

Ministère des Affaires Étrangères

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# THE FRENCH YELLOW BOOK

~~DIPLOMATIC~~ DOCUMENTS  
CONCERNING ~~THE~~ EVENTS AND NEGOTIATIONS  
~~WHICH PRECEDED~~  
THE OPENING OF HOSTILITIES BETWEEN GERMANY  
~~ON THE ONE~~ HAND,  
AND POLAND/~~AND GREAT~~ BRITAIN AND FRANCE  
~~ON THE OTHER~~

1939

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THE present Yellow Book is a collection of the most important among the documents which bring out clearly the course of French diplomatic action from September 29, 1938, the date of the Munich Agreement, to September 3, 1939, the date when France and Great Britain, in execution of their pledges of assistance, declared themselves to be in a state of war with Germany.

This publication is limited to the general theme of Franco-German relations, as it clearly was not possible to find space for all the other problems on which our diplomacy was active during the same period (Spanish affairs, Franco-Italian relations, events in the Far East, negotiations with Moscow and pacts of assistance).

Two principal phases can be distinguished in the period under review:

From October 1 to March 15 French diplomatic action followed the policy of *détente* and collaboration of which the framework had been set up by the Anglo-German declaration of September 30 and the Franco-German declaration of December 6. French diplomacy made a sincere and whole-hearted effort to put Franco-German relations on a normal footing in every sphere, to establish wider possibilities and enlarge peaceful co-operation between the two countries.

As early as the month of February the resistance opposed by the German Government to any practical organization of the international guarantee stipulated on September 29 in favour of Czechoslovakia was such as to raise doubts regarding the sincerity of the intentions of the Reich. On March 15 the entry of German troops into Prague completed the violation of the Munich Agreement and irrevocably destroyed the element of mutual confidence without which the declaration of December 6 became a dead letter.

In the course of the following weeks the direction of the next German drive became evident through numerous incidents, until at last the speech delivered by Herr Hitler to the Reichstag on April 28 plainly disclosed Poland as the next victim of German imperialism.

French diplomacy spared no effort, during the next four months, to avert the danger which menaced Europe: efforts were made to reach an agreement with the U.S.S.R.; secret but categorical warnings were given to Germany that France would be faithful to her pledges of assistance; Poland was encouraged to persevere in her attitude of moderation and patience in face of German provocation. Nothing was neglected which could directly or indirectly induce the German Government to renounce the use of methods of force and violence; nothing was concealed from Germany which could make her realize the risks to which her policy exposed her and, with her, the whole of Europe. To this persevering will for peace the message of the French Foreign Minister to Herr von Ribbentrop on July 1, as well as the appeal of the French Prime Minister to Herr Hitler on August 26, bear witness in an unimpeachable manner.

At the very moment when the Italian initiative of August 31 and the acceptance by Poland of the Franco-British proposals for direct negotiation offered a last chance of peace the German aggression of September 1 deliberately plunged Europe into war.

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## PART FIVE

## The Danzig Question

(May 15-August 19, 1939)

## I

## THE MILITARIZATION OF THE FREE CITY

(May 15-June 30)

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145	M. COULONDRE ..... Berlin, June 27 The German leaders may contemplate having the Free City proclaimed part of the Reich by the Danzig Senate; this would provoke Polish counter-measures making it possible to represent the Poles as the aggressors. It would be advisable to forestall this manoeuvre by making it clear that any violent action originating in Danzig itself, and which Poland considered essential to resist, would automatically bring France and Great Britain to her assistance.....	167
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deliver on the evening of June 29, he should give the leaders of the Reich clear warning of the common determination of the two Governments to fulfil their guarantee of assistance to Poland, whatever means the Germans may adopt to conceal the real character of its action under a cloak of ambiguity.....171

- 148 M. COULONDRE ..... Berlin, June 30  
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## II

## German Agitation Continued

## Warning to Germany :

Letter from M. Georges Bonnet to Herr von Ribbentrop

(July 1-July 30)

- 149 NOTE BY THE MINISTER ..... Paris, July 1  
The Minister for Foreign Affairs receives a visit from Count von Welzcek, German Ambassador in Paris. He has recently seen Herr von Ribbentrop, who considers that at any moment an incident could lead to war between Germany and Poland. He expresses regret that it should not have been understood that Germany must have a zone of influence in the East. M. Georges Bonnet in reply recalls, in particular, that in the course of his conversation with Herr von Ribbentrop, he made express reservations with regard to the relations of France with Poland and with the U.S.S.R. He assures him that if Germany sincerely desires peace, the danger of war does not exist. Mentioning the definite obligations undertaken by France with regard to Poland, he is anxious to leave the German Government in no doubt whatever as to the attitude of the French Government in the event of a conflict.....173
- 150 NOTE BY THE MINISTER ..... Paris, July 1  
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- 151 M. GAUQUIÉ ..... Warsaw, July 3  
Youths belonging to the "Hitler Jugend" crossed the Polish frontier and were arrested; after representations from the German Embassy in Warsaw, the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs has ordered their release .....177
- 152 M. DE LA TOURNELLE ..... Danzig, July 3  
The Polish Government has decided to observe great caution and not for the time being to oppose the military measures in progress at Danzig.....177
- 153 M. COULONDRE ..... Berlin, July 4  
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- 154 M. COULONDRE ..... Berlin, July 4  
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- 155 M. GARREAU ..... Hamburg, July 4  
Economic circles in Hamburg believe that if the Anglo-Franco-Russian negotiations are not rapidly concluded a German-Russian pact will be, which would increase the risk of aggression by the Reich against Poland, and, in consequence, of a general conflagration.....180
- 156 M. LÉON NOËL ..... Warsaw, July 6  
The Military Attaché to the French Embassy in Warsaw is under the impression that Poland will go to the extreme limit of patience with regard to the militarization of Danzig.....180



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157	M. LÉON NOËL ..... Warsaw, July 6 M. Beck informs the French Ambassador in Warsaw that Poland will not intervene so long as her vital interests are not affected. He adds that unless the progress of events is too rapid to allow the necessary time, the Polish Government will submit any proposed action to preliminary consultation with the British and French Governments.....	180
158	M. LÉON NOËL ..... Warsaw, July 6 M. Beck hopes the Press of the Western Powers will not give over-much space to the news about Danzig, so as not to play into the hands of the German Propaganda Ministry.....	181
159	M. LÉON NOËL ..... Warsaw, July 9 A pamphlet circulated by the Danzig Senate proves that the German claim to the Free City is by no means the limit of the German claims.....	182
160	M. LÉON NOËL ..... Warsaw, July 10 The militarization of the Free City is being methodically carried out ; differences between Polish nationals and Danzig authorities occur incessantly ; the great majority of the population desires the maintenance of the <i>status quo</i> and appears to be terrorized. The situation recalls that which existed in Austria before the <i>Anschluss</i> .....	183
161	M. COULONDRE ..... Berlin, July 11 According to a responsible person in the confidence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Reich, Herr Hitler is displeased with Herr von Ribbentrop for having involved him in the Danzig affair. The German Press campaign is in fact displaying more discretion. The firmness of the Franco-British attitude is understood to have caused surprise and embarrassment in Berlin. The attempt at intimidation having failed, the leading circles of the Reich would seem to be ready to try persuasion by declaring that Danzig would be Germany's last claim. This is a manœuvre against which French and British public opinion should be put on its guard.....	186
162	M. COULONDRE ..... Berlin, July 31 In a conversation with the French Ambassador in Berlin, Herr von Weizsäcker expresses his displeasure with regard to the communication from the French Minister for Foreign Affairs to Herr von Ribbentrop ; he complains further of the attitude adopted publicly by Mr. Chamberlain in the Danzig affair. His language tends to prove that the German Government is impressed by the firmness displayed by the Western Powers. The positions taken up by Paris and London are now clearly understood in Berlin, and M. Coulondre considers that, in so far as it depends on the French Government it would be an advantage to keep silent about Danzig.....	188
163	HERR VON RIBBENTROP..... Fuschl, July 13 Herr von Ribbentrop replies by a personal letter to the note handed by M. Georges Bonnet to Count von Welczeck on July 1. After disputing the point that the reservations made by the French Foreign Minister on December 6 concerning the relations between France and third powers, could apply to French relations with Poland, he makes the following observations : (1) Germany denies France the right to interfere in her spheres of vital interest ; (2) Any violation of Danzig territory by Poland, or any Polish provocation incompatible with the prestige of the Reich, will be answered forthwith by the advance of German forces, and the annihilation of the entire Polish army ; (3) The threat contained in the French note and its reference to French assistance to Poland can in no way impress the Führer. If things are such that the French Government desires war, it will find Germany ready for it at any moment.....	189
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