

C O N F I D E N T I A L

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Arthur Greiser, one-time President of the Senate of Danzig, Reichsstatthalter and Gauleiter of Wartheland.

Greiser claims that after his discharge from the German Navy in 1919 he found himself in dire financial needs and earned his living through very hard labor. The program of the NSDAP attracted him because of the social promises it contained, and in 1930 he joined the Party. Being not unintelligent he claims to have rapidly risen to a leading position. The huge successes enjoyed by the National Socialists in the elections brought him a position in the Danzig Senate where, after the resignation of Dr. Rauschnig, he was appointed President.

The Conflict between Danzig and Poland: As every German, he had taken the standpoint, he asserts, that Danzig was German and would one day have to return to the Reich. Similarly he claims to have supported the campaign for the return of the ceded parts of West Prussia and Upper Silesia. He never believed, however, that these problems had to be solved by force, but thought that this had to be done through negotiations with Poland and the League of Nations in the course of many years. He states that he held the same views on this subject as did his predecessor Rauschnig who, likewise, followed a course of moderation. Gauleiter Forster on the other hand, supported by the Party Reichsleitung, followed strong-arm politics. Because of his dissenting opinion on the Poland-Danzig problem, he says, he got into difficulties with the Gauleiter and found himself being increasingly ignored in Danzig political circles. He relates that, already in 1938, he had relayed his proposals for the solution of the Danzig question to Baron von Neurath who was the Foreign Minister at the time. His suggestion was that Poland receive a free zone in the harbors of Danzig, Memel and Libau, while the entire Danzig port be declared a free port. Moreover, the autobahn was to be extended through the Polish Corridor to Danzig. He claims that although Neurath personally approved of these proposals, nothing was ever done about them officially. In 1939 he returned from naval maneuvers and was shocked to discover "how far matters had already gone." At a mass meeting of the Danzig Home Guard (Heimwehr), which was a Party subsidiary, he asserts to have expressed his anxiety to the Wehrkreiskommandeur General Wodrich, but his words fell on deaf ears. He relates further that in August 1939 the Party deprived him of all his posts so that once more he found himself practically unemployed. Thereupon he offered his services as reserve officer of the Navy in order to take over the command of a fleet of mine-sweepers. On the way to Wilhelmshafen he was called to Berlin by a radiogram which instructed him to report to Dr. Frick. Frick charged him with the civil administration of Poznan. This position was later turned into that of Reichsstatthalter and Gauleiter for Wartheland.

Relations to Rauschnig: Greiser describes Rauschnig as a friend with whom he had stood in agreement on many political issues.

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"Even when he left the Party and went abroad, my good opinion of him did not change. I never considered him a traitor. I was present at one or two of his discussions with Hitler, and whatever I read in the newspapers about Rauschnig's book, certainly coincides with what they talked about in these conversations."

Relations to Hitler: Greiser explains that as consequence of his stand for mediation in the Danzig question and his strained relations with Gauleiter Forster, he fell into the bad graces of Hitler. After the Catyn affair letters reached him from all walks of the Polish population, in which Polish citizens requested permission to enlist in the fight against Russia. Greiser states that he sent a memorandum on this question to the Fuehrer and suggested the establishment of a Legion of Polish Volunteers. He believed to be able to amass some 100,000 Poles in this unit. He declares that Hitler retorted curtly: "Since you have approximately 100,000 men at your disposal, I have advised the Reich Minister of Labor to take the necessary steps for the exploitation of this manpower."

Attitude towards the Party: Greiser maintains, even today, that the original platform of the Party was good. In practice, however, these original principles were greatly distorted and for several years already he claims to have been near desperation. Out of a feeling of "German loyalty", however, he stuck to his post. He claims often to have discussed these matters with his wife (the only person with whom he could speak freely) and that both had come to the conclusion that they must remain at their post until the war had been lost. They planned to buy, at the end of hostilities, a little country home and to retire from politics. What the Party and its system had actually brought about he only realized when faced with the magnitude of the collapse and with the terrible things that have now been brought to light. "It was as though one saw light for the first time. The Fuehrer had, during all these years, preached pure lies for he must have known what actually went on and how matters stood."

On the Jewish Question: Greiser claims to have been in complete disagreement with the Nazis' persecution of the Jews. He interpreted the original Party program as intending to break the hold of the Jews on German economy and cultural life. He never interpreted it as meaning the physical extinction of the Jews. He states that his own sister had married a Jew who emigrated to New York and that his sister's fate had made a deep personal impression on him and had caused him to do a lot of thinking. Of the Ghettos in Poland he claims to have known and to have had the impression that the Jews there lived fairly comfortable; but he maintains that he had no knowledge of the existence of the so-called extermination camps and that he had only learnt of what went on in the concentration camps on his capture. In summer 1943 he heard a lecture by Himmler on the subject of concentration camps in which Himmler declared, in front of a number of generals, that the concentration camps were nothing more than huge armament works in which there was no threat of sabotage.

The Flight from the Wartheland: Greiser claims to have had knowledge of the Russian plans for an offensive on the Weichsel as early as December 1944. This caused him considerable worry about the evacuation of the Wartheland. He got in touch with Goebbels, Bormann, Himmler and the Army Group Commander General Harpe in an

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effort to discover something about the intentions and plans of the German High Command. He was unable, however, to get any information from any source. Finally, on January 12, Dr. Naumann appeared and addressed the responsible men in the Wartheland with the following words: "The German High Command was aware of everything that went on and was prepared for any eventuality. The Russian attack would not be directed against the Wartheland but would be carried out in a southerly and northerly direction. Enough German forces were held in readiness to frustrate any attempt at breaking through." Two days later the Russian offensive began. Greiser went to the front in order to get a better picture of the actual situation. He says, "confusion and chaos reigned at the front. The German troops fled like rabbits toward the west; the disaster could no longer be held off." Greiser ordered an evacuation which was carried out in three steps. Many Poles joined the columns of German refugees. He claims to have succeeded in evacuating roughly one million persons from the Gau but a great portion of them, later, were unable to get across the Oder. He himself, acting on orders of the Reich's Chancellery, left his post on January 20. In Berlin he was rebuked sharply by Bormann who criticized Greiser for having rescued so many people but only slight quantities of livestock and materials. In the course of his conversations in Berlin he was granted leave to Bavaria where he was to undergo medical treatment.

His Estate: Greiser says that his present property amounts to some 400,000 marks. About 200,000 marks were paid him by an insurance company following a hunting accident which resulted in the loss of one of his eyes. His monthly salary as Reichsstatthalter amounted to 3,000 marks plus 2,000 marks for expenditures. His post of Gauleiter had been an honorary one.

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