

Reply from the Führer to Daladier

Berlin, August 27, 1939

Dear President-Minister!

I understand your concern. I, too, have never lost sight of the high duty incumbent on those who determine the fate of peoples. As a former front-line soldier, I, like you, know the horrors of war. Based on this attitude and understanding, I have also made sincere efforts to eliminate all sources of conflict between our two peoples.

I once openly assured the French people that the return of the Saar region would be a prerequisite for this. After this return, I immediately solemnly reaffirmed my renunciation of any further claims that might affect France. The German people have approved of my position. As you yourself were able to see during your last visit here, they did not and do not feel any resentment or even hatred towards their once brave adversary, being aware of their own position. On the contrary. The pacification of our western frontier has led to an increase of sympathy, at least on the part of the German people, a sympathy which in many cases has been truly demonstrative. The construction of the great western fortifications, which have absorbed and continue to absorb billions, represents for Germany the document of acceptance and definition of the final frontier of the Reich. Thus the German people have renounced two provinces which once belonged to the old German Reich, were later won back at the cost of much blood, and were finally defended with even greater bloodshed.

This renunciation, as you must admit, Your Excellency, does not represent a tactical attitude displayed outwardly, but a decision which has been consistently reinforced by all our measures. You will not be able to name a single case, Mr. President-Minister, in which even one line or speech has violated this final fixation of the German legal frontier in the West. I believed that by this refusal and this attitude I had eliminated all possible sources of conflict between our two peoples that could lead to a repetition of the tragedy of 1914/18.

However, this voluntary limitation of the standard of living of the Germans in the West cannot be interpreted as acceptance of the Versailles dictate, which also applies to all other regions.

Year after year I tried to achieve a revision of even the most impossible and intolerable provisions of this dictate by means of negotiations. This was impossible. The need for a revision was recognized and clear to many insightful people in all countries. Whatever may now be brought against my method, whatever one may think necessary to criticize in it, one must not overlook or deny that I succeeded, without further bloodshed, not only in finding satisfactory solutions for Germany in many cases, but also that by the nature of the procedure I relieved the statesmen of other countries from the obligation, which was often impossible for them, of answering to their own peoples for this revision. In the end, Your Excellency will have to admit one thing to me: the revision had to take place. The Versailles dictate was intolerable. No honest Frenchman, not even you, Mr. Daladier, would have acted differently from me in a similar situation. In this sense, I have now also tried to eliminate the most unreasonable measure of the Versailles dictate.

I made the Polish government an offer that shocked the German people. No one other than me could have dared to go public with such an offer. It could therefore only be a one-off. I am now deeply convinced that if, instead of unleashing a wild campaign against Germany in the press and spreading rumors of German mobilization, Poland had somehow been persuaded to be reasonable, Europe could enjoy a state of profound peace today and for 25 years. As it was, however, the lie about German aggression first agitated Polish public opinion, made it difficult for the Polish government to make its own necessary, clear decisions, and, above all, the subsequent promise of guarantees obscured its view of the limits of real possibilities.

The Polish government rejected the proposals. Polish public opinion, firmly convinced that England and France would now fight for Poland, began to make demands that might not be described as ridiculous madness if they were not so incalculably dangerous. At that time, an unbearable terror

began, a physical and economic persecution of the more than one and a half million Germans in the territories separated from the Reich. I don't want to discuss the atrocities that occurred here. However, with continued attacks by Polish authorities, Danzig also became increasingly aware that it was seemingly hopelessly at the mercy of a power alien to the national character of the city and its population.

May I now ask, Mr. Daladier, how would you, as a Frenchman, act if, through some unfortunate outcome of a valiant battle, one of your provinces were cut off by a corridor occupied by a foreign power, a large city—let's say Marseille—were prevented from pledging allegiance to France, and the French living in that territory were then persecuted, beaten, mistreated, even brutally murdered?

You are a Frenchman, Mr. Daladier, and I therefore know how you would act. I am German, Mr. Daladier. Do not doubt my sense of honor and duty to act in exactly the same way. If you now suffered the misfortune that we suffer. Would you then, Mr. Daladier, understand if Germany, without any reason, wanted to insist that the corridor through France remain, that the stolen territories should not be returned, that the return of Marseille to France should be prohibited?

In any case, Mr. Daladier, I cannot imagine that Germany would fight against you for this reason. For I, and all of us, have renounced Alsace-Lorraine to avoid further bloodshed; even less would we shed blood to perpetuate an injustice that would be intolerable to you, just as it would be meaningless to us.

I feel exactly the same way as you do about everything you write in your letter, Mr. Daladier. Perhaps we, the old front-line soldiers, can most easily understand each other in some areas; but I beg you, please understand this too: that it is impossible for a nation of honor to renounce almost two million people and see them mistreated on its own borders.

I have therefore made a clear demand: Danzig and the Corridor must be returned to Germany. The Macedonian situation on our eastern border must be eliminated. I see no way to persuade Poland, which now feels unassailable under the protection of its guarantees, to a peaceful solution here. But I would despair of an honorable future for my people if, under such circumstances, we were not determined to resolve the issue one way or another. If fate now forces our two peoples to fight again, there would surely be a difference in motives. I, Mr. Daladier, would then fight with my people to preserve it. This is all the more tragic because many of the important men of your own people have recognized the absurdity of the solution at that time as well as the impossibility of maintaining it permanently. I am aware of the grave consequences that such a conflict entails. But I believe Poland would have to bear the gravest of them, for no matter how a war over this issue turns out, the Polish state of today would be doomed or lost.

That our two peoples should now enter into a new bloody war of annihilation is very painful not only for you, but also for me, Mr. Daladier. However, as I have already stated, I see no possibility for us to influence Poland in a reasonable way to correct a situation that is intolerable for the German people and the German Reich.

Adolf Hitler.

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