



Ministère des Affaires Étrangères

DIPLOMATIC DOCUMENTS

1938-1939

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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II

German Agitation Continued

Warning to Germany :

Letter from M. Georges Bonnet to Herr von Ribbentrop

(July 1-July 30)

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