a new position might have to be taken (presumably by Poland).

With regard to the general situation in Danzig I remarked that I was afraid time was on the side of the Senate in its defiance of the League guarantee of the Constitution, and it probably would be necessary for the Council to take a definite position of some kind in September. I myself was at the moment

powerless as far as preventive work with the Senate was concerned. Mr. Papée agreed with this point of view and restated the position by saying that everything possible should be done before the Council met.

In questioning me as to the statements made to journalists by the Senate regarding the High Commissioner's position, he asked if I knew whether they were centering their opposition to me on personal grounds. I said that I had not that impression, but it might very well be so. My own view was still as formed immediately after Greiser's speech in Geneva, that their first action was intended to be the abolition of the League guarantee of the Constitution. There might have been a certain narrowing of the claims for revision, but that still stood and would stand, even if the effort was made to turn the question into one relating to me personally. I thought Mr. Papée would be interested to read the letter written to me by President Greiser on June 3rd, following my reappointment by the Council. (Attached is a copy of a translation.) This would almost appear to be documentary evidence in support of the theory that policy had been changed completely in the middle of June, and that this difference between the letters as well as Greiser's personal relations with me up to the time of his visit to Berlin about June 18th showed definitely that the personal charges (which really amounted to the allegation that I had carried out the Council's instructions) had no foundation outside general policy.



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Danzig, August 5th 1936.

Baron de la Tournelle and Count Ponzone visited me yesterday. Both had stories to the effect that an arrangement had been made or was about to be made between Poland and Germany to settle finally the Danzig question.

The Frenchman's story was that a Polish Deputy here had been told by Colonel Slowak that Poland had already agreed to give up her rights in Danzig! The Italian spoke for ten minutes without interruption from me. I would give five pounds to have a gramophone record of his mellifluous French. I felt an impulse to ask him if he had ever thought of a literary career; I could not help picturing him on the stage in a clever, if light, comedy. He said that he smelt something in the air; he had no evidence but he believed something was certainly being arranged of a very important character. The only fact he had in addition to those already told me by de la Tournelle was that the Polish Commissariat was working feverishly. He had not been able to see Mr. Papée and was told day after day he was too much occupied with telephone calls and interviews, etc. I reflected that there might be another explanation.

Ponzone has his human side too, and one gets to like him more for it, in spite of his exaggerated touchiness. At the end of our conversation he remarked that he had a personal interest; if Danzig went back to the Reich suddenly for his career would be broken. He explained that he had to serve two years in a first-class Consulate-General before he got his Legation. There were only five posts of this kind independent of Legations and Ambassadors, and if Danzig went back to Germany he would have to report to the Ambassador in Berlin. One of the other posts was Dublin. I agreed with him that the climate there was very damp!

I hear that my friend De Lieto has at last accepted the Legation at Quito which he had refused on leaving Danzig.

I have expressed the view in the right quarters that what appears to be the policy of postponing action regarding Danzig may be useful as far as the general European situation is concerned, but will most likely render the Danzig problem still more difficult to settle later on. The Committee of Three has not met although they have had my preliminary Report for about two weeks. The idea seems to me to be not to introduce Danzig in an aggravating way while the impending new Locarno conference is at stake. I may be wrong. Italy and Germany have now accepted invitations and the conference will probably meet about the middle of October. I am for the time being holding up the preparation of the more general Report on the situation here which will be needed. In a conversation with Mrl Papée on the 3rd instant he seemed to agree with me that the Danzig situation would represent a fait accompli unless some factor could be introduced in the meantime. I indicated that I thought this could only be done in Danzig and perhaps only by Poland.

Danzig, August 6th 1936.

The naiveté of Greiser was again illustrated in an incident told me last night by the American Consul.

X X  
The European representative of the Columbia Broadcasting Company had asked me to broadcast to the United States. I had refused, but he came here and eventually saw Greiser, who promptly agreed. They had some general conversation and in reply to a question Greiser said: "But you know the principle of the National Socialist movement - obedience from below and orders from above. I am not the head of the Party in Danzig and I have to take my orders." - An extraordinary declaration from the head of the Government and head of a State, but illuminating for the American.

At one point in the conversation Greiser said that they would be prepared to have another High Commissioner here: a German. Then he added as an afterthought: "Or an American". The American of course would not interfere with internal affairs.

The American, Kalterbourne, also wanted to see Forster (I had myself suggested this to him) and called at Forster's office half an hour after his interview with Greiser. He found Greiser and Huth in the waiting-room, awaiting the pleasure of the Gauleiter, but was told that the Gauleiter was far too busy to see him.

Greiser was to answer a series of questions. These were prepared and the broadcast was to take place some four days later, on Saturday night. Gallman had expressed his surprise at the prompt acceptance by Greiser without consultation with others. His doubts were justified. The questions were prepared, apparently with some considerable skill and knowledge. On the Friday night Kalterbourne got a telephone message from Boettcher saying he was sorry "owing to technical difficulties" the President could not broadcast. Kalterbourne, who speaks to millions of Americans every week, was enraged at this treatment, saying that everything had been fixed up and announced in America, that he knew what the technical reasons were and he would fly to London at once and make the broadcast himself. I should like to have heard his story.



I have now a little more information about the Notes exchanged between Warsaw and Berlin, and believe that by inference at any rate the displeasure of the Führer at the present High Commissioner may be indicated. I do not think the Council can afford to let me be made a scape-goat and I should myself have something to say. The problem is not made easier by the prospect of another German warship at the end of this month visiting Danzig, and I have raised this matter also with Papée.

On the same occasion I gave him a copy of a letter sent to me by Greiser on June 3rd, congratulating me on my reappointment, referring to my selfless mediation, etc. An illuminating contrast to his speech a fortnight later. Papée expressed his surprise that I had not produced this at the Council meeting. I recalled to him my conversation with Lubinski and said that my difficulty had been to refrain from saying things on that occasion. He remarked that perhaps the steadiness of this policy had been the most advantageous. I then said that of course I would have to make a report shortly, in which this restraint would play little part.

*Both have made representations in Warsaw as to the position of the H.C. I have pointed out (as I have often done myself) that failure of the Council to ensure the guarantee of the Constitution would also involve the other guarantees of the League in Danzig.*

August 7th 1936.

I had a conversation with Mr. Papée today before leaving for my ten days holiday. I drew his attention to a decision of the Press Court in the case of one of the recent suppressions. In this judgment the Court said that one sentence alone in the newspaper would have justified suppression for several months. This sentence (I quote from memory) was to the effect that the League of Nations had been during the past fifteen years, and was today, one of the best guarantees for Germanism in Danzig. I said to him that a decision of this kind was taken by me as a symptom of the determination of the Government to break the guarantee of the Constitution.

Papée remarked à propos of the Notes exchanged between Warsaw and Berlin, of which he was not yet able to let me have copies, but which had been sent to the President of the Council, that any German attempt to make the incident during the reception for the "Admiral Scheer" officers a year ago the foundation for their refusal to call on the High Commissioner when the "Leipzig" visited Danzig was altogether too thin. He gave me the impression that his Government fully appreciated that any attempt to make the "Leipzig" incident have a purely personal bearing was merely a subterfuge. He referred again to the fact that the conversations between Berlin and Warsaw were not yet finished, and I remarked that I was not optimistic as to the outcome.

Mr. Papée again emphasised that Poland regarded her interests in Danzig as vital, and he added quite clearly the presence of the League in Danzig was also vital. Poland was and would be prepared to fulfil all her obligations and he even went so far as to say that if a mandate from the Council was not given Poland might in certain circumstances be forced herself to take the initiative.

I reported to him some of the stories circulating in Danzig as to a complete Polish-German accord on the future of the Free City. He described these reports as fantastic. He told me that there was much uncertainty as to what degree of interest either the League or its two principal members, France and Britain, could or would show for Poland in support of the maintenance of the status quo. He directed my attention to the reaction which had been seen in the Danzig press to the decision to renew Polish representation in Tschequo-Slovakia, and indicated that the <sup>alliance</sup> arrangements with France would be shown in the near future to be reality. This was in response to my mentioning the various rumours, and what appeared to be the continued uncertainty in many quarters as to Polish policy. I said that

no doubt everyone would welcome a really sound arrangement between Poland and Germany which would ease the European situation of one of its danger points, and that naturally my only concern and interest was that if changes were to take place with regard to Danzig they should follow a legal form and that the general interests of the League in pursuit of the pacific settlement of all disputes would be ensured.

At the same time I recalled that immediately after the last Geneva meeting, when there was much nervousness and uncertainty as to whether Greiser's declarations would be followed by a coup de force, I had believed that two elements would make it much less likely. One was Polish determination to act and Germany's full knowledge of that fact, thus leading at any rate to a method of discussion rather than force. Similarly I now felt that a clarification of Poland's position might help the more moderate elements and perhaps more experienced elements in the German Government, as against the policy of the extremists which might very well endanger European peace.

On the whole the conversation, which is only noted above in a very sketchy fashion, was of a nature to clarify the Polish position, but it disclosed the fundamental elements of European concern and even danger.

*Must be revised*



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Danzig, 12th September, 1936.

Pablo de Azcarate, Deputy Secretary-General of the League, has been appointed Spanish Ambassador at London, in circumstances which reflect very high credit on his personal courage and convictions. It seems doubtful what the outcome of the dreadful Spanish civil war will be, and he has given up a post of great honour in the international world at a time when few Spanish diplomats have remained at their posts.

I first met him intimately in connection with Minority work while I was Rapporteur for Minorities for the Council and he was Director of the Section, and formed a high opinion of his honesty and independence which were so important, especially in that post and in those days. My next contact was not personal but in connection with his appointment as Deputy Secretary-General. I fought this appointment through three or four secret meetings of the Council on the grounds that the post had been intended for the representative of a State which was not semi-permanent on the Council. It is to the credit of Azcarate that all this difficulty never affected our personal relations.



Danzig, 12th September 1936.

I have not been writing diary notes for the last two months, mainly because I felt it was more dangerous than usual to have even a secret record of some things either in my house or at the office. There was not only the ordinary fear of spying work from within, for some time I did not know whether or not to expect an occupation of my Residence, etc.

The secret Council meeting held after Greiser's outburst on 4th July showed very serious fears not only as to the future but even as to my personal safety and I returned to Danzig not knowing what to expect, but feeling that it was important above all to give no sign of any doubt or question. It may have been partly the representations made at Berlin by the British, French and Polish Ambassadors or the stiff attitude which Poland for a time took up and their assurances of immediate military intervention in circumstances affecting either my person or the Statute, or a belated control by the Wilhelmstrasse in checking the Danzig policy as expressed by Greiser. The fear of a coup de force gradually passed away, at any rate for the time being.

Newspaper cuttings will recall some of the moments of tension and some of the outrageous declarations and the gradual limitation of the objective to the breaking of the guarantee of the League of Nations with regard to the Constitution. Steps were taken to reassure Poland both by Germany and Danzig that her rights would be fully respected.

X  
I have had one or two interesting and notable interviews with Papée, but have not seen Greiser nor have I met Colonel Beck since 5th July. Under direct suggestion from the Council members I immediately on my return from Geneva fixed the precise machinery under which if it became necessary I would call for Polish troops. In this also I had the idea that the knowledge that I was ready to act and that Poland was ready to act would have a deterrent effect and help towards maintaining the peace for the present at any rate. I have somewhere a record of my last conversation with Colonel Beck on the morning of 5th July, perhaps the most dramatic in my experience.

7-  
Things developed until the middle of August when, while the Olympic Games were going on, there was no anticipation of any immediate danger and I was able to take ten days leave to tour the Scandinavian capitals. Prior to departing I had another conversation with Papée in which he again indicated, and more clearly than on other occasions, the determination of Poland to maintain her position in Danzig and if necessary to reorientate her policy in order to do so. Shortly afterwards took place the visit of the French Chief of Staff to Warsaw and the return visit of General Rydz-Śmigły, the virtual dictator of Poland and successor to the old Marshall, to France, and the renewal and strengthening of the Franco-Polish alliance, which some responsible newspapers directly connected with Germany's Danzig policy, entre autre.

18-  
X  
The Senate has given every indication of carrying out the Berlin policy of boycotting the High Commissioner and the League of Nations so far as so-called internal affairs are concerned. Letters from me on the Constitution have not been answered and decrees have been issued which I am certain are against the Constitution. The Council will next week begin a Session in which it will be faced with

another fait accompli: the destruction of the guarantee of the Constitution; and I do not see what the outcome can be. The Germans have tried to force my resignation by means of the famous "nerve test", and thus simplify the fait accompli policy. I naturally have no longing to remain here, but am equally determined that if I leave Danzig in these circumstances it will be made clear in public that it is not because of any failure on my own part to carry out Council instructions with discretion and tact but simply due to the change of policy in Germany and the weakness of the League.

The Poles have received a reply on the cruiser "Leipzig" incident which is not satisfactory, but which certainly has shown a desire to withdraw somewhat on the first demands voiced through Greiser and an effort is made to limit the difficulty to a so-called personal issue on account of the scene created by Greiser last year when the ship "Admiral Scheer" was here. This pretext is too thin even for the Poles and they have been endeavouring, but so far without success, to get any further move in the German position. Another German ship was due to arrive in Danzig at the end of August, and I am inclined to think that it was due to Polish representation that this visit was cancelled. It would have meant a repetition of the slight to the League, and Poland would have been put into an impossible position if her representative had accepted the German courtesies in such circumstances.

My experiences in Danzig have certainly shown me some novelties in modern diplomatic life and this summer the conduct of the German Government in its Propaganda Ministry and otherwise has been amazingly unscrupulous. One does not expect from any Government behaviour such as one expects from a gentleman, but the dirtiness of German policy in the circumstances has, I know, been a shock to many decent Germans, and I am sure not least to many of their old diplomats who know me personally. The unscrupulousness of people like Greiser and Böttcher is of a different character, one expects at any rate less from people of this kind: Greiser because he is a simple man without any principles except those of obedience to his leaders, Böttcher partly because he is most unnaturally stupid. It has been a tragedy for Greiser that he has not had a man of some intelligence to give him advice, not as to policy, which he does not himself make, but as to methods of obtaining the same aims. Böttcher's remarks to foreigners here almost invariably reach me. I recall that about a year ago, when personal relations were supposed to be excellent and to an English journalist he compared the German-Polish national relationship with the English-Irish on the basis of the two inferior races, and the English journalist, who was quite friendly to Ireland, reported it to me, greatly to my amusement. He has now advanced to a somewhat more personal line of insult and the American Consul's story to me the other day brightened a whole morning. An American talking to Böttcher asked him some question about the High Commissioner, and he replied by saying the High Commissioner was a little man with a long nose! I suppose this is on a par with his spiritual guide the "Stürmer", which some weeks ago published photographs of Greiser and myself, together, my own photograph having been touched up a little, and this distinguished newspaper, which has for some time been under the direct control of the German Ministry for Propaganda, compared our personal appearances, naturally to my disadvantage.



High Commissioners, if there are any in future, will have to be chosen on the basis of a Hollywood film-star appearance! These, however, have really only been the lighter touches in a very anxious time.

I have just been told that Bethke, head of the police, who is Greiser's best friend here, talking to a man whom he thought was a Nazi - but who wasn't - explained that the policy Greiser had followed was Berlin policy and not Greiser's own. His speech, I should say, was written by Forster and had the approval of Goebbels, Hitler, and perhaps Goering, but I am not so sure of the last. Wilhelmstrasse say they did not know anything about it until after it was made. The Wilhelmstrasse people are in a deplorable position if this is so. Von Neurath's assurances to the British and Polish Ambassadors on Thursday that there would be not the slightest hitch in allowing the "Leipzig" incident to pass over, and the sequel 48 hours later were a sad commentary on their position. Greiser, who became world famous in a night, did not serve Germany. Cartoonists all over the world represented him as a typical Nazi diplomat and in England it is apparently now customary to say "A Greaser to you!" when they wish to indicate that they are prepared to cock a snook. It is sad for the decent Germans, not only in Danzig but also in Germany.

The Committee of Three appointed by the Council to follow Danzig affairs has shown every sign of being anxious to avoid coming to conclusions with the Danzig problem. They have not yet met and newspapers have explained that it was the absence of a report from me which was the reason. They had material to come to conclusions in the documents I sent. I have now sent a little more general survey but have done everything humanly possible to make it objective and to avoid myself drawing a clear conclusion. I am quite prepared at any time to do this but am anxious in every way possible to lessen the burden of the Council. The dreadful Spanish tragedy has added to the chaotic condition of European affairs and has been for the past six weeks perhaps the cause of most anxiety.

I went to Geneva for a couple of days last week and showed my draft report to Avenol and Walters. Walters' remark was that it was an answerable document. Avenol's only suggestion was that instead of myself putting the question on the Agenda I should again leave that to the Committee and the Council. I had some doubts on this point myself and was quite prepared to accept that suggestion.



Danzig, 16th October 1936.

When I went to Geneva first in September for a day to see Avenol he mentioned to me incidentally that he hoped shortly to be in a position to make an interesting proposal. He could not say more at the moment.

Two days after my return to Danzig I saw an announcement that Azcarate had resigned from the post of Deputy-Secretary-General on being appointed Spanish Ambassador in London. There were also one or two directorships vacant in the Secretariat, and going down to Geneva again for the Council and Assembly I did not of course mention the matter in any way and proceeded with my discussions with the Rapporteur's delegation. I saw Avenol and had a general talk with him on the situation in Danzig and the prospects but it was not until some days later as we were walking together towards the new Council room for a discussion on the "Leipzig" incident that he again spoke of it. He drew me aside in the corridor and asked me what I would say about the proposal to be the new Deputy-Secretary-General. I said that I would feel very flattered at such a proposal but that I would like to think the matter over. I had never had any thoughts of joining the Secretariat. At the same time I did express my appreciation of what was a very big compliment. He said he was sure the appointment would be a most popular one generally in the League of Nations but that there might be one or two difficult points ~~we~~ would have to surmount.

During the next week I heard rumours of many efforts being set on foot to secure the appointment for various nationals; every Government which thought it had some hope was of course exceedingly anxious to secure the appointment. There were three or four candidates in the Secretariat itself: Reichmann, Pelt, (the Dutch Director of the Information Section) Ekman, (The Swedish Director of the Social Section) and ~~aghrades~~ <sup>Greek</sup> Director of the Disarmament Section who had been later doing personnel work. The Polish Government were not apparently backing Reichmann but were strongly pressing for another candidate and claiming succession on the basis of being the next semi-permanent member of the Council. (It was on this principle that I had held up Azcarate's nomination for three months while I was sitting on the Council.)

The secret was pretty well kept until the first meeting of the Committee of Three dealing with Danzig. I was not present but the situation had been examined on the basis of my reports and a ~~advance~~ <sup>decision</sup> made to the first general conclusion that the League could not divide its guarantees in Danzig; if one could not be maintained neither could any other. At this stage Avenol interrupted and said he wished to talk with the three Foreign Ministers alone, Eden, Delbos and Monteiro. All the Secretaries and advisors were cleared out and it appears that Avenol at this point said that as it might affect the Danzig situation he wanted the Committee to know that he proposed to nominate me as his Deputy.

That was, I think, 29th September. The following morning Eden asked me to see him and he came out of the Assembly discussion for the purpose. He said that Avenol had told him of his proposition and he wanted to know what I would think about it. Would I consider that I was being let down in any way? I had already heard, by the way, that the matter had been mentioned privately to Cranborne before Eden's arrival and he had apparently had nothing to say against the appointment. I told Eden that I would not look upon the nomination in that way at all. It was a very high

post, much higher than the one I held, and while I had been hoping rather to return to my own Service I felt I could hardly refuse such a big offer. Incidentally it would mean a very good exit from Danzig. Eden said that neither he nor the Committee wanted to stand in the way of my promotion, that the post certainly was an extremely important one and that in the normal course of events it might very well mean that I would become later on Secretary General. He thought that my promotion would be very well deserved and if I thought well of it he would do nothing to stand in my way.

A secret meeting of the Council was summoned for that evening but was not held. It took place the following morning and I have not much information beyond the official report of what happened. The nomination was unanimously approved.

It was clear that it had not been anticipated and that in some quarters my nomination would be regarded as a retreat from Danzig. This was inevitable. The Council did what they could to meet this. They put restriction on the period when I would take up my new duties by saying that this could not take place until my successor was nominated. Both the French and, although in a lesser way, the British were perhaps concerned with their own public opinion and sensitive to any suggestion that Danzig was being abandoned.

Within the next day or so I called on Avenol to express my appreciation of his action and the nice things he had said about me. He remarked with a smile that he had had to act very quickly before the other candidatures had time to solidify. There would of course have been great and increasing competition to get the post.

In Danzig the news came as a very welcome surprise. It was treated on the basis of "the recall of Lester" and the Nazi press jubilated. A special festival that weekend at which Greiser and Forster spoke was made the occasion for celebrating "the triumph over the League and Lester", and the Opposition were told that they were now in for it at last. On the "Leipzig" incident, which had been put through with a very satisfactory resolution a fortnight before this, accepting the explanations of the German Government but calling upon all the Governments concerned to prevent a repetition of any such incident, the German press had been completely silent. They reported the matter not too badly but without any comment whatsoever. Similarly they did little beyond headlines with regard to my new appointment.

In the meantime the Committee of Three were at work and another Council meeting was held to deal with a Report from them which at the same time sent my Reports to the Council. This seems to have come as a most unpleasant shock to the Danzig Nazis, following their jubilations. The resolution referred to the continued obstruction by the Senate of the League representative and the Council, and gave a mandate to Poland to examine the situation with a view to the maintenance of the guarantee of the Constitution, and to report upon the conditions necessary to enable the High Commissioner to carry out all his duties. At the same time there was a report in the newspapers that my successor would be a Pole. This all seemed to justify the suspicion expressed by the "Vorposten" in its first leading article celebrating my so-called "downfall", that there must be a snag somewhere.



The behaviour of Böttcher in the course of the meeting displayed two more instances of brilliant tactics. He sat at the table for the "Leipzig" incident, when Eden had incidentally mentioned that he supposed a later meeting to deal with the general reports of the High Commissioner would be held. Böttcher put in a solemn complaint that these reports had only reached the Senate on 16th September. Nobody took any notice of this. The Council members must have been a little bit surprised as they had not themselves seen as yet any of the reports which had been for a fortnight in the hands of the Senate. Even the Committee of Three had not received the final documents at the time they were handed to the Senate. This childish point was solemnly reported in the German papers but nowhere else. The Senate had been warned several times that the Council would consider the general position at a later meeting. In spite of this and in spite of advice from the Secretariat, Böttcher returned to Danzig. On 2nd October a formal notice of the meeting to be held on 5th October was sent to the Senate. On the 5th they replied that if it was only a question of accepting the recall of Mr. Lester they did not propose to attend. This was not at all the subject for which they had been invited, and was merely their method of refusing to attend to discuss the internal affairs of the Free City. When, however, they saw the resolution passed by the Council they sent a very forcible letter to the Secretary General protesting against the lack of politeness of the League. I certainly think that the lack of sense of humour shown in this protest was another inspiration of Böttcher's.



Danzig, 19th October 1936.

Monsieur Leseur is the Consul of Venezuela here, tall, fair-haired and gentle. He called to see me yesterday to tell me that he was being recalled and as he has during his time in Danzig seen nothing else of Europe I urged him to make a tour on his return journey.

After talking for a time I mentioned that I also was leaving Danzig. He showed some interest in this announcement and also when I told him that I had been given a post in the Secretariat. I wondered how he had been able to live in Danzig for the past few weeks without hearing about it, but he said he had read it in the local newspapers and had not believed it.

He came to see me once during one of the hottest weeks in my recent difficulties in the summer and solemnly handed me a five-page memorandum, type-written, on some minor social reform in Venezuela.

Before he left me yesterday he asked me if I would give him a letter. My name, he said, was very well-known in Venezuela and it would help him. I pointed out that the High Commissioner really had no relations with the Consuls except courtesy relations but he still thought that it would be useful to have some record of our good relationship so I promised to answer a written announcement from him that he was leaving Danzig.

I wonder what his reports to his Government on the situation here can be like. But he is a very nice fellow.

11  
It is interesting about my new appointment that no Government had any part in the initiative taken by the Secretary General. It was Avenol alone in this case, as indeed on the occasion of my appointment as High Commissioner, who was responsible. He seems to have formed a very flattering estimate of me which has from time to time shown itself in ways and on occasions surprising to me. My transfer from Danzig at this moment is being generally regarded as a sign of League weakness, and perhaps it is, but trying to form an impersonal and objective estimate as I can in this private diary I believe that Avenol was at least equally convinced of my suitability as his first assistant. There were other ways in which my removal could have been easily arranged.

After the announcement I talked with Frank Walters, who is probably my best friend in the Secretariat. He told me that he would like to be able to say that he had had some part in the suggestion but that it was entirely Avenol's initiative. When Azcarate's departure was announced he had expected that Avenol would, as he often did in such matters, delay and postpone, but he had actually informed Walters of his decision within a few hours. Avenol must have anticipated Azcarate's resignation. The latter had been much concerned with the Spanish situation and according to another source had been showing a certain amount of activity in his national affairs.

Of the aspirants in the Secretariat all came to congratulate me and I think that Rajchman was perhaps the most disappointed. He has given very courageous and unselfish service but I was told his appointment would have been very unpopular. He has been very friendly with me and we have worked together on all kinds of questions, but I was told that at least two or perhaps three of the principal officers of the Secretariat would have resigned if he had got the appointment. Agnades, one of the nicest fellows I know, and as honest as the day, a man who stands very high in Avenol's estimation, was a more likely candidate. His appointment would have pleased me immensely. Ekman, the Swede, was I think in every way unsuitable and Pelt was not big enough. It is rather curious how these things come to people who have not thought of them or looked for them.

The one thing I was looking for was the return to the Irish Service and the shiver with which this suggestion has always been received has been most chilling. There was no Cabinet Minister in the Delegation this time - Cremins, Rynne and ~~Seven~~. I talked to them about the proposal and about my own hopes, and the encouragement I got to take the international job was unanimously enthusiastic. Rynne and Frank said that there was no job at home and no hope of any. Micky said that it was always possible of course that I would be given something like control of Passports. I wrote to Joe Walshe and left the decision in the hands of the Government, but said I would like to keep my contacts with my own Service. When I telephoned to Joe he said he had talked to the President and both thought I should accept the post, which was such a very high one. On the other matter nothing could be said.

The Assembly dealt with the question of the admission of the Abyssinian delegation. The Italians did not attend either Council or Assembly pending a decision to exclude their conquered province.



2  
Fear of League Council decision as binding for future

All seemed set for a decision "as a question of procedure" that the Abyssinian credentials were not in order, when to the surprise of 99 per cent of the people the Committee eventually reported that the credentials were in order for the present Assembly. Frank Walters' comment was that he had found again and again that the Assembly developed some kind of conscience and personality apart from the wishes of Governments. Most people wanted the Italians back on the European scene. The hope of the Five Power Locarno conference dominated. If this cannot be put through, and it still seems very shaky, the European situation will continue to be dangerous and uncertain. The same prospect has dominated the League attitude towards Danzig during recent months. I wrote to Avenol (and the Rapporteur) in the early days of August when there was no sign of the Committee of Three meeting, that I could understand the wider European necessities might lead them to decide not to press the Danzig situation lest it should give Germany an excuse for backing away further from the Locarno conference and the League, but that they must realise the reaction in Danzig itself would be bad and that in a very few months a situation would exist here which could not be recovered. Events seem to have proved this to be good judgment and I only hope the greater cause for which our position in Danzig has been imperilled will not also be lost.

All through the Assembly one had the impression that Germany, although absent, dominated the scene. Fear of Germany hung like a cloud. And yet one of the few cheerful people I met was Osusky, ~~Czech~~-Slovakian Minister in Paris. I lunched with him and Hugh Wilson, the American Minister, one day and he expressed the view that with all Europe wanting peace Germany would not go to war. More important, he estimated Hitler as a great opportunist in international affairs. He distinguished between his internal policy of absolutism - he would not have his dictatorship within the Reich challenged in any way - but his attitude towards international questions would be decided entirely on grounds of opportunism. He would gradually make arrangements on all sides satisfactory to Germany but without thinking of going as far as war. I asked what about the frontiers and was thinking of the three million Germans in Chequo-Slovakia. Osusky said that with the development of economic cooperation - of which great hopes have been raised by the new agreement aligning the currencies of France, Britain and America which had brought Switzerland, Italy ~~Czech~~-Slovakia and others in its train - the frontier question would be rendered less acute and less important.

On the other hand a day or so before I left, F.W. in a very and unusually pessimistic mood, said that none of the great countries was at the moment basing its policy on the League. He even was so gloomy as to anticipate an early German move towards ~~Czech~~-Slovakia. If ~~Czech~~-Slovakia fought it would take a fortnight instead of a week. This was a most unusually pessimistic view for F. and was a good deal worse than my own. I still do not think that aggression can be safely launched in any direction without involving general war. If France can recover from her present internal divisions which are regarded as a source of weakness and if the Spanish situation can reach its tragic end without involving other Powers, I think we may still be able to keep some considerable hope.



I saw Papée yesterday and intimated to him that I regarded my situation at the moment here as largely a formal one. I had reported a situation to Geneva and their remedy had been to ask Poland to take action. I considered the matters to be entirely in Poland's hands. Colonel Beck has been on holiday and also in Paris, and Papée goes to Warsaw this weekend to see him to get the final instructions. He personally anticipates that a new chapter is opening in Danzig-Polish relations. The Senate has just banned the Social Democrat Party and all its organisations on the grounds that some arms were alleged to have been found in the possession of some members. It is quite possibly a "plant"; I do not know. Papée had seen Greiser and had warned him against such extreme steps. At the same time I do not anticipate that Poland will endeavour or will succeed in maintaining the Constitution.

X I see that Forster in a recent speech again laid on me the responsibility for the death of his three S.A. men. This could well be regarded as criminal incitement.

Incidentally, at one of the last Committee meetings, Eden apparently asked Beck to ensure that life was made tolerable for me while I remained in Danzig and Beck had given assurances. Both of them told me about this afterwards.

I came back through Vienna, Prague and Berlin. I made no official calls in Vienna. Strang, who had heard I was going to Prague, said he would write to the Chargé d'Affaires there, but I had asked him not to do so as I wanted to make no calls. I met nobody except Bruins, who used to be American Consul in Danzig. On the way to Bruins' house to lunch we passed a huge open space in the new town and Bruins told me that underneath was a vast bomb-proof shelter. The impression of the corps apparently was that the situation was still very uncertain and dangerous. I left cards on the British Minister and Foreign Minister two hours before I left and had the Legation on the telephone half an hour later, as the new Minister wanted to see me. This was of course not possible.

The valley of the Elbe as one goes through the frontier towards Dresden is a beautiful corner of Germany which I hope some time to explore.

Danzig, 24th October 1936.

There is renewed talk of Greiser being removed and one hears from many quarters that he is in bad odour in Berlin. Because I regard Greiser as being a man of no initiative who is more than content merely to obey, which he does without scruple, and as he is not the real source of difficulties in Danzig I have been expressing my opinion to people who tell me of his projected removal. In any case the sacrifice of Greiser would make a little show but have no significance whatever. One newspaper mentions Huth as the successor. Huth has always made a show of being very agreeable but he is of even less personal significance than Greiser, a petty engineer whose only mark of distinction is his fanaticism and who has always been regarded as Forster's watchdog on Greiser, his puppet.

When I was in Geneva I heard the latest popular song from France: "Tout va très bien". This song relates how Madame telephones after an absence of 14 days to her various servants for news of the house and is assured most cheerfully: everything is well, except - and then each one relates a catastrophe worse than the last. They end their details with: "Apart de ça, Madame la Marquise, Tout va très bien." A French journalist has written a parody in which Joseph (Avenol) replies to anxious enquiries about the League. Joseph is made to say that everything is going well "tout en déplorant un petit rien."

"Il était une petite bêtise,  
L'Ethiopie a été conquise,  
Mais apart ça, Madame la Marquise,  
Tout va très bien!"

It caused a certain amount of exquisite delight in League circles, partly on account of the personality of Avenol.

Ans

Forster established himself in Danzig four years ago. He is not a Danzig citizen but a German national. He is leader of the Danzig National Socialist Party (? Is he appointed from outside or is he elected here) He is a member of the German Reichstag and a high official of the Prussian Government, and holds also important positions in the State and Party organizations in Germany. Under the organization of the N.S. Party he claims the obedience of all members of the Party in his Gau or district. On one occasion (get date) he announced that members of the Senate should set an example in this respect. All members of the Senate are also members of his Party and the President of the Senate is the substitute Gauleiter.

Following the last election and in view of the activities of Forster I wrote to the President of the Senate asking if the position of Forster involved any interference in Government matters and received a reply (see documents). There is however a certain amount of evidence that he does interfere directly in Government matters. For example he made a speech this year (date) in which he declared that any State official who did not vote for the N.S. Party would be dismissed. No objection was made to this by the Government but when the matter came to be examined by the High Court, in connection with the election protest, the Court found that this action was an unconstitutional attempt to influence voting. Mr. Forster has frequently addressed gatherings of officials in State buildings (? other cases)

Forster in his public speeches claims to represent the views of Herr Hitler, Chancellor of the German Reich. He claims that his authority is based on that fact (? evidence) As recently as (?) November in a public speech in which he said the Opposition Parties in Danzig could run to the Judge or to the League of Nations, he said that Opposition leaders would find themselves in a concentration camp;



that he looked forward to the day on which the German flag would fly again over Danzig, and added that no one better than he knew the plans of Herr Hitler with regard to Danzig. When this speech was made were present: President Greiser, Senator Boeck, the German Consul General, etc.

Forster controls the official newspaper of the N.S. Party in Danzig. The permanent heading under the title of this newspaper the "Vorposten", is as follows: "Zurück zum Reich; gegen vertragliche Willkür".

With regard to Forster's claim to complete obedience from every member of his Party, it will be recalled that the resignation of President Rauschnig was mentioned in my annual Report for 1934. In that document I reported the official version of this affair, including the explanation that President Rauschnig had retired owing to ill health, and that Danzig had lost a first-class statesman. During the current year following a public attack on Rauschnig by Forster, the former made a public disclosure of the facts <sup>in</sup> connection with his retirement. (get documents) Rauschnig said that he had been compelled to retire because of a quarrel with Mr. Forster, who insisted that the head of the Government should follow his policy with regard to the financial, economic and political situation in Danzig. Rauschnig said his retirement was forced by the claim of Forster to be the dictator of Danzig.

On a number of occasions action by the Government against the Opposition followed an announcement by Forster and his newspaper that these things must take place. There have also been threats in his newspaper and in his speeches of the use of physical force against the Opposition and these incitements have in some cases been followed by intimidation and assaults. (See articles in Vorposten in September and November. Get copy of Forster's secret circular letter to his subordinates referring to the Jews and Catholics.)

There has been no official or public recognition of Forster by the German Reich. as their agent, but Forster has, for example announced that German Reichsministers would visit Danzig to support his Party in an internal election and this has been followed by the visits of such Ministers. There is, however, no evidence that Forster's claim to represent the German Chancellor is in fact true, although these pretensions and their consequences are not denied.

Danzig, 22nd December 1936.

Negotiations are at last proceeding between Danzig and Poland in pursuance of the Council mandate. These negotiations were first delayed on the Polish side and it was not till about 25th October that the first approach was made to Danzig. Greiser then went on long sick leave from which he returned two weeks ago. Both parties are very optimistic but from no Polish source has one so far been able to get any idea as to the possible outcome of the situation.

Colonel Beck made a visit to London in November and had some discussions with Eden and subsequently announced that Poland shared the British opinion regarding the campaign of ideologies and would not take part either in the Communist or in the Fascist block. There have also been exchanges of visits with Rumania which, while apparently retaining its close connection with the Little Entente, has shown internal signs of Fascist influence and dissatisfaction with the Franco-Russian pact. Italy and Britain on the other hand are approaching agreement regarding the Mediterranean, perhaps in spite of speeches by Mussolini such as that in which he held out the "olive branch supported by eight million bayonets".

In Danzig itself the Social Democratic Party and all its kindred associations was suppressed a couple of months ago, the ostensible grounds being some revolvers alleged to have been found in the offices of the defunct "Volksstimme". The chief of the Catholic Party has been arrested and some other deputies are in Schutzhaft. Four Opposition deputies had their parliamentary immunity withdrawn at a meeting of the Volkstag and Mr. Forster six weeks ago announced that he would have a special Christmas present for the Führer which is veriously interpreted, although the suggestion that it meant the return of Danzig to the Reich was of course quite groundless.

I was nearly two months away from Danzig on leave. In London I dined with Ralph Stevenson and his wife. The conversation turned largely upon the question of Mrs. Simpson, which was shortly to break as an open scandal and lead to the abdication of Edward VIII. Knowledge of this affair was then almost a class distinction, the masses knowing nothing at all owing to the discretion of the English press, while the American press were full of articles referring to Mrs Simpson as "Queen Wally". It was while I was in London that the divorce from her husband was announced.

Legal action was necessary in each of the Commonwealth States. De Valera wiped the king out of the Constitution, abolished the Governor-Generalship and announced that George VI would be recognised for external purposes only. From the point of view of Irish national development it is a little doubtful and is of course contrary to the development of a separate kingdom with a divisible monarch which was the line on which Kevin O'Higgins worked. It may be argued that by coming under the Commonwealth we form our diplomatic front internationally whereas under the other line of development there might have been more legal justification for a more theoretical independence. De Valera has himself, however, and this is interesting, accepted the king, even for such limited purposes.

The English people, who must have received a terrific shock with the sudden disclosures and self-imposed exile of a man who was extraordinarily popular, came out of the affair



with great dignity and calmness. It must be humiliating for the English to have an ex-king wandering about Europe but I doubt if any other people could have made the turn-over with so little fuss. Nevertheless it may appear that Edward has given a very serious shaking to the monarchical system in England.

In Geneva I stayed some weeks on my way back. I had informed the Poles on leaving Danzig that I thought my absence might actually be helpful to them in their negotiations and that of course if a bad situation developed I would return quickly. One of the objects in taking a long leave at that time was to help to make it clear to Poland that she was shouldering the responsibility herself. This was in accord with the views of the Rapporteur and the S.G.

My time in Geneva was on the whole rather boring, as I had not much to do, but I attended the Special Council meeting held in connection with the Spanish Civil War. The recognition of Franco by Berlin and Rome was rather premature and was subsequently followed by additional help in material form - the despatch of thousands of "volunteers". On the other hand help also appears to have reached the Government side and although the fall of Madrid was announced in the newspapers in the middle of November Franco does not seem yet to have obtained a footing in the city.

Beck has made a speech on Foreign Affairs in the Polish parliament in which he refers to Polish neutrality in the war of ideologies, the importance of good relations with Germany and the correct relations which are maintained with Russia. The importance of Poland as a key country has been more widely recognised during the past few months. The shadow of war which has been over Europe especially in the past year is no doubt still there and no one could safely prophesy, but I am feeling much more confident in the maintenance of peace for the next year or two and in the meantime British re-armament is going ahead fairly well, which at any rate will be an additional guarantee of peace. German preparations continue and one of the principal Reichswehr officers in an article on the new 4 Years Plan says it is really military in its purpose and not merely economic. Göring a couple of months ago made a public speech in which he said people had to give up butter for cannons. There is, however, a sudden shortage in Germany and her economic position is bad. This amongst other things has revived the demand for colonies. The development of an acute position in Germany would probably be more dangerous than otherwise. I suppose one of the factors which has helped to reassure peaceful people in Europe has been the formal declarations by the British Government, through Eden, that immediate help would be given in case of an attack on France or Belgium and the subsequent offer by Blum of similar guarantees in case of aggression against England. It is interesting to note that while English-Italian relations seem to be improving there is rather less confidence and good-will between France and Italy at the moment.

Secret      Date

My conversation with Colonel BECK on the 30th of January <sup>1937</sup> lasted for 40 minutes. I encouraged him with a few questions, but he himself spoke most of the time. It struck me that his remarks were mainly in the nature of an explanation or apology of his policy vis-à-vis the League and his general policy in international affairs. He emphasized his view that the direct agreements he was making were more valuable to Poland, but professed himself to be a real friend of the Institution here which was very useful for the direct contacts it provided. If he disputed things at times that was merely a sign of the value and interest the organization had; those who were indifferent did not dispute. On the other hand he went on to speak of difficulties which the League had made for Poland in the past and mentioned Danzig, Silesia, etc., but at the same time he repudiated the theory that Danzig was an exclusively Polish affair and even remarked that if he were to decide to leave the League, he could get sufficient support for that policy.

This turn in his remarks (which were almost a monologue) was rather striking; it arose from nothing which had been said by me; he seemed to me to be surveying in his own mind discussions and arguments which had been taking place, but with which I was not fully acquainted.

Regarding Danzig he spoke of the future and I asked him was he optimistic; and he said he was, he was more optimistic about Danzig than the League. History of Danzig for 300 years showed that it was <sup>about</sup> ~~the~~ vital interest of Poland and that fact was known to Germany. Poland was ready to defend her interests there and he seemed to think that Germany would take no action to antagonize Poland in that direction. (I recalled the conversation I had with him on the 5th of July last in which his attitude and sentiments were far from being so confident, but of course I said nothing). Beck concluded by saying that he depended not on Berlin but on Warsaw as far as the future developments of Danzig were concerned.

I would like to emphasize that the trend of the Polish Foreign Minister's conversation was not due to the occasional mild remarks made by myself, but struck me as being <sup>more</sup> ~~almost~~ in the nature of reflections on remarks which had been made to him by other persons. ~~in view of the fact that~~ <sup>he</sup> he did emphasize more than ~~one~~ that his policy was a good policy for Europe.

February 1st 1937