

Versailles Treaty: The Free City of Danzig (June 28, 1919)

Abstract

The future of the port city of Gdansk [German: Danzig] became a point of contention between Germany and Poland after the First World War. The Hanseatic city was the capital of the province of West Prussia, which Germany had to cede to Poland in accordance with the Treaty of Versailles. The majority of the population of Gdansk was German however, and during the peace negotiations they held mass protests, citing the right of self-determination of peoples as declared by U.S. President Wilson. The Polish government, in turn, referred to Wilson's assurance of a Baltic Sea port for the restored Polish state. It emphasized that Poland's economic and political independence, given its geopolitical position between Russia and Germany, depended on access to the Baltic Sea. Ultimately, the Allies agreed on a compromise solution: they declared Danzig a free city under the protection of the League of Nations. The Republic of Poland was guaranteed the use of the port and the right to operate the railway. The status of Gdansk became a constant topic of Nazi propaganda, which fell on fertile ground among the German population, not only in Danzig, and further fueled the existing anti-Polish sentiment.

Source

Section XI.

Free City of Danzig.

Article 100.

Germany renounces in favour of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers all rights and title over the territory comprised within the following limits:

from the Baltic Sea southwards to the point where the principal channels of navigation of the Nogat and the Vistula (Weichsel) meet:

the boundary of East Prussia as described in Article 28 of Part II (Boundaries of Germany) of the present Treaty;

thence the principal channel of navigation of the Vistula downstream to a point about 6½ kilometres north of the bridge of Dirschau;

thence north-west to point 5, 1½ kilometres south-east of the church of Gütthland:

a line to be fixed on the ground;

thence in a general westerly direction to the salient made by the boundary of the *Kreis* of Berent 8½ kilometres north-east of Schöneck:

a line to be fixed on the ground passing between Mühlbanz on the south and Rambeltsch on the north;

thence the boundary of the *Kreis* of Berent westwards to the reentrant which it forms 6 kilometres north-north-west of Schöneck;

thence to a point on the median line of Lonkener See:

a line to be fixed on the ground passing north of Neu Fietz and Schatarpi and south of Barenhütte and Lonken;

thence the median line of Lonkener See to its northernmost point;

thence to the southern end of Pollenziner See:

a line to be fixed on the ground;

thence the median line of Pollenziner See to its northernmost point;

thence in a north-easterly direction to a point about 1 kilometre south of Koliebken church, where the Danzig-Neustadt railway crosses a stream:

a line to be fixed on the ground passing south-east of Kamehlen, Krissau, Fidlin, Sulmin (Richthof), Mattern, Schäferlei, and to the north-west of Neuendorf, Marschau, Czapielken, Hoch- and Klein-Kelpin, Pulvermühl, Renneberg and the towns of Oliva and Zoppot;

thence the course of the stream mentioned above to the Baltic Sea.

The boundaries described above are drawn on a German, map scale 1/100,000, attached to the present Treaty (Map No. 3).

Article 101.

A Commission composed of three members appointed by the Principal Allied and Associated Powers, including a High Commissioner as President, one member appointed by Germany and one member appointed by Poland, shall be constituted within fifteen days of the coming into force of the present Treaty for the purpose of delimiting on the spot the frontier of the territory as described above, taking into account as far as possible the existing communal boundaries.

Article 102.

The Principal Allied and Associated Powers undertake to establish the town of Danzig, together with the rest of the territory described in Article 100, as a Free City. It will be placed under the protection of the League of Nations.

Article 103.

A constitution for the Free City of Danzig shall be drawn up by the duly appointed representatives of the Free City in agreement with a High Commissioner to be appointed by the League of Nations. This constitution shall be placed under the guarantee of the League of Nations.

The High Commissioner will also be entrusted with the duty of dealing in the first instance with all differences arising between Poland and the Free City of Danzig in regard to this Treaty or any arrangements or agreements made thereunder.

The High Commissioner shall reside at Danzig.

Article 104.

The Principal Allied and Associated Powers undertake to negotiate a Treaty between the Polish Government and the Free City of Danzig, which shall come into force at the same time as the establishment of the said Free City, with the following objects:

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1. To effect the inclusion of the Free City of Danzig within the Polish Customs frontiers, and to establish a free area in the port;
 2. To ensure to Poland without any restriction the free use and service of all waterways, docks, basins, wharves and other works within the territory of the Free City necessary for Polish imports and exports;
 3. To ensure to Poland the control and administration of the Vistula and of the whole railway system within the Free City, except such street and other railways as serve primarily the needs of the Free City, and of postal, telegraphic and telephonic communication between Poland and the port of Danzig;
 4. To ensure to Poland the right to develop and improve the waterways, docks, basins, wharves, railways and other works and means of communication mentioned in this Article, as well as to lease or purchase through appropriate processes such land and other property as may be necessary for these purposes;
 5. To provide against any discrimination within the Free City of Danzig to the detriment of citizens of Poland and other persons of Polish origin or speech;
 6. To provide that the Polish Government shall undertake the conduct of the foreign relations of the Free City of Danzig as well as the diplomatic protection of citizens of that city when abroad.

Article 105.

On the coming into force of the present Treaty German nationals ordinarily resident in the territory described in Article 100 will *ipso facto* lose their German nationality in order to become nationals of the Free City of Danzig.

Article 106.

Within a period of two years from the coming into force of the present Treaty, German nationals over 18 years of age ordinarily resident in the territory described in Article 100 will have the right to opt for German nationality.

Option by a husband will cover his wife and option by parents will cover their children less than 18 years of age.

All persons who exercise the right of option referred to above must during the ensuing twelve months transfer their place of residence to Germany.

These persons will be entitled to preserve the immovable property possessed by them in the territory of the Free City of Danzig. They may carry with them their movable property of every description. No export or import duties shall be imposed upon them in this connection.

Article 107.

All property situated within the territory of the Free City of Danzig belonging to the German Empire or to any German State shall pass to the Principal Allied and Associated Powers for transfer to the Free City of Danzig or to the Polish State as they may consider equitable.

Article 108.

The proportion and nature of the financial liabilities of Germany and of Prussia to be borne by the Free City of Danzig shall be fixed in accordance with Article 254 of Part IX (Financial Clauses) of the present Treaty.

All other questions which may arise from the cession of the territory referred to in Article 100 shall be settled by further agreements.

Source: The Treaty of Peace with Germany, June 28, 1919, *International Law Documents*. Naval War College, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920, pp. 18–21.

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