POLAND'S FRONTIERS

BY

PETER JORDAN

THE present war was started in the defence of Poland's frontiers and their restoration has been the declared war objective of the Allied Powers ever since September 3rd, 1939. The problem of the post-war boundaries of Poland is in the foreground of international affairs.

It has been the intention of the author of the present study to outline the problem of Poland's frontiers in its essentials, without going into the merits of the recent proposals for new Polish boundaries. The historical frontiers shown on the following maps are not intended to suggest any territorial claim and are included for purposes of reference.

Whatever changes may be proposed or accepted in the future, their justice or otherwise can only be appreciated in the light of the events which led to the present situation.

POLAND'S FRONTIERS

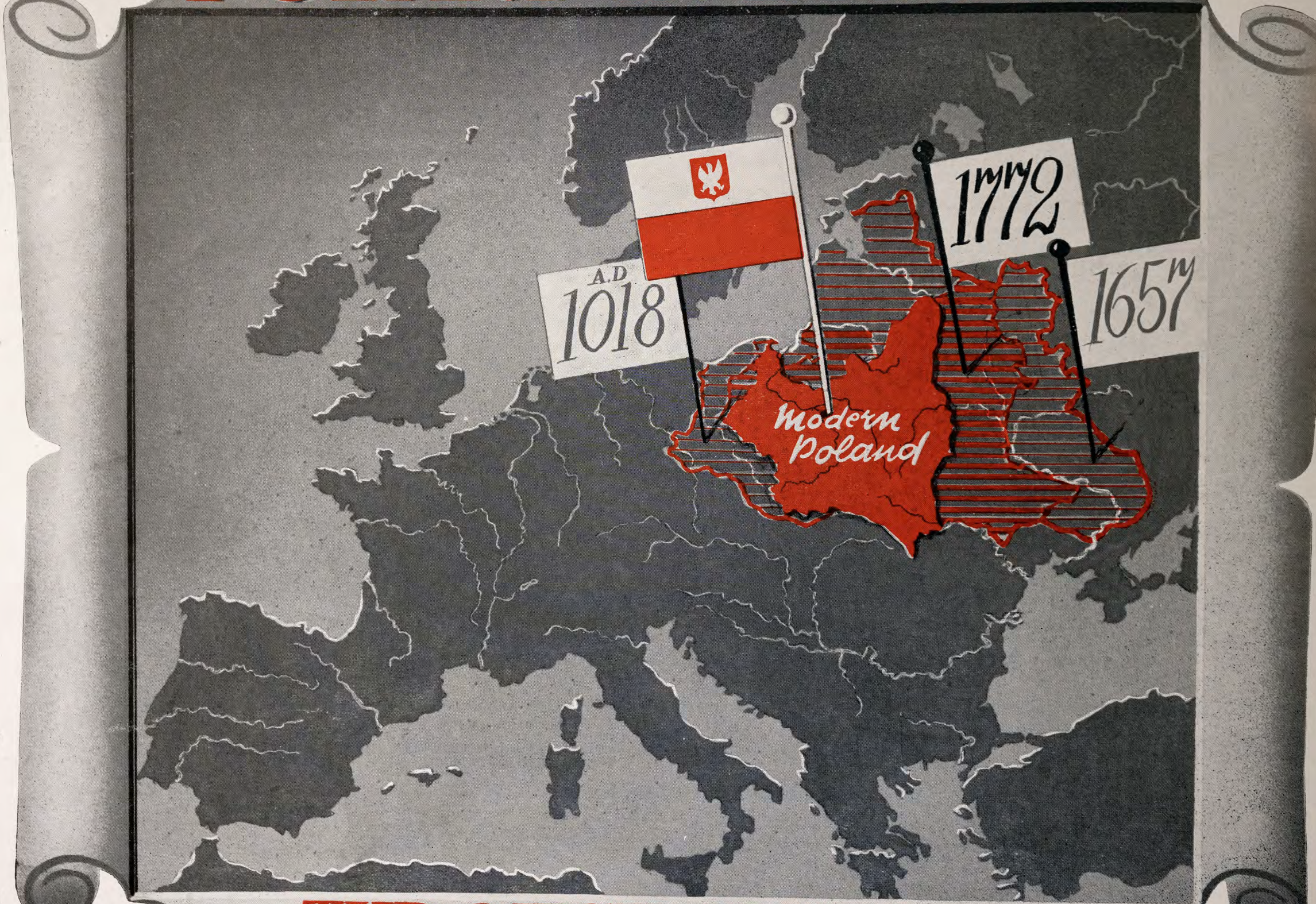
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POLAND IN EUROPE



THROUGH HISTORY

POLAND IN EUROPE

THE adjoining map shows the position of Poland in Europe and the extent of her territories in various periods of history. It is seldom wise to seek in the past a plan for the future, but a knowledge of history may provide a useful foundation for a judgment of contemporary conditions.

The fact that Poland has lost, in the course of centuries, many lands both in the west and in the east might be taken, at first sight, as evidence of a national decline. Actually, the withdrawal of Poland in the west from the line of the River Oder and in the east from the Dnieper was not due to any decadence of the Polish nation, but to the rise of the German and Russian imperialisms. The Poles kept their vitality, proving it by survival amidst great dangers and a consistently high birth rate—a symptom of vigour and hope in the future.

The vast territories of old Poland were never claimed by modern Poland and are not likely to be ever claimed by her again. Conditions have changed, and no one could dream of looking centuries back for a model for the future. It is important, however, to realize that the modern Poland, within the frontiers of 1939, is not an artificially expanded State.

The Poland of 1918-1939 is the kernel of the formerly Polish lands, the hard core of national territory. It is a Poland reduced to what is indispensable to the continued existence of the nation.

The relatively small modern Poland is the home of far more people than the large Poland of 1772 or former periods. In 1918, when Poland regained independence within reduced boundaries, which were nevertheless freely accepted by the nation as final and satisfactory (except for East Prussia and Silesia), it had a population of about 27,000,000; in 1939 there lived within the same territory over 35,000,000 people. An increase of population by 25 per cent within twenty years is without parallel in modern times—notably among nations of the Western civilization. It means that the natural increase of the Polish population within twenty years—a short period in the life of nations—was greater than the entire population of many European countries of importance—or of a whole continent, like Australia.

A high birth rate has two main effects: increasing numbers of the population and a low average age—a young population. Poland is a country with a predominance of the young over the old. Exactly the opposite is the case in France and Germany.

It seems probable that Poland will emerge from the turmoil decimated, but younger than ever, as a compact, closely-knit national community, practically classless—for the war has brought all the former social classes to the same level and made them share the same life. It is a country with a rich culture of its own. It is also a nation passionately attached to freedom—both national and personal. The most significant feature of the political and cultural make-up of Poland is probably the fact that the Poles look upon themselves as members of the Western European Christian civilization and are prepared at all times to give their lives in the defence of what some sceptical people in the West regard as almost obsolete.

This profound loyalty to the unity of the Western European civilization, proved again and again by deeds, is no empty phrase. It might be described in the language of current politics as devotion to democracy—but it is something both deeper and more comprehensive.

It means respect for certain basic principles, derived from Christianity, like the setting of an infinitely high value on human personality—which includes the idea of personal freedom; and absolute respect for freely-given pledges and undertakings.

These things may appear somewhat irrelevant to the problem of frontiers and yet in the case of Poland they are of the utmost significance. The frontiers of Poland, most of them at any rate, are not only boundaries between States and nations, but also between entirely different ways of life and different worlds. On the Polish side the standards of conduct are approximately the same as in any Western European country. On the other side they are reversed: the individual, his life and freedom are of little account, while the power of the organized community is everything; pledges are valid only in so far as they serve the interests of that community, which is the Totalitarian State.

No doubt the merging of different civilizations into one harmonious whole should be envisaged as the ultimate aim of mankind and the objective of any far-sighted policy. For the time being, however, basic differences exist, and to overlook them would not bring unity any nearer.

Any change of frontiers in any part of the world, especially in such a key region as Central Europe, directly affects the lives of millions of people in the territories concerned, and indirectly, but very tangibly, the lives of hundreds of millions of people in all the adjoining countries.

POLAND IN 1772



BEFORE THE PARTITIONS

II

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

BETWEEN A.D. 966 and 1795 Poland had been one of the principal European powers, and, at times, even the largest country in Europe. The western frontier of Poland, which in the Middle Ages had been on the River Oder, became stabilized about the sixteenth century approximately along the line of the modern frontier of 1918. That boundary conformed more or less to the ethnographic line of division between Poles and Germans, except for Silesia and parts of Pomerania, which were held by Germany though inhabited by Poles. It included within Poland Danzig and a part of East Prussia, which were not returned to Poland in 1918.

The Partitions of 1772, 1793 and 1795, resulted in the splitting of the country into three parts, annexed by Austria, Prussia and Russia respectively. The Russian share was by far the largest of the three. Unlike the western frontier of Poland, the eastern boundary had undergone several changes in the course of the last few centuries. At one time the eastern frontier of Poland was well beyond the Dnieper, including most of the territory known today as the Ukraine. Later it followed, in the main, the line of the Rivers Dnieper and Dvina in the north. That was the frontier of Poland in 1772, at the time of the First Partition, shown on the adjoining map.

Between 1815 and 1830 there existed a "Kingdom of Poland," established by the Congress of Vienna. It comprised only the central provinces of Poland, without any of the principal cities except Warsaw. It was, in fact, even smaller than the "Duchy of Warsaw," founded by Napoleon in 1809 as a preliminary to a proposed total restoration of Poland. The small "Kingdom of Poland" was established as a result of the insistence of the French and British delegates to the Congress of Vienna, who refused to acquiesce to the total occupation of Poland by Russia. The "Kingdom of Poland" had the Tzar of Russia for King, but it enjoyed a certain measure of freedom and autonomy. This did not last, however, more than fifteen years—for in 1830 the Tzar decided to extend his full autocratic tyranny over the "Kingdom of Poland," and eventually achieved his object, after a bitterly contested war against the small but stubborn Polish army.

Actually the line dividing the "Kingdom of Poland" from the rest of the Polish territories under Russian occupation was purely arbitrary. There were Poles on both sides of the line, and when a new Polish national insurrection against Russian oppression was organized in 1863, the heaviest fighting was in the eastern provinces. These eastern provinces of Poland, notably the region of Wilno, remained strongholds of Polish patriotism and national activities, in spite of the fact that they were far east of the boundary of the "Kingdom of Poland."

The historical lesson of the short-lived "Kingdom of Poland" of 1815-1830 is clear: a mutilated Poland, deprived of her eastern provinces, is likely to invite Russian aggression by her weakness, and is bound to be swallowed up. The "Congress Kingdom"—as it was called—had a government which was certainly "friendly to Russia," since the Tzar was the King and his own brother the Viceroy. This did not save Poland from a Russian invasion and annexation in 1831.

In the other parts of Poland, occupied by Germany and Austria, the national spirit was kept alive throughout the nineteenth century, and the desire for independence was never abated. The efforts of the Russians and Germans to de-nationalize the Poles, mainly through the enforced use of the Russian and German languages in the schools and offices, were of no avail. Every form of persecution called forth a natural reaction and thus strengthened the Polish national spirit. In the southern part of Poland, occupied by Austria, conditions were somewhat more favourable, and the Poles enjoyed a certain amount of freedom. The university of Cracow continued to function and the university of Lwow was reopened towards the end of the nineteenth century.

In spite of the splitting-up of Poland into three parts, national unity was never seriously endangered. The unity of language, tradition and political aspirations, reinforced by a solidarity of common suffering, kept the Poles united.

POLAND IN 1914



EVE OF LIBERATION

POLAND DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

THE year 1914 found Poland divided between the three empires: German, Austrian and Russian. The population of Poland had increased considerably during the nineteenth century, and by 1914 there were about twenty-five million Poles. Their national consciousness and solidarity were stronger than ever. Realizing the importance of winning to their side such a large group of people, both Germany and Russia endeavoured to secure Polish support, outbidding each other with promises made to the Polish nation.

Germany and Austria-Hungary announced on November 5th, 1916, the elevation of Poland to "an independent State with a hereditary monarchy and constitutional government," and they set up a Polish Regency Council, which proceeded to establish a Polish administration, under the control of the occupying military authorities. At that time the German and Austrian armies held the major part of Poland, including most of the territories hitherto ruled by Russia. The frontiers of the proposed Polish State were not clearly defined, but it was obvious, at any rate, that even the Germans realized that Poland could not be held indefinitely in subjugation.

At the same time, the Polish Legions, under Brigadier Pilsudski, were fighting against the Russians with the ultimate object of restoring Poland's independence. They enjoyed, at first, a measure of support from Austria, but when the patriotic aims of the Legions became apparent and they refused to swear an oath of allegiance to the Emperor, the Germans interned the Polish soldiers and sent Pilsudski, together with his Chief-of-Staff, Sosnkowski, to the fortress of Magdeburg.

On the Russian side, declarations were made by the Commander-in-Chief, the Premier, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and finally by the Tzar himself, promising the reunion of the whole Polish nation, which would then "freely organize its own national government and institutions." These promises were repeated by Prince Lvov, Premier of the government established in March 1917, after Nicholas II had been dethroned. He assured the Poles, in a manifesto, that "the Russian nation, which had thrown off the yoke, admitted the full right of the Polish brother-nation to decide its own fate in accordance with its own will." He also promised aid in the "establishment of an independent Polish State."

The revolutionary Russian Government, which succeeded the moderate transition Government, went even further in its willingness to return to Poland what the tzars had looted. The Council of People's Commissars, under the chairmanship of Lenin, issued, in August 1918, the following decree:

"All agreements and acts concluded by the government of the former Russian Empire with the governments of the Kingdom of Prussia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire in connection with the Partitions of Poland are annulled for ever by the present resolution, in view of the fact that they are contrary to the principle of the self-determination of peoples and the revolutionary legal conception of the Russian nation, which recognizes the inalienable right of the Polish nation to decide its own fate and to become united."

These declarations of all the governments directly concerned, combined with the determination of the Poles to regain their full independence, made the restoration of Poland a virtual certainty long before the end of the war. Legally speaking, it meant a return to the *status quo ante*—that is, the position which existed before the Partitions. Since the Partition Treaties were expressly declared null and void, the natural conclusion was that the pre-Partition frontiers of Poland would be restored.

A similar attitude was adopted by the Allied Powers, notably France and Britain. President Wilson included Poland's independence in his fourteen points. A Polish army was formed in France, and it took part in the fighting on the Western Front against the Germans.

After the capitulation of Germany, the German armies evacuated Poland, gradually withdrawing from the eastern as well as the western part of the country. Polish forces took over and, in the course of 1919, they occupied a large portion of the eastern provinces of Poland, formerly under Russian rule. There the Polish Government established a provisional administration, with a view to finally deciding the fate of the region east of Wilno, Baranowicze, Pinsk, Sarny and Rowne, in accordance with the wishes of the inhabitants. The population of that region is admittedly mixed, including Poles, White Ruthenians, Ukrainians and Jews. The number of Russians in the whole area is insignificant, as almost the only Russian residents there were tzarist officials and soldiers.

THE "CURZON LINE"



OF 1920

IV

THE RESTORATION OF POLAND

THE victorious Allied Powers favoured, in principle, the restoration to Poland of all the territories of which she had been robbed as a result of the Partitions. The entire Polish territory under Austrian occupation was returned to Poland, and so was the territory under German occupation, with the exception of Danzig and a part of East Prussia. The application of the same principle of restoration-in-full to the territories under Russian occupation would have meant a return to the line of the Dnieper, which was Poland's frontier in the east in 1772.

The Poles themselves, however, realized that such a claim might not be in complete agreement with the principle of self-determination, and they did not desire to incorporate all the pre-Partition territories irrespective of the will of the inhabitants. The Polish Chief of State, Joseph Pilsudski, was actually in favour of establishing an independent Ukraine.

In the meantime, the new Soviet Government had embarked on a policy of spreading revolution throughout Europe, and it ordered its armies to invade Poland, with a view to marching towards Western Europe.

The Allied Supreme Council, faced with this situation, issued the following declaration on December 8th, 1919:

"The Principal Allied and Associated Powers, recognizing the importance of putting an end, as soon as possible, to the present state of political uncertainty in which the Polish nation finds itself involved, now, without prejudice to later terms which may be designed to fix the final eastern frontier of Poland, declare that they henceforth recognize the right of the Polish Government to proceed, within the period provided for by the treaty of June 28th, 1919, concluded with Poland, to establish a regular administration of the territories of the former Russian Empire situated to the west of the line specified below. . . ."

There follows a description of the line shown on the adjoining map. It ran from Grodno in the north to the point at which the former Russian and Austrian frontiers met east of Przemysl.

In conclusion, the declaration went on: "The eventual rights of Poland to territories situated to the east of the above-mentioned line are expressly reserved."

In July 1920 the British Government proposed the same line to the Russians as a temporary armistice line between Poland and Soviet Russia. The line was in this case arbitrarily extended southwards, running east of Przemysl to the Carpathians. As the armistice proposal bore the signature of Lord Curzon, then Foreign Secretary, the line has since been known as the "Curzon Line."

Neither the Supreme Allied Council in 1919, nor the British Government in 1920, described the "Curzon Line"—which only acquired its name later—as a suitable Polish-Russian frontier. It was intended only to demarcate indisputably Polish territory, and beyond it, in the east, there was the territory in dispute between Russia and Poland.

The name of Lord Curzon was used in subsequent years for the purpose of conveying the idea that the line was of his creation and that he had believed it to be the best frontier between Poland and Russia. It has been alternately suggested that the notorious line divided territories inhabited by Poles from those with non-Polish population. Neither of these assiduously fostered assumptions is correct. Lord Curzon put his signature to the armistice proposal of 1920 because the British Government was anxious, at the time, to stop the hostilities between Russia and Poland. He suggested the line formerly sanctioned by the Supreme Allied Council as the boundary of indisputably Polish territory, for it was difficult, on the spur of the moment, to devise any new line. Later, in 1923, Lord Curzon officially recognized the Russian-Polish frontier established by the Treaty of Riga—thus pledging both himself and the British Government, of which he was still Foreign Secretary.

The formal recognition of the Riga Treaty frontier between Russia and Poland was a definite legal act, while the suggestion of an armistice line—which was not accepted by either side—can hardly be considered to have any permanent significance. There could not be a more eloquent testimony to the efficiency of modern propaganda than the fact that Lord Curzon's name became associated with the line which he once suggested for provisional demarcation, and not the line which he officially recognized as the final frontier, three years later, in 1923.

As to the will of the population, the "Curzon Line" has never been an ethnographic boundary. To the east of that line there live at least 4,500,000 Poles, and the acceptance of the "Curzon Line" as a Polish-Russian frontier would, therefore, be in clear contradiction to the principle of self-determination.

LENIN'S LINE



SOVIET OFFER OF 1920

V

"LENIN'S LINE"

THE unsettled conditions with regard to the border of Poland and Russia continued throughout 1919. In December of that year, the Soviet Government addressed a note to the Polish Government, signed by Lenin, in which it suggested the establishment of a frontier running approximately along the line Dryssa-Dzisna-Polotsk-Borysov-Cudnov-Pilava-Bar (as drawn on the adjoining map). The note added that: "The Council of People's Commissars considers that, in so far as the real interests of Poland and Russia are concerned, there is no single question, territorial, economic or other, which could not be decided in a peaceful way by negotiations, concessions and mutual agreements."

The Council of Commissars evidently considered that a Polish-Russian frontier drawn along the "Lenin Line" would not be injurious to the "real interests of Russia." This line was some way to the east of the frontier eventually decided upon in Riga in 1921, and several hundred miles to the east of the "Curzon Line."

Negotiations between Poland and Russia on the basis of the "Lenin Line" were to be opened at Borysov. In the meantime, however, it transpired that the Soviet General Staff had concentrated a strong force near that town and apparently intended to continue hostilities. In the fighting which followed, General Pilsudski, with the help of a Ukrainian National Army, took Kiev on May 8th, 1920. The Soviet Commander, Tukhachevsky, counter-attacked in the north and advanced towards Warsaw.

It was at that time that the British Government endeavoured to mediate, suggesting the "Curzon Line" as an armistice line and proposing, on July 11th, 1920, to hold, in London, in the near future, a "conference of representatives from Soviet Russia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Finland, for the purpose of concluding a final peace with Russia." The British Government of the time realized that the problem of Russia's western frontier in Europe is one of international importance, and should be settled by common agreement of all the nations concerned. The British offer of mediation was rejected by the Russians.

General Tukhachevsky, the Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet forces, issued, on July 2nd, 1920, an order of the day in which he said: "In the west the fortunes of world revolution are at stake. Over the corpse of Poland lies the way to world conflagration."

On August 14th the Soviet armies approached the gates of Warsaw. A hastily organized Polish army, commanded by Pilsudski and composed largely of young volunteers, defeated the Russians in a three-day battle. It has been described by Viscount d'Abernon as the "Eighteenth Decisive Battle of the World." He realized that a Polish defeat at Warsaw in 1920 would have meant the spread of Bolshevism throughout Europe.

After smashing the Soviet armies, the forces of Pilsudski drove them eastwards. At the time, Poland could have enforced almost any frontier she desired.

It was not, however, the policy of the Polish Government to acquire any territory merely by force of arms, without taking into consideration the will of the inhabitants and the continuation of peaceful, neighbourly relations with other countries.

The instructions given to the Polish delegation sent to Riga to negotiate a peace treaty after victory, were almost identical to those given to the delegation sent previously to Minsk, during the hostilities, at a time when the situation of the Polish armies had been very precarious. It meant that the treaty would not be concluded on the basis of the military situation of the moment, but on the more solid foundations of objective justice and respect for the legitimate rights of other nations, even those temporarily defeated in the field.

The Polish Government was anxious to safeguard the interests of Poland, while avoiding the incorporation of large national minorities and the enforcement of conditions which might cause resentment among the Russians and thus prevent future friendly relations between Poland and Russia. That is why it refrained from claiming the old Polish pre-Partition frontier of 1772—although such a claim might have been possible under the circumstances.

POLISH CONCESSION TO RUSSIA



TREATY OF RIGA 1921

THE TREATY OF RIGA, 1921

THE first meeting of the Peace Conference at Riga took place on September 21st, 1920. Within a fortnight the Polish and Soviet delegations agreed on a frontier line, which was the line shown on the adjoining map. It nearly coincided with the line of the Second Partition.

The final frontier fixed at Riga was inspired by the Polish Government's desire not to include within the boundary of Poland too many minorities and not to create grounds for future conflicts with Russia. The treaty was actually negotiated and concluded, not with Russia alone, but with the Russian and Ukrainian Soviet Republics, which both sent their delegations.

The ethnographic situation in the borderlands of Poland and Russia has always been complex. The national consciousness of the inhabitants has in many cases not been fully developed and few of them regarded themselves as "White Ruthenians" or "Ukrainians"—even when they spoke the respective languages. Religion played a more important part than nationality, for even the least politically conscious peasant could always state whether he was a member of the Orthodox or of the Catholic Church. The Catholics were pro-Polish and a large proportion of them used the Polish language.

In the northern section of the frontier, the Polish Government claimed, therefore, only those provinces in which the Catholics were in the majority—namely those of Wilno, Bialystok and Nowogrodek.

There were many Poles also on the eastern side of the proposed frontier, but since they were there a minority (the province of Minsk), the Polish Government did not believe itself justified in claiming that region. Altogether 1,500,000 Poles were left on the Soviet side of the frontier by the treaty of Riga—a sacrifice made by Poland for the sake of future friendly and peaceful relations with her Russian neighbour.

In the southern section, the Polish Government claimed only that part of the country which had been, throughout the nineteenth century, under Austrian occupation and had never at any time belonged to Russia. The Soviet Government could not, in any case, lay claim to those territories. There were many Poles east of the Riga frontier in the south as well as in the north—notably in the districts of Kamieniec, Berdichev and Vinnitsa, but Poland abstained from claiming that region and voluntarily left to Russia all that she had taken in the Second Partition of 1793. In fact, Poland demanded only the return of the territory taken by Russia in the Third Partition, while the much larger territories annexed in the First and Second Partitions were kept by the Soviet Union—although the Soviet Government had solemnly denounced and annulled all three Partitions.

The final treaty between Poland and Russia was signed in Riga on March 18th, 1921. The negotiations lasted several months, but it is significant that the frontier problem was the most easily solved of all. Much more time was taken up with economic and financial questions. The treaty was freely negotiated and the Polish side made numerous concessions to the Russians, although, at the time, the Polish army enjoyed superiority over the Soviet army.

The Soviet Government considered the treaty of Riga favourable to the interests of Russia and it never questioned the validity or fairness of the frontier established in 1921. On the contrary, the official Soviet view was that the treaty of Riga was a diplomatic success for the Russian side, which obtained a more favourable frontier than the one which it was prepared to accept.

The Treaty of Riga was expressly confirmed by the Soviet Government in the Polish-Russian Protocol of May 5th, 1934, and again in the Soviet Declaration of November 26th, 1938, confirming the Polish-Russian Pact of Non-Aggression. In all these treaties, the Soviet Government freely recognized the Riga frontier with Poland as final, and it never made any claims to territories west of that line.

HOW VERSAILLES



FAVOURED GERMANY

THE GERMAN-POLISH FRONTIER OF 1919

THE thirteenth of President Wilson's famous fourteen points of January 1918 stated: *"An independent Polish State should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant."*

None of the Powers represented at the Peace Conference of Paris had prepared a more extensive and better-balanced study of Central European conditions than the United States of America. Already in January 1919 the American delegation presented a *Tentative Report,* the fruit of several years' research, in which suggestions for the new territorial settlement in Europe were made. It recommended the establishment of an independent Poland, and went on: "The problem of Polish access to the sea is very difficult. If such access is accorded through continuous Polish territory, the province of East Prussia, with a population of 1,600,000 Germans, will be cut off from the rest of Germany. If Poland does not thus secure access to the sea, 600,000 Poles in West Prussia (Pomorze) will remain under German rule and 20,000,000 Poles in Poland proper will probably have but a hampered and precarious commercial outlet, subject to alien, and, for a time at least, hostile decision. It is believed that the lesser of these evils is preferable, and that 'The Corridor' and Danzig should be ceded to Poland."

With regard to Danzig, the American experts wrote: "Danzig is today unquestionably a German city . . . it is incontestable, however, that Danzig owed its own importance in the past to its position as the natural port of the great Polish hinterland behind it, and that if the principle of the Polish corridor to the sea is accepted at all, it must almost inevitably involve the inclusion of Danzig in that corridor, for there is no room physically for another great port at the mouth of the Vistula."

The Commission on Polish Affairs at the Peace Conference recommended the incorporation to Poland of Pomorze and of Danzig, with the district of Marienwerder on the right bank of the Vistula. In the west, the proposals of the Commission were in strict accordance with the principle of self-determination and they included within Poland that part of Silesia inhabited by Poles.

When the Germans were presented at Versailles, on May 7th, 1919, with the Conditions of Peace they replied with vehement protests. Count von Brockdorff-Rantzau, the head of the German delegation, addressed to the Supreme Council his *"Remarks on the Conditions of Peace,"* in which he claimed the retention by Germany of Polish lands robbed by Prussia in the past.

As one of the members of the Supreme Council, Mr. Lloyd George, was particularly anxious to prevent an undue weakening of Germany, the protest of Count von Brockdorff-Rantzau was not unheeded. The final text of the Treaty was more favourable to Germany, at the expense of Poland, than the original draft.

Poland received only a narrow strip of Baltic coast (about 45 miles) without any ports. Danzig was made a Free City under the protection of the League of Nations—an equivocal situation which was promptly exploited by the Germans to their own advantage. Plebiscites were to be held in a part of East Prussia, known to have a Polish population, and in a part of Silesia.

The plebiscite in East Prussia was held in July 1920 in conditions which made it a mere mockery. The German authorities remained in full control, the German "Sicherheitswehr"—a forerunner of the Storm Troopers—terrorized the Polish population and the Germans enjoyed a monopoly of propaganda. Already before the poll, the Polish Government advised the Inter-Allied Commission that "in view of the lack of the most elementary guarantees and in face of the unbridled pressure by the German authorities, the plebiscite would not give true expression to the will of the population and would be contrary to the spirit of the Treaty of Versailles."

A plebiscite was held in similar conditions in Silesia, where the Polish population, however, rose spontaneously against the Germans and reversed to some extent the results of their terrorism.

Both the plebiscites were parodies of popular votes and the Germans succeeded in turning them to their favour by the use of most unscrupulous treachery and physical terror.

The result was that the Treaty of Versailles left in Germany about 1,500,000 Poles—including some 800,000 in Silesia, 400,000 in East Prussia, and a large number in other parts of Germany. This considerable Polish minority was left at the mercy of the Germans without any protection—while the German minorities in other countries were closely protected by treaties and the League of Nations.

The Polish population in Germany was brutally oppressed both by the "Good Germans" of the Stresemann days and by the Nazis. From the point of view of those under their rule, the difference between the "Democratic Germans" and the Nazis was not very great.

"FREE AND SECURE"



ACCESS TO THE SEA

POLAND'S LIFELINE

PRESIDENT Wilson and his staff of experts realized that Poland could never be really independent without a "free and secure access to the sea." No country can enjoy genuine freedom unless it has its own ports and can use the best highway of all—the sea. There are in Europe only three countries without an access to the sea: Switzerland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. In the case of these three countries, the distance to the nearest sea coast renders access to the sea physically impossible.

Poland has a population approximately as large as Switzerland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary together. She has always had ports on the Baltic, notably Danzig, at the mouth of her principal river—the Vistula. A section of the Baltic coast has been inhabited by Poles since immemorial times.

Owing, however, to various political intrigues, especially to a desire to spare the Germans, Poland's access to the sea was whittled down by the makers of the Versailles settlement until it became little more than a fiction.

East Prussia, the bastion of the Junker class and of German militarism, was left to Germany—although most of it had belonged to Poland before the Partitions. Danzig, the traditional port of Poland, situated at the mouth of the Vistula, was made a Free City. This meant, in practice, that it remained under German rule and was ruled from Berlin, in spite of the nominal League of Nations' control.

All that Poland did get at Versailles was a strip of 45 miles of sea coast, without any ports and without any railways. It was connected with the main territory of Poland by a narrow bottle-neck, which was later nicknamed "The Corridor." Such an access to the sea was anything but "free and secure."

Endowed by the Treaty of Versailles with such a purely nominal access to the sea, the Poles were determined to make the best of it. They built, in the space of about ten years, a completely new port—Gdynia. Erected at great expense on what had been a bare beach, without any natural facilities, not even a creek, Gdynia became, within a short time, the largest port in the Baltic in terms of goods-turnover—which exceeded 9,000,000 tons per year.

The City of Gdynia, built by Polish enterprise in the 1924-1939 period, became the most modern and progressive town in the country, with a population which reached 135,000 in 1939—starting from a village of 500 people in 1924.

The Polish merchant fleet could begin to develop only after Gdynia was made serviceable and, therefore, it had only a relatively short time for growing before the war. It nevertheless maintained regular transatlantic services, and the Polish merchant ensign was seen in all the ports of the world. Both the Polish Navy and the Merchant Marine have been continuing their work since the outbreak of the war, rendering valuable services to the Allied cause.

In spite of the inadequacy of her access to the sea, Poland has become, in recent years, a seafaring nation. Seventy-seven per cent of Poland's foreign trade was carried on by sea (1938) and the narrow "corridor" linking Poland with the Baltic became Poland's lifeline, on which depended three-quarters of her total trade with the world.

The events of 1939 have proved how easy it is for Germany to take advantage of her strategical base of East Prussia for the purpose of invading Poland. The East Prussian border is only 150 miles north of Warsaw.

That is why there seems to be widespread agreement among responsible statesmen, who have already made declarations on this subject, that Poland's access to the sea should be widened after the present war. This can be achieved by incorporating within Poland Danzig and East Prussia, as well as a section of the coast of West Pomerania. These territories have a considerable Polish population, while their German inhabitants might return to the Reich, as the Germans from the Baltic countries have done.

Poland will never be able to achieve prosperity unless she develops her trade with other countries, to the mutual benefit of all concerned. Since three-quarters of Poland's trade is carried on by sea, both the economic welfare and the independence of Poland are dependent on having a sufficiently wide sea coast, with several ports.

East Prussia has always been a German invasion base in the east and a direct menace to all neighbours, besides being a breeding ground of the worst type of German imperialist. East Prussia had belonged to Poland in the past and there is ample justification for its return to Poland, as a partial compensation for the untold damage and suffering inflicted on the Poles by the Germans in the present war.

As to Silesia, it has a larger Polish population than East Prussia (800,000), and it is an arsenal which cannot be left safely in German hands. Its industrial resources are necessary for the reconstruction of Poland, and the return of Silesia to that country is indispensable from the point of view of European security.

RIBBENTROP-MOLOTOV



1939 PARTITION OF POLAND

THE RIBBENTROP-MOLOTOV PACT

ON August 23rd, 1939, Germany concluded a Pact of Non-Aggression with Soviet Russia. Eight days later, Hitler—having by means of this Pact made sure that Russia would assist rather than oppose him—attacked Poland. Despite the numerical and technical superiority of the German armies, Poland resisted them stubbornly. The Germans did not enter Warsaw until October 1st, while Hel, on the sea coast, held out until October 2nd, and the last important battle was fought at Kock on October 5th.

The resistance of the Polish armies could have lasted much longer if the Soviet armies had not suddenly invaded Poland in the east on September 17th. The Germans, at that time, had already occupied the western half of Poland, while the eastern half of the country was still free, and a second line of defence against the Germans was being prepared along the River Bug, in territories less favourable for blitzkrieg methods.

Taken by surprise in the rear by the Russians, the Polish army had no choice but to seek to withdraw what forces it could to Rumania and Hungary, with a view to continuing the hostilities against the Germans in the west.

The Soviet Government, violating its formal pledges contained in the Pact of Non-Aggression concluded with Poland in 1932, and extended in 1934 until 1945, invaded Polish territory under the excuse that "Poland had ceased to exist as a State." Britain and France had at that time already declared war on Germany, in fulfilment of their obligations to Poland as her allies.

On September 28th, 1939, Germany and Russia concluded a further pact, whereby they partitioned Poland. Germany took 72,806 square miles and Soviet Russia 77,620 square miles. It is notable that the Russian share was the larger. Owing to the greater density of population in the west, the part occupied by Germany had about 22,000,000 inhabitants, and the part taken by Russia 13,000,000 inhabitants.

The part of Poland occupied by Germany had an almost purely Polish population. As to the part occupied by Russia, it had a mixed population, composed of:

5,274,000	Poles
4,841,000	Ukrainians
1,596,000	White Ruthenians
1,109,000	Jews
134,000	Russians
84,000	Lithuanians

The Poles, therefore, had a relative, if not an absolute, majority in that area. Moreover, a very large proportion of the Ukrainians and White Ruthenians were loyal citizens of the Polish Republic, reluctant to change its administration for any other. The Ukrainians and White Ruthenians had their own members in the Warsaw Parliament and they enjoyed various privileges, including the use of their own language in schools and courts.

Soon after the occupation, the Soviet military authorities ordered compulsory elections to the "National Assemblies of the Western Ukraine and White Ruthenia." The vote, carried out under strong pressure of the military, followed usual Soviet practices in so far as only Government-appointed candidates could be voted for. Many of those were sent from Russia, or figured on the candidates' lists without even being present—for instance Marshal Voroshilov and Mr. Molotov were among the candidates. The vote was compulsory and public, no secrecy being observed. Voters were given cards with the names of the official candidates and those who did not want to vote for them had to cross out their names in the presence of officers of the Soviet political police (N.K.V.D., formerly known as G.P.U.). The Assemblies elected in this manner voted, also by open vote, the incorporation of the eastern Polish provinces to the Soviet Union.

The so-called "popular vote" was a mockery of all democratic practice. Carried out under military occupation and under threat of reprisals, it could not express the genuine will of the population. Persons who abstained from the vote were informed that they would not receive ration cards and would, therefore, be condemned to starvation. Those who refused to vote for the Soviet candidates were threatened with far more severe penalties, including death.

Later the Soviet authorities proceeded to deport, to the interior of Russia, the inhabitants of the occupied area. In all about 1,200,000 men, women and children were deported, either to remote Asiatic regions, or to forced-labour camps in the Arctic. About 800,000 of them were Poles and the rest were Jews, White Ruthenians and Ukrainians, belonging to all social classes—including large numbers of workmen.

Both the "popular vote" under military occupation and the mass deportation of the inhabitants were in flagrant contradiction to the elementary rules of international law and notably the Fourth Hague Convention of 1907.

TREATIES IN 1939



HONOURED AND BROKEN

X

INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

IF treaties were always respected, the position of Poland in 1939 could be described as one of great security and strength.

Poland had alliances with France and Rumania, dating from 1921. The French alliance was looked upon as the foundation-stone of Polish policy.

In 1939 Poland concluded an alliance with Great Britain—a step which caused Hitler to denounce his Pact of Non-Aggression with Poland. It cannot be too strongly stressed that the acceptance of the British guarantee and later the alliance was a matter of free choice for Poland. Poland could have bowed to German strength and saved many millions of lives at the price of collaboration with Germany, as others have done. She chose the harder way.

Poland's position in 1939 was, if treaties were honoured, doubly secure—for she was the ally of the two Western-European powers and had formal guarantees of peaceful neighbourship from Russia as well.

The Pact of Non-Aggression of July 25th, 1932, between Poland and the U.S.S.R. deserves close study. In the preamble it states:

"Considering that the Treaty of Peace of March 18th, 1921 (the Treaty of Riga) constitutes, now as in the past, the basis of their reciprocal relations and undertakings."

Article 1. "The two Contracting Parties, recording the fact that they have renounced war as an instrument of national policy in their mutual relations, reciprocally undertake to refrain from taking any aggressive action against or invading the territory of the other Party, either alone or in conjunction with other Powers.

"Any act of violence attacking the integrity and inviolability of the territory or the political independence of the other Contracting Party shall be regarded as contrary to the undertakings contained in the present Article, even if such acts are committed without declaration of war and avoid all possible warlike manifestations."

Article 2. "Should one of the Contracting Parties be attacked by a Third State or by a group of other States, the other Contracting Party undertakes not to give aid or assistance, either directly or indirectly, to the aggressor State during the whole period of conflict."

Article 3. "Each of the Contracting Parties undertakes not to be a party to an agreement openly hostile to the other Party from the point of view of aggression."

The pledges contained in the Russo-Polish Pact of Non-Aggression are clear and unequivocal, as well as its explicit confirmation of the Treaty of Riga of 1921 and of the frontier determined by that treaty.

Any possible lack of clarity was removed by the Convention for the Definition of Aggression, signed in London, on July 3rd, 1933, by Soviet Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Rumania, Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan:

Article 2. "Accordingly, the aggressor in an international conflict shall, subject to the agreements in force between the parties to the dispute, be considered to be that State which is the first to commit any of the following actions:

1. *Declaration of war upon another State.*
2. *Invasion by its armed forces, with or without a declaration of war, of the territory of another State.*
3. *Attack by its land, naval or air forces, with or without a declaration of war, on the territory, vessels or aircraft of another State.*
4. *Naval blockade of the coasts or ports of another State.*
5. *Provision of support to armed bands formed in its territory which have invaded the territory of another State, or refusal to take in its own territory all measures in its power to deprive those bands of all assistance or protection."*

Article 3. "No political, military, economic or other considerations may serve as an excuse or justification for the aggression referred to in Article 2."

The Annex to the Convention stated:

"The High Contracting Parties . . . declare that no act of aggression within the meaning of Article 2 of that Convention can be justified on either of the following grounds, among others:

(a) *The internal condition of a State—e.g. its political, economic or social structure; alleged defects in its administration; disturbances due to strikes, revolutions, counter-revolutions or civil war.*

(b) *The international conduct of a State—e.g. the violation or threatened violation of the material or moral rights or interests of a foreign State or its nationals; the rupture of diplomatic or economic relations; economic or financial boycotts; disputes relating to economic, financial or other obligations towards foreign States; frontier incidents not forming any of the cases of aggression specified in Article 2."*

The above Convention was signed in 1933 in London by Soviet Russia and her western neighbours, including Latvia, Estonia, Poland and Rumania. As it has never been denounced, it is still binding from the point of view of international law.

In May 1934 a Protocol renewing until December 31st, 1945, the 1932 Pact of Non-Aggression between Poland and Russia was signed in Moscow:

"In connection with the signature on this date of the Protocol prolonging the Treaty of Non-Aggression betwen Poland and the U.S.S.R. of July 25th, 1932, each of the High Contracting Parties, having again examined all the provisions of the Peace Treaty concluded at Riga on March 18th, 1921, which constitutes the basis of their mutual relations, declares that it has no obligations and is not bound by any declarations inconsistent with the provisions of the said Peace Treaty and in particular of Article 3 thereof."

These formal treaties and pledges are still valid and binding, unless we admit the right of any Power to cancel or withdraw its obligations at will, whenever it deems it convenient to do so.

In international law, Poland's frontiers of 1939 are still fully recognized by all the Governments of the world.

BRITISH-POLISH



ALLIANCE OF 1939

THE BRITISH GUARANTEE TO POLAND

ON March 31st, 1939, Mr. Neville Chamberlain made the following statement in the House of Commons:

"As the House is aware, certain consultations are now proceeding with other Governments. In order to make perfectly clear the position of His Majesty's Government in the meantime, before those consultations are concluded, I now have to inform the House that during that period, in the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence, and which the Polish Government accordingly considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish Government all support in their power. They have given the Polish Government an assurance to this effect."

The guarantee was given at the initiative of the British Government, which consulted the Polish Government and secured their consent.

Hitler retorted by his speech of April 28th, in which he denounced the German-Polish Pact of Non-Aggression. His step was a violation of international law, for if treaties could be denounced at will by either party, no agreement between nations could ever have any value or meaning.

In the course of the subsequent negotiations conducted in London by the Polish Foreign Secretary, Mr. Beck, the British guarantee was completed by a Declaration of Mutual Assistance, pending the conclusion of a formal Treaty of Alliance between Britain and Poland.

Germany then made far-reaching demands, which the Polish Government rejected, as clearly menacing the independence of Poland.

On August 23rd Germany and Russia concluded, in Moscow, the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. It was clearly aimed against Poland and it strengthened the position of Nazi Germany in Europe, by assuring it of the benevolent neutrality of Russia, or even of its military and economic assistance within certain limits.

Two days after the signature in Moscow of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, the Treaty of Alliance between Britain and Poland was signed in London by Lord Halifax and Count Raczynski, the Polish Ambassador.

Article 1. "Should one of the contracting parties become engaged in hostilities with a European Power in consequence of aggression by the latter against that Contracting Party, the other Contracting Party will at once give the Contracting Party engaged in hostilities all the support and assistance in its power."

Article 2. "(1) The provisions of Article 1 will also apply in the event of any action by a European Power which clearly threatened, directly or indirectly, the independence of one of the Contracting Parties, and was of such a nature that the Party in question considered it vital to resist it with its armed forces.

"(2) Should one of the Contracting Parties become engaged in hostilities with a European Power in consequence of action by that Power which threatened the independence or neutrality of another European State in such a way as to constitute a clear menace to the security of that Contracting Party, the provisions of Article 1 will apply, without prejudice, however, to the rights of the other European State concerned."

Article 3. "Should a European Power attempt to undermine the independence of one of the Contracting Parties by processes of economic penetration or in any other way, the Contracting Parties will support each other in resistance to such attempts. Should the European Power concerned thereupon embark on hostilities against one of the Contracting Parties, the provisions of Article 1 will apply."

A week later, on September 1st, 1939, Germany attacked Poland. The Anglo-Polish Agreement of Mutual Assistance, which is the official name of the alliance, was fully honoured by both sides. Britain declared war on Germany on September 3rd and France followed suit immediately. Although no actual military assistance was extended to Poland during the campaign of the autumn of 1939, the terms of the alliance with Poland have been and are being faithfully carried out by His Majesty's Government.

As to Poland, she remained absolutely loyal to the alliance, by fighting against the Germans and refusing to sign any separate armistice or agreement with the enemy. Unlike other occupied countries, Poland never produced a Quisling, and the underground administration and army, acting under the authority of the Polish Government in London, have steadfastly refused any form of collaboration with the Germans. Moreover, Polish forces took part in the defence of the British Empire, on land, at sea and in the air. The part played by the Polish Air Force in the Battle of Britain was particularly prominent. Thus, the "Agreement of

Mutual Assistance" was well named, although at the time of its signature the idea of Poland lending assistance to Britain might have seemed somewhat far-fetched.

In July 1941 after the signature of the new Soviet-Polish Agreement, which cancelled the provisions of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and therefore constituted, from the legal point of view, a return to the *status quo ante* between Poland and Russia, Mr. Eden handed to General Sikorski, the Polish Prime Minister, the following note:

"In connection with today's signing of the Polish-Soviet agreement, I desire to take the opportunity of informing you that, in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Military Aid between Great Britain and Poland, dated August 25th, 1939, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom has not undertaken any obligation to the U.S.S.R. which would affect the relations between that State and Poland. I desire also to assure you that His Majesty's Government does not recognize any territorial changes made in Poland since August 1939."

The Polish-Soviet agreement of July 1941 was evidence of Poland's goodwill towards Russia. Notwithstanding the action of Russia in 1939, Poland was prepared to open a new chapter and establish friendly relations with the Soviet Union, provided that the Russians renounced the territorial aggrandisement secured at the expense of Poland through the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. The general principle of international law is that any temporary territorial changes which may occur in time of war are not valid, unless they are sanctioned by treaties freely negotiated with all the countries concerned and duly ratified by their Parliaments.

Replying on January 26th, 1944, to a question by Mr. Pickthorn, Mr. Eden stated in the House of Commons:

"The statement of the Prime Minister to which my honourable friend refers, is as follows:

> 'We have not at any time adopted, since this war broke out, the line that nothing could be changed in the territorial structure of various countries. On the other hand, we do not propose to recognize any territorial changes which take place during the war, unless they take place with the free consent and goodwill of the parties concerned.'

"This statement represents the views of His Majesty's Government. The wording of the note which I addressed to General Sikorski after the signature of the Russo-Polish Agreement was:

> 'His Majesty's Government do not recognize any territorial changes which have been effected in Poland since August 1939.'

"This remains the position. His Majesty's Government, of course, stand by the principles enunciated in the Atlantic Charter."

Mr. Molson: "Will the Foreign Secretary make it plain that the Prime Minister's statement was not intended to refer to enemy territory?"

Mr. Eden: "I do not think that there is any misunderstanding about that. So far as enemy countries are concerned, they, of course, are governed by the terms of unconditional surrender already announced."

In reference to Poland's frontiers, this means that any change to the detriment of Poland could not be recognized as legal, while changes to the detriment of Germany, in favour of Poland or of any other Allied nations, may be contemplated.

Poland entered the present war as the first nation to take up arms against German-Nazi aggression. No greater mockery could be made of all principles of law and justice than to suggest that Poland should come out of the war mutilated and reduced in territory. The settlement of the problem of Poland's frontiers will be the test-case of the present war and an augury for the future of Europe.