



Neptune Fountain in the Long Market, the White Eagle of Poland on the gate, now removed by the Germans.

## This Danzig — Why Does It So Interest The Poles?

"A city built on Polish soil at the mouth of Poland's river the Vistula, to serve as Poland's port, made rich through trading in the products of Polish toil".

Racially it is largely German. This is not a matter of dispute. But Danzig is of vital interest to Poland for four main reasons.

### I. Because of its Slavic origin and Polish history

#### Chapter 1. The Beginning. Prehistory to 1308.

Prehistory. An old Slavic, Lusatian, settlement.

- 997 A reference to it as "an important town".
- 1148 Assigned by the Pope to the Polish bishopric of Wloclawek.
- 1220+ Established as a trading center by the Slavic Duke Swiatopelk.
- 1227 Dominican friars brought from Krakow to take charge of the local church of St. Nicholas.
- 1282 Willed by the local duke Msciwoj to his nephew, Przemysl II, duke of Great Poland. From then a regular part of Poland.

#### Chapter 2. Era of the Teutonic Knights. 1308—1454.

1308 Population of 10,000 massacred by the Teutonic Knights from East Prussia and Culm, and occupied by the Knights. Late in the century Danzig became one of the chief Hanseatic towns, growing rich on Poland's trade. Constant friction between the Knights and the citizens.

1410 After the defeat of the Teutonic Knights by the Poles and Lithuanians at Grunwald the city declared its allegiance to Poland. This did not become effective until 1454.

#### Chapter 3. The Polish Era. 1457—1793.

1457 King Kazimierz of Poland visits Danzig and receives the oath of allegiance in the Long Market.

1466 Danzig formally incorporated into Poland with privileges of local autonomy. Its period of greatest prosperity begins. Its finest buildings are now built.

1526 King Zygmunt I of Poland resides in Danzig three months.

1552 King Zygmunt August of Poland spends two months in Danzig.

1660 King Jan Kazimierz there to sign Treaty of Oliva.

1678 King Jan Sobieski visits there with his queen and court for seven months. Builds the Royal Chapel as a souvenir of his stay.

1734 Danzig fights loyally for King Stanislaw Leszczynski, against Russia and Saxony.

1757 Statue to August III, King of Poland, erected by the Danzigers in honor of the 300th anniversary of Danzig's access to Polish sovereignty.

1772 The first Partition of Poland places Danzig practically in Prussian hands. Declines in importance as a port.

1793 Danzig seized by Prussia.

#### Chapter 4. The Prusso-German Era. 1793—1918.

During these 125 years of Prussian rule, Danzig, deprived of an independent and prospering Polish hinterland, ceased to be a great port and became simply a pleasant provincial city, and army post. In 1913 its port turn-over was only 2,112,100 tons.

#### Chapter 5. Post-War Danzig.

1919 Contrary to the unanimous recommendation of the commission of experts, Danzig was not assigned to Poland by the Peace Treaty but was set up as a Free State.

1920 During the Bolshevik invasion of Poland the Danzig dock workers refused to unload military supplies for the hard-pressed Poles. A few years later, for both strategic and commercial reasons, Poland began to build its own port, Gdynia, now the fourth port of Northern Europe, smaller only than Rotterdam, Antwerp, and Hamburg.

1938 Poland's need of two ports demonstrated by the fact that though Gdynia cleared 9,173,438 tons of freight, Danzig cleared 7,127,195 tons in 1938.

1939 Nazis from the Reich stir up trouble in Danzig, contrary to the desire of the better element of Danzig's residents, (see the Rauschning articles), and threaten the seizure of Danzig by Germany. Poland prepares to prevent this with war if necessary. England and France back the Polish point of view.



"a small and delicate chapel in the late Renaissance style built by one of the Kings of Poland not far from the Teutonic pile of the Marienkirche. It looks like a tender flower blossoming at the foot of a mighty rock, a flower whose seed might have been wafted thither by some breath of culture and civilization from a more favored clime".  
H. Wickham Steed

### IV. Because of its Political, Military, and Naval Significance.

1. To the Poles, Danzig is more vital than Gibraltar to the English, far more vital than is Hawaii to America.

2. Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, said in the late 18th century that whoever holds Danzig has more power in Poland than the King of Poland himself. History proved him right. And if through holding Danzig Germany should rule Poland, Germany would soon rule all Europe and menace the world.

3. Danzig in the hands of Germany would give Germany control of the whole Bay of Danzig and thus Poland's access to the sea. Therefore under no circumstances can Poland allow Germany to come into the possession of Danzig to be used as a German naval base, Hitler's plan.

4. Therefore any effort of Germany to seize Danzig by force or craft means war, literally a world war. A non-German Danzig is the key to peace.

"If the Danzigers wish to return to the Reich they may; but they may not and cannot take Danzig with them. It is historically, politically, economically, and strategically Poland's".

A Danzig doorway, the Danzig emblem above, the Polish White Eagle on the door, now removed by the Germans.



City Hall spire terminating with the statue of the Polish King Zygmunt August. Row of mediaeval warehouses along the river in the middle background.



