

Letters to the Editor

THE DANZIG PROBLEM

A CITIZEN'S VIEWS

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—As a Danzig citizen I was greatly interested in your leading article on "Familiar Tactics" which was published in your issue of July 24. Although a great deal could be said to challenge your view of the general trend of German foreign policy I must refrain from doing so because I should require too much of your space. But may I be allowed just to make a few brief comments on two of your statements which regard the Danzig problem itself?

(1) You suggest that the Danzigers "might well prefer . . . to be left with the status and the Constitution allotted to and willingly adopted by themselves after the War." I think it is well to recall, in this connexion, the spontaneous mass demonstrations by which practically the whole of the Danzig population, in 1920, protested passionately against the severance of their city from the German Motherland—with all the alluring promises of a bright and happy future at the side of their Polish neighbours ringing in their ears. Instead of "willingly" adopting their lot the Danzigers have always—before 1933 and after—fostered one ardent desire: to return to Germany; and they are even now convinced that one day their dream will come true.

During the last 20 years their cause has been backed up by numerous English, French, American, and other writers, and it is most disconcerting for them to see that the clear and simple issue has recently been drowned by the backwash of political emotions which made Danzig the "symbol of freedom and independence" for which not only Poland but also this country is willing to fight. I am not unfamiliar with the reasons adduced for this radical change of attitude, but for all that I contend that the original issue should be taken at its face value for the sake of a constructive policy whose aim it is to lay the foundations for lasting peace and order in the Eastern part

contend that the original issue should be taken at its face value for the sake of a constructive policy whose aim it is to lay the foundations for lasting peace and order in the Eastern part of Europe.

(2) You say "if (Danzig) were forcibly seized and militarized by Germany it would place Poland first economically and then politically at the mercy of the Reich," and a little later that, "fortified and in German hands, it would tip the balance of sea power in the Baltic in favour of Germany, and on the land side command the approach of Poland to her only seaboard." Are you, however, aware that the strategic issue involved would not be a sequel to a reincorporation of Danzig in the Reich but has been, in fact, in existence already since long?

It is of no significance whatsoever, in case of a Polish-German war—which we all hope will never occur—whether Danzig at the beginning of the hostilities is in German or Polish hands or not occupied by either Power. Years before Hitler came into power General Weygand, who speaks certainly as an expert, summed up the strategic problem of the so-called Polish Corridor in these words: "Useless in times of peace, it cannot be defended in wartime." This is, and always will be, fundamentally true. If, therefore, Poland's strategical position on the Baltic is in no way aggravated by an alteration of the status of Danzig, there seems to me to be no reason why she should reject for ever a peaceful solution of the problem on the basis of an "unconditional return" of Danzig to the Reich. There can be no bartering over the German character of the Free City and all that results from it, and there need be no bartering over Polish economic rights in Danzig. For, once a settlement is reached, it is definitely in the interest of Germany and particularly of Danzig that Poland should have all trading facilities in Danzig which she wants.

Nobody is interested to curtail Poland's title to a "free access to the sea" for her trade, and Danzig would be only too pleased to be used as a port for the Polish hinterland more freely than at present—with Gdynia having ousted it gradually from its position as Poland's outlet to the sea, which was, after all, the pretext for creating the *status quo*. In a word, Danzig in German hands is a case for close economic collaboration between Germany and Poland and not for putting Poland economically at the mercy of the Reich. Nor would Poland's political independence be threatened by the reincorporation of Danzig in the German Reich. Germany, for obvious reasons, does not want to blot out Poland from the map of Europe, and for Poland nothing is more essential than the stability of good relations with her great neighbour on the Western frontier. This was realized by Marshal Pilsudski when he concluded the non-aggression pact with Herr Hitler in 1934.

Yours faithfully,

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3, Grenville Street, W.C.1, July 26.