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THE  
POLISH-SOVIET FRONTIER

by

STANISŁAW GRABSKI

Professor of Political Economy at the University of Lwów  
Chairman of the Polish National Council



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### I.

On August 23, 1939, the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics concluded a Pact of Non-Aggression with Germany. Eight days later Hitler, having by this Pact made sure that the attitude of Soviet Russia would be favourable to himself, made his attack on Poland. Despite the enormous numerical and technical superiority of the German armies, Poland stubbornly defended itself. In the course of the first fortnight of the war the Polish Army suffered enormous losses, but it was learning ever better methods of fighting against armoured forces. From September 11 to 21 it offered fierce resistance at Kutno. On September 13, Lwów held the attacking German army in its suburbs and continued to defend itself successfully until the 22nd. The defence of Modlin lasted still longer, until the 28th, and the Germans did not enter Warsaw till October 1. They took Hel on October 2, while the remains of the Polish army held out at Kock until October 5.

However, in the middle of the fierce and ever more successful fighting which the Polish armies were carrying on against the German invader, the Soviet armies, quite unprovoked and quite unexpectedly, crossed the Polish frontier on September 17. At that date the Germans had occupied the western half of Poland. The whole of the eastern half was still in the possession of the Polish governmental authorities and armed forces. A rainy autumn was coming, so sorely desired by the Polish divisions which were reorganizing for a fresh war of manœuvre east of the Bug, where the terrain would be much less favourable for the motorized German *Blitzkrieg*. But all their plans and hopes were thwarted by the action of the Soviet armies in crossing the eastern frontier of Poland. It became obvious that victory over the Germans could be sought only in the west.

Pressed as they were from two sides—by the Germans in the west and the Russians in the east—the Polish armies, rather than lay down their arms, made their way through Roumania and Hungary to France. The President and Government of Poland left the country. Whatever may have been the faults and omissions of that Government, it remained to the end faithful to its alliance with Great Britain and France, and preserved intact the honour of the Polish State and nation. It passed the Polish-Roumanian frontier only when the entry of the Soviet forces into Poland had deprived the Polish army of the terrain for further resistance to the Germans.

The Soviet People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Molotov, issued a proclamation on September 17 announcing the armed occupation of the eastern half of Poland, not yet occupied by the Germans, in order that its inhabitants might be saved the horrors of war. And, indeed, by their action the Soviet authorities did shorten the military operations in Poland, perhaps by a few months.

But the population of Lwów, at least, had quite another aim. Although the city was already on the 18th cut off from the rest of the country by the Soviet forces which had advanced from the east, it still successfully resisted the German attacks for four days.

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The Soviet-German Pact of August 23 was complemented five weeks later by a further pact between the same two countries providing for the partition of Poland, the Germans taking 72,806 square miles with a population of 22 million, and the U.S.S.R. 77,620 square miles with a population of 13 million. (See Map I.)



Thus the U.S.S.R., which had previously been separated from Germany by Poland, obtained a common frontier with Germany along the Ribbentrop-Molotov Line. And it was on this line that military operations began when Hitler attacked Soviet Russia on June 22, 1941.

Only four days later, on June 26, the German armies crossed the eastern frontier of the Polish Republic in its northern sector near Minsk, and ten days later, on July 2, in its southern sector in Volhynia.

The resistance offered to the German invaders by the much more numerous Soviet forces in the eastern half of Poland lasted only one-third as long as that offered by the less well-equipped Polish army in the smaller, western half of the country, although in the east there was more room for manœuvre.

It was not till they reached Smolensk and were fighting on their own soil that the Soviet armies resisted the German armoured divisions as fiercely as the Poles had done.

On July 30, 1941, the following agreement was concluded between the U.S.S.R. and Poland:

(1) The U.S.S.R. admits that the Soviet-German treaties of 1939 concerning territorial changes in Poland have lost their force. The Polish Government declares that Poland is not bound with any third power by any agreement directed against the U.S.S.R.

(2) Diplomatic relations between the two governments will be renewed the moment the present agreement is signed, and ambassadors will be appointed immediately.

(3) Both governments pledge themselves to give one another every kind of aid and support in the present war against Hitlerite Germany.

(4) The Government of the U.S.S.R. declares its assent to the raising, in the territory of the U.S.S.R., of a Polish army, whose commander will be appointed by the Polish Government in consultation with the Government of the U.S.S.R. The Polish Army in the territory of the U.S.S.R. will be under the operational authority of the Chief Command of the U.S.S.R., on which the Polish Army will be represented. All details concerning the leadership, organization, and use of this armed force will be determined by a further agreement.

(5) The agreement comes into force immediately and does not require ratification.

The following note was added at the end of the above agreement:

"The moment diplomatic relations are renewed the Soviet Government will grant an amnesty to all Polish citizens who are at present deprived of their liberty within the territory of the U.S.S.R., either as prisoners-of-war or for other proper reasons."

After this agreement had been signed, at the Foreign Office, Mr. Eden handed to General Sikorski the following note:

"In connexion 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 25, 1939, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom has not undertaken any obligations 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."

Mr. Eden's declaration is clear. There is no ambiguity in it. It permits of no distorted interpretation. Great Britain does not recognize any territorial



changes made in Poland since August 1939—including the detachment from Poland and the incorporation with the U.S.S.R. of the Polish provinces lying to the east of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Line. And since the declaration was made immediately after the signature of the Polish-Soviet agreement, it has the force of an official commentary by H.M. Government on that agreement—in complete accord with the Polish interpretation of it.

This was stated by General Sikorski when he handed to Mr. Eden the following answer :

“ The Polish Government acknowledges the receipt of Your Excellency's letter of July 30, 1941, and desires to express its sincere satisfaction with the declaration of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to the effect that it does not recognize any territorial changes made in Poland since August 1939. This corresponds to the views of the Polish Government, which, as H.M. Government was previously informed, has not recognized any territorial changes made at the outbreak of the present war.”

A strictly legal analysis of Article 1 of the Polish-Soviet agreement permits of no other interpretation. The Government of the U.S.S.R., when admitting that “ the Soviet-German treaties of 1939 concerning territorial changes in Poland have lost their force ”, thereby admitted that the territorial changes made in Poland by virtue of those treaties have ceased to have any legal significance. For the reference in the Polish-Soviet agreement of July 30 could only be to the legality of the partition of Poland carried out by the U.S.S.R. in conjunction with Germany in September 1939, or to the legal claims of the U.S.S.R. to the Polish territory east of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Line thereby assigned to it. Actually this territory was at that moment in German hands.

It was not Article 1 only of the Polish-Soviet agreement which denied the legality of the detachment from Poland of the eastern half of the Republic, annexed by the U.S.S.R. in September 1939.

This is done also by Article 4, whereby the Soviet Government declares its assent to the raising, in the territory of the U.S.S.R., of a Polish army, whose commander is to be appointed by the Polish Government. For a Polish army could only be an army composed of Polish citizens. And the aggregations of Poles from which an army could be raised were those who had been deported into the centre of Russia from the Polish districts which had been occupied by virtue of the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement. By acknowledging the Polish Government's right to raise an army in the territory of the U.S.S.R. from the inhabitants of those districts, the Soviet Government likewise acknowledged that they were Polish citizens, and that the districts in question legally belonged to Poland.

The Polish citizenship of the inhabitants of the Polish provinces annexed by the U.S.S.R. in 1939 is still more clearly asserted in the note added at the end of the agreement, where it is said :

“ The Soviet Government will grant an amnesty to all Polish citizens who are deprived of their liberty within the territory of the U.S.S.R.”

For at least 90 per cent. of all the Polish citizens who were deprived of their liberty within the territory of the U.S.S.R. came from those provinces.

The provisions of the agreement of July 30, 1941, were at first understood in this sense by the Soviet Government also. As an eye-witness of the liberation of Polish citizens in August and September of that year from the prisons, forced-labour camps, and places of compulsory settlement where they had been confined, and as one of those who thus regained his freedom, I must do the authorities of the N.K.V.D. justice. At that time, notwithstanding the great difficulties of communication caused by the war, they did endeavour as quickly as possible to restore the rights of free Polish citizens to the majority of those inhabitants of the eastern half of Poland arrested and deported between September 1939, and June 1941—irrespective of their nationality or religion. The only ones whom they still kept in prisons and camps were Ukrainian Nationalist leaders, for the alleged reason that they were decidedly inclined to support Germany, and that if they were set at liberty, the Polish Embassy in the U.S.S.R. would have no means of preventing them from taking action injurious to the whole Allied cause.

So it was also in October and November. In the course of the first four months after the signing of the Polish-Soviet agreement some hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens (including a considerable number belonging to national minorities) received their freedom and, with the co-operation of the Soviet authorities, who were well-disposed to them at that time, were given Polish passports and cultural and material support by the Polish Embassy. Simultaneously the ranks of the Polish army were filled by about 46,000 volunteers from the Polish citizens (including many Jews and White Ruthenians, and a smaller number of Ukrainians) who had been released from prisons and camps. But in November the Commissar of the Kazak Republic, General Shcherbakov, issued an order that all Polish citizens of Ukrainian, White Ruthenian, and Jewish nationality who were at liberty and were fit for military service should be directed to the Red Army. To a protest made against this by the Polish Embassy, the Soviet Government replied in a note of December 1, in which it threw doubt upon the Polish citizenship of persons of Jewish, Ukrainian and White Ruthenian origin who had been deported during the Soviet occupation from the eastern provinces of Poland, “ because the question of the frontiers of the U.S.S.R. and Poland is not yet settled, and is subject to revision in the future.” Stalin did, indeed, sign a declaration at the Kremlin in conjunction with General Sikorski on December 4, and afterwards published it, to the effect that the relations of the U.S.S.R. would be based on “ mutual honest observance of the undertaking they have assumed.” Yet immediately after General Sikorski's departure from Russia the Soviet Government, in its notes to the Allied States concerning German barbarities, began to mention Polish towns as if they were towns of the U.S.S.R. In 1942 it was rendered impossible for the Polish Embassy to continue to protect Polish citizens within the territory of the U.S.S.R. ; and on January 16, 1943, the U.S.S.R. Government informed the Polish Embassy that it was withdrawing the right of Polish citizenship from all those whose possession of it had been previously acknowledged ; and on April 26 it broke off diplomatic relations with Poland.

Although the Government of the U.S.S.R. thus failed to carry out the provisions of the Polish-Soviet agreement of July 30, 1941, it did not denounce the



agreement, which accordingly retained its legal validity. Now by that agreement the Soviet Government admitted that the German-Soviet treaties concerning territorial changes in Poland had lost their force—and that the Ribbentrop-Molotov line partitioning Poland, described in those treaties, had accordingly likewise lost its validity. But if the partition of Poland between Germany and the U.S.S.R. was no longer valid, then Poland continued legally to exist undivided as it had been before September 1939. And if it still existed, though temporarily under German occupation, and was recognized not only by Great Britain and the United States, but also by the U.S.S.R.—as was indicated by the mere fact that the Soviet Government concluded with it the agreement of July 30, 1941—then there was no common Soviet-German frontier. The Ribbentrop-Molotov Line was never at any time the Polish-Soviet frontier. It was a Soviet-German frontier, drawn across Poland, which, as both the contracting parties asserted, had vanished from the surface of the earth and was never to reappear.

Doubts have, however, from time to time been raised by eminent British and American publicists as to whether Poland's rights to its pre-war eastern frontier, though this was undoubtedly determined by international treaty, are yet justified; and whether it would not be fitter to take as frontier the Curzon Line.

As one of those who took part in the peace negotiations at Minsk and Riga which ended in the conclusion of the peace treaty of 1921, whereby the frontier between Poland and the U.S.S.R. was determined, I wish to state certain facts concerning the negotiations and the circumstances which preceded them, and also to give a certain number of geographical and historical explanations, designed to enable my readers to judge for themselves which of three lines which have at different times been proposed is the most suitable: the Riga, or the Curzon, or the Ribbentrop-Molotov Line.

## II.

The Treaty of Versailles fixed the frontiers dividing restored Poland from Germany. The question of its eastern frontier was left to be decided by the great allied Powers later.

This was done because whatever frontier between Poland and Soviet Russia might have been drawn on the map by the Peace Conference, it would not have been recognized by Russia, and in the existing circumstances the frontier could only be determined by a direct understanding between Poland and the latter.

But meanwhile these two States were at war.

The Polish nation never recognized the partitions of the Republic carried out at the end of the 18th century by Prussia, Austria and Russia. It protested actively against them by the insurrections of 1794, 1806, 1830, 1848, and 1863. There was not a generation of Poles but stood to arms in order to demonstrate to the world the right of the Polish nation to regain its liberty and to reunite the territories torn apart by the annexing powers.

Accordingly, when all the three dynasties which had partitioned Poland fell in 1918, the Polish people perceived that at last the triumph of justice over superior force was at hand, and that the historic injury done to their country by the partitions was now to be made good. This conviction was further strengthened by the decree of the People's Commissars signed by Lenin in August 1918:

“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 connexion with the partition 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 independence and unity.”

When, however, after the capitulation of Germany its armies withdrew from the areas which they had been occupying in 1918, and which Russia had taken from Poland at the time of the partitions, these areas were immediately reoccupied by the Soviet armies moving westwards on the track of the retreating German forces and authorities. On the other hand, the Polish armies moved eastwards. During 1919 they freed from Russian rule almost the whole of the area taken by Russia at the third partition, of 1795, and half of that taken at the second partition, in 1793.

Nevertheless Poland, though it had a perfect historical right to do so, did not incorporate with itself all the provinces of the former Polish Republic which it had freed. After driving back the Bolsheviks from Wilno, the Head of the State and Commander in Chief, as he was at that time, Joseph Pilsudski, issued a manifesto on April 22, 1919, announcing a temporary administration of the country through local autonomous committees under Polish protection, until the people should have freely decided on their legal and political status for the future. In accordance with this, elections to Municipal Councils were held immediately in all the larger towns freed from Russian rule in 1919; and for the general administration of the country a special “Eastern Districts Committee” was set up, composed of local citizens. Still earlier—on March 21—The Polish Socialist Party had approached the Soviet Government with the proposal that both the Bolshevik and the Polish armies should be withdrawn from the area taken by Russia at the time of the partitions, in order that the population might decide their future allegiance by a free plebiscite. But the Soviet Government preferred to have the question of the Polish-Russian frontier settled by its armies.

In these circumstances the Allied Supreme Council issued the following declaration on December 8, 1919:

“The Chief 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 28, 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 as shown on Map V (see p. 13).

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."

On July 11, 1920, the British Government proposed the above line to the Soviets as an armistice line between Poland and Soviet Russia. The Polish Army was to withdraw to it, and the Russian Army to stand fifty kilometres to the east of it.

From that time the line has been called the "Curzon Line."

What was it actually?

In 1920 it was proposed by Lord Curzon to Poland and the Soviet Union as a line along which military operations were to cease, and not at all as a frontier line. The frontier was to be determined later by a peace conference which it was suggested should be held in London. But this proposal was rejected by the Soviet Government in its certainty of military victory. Indeed, its real aim was not so much the obtainment of the best possible frontier for itself in the west, as the occupation of the whole of Poland and the establishment there of a communist government, the future members of which accompanied the Bolshevik armies on their march on Warsaw.

Attention may be drawn to the following sentences from an order of the day issued by General Tukhachevsky, Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet forces, on July 2, 1920:

"In the west the fortunes of the world-revolution are at stake. Over the corpse of Poland lies the way to world-conflagration."

But in 1919 the Supreme Council had fixed the above line provisionally, without prejudice to the final determination of the eastern frontier of Poland, as the boundary of the area to be regularly administered by Poland, while "the eventual rights of Poland to territories situated to the east of the above-mentioned line" were "expressly reserved."

In view of the military situation between the Soviet Union and Poland at that time, any Polish-Soviet frontier drawn by the Supreme Council would have been unreal. Accordingly, the Supreme Council confined itself to determining the frontier of such indisputably Polish territory as was not questioned at that time either by the Bolsheviks or even by the so-called White *émigrés* and the White armies of Kolchak, Denikin, and Wrangel. But at the same time it expressly admitted that Poland had claims to the territory in dispute between it and Russia, which it might put forward when its frontiers were being finally determined.

Accordingly, neither His Majesty's Government in 1920, nor the Supreme Council in 1919 described the "Curzon Line" as a suitable Polish-Russian or Polish-Soviet frontier. It was intended only to demarcate indisputably Polish territory; and beyond it to the east lay territory in dispute between Poland and the Soviet Union—or the Russian Empire, for many governments in Europe at that time were still counting on the victory of the Russian White generals.

What was the origin of this line dividing the Polish provinces of "the former Russian Empire" into such as were indisputably Polish and such as were in dispute between Poland and Russia?

Its genesis lies in the history of the partition of Poland as it may be followed on the accompanying maps.

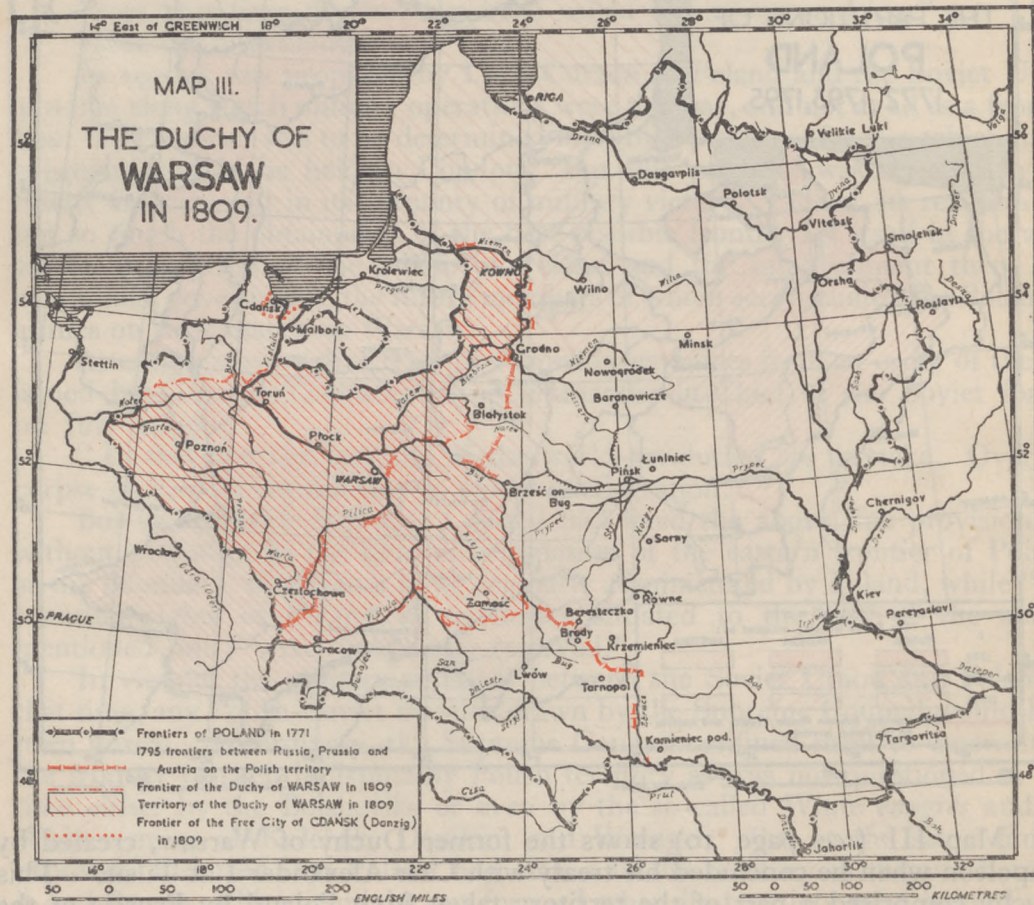
Map II. illustrates the three partitions, of 1772, 1793, and 1795.



Map III (see page 10) shows the former Duchy of Warsaw, created by Napoleon when he concluded his treaty with Czar Alexander I at Tilsit. This Duchy comprised a part of the territory taken from Poland by Prussia at the first partition, as well as the territory taken by it at the second and third partitions, with the exception of the district of Białystok, of which Napoleon made a present to Alexander. In 1809 it recovered from Austria the districts which the latter had taken from Poland at the time of the third partition. The Congress of Vienna in 1815 took from it and returned to Prussia the two provinces of Poznań and Bydgoszcz, forming the remainder of the Duchy into the so-called Kingdom of Poland, connected with Russia by a dynastic union. The boundaries of this Kingdom are shown on Map IV (see page 11).



The Kingdom of Poland, though incorporated with Russia in so far as they had a common monarch, was nevertheless a separate State. Its constitution was quite different from that of Russia. Whereas Russia was an absolute monarchy, the Kingdom had parliamentary representation, in accordance with three hundred years of Polish tradition. (Parliamentary government had been established in Poland at the beginning of the sixteenth century.) The Kingdom also had a separate government (except for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and a separate army. The Czar took the title of King of Poland, and Alexander I's successor, Nicholas I, had himself solemnly crowned at Warsaw



in 1825. He was, however, an oriental despot, hating parliamentary institutions, and he restricted constitutional liberties in the Kingdom of Poland by the most various measures. This led to ever-increasing excitement among the Polish community, and when, in 1830, he determined to use the Polish army for the restoration of the Bourbon dynasty in France (where it had been dethroned by the people), and for the crushing of the revolution which had broken out in Belgium, the National Revolution broke out in Warsaw.

The numerical superiority of the Russian armies was, however, too great. After suppressing the revolution, Czar Nicholas I abolished the Diet of the Kingdom of Poland, and its separate Council of Ministers, and appointed the Russian Field-Marshal Paskevich governor, with absolute authority. The separate



Bank of Poland was, however, retained, along with the Polish currency, the *Code Napoléon* (introduced by the Grand Duchy of Warsaw), the Polish educational system (apart from the university of Warsaw, which was abolished because so many students had taken part in the insurrection), the description "Kingdom of Poland," and the previously-existing boundaries. Paskevich introduced a military government with hardly any but Russians in the higher posts, but he



made no attempt to russify the Polish community. In the schools instruction continued to be given by Polish teachers in Polish; in the lawcourts Polish judges still conducted trials in Polish, and the majority of the lower and middle grades of officials was composed of Poles.

In 1863 a fresh insurrection broke out in the Kingdom. After its suppression the Russian Government began the russification of the whole administration (including even local administration), the judicial, and the educational, systems throughout the Kingdom. In all the class-rooms and corridors of the Warsaw secondary schools notices were posted up in Russian to the effect that "speaking Polish within the walls of the school is forbidden." (None the less, during the nine years in which I attended secondary school at Warsaw I never heard my schoolfellows speaking anything but Polish. I was punished with a few hours in the school *carcer* occasionally for speaking Polish, but that was all.) Yet the czar retained the title of King of Poland, and the boundaries of the Kingdom remained unchanged. After Russia had received a Constitution none but Poles were elected to the *duma* to represent the Kingdom, at four successive elections; they constituted a homogeneous Polish fraction.

When the world war broke out in 1914, Germany and Russia attempted to outbid one another with the promises they made to the Polish nation. In the outcome, Germany and Austria-Hungary on November 5, 1916, announced the erection of the Kingdom of Poland into "an independent State with a hereditary monarchy and constitutional government", and set up a Polish Regency Council, which immediately proceeded to establish a Polish administration, under the control of the occupying military authorities. On the Russian side a number of declarations were made, by the commander-in-chief, the premier, the minister for foreign affairs, and finally by the czar himself, promising the reunion of the whole Polish nation, and the grant to it of the right freely to organize its own national, social, and economic institutions. These promises were definitely formulated by Prince Lvov, Prime Minister in the government established in March 1917, after Nicholas II had been dethroned. In a manifesto addressed to the Poles he assured them that "the Russian nation, which had thrown off the yoke, admitted the full right of the Polish brother-nation to decide its own fate according to its own will." Moreover, he promised aid in the "establishment of an independent Polish State."

In actual fact, however, the Russian revolutionary government was unable to give the Polish nation any aid against the Germans, who still retained possession of the provinces of Poznań and Pomerania (Pomorze), which had been detached from the Grand Duchy of Warsaw by the Congress of Vienna; or against the Austrians, who likewise had no intention of renouncing Galicia. For the Revolution had seriously disorganized the Russian Army, in which soldiers' councils had been immediately introduced and had removed, and sometimes even murdered, their officers.

In point of fact, then, Prince Lvov's declaration was equivalent to the recognition by Russia of the termination by the Central Powers of the union established by the Congress of Vienna between the Congress Kingdom and the Russian Empire.

On Map V are shown: (a) the frontiers of Poland before the Partitions, (b) the frontiers of the Polish Kingdom 1815, (c) the Curzon Line. From a comparison of these three lines it is evident that the Supreme Council on December 8, 1919, acknowledged as indisputably Polish the territories taken from Poland by Austria and Prussia at the time of the three partitions, with the exception of the Danzig area, while those taken by Russia in 1772, 1793, and 1795 were regarded as in dispute.

For the Curzon Line marks almost exactly the limit of Russia's 18th-century acquisitions, or in other words the eastern border of the Kingdom of Poland plus only the district of Białystok, presented to Alexander by Napoleon in 1807.



But, of course, the Supreme Council could not deny to Poland the right to claim the return of the districts taken from it by Russia at the partitions, when it was recognizing the recovery by Poland of all the territories (with the exception of a small piece at the mouth of the Vistula) taken from it by Austria and Prussia when they partitioned Poland in conjunction with Russia. So it expressly reserved "the eventual right of Poland to territories situated to the east of the above-mentioned line."



What were these claims which Poland might properly put forward to districts lying to the east of the Curzon Line, *i.e.*, to the districts taken from it by Russia between 1772 and 1795?

If I am to give an exact answer to this question, I must be permitted first to give a short account of the circumstances under which these districts originally came to be included within the frontiers of the Polish Republic.

In the 10th century, out of the numerous Slavonic tribes inhabiting the area between the Elbe and the Dnieper three States were formed: the Ruthenian, on the Dnieper; the Polish, on the Oder and the Vistula; and the Czech. But in the 12th century the Ruthenian State fell apart into numerous petty duchies. In 1170 there were seventy-two of them. Simultaneously, however, the Ruthenian dukes subdued the Finno-Turanian tribes dwelling between the upper reaches of the Dnieper and the Volga. There a number of new Ruthenian duchies came into being, the strongest of which was the duchy of Suzdal, near Moscow. In the middle of the 13th century all these Ruthenian duchies were subjugated by the Mongols, who ruled over them for two hundred years, without, however, modifying their political or ecclesiastical structure. They contented themselves with the exercise of a general suzerainty and supervision over the Ruthenian dukes and the exaction of tribute from them.

A hundred years later, however, the powerful Mongol empire, created by the military genius of Jhinghis Khan, had begun to decay. In the 14th century suzerainty over the Ruthenian dukes was exercised by the khans of the "Golden Horde," who led a nomad life on the Volga steppes. By their astute policy, taking advantage of the quarrels between individual Tartar leaders and securing their support, the Muscovite dukes of the same century obtained authority, by conquest or by dynastic union, over an ever-increasing number of north-east Ruthenian duchies.

At this same time Lithuania made its appearance on the stage of history; a not very numerous, but warlike pagan nation. The Lithuanian dukes, profiting by the internal decay of the Mongol empire, tore from it increasingly extensive areas which had belonged to the old Ruthenian duchies on the Dnieper, and extended their dominion southwards to Kiev and beyond. In the second half of the 14th century the majority of the population of Lithuania was composed of Christian Ruthenian Slavs. Wilno became the capital. The influence of the Ruthenian knightage made itself increasingly felt at the courts of the Lithuanian dukes, and the White-Ruthenian language was more and more used. While Moscow became the rallying point for the mixed Slavonic and Finno-Turanian peoples of the north-east Ruthenian districts in their struggle against Tartar domination, the purely Slavonic west and south-west Ruthenian tribes came together under the rule of the Lithuanian dukes who had liberated them from the Mongol yoke.

The tribes of what is now called White Ruthenia and the Ukraine maintained a certain political and cultural contact, from the middle of the 10th to the end of the 13th century, with those of Great Russia, who were ruled by dukes of the same dynasty. After that, however, until the time of the partitions of

Poland in the 18th century, the paths of their cultural development completely diverged, and three separate languages came into being: the Russian, in the Muscovite dominions; the White-Ruthenian, to the north of the Pripet, and the Ukrainian, on the lower Dnieper. The Great Russians always spoke of themselves as *Ruskiye*, which Latin writers trans-literated as *Russi*; whereas the Ukrainians formerly called themselves *Rusyny*, which Latin writers modified into *Rutheni*. Since the end of the 19th century, however, in order to mark more clearly their difference from the Great Russians, the southern Ruthenians have begun to call themselves "Ukrainians." The White-Ruthenian language is undoubtedly more akin phonetically to the Polish than to the Russian. From the middle of the 19th century onwards the Russian czars did their utmost to stifle this Ukrainian and White-Ruthenian feeling that they were a distinct people from the Great Russians, and they put forward the official view that the Ukrainian and White-Ruthenian languages were merely dialects of Russian. This conception, however, did not survive the fall of the czardom. This event was immediately followed by the creation of a provisional Ukrainian government at Kiev: a Ukrainian Soviet, which replaced Russian by Ukrainian as the language of the administration, schools and army. But even in the 14th century neither the White-Ruthenian nor the Ukrainian knights had felt any consciousness, or desire, of unity with Moscow.

Lithuania increased in power and united more and more of the old Ruthenian duchies under its dominion, not without considerable aid from their inhabitants. But at the same time its relations with the still powerful Tartars became inflamed, and an increasingly aggressive attitude towards it was taken up by the Order of Teutonic Knights, which had made itself master of Pomerania (Pomorze) and East Prussia. Consequently Lithuania was brought to the conclusion that its own forces were insufficient for successful defence, and that if it were to acquire permanent allies it must renounce paganism and enter the community of Christian civilized nations. It had only to choose whether it would receive Christianity from Catholic Poland or from Orthodox Moscow. It chose Poland. In 1385 a congress of Polish and Lithuanian Notables was held at the Lithuanian town of Krewo, where it was decided that Lithuania should be dynastically united with Poland by the marriage of the Lithuanian duke Jagiello (who at baptism took the purely Polish name of Władysław (Ladislas)) with the fifteen-year-old Polish queen Jadwiga, who had been crowned three years before.

This dynastic union of the two countries, though at first intended to be exclusively political, soon began to change into a social and cultural union. The mere facts that Lithuania voluntarily received the Christian faith from Polish hands and that the first clergy in the country were Polish caused the Lithuanian knights to take a keen interest in Polish manners and customs. This, in turn, led to the holding of another congress of Polish and Lithuanian Notables, at Horodło, on the Bug, in 1413, on the occasion of which the Roman-Catholic knights of Lithuania (and later the Orthodox also) were received into the Polish knightly clans (*związki herbowe*). This was the beginning of a process which lasted unbroken for four hundred and fifty years, where through both the knights and burghers of Lithuania, White Ruthenia, and the Ukraine were incorporated ever more closely in a cultural community with those of Poland, whose civilization was quite distinct from that of Moscow. In 1569 the united Lithuanian



and Polish Diets changed the dynastic union into a more far-reaching one. From that time onwards there was only one parliament for the united Republic, and one legislature; a uniform currency, a single customs system, and a single electoral college for choosing the kings. The treasuries and the armies of Poland and Lithuania still remained distinct. For a certain time, too, the official language of Lithuania continued to be White-Ruthenian, which was still spoken by the majority of the knights. But the Act of Union was drawn up in Polish. The union was at first opposed by the Lithuanian Magnates, but it was strongly demanded by the smaller nobility and gentry, and more particularly by the White-Ruthenian and Ukrainian sections. The last-named, indeed, went so far as to incorporate the south-eastern districts which they inhabited in Poland. It was also accepted by the great lords from the formerly separate Ruthenian and Lithuanian duchies, who were afraid above all of Moscow, constantly at war with Lithuania as it was, and saw their only hope of successful resistance in the closest relations with Poland.

In the 17th century not only the whole of the Lithuanian and White-Ruthenian nobility and gentry, but also the White-Ruthenian burgher class, adopted the Polish language. In the 18th century Lithuania and its White-Ruthenian dependencies were incorporated with Poland as closely as is Wales today with England. The Lithuanian and White-Ruthenian languages were still spoken only by the peasants in their villages, whereas the educated classes used only Polish. The sermons and hymns in churches were also in Polish. The feeling of Polish patriotism was just as great in the regions of former Lithuania and of the old Ruthenian tribes on the Niemen and the Dnieper as on the Vistula and the Warta. Accordingly, after the first partition of Poland in 1772, Lithuania was finally made into one homogeneous State with Poland, with a single treasury and a single army, by the new Constitution promulgated on May 3, 1791. The insurrection directed simultaneously against Prussia and Russia in 1794 was headed by Kościuszko, who came from White Ruthenia and was undoubtedly of White-Ruthenian origin, and its main centres were Cracow, Warsaw, and Wilno.

The partitions of Poland led to the amalgamation of the eastern provinces of the Republic with the Russian Empire. But Polish civilization long maintained its position there. The Empress Catharine, who carried out the partitions in conjunction with Prussia and Austria, attempted to introduce the official use of the Russian language throughout the territory she had annexed; but her son Paul restored the use of Polish, which was maintained likewise by Czar Alexander I. It was during the reign of the latter that the Polish University of Wilno attained its greatest splendour, and another Polish institute of higher studies was founded under the name of the "Liceum" at the Volhynian town of Krzemieniec, while numerous Polish secondary schools sprang up in all the larger towns of the country.

After the failure of the insurrection of 1830, in which men from the provinces of Wilno and Volhynia took a distinguished part, Czar Nicholas I abolished Polish institutes of learning everywhere except in the Kingdom of Poland, and began the russification of the districts annexed at the time of the partitions by the compulsory conversion of the Uniates or Greek Catholics to the Orthodox faith. Nevertheless not only the nobility, gentry, and burghers, but even the

peasants of the Wilno province rose in large numbers in 1863. That province also produced the most eminent of the leaders of the insurrection, namely Traugutt, as well as the creator of the Polish Legions during the last world war, Piłsudski.

It was not only army leaders, however, who grew up in the eastern provinces of the Republic. Until quite recently they produced also outstanding figures in the progress of Polish civilization: the two greatest Polish poets, Mickiewicz and Słowacki; the most distinguished musicians, Moniuszko and Paderewski; a number of eminent novelists: Rzewuski, Kraszewski, Orzeszkowa, and Rodziewiczówna; the well-known scholars Jan and Jędrzej Śniadecki; and very many others.

After the insurrection of 1863 had been crushed the pressure of russification increased enormously. The speaking of Polish in all public buildings and the sale of land to Poles were forbidden. A Pole might not even purchase a piece of ground from another Pole. All Polish cultural associations were prohibited. The teaching in the schools was conducted only in Russian. The government introduced large numbers of Russian merchants and industrialists. Only they received government contracts. The children of educated burgher families remained Polish in spite of the pressure exercised by the administration and the schools. But the children of the peasants, whose parents spoke White-Ruthenian at home, succumbed and were easily russified by the schools.

In the course, therefore, of the forty years from 1864 to the beginning of the present century Russian nationalism and civilization took root to a certain extent in the consciousness of the broad masses of the people torn from Poland by Russia at the partitions.

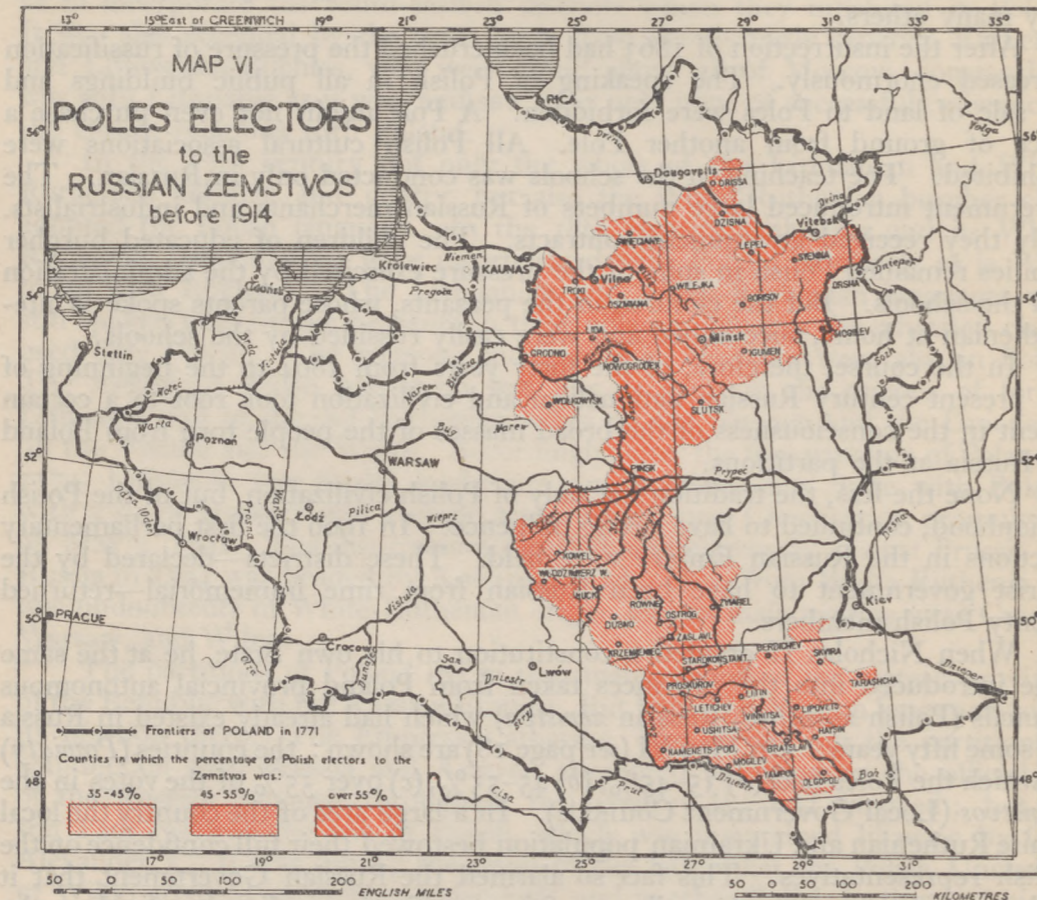
None the less, the tradition not only of Polish civilization, but of the Polish nationhood, continued to have strong influence. In 1906 the first parliamentary elections in the Russian Empire were held. These districts—declared by the czarist government to have been Russian from time immemorial—returned twenty Polish members.

When Nicholas II granted a constitution to his own State, he at the same time introduced into the provinces taken from Poland provincial autonomous councils (Polish *ziemstwa*, Russian *zemstva*) which had already existed in Russia for some fifty years. On Map VI (see page 18) are shown: the counties (*Powiaty*) in which the Poles had (a) 35–45%, (b) 45–55%, (c) over 55% of the votes in the *Zemstvos* (Local Government Councils). In a large area of the country the local White Ruthenian and Ukrainian population bestowed their full confidence on the Polish representatives. This fact so alarmed the Russian Government that it endeavoured to prevent the collapse of its russification policy by dividing the electors to the *zemstva* into the two national groups, Polish and Russian, all Ukrainians and White Ruthenians being counted as belonging to the latter, so that they might not in future elect Poles.

After the fall of the czarism in February 1917, an end was put to all the restrictions which had till that time hampered the social and cultural initiative of the Polish, White-Ruthenian, and Ukrainian population in the annexed provinces of the former Polish Republic. The Poles took occasion immediately to organize their national system of elementary schools. In the course of one year they organized several thousand schools.



The White-Ruthenian, Ukrainian, and Lithuanian populations lived in free association with Poland—at first dynastic and later governmental—for almost 500 years. To Russia they were bound by annexation and armed force for 130 years. Poland had never endeavoured to polonize them by force. They had voluntarily adopted the Western-European civilization of Poland, as being higher than their own. Russia throughout the ninety years after 1830 had used every method of compulsion open to the administration in the provinces taken at the time of the partitions, to annihilate every trace of their former union with the Polish State and Polish civilization, and to make of them a purely Russian country.



The Russian Government's introduction of separate Polish and Russian electoral groups afforded official confirmation that the country had not become Russian despite all that had been done to make it so, but was a country of mixed nationalities, in which the Polish civilization exerted strong influence.

In view of these facts the Supreme Council in December 1919, could not deny Poland's rights to the districts situated to the east of the Curzon Line. Whereas it recognized the territories of the Polish Republic to the west of that line as indisputably Polish, it regarded the districts taken by Russia in the course of the three partitions (as already said) as in dispute between Poland and Russia.

IV

There were two possible methods of settling the question of the territories in dispute between Poland and Russia: territories of mixed Polish, White-Ruthenian, and Russian population, or of Polish, Ukrainian, and Russian, to which Poland had historical rights by virtue of their 500 years of voluntary union with it; while Russia put forward claims on its part because of their attachment to the Russian Empire throughout the last 130 years. The one method would have been to divide the area in question between Poland and the Soviet Union; the other, to erect White Ruthenia and the Ukraine into buffer States, which would then themselves determine their relationship to Poland on the one hand and to Russia on the other, either entering into a union with one or other of them, or deciding to remain completely independent, legally and politically.

This second idea was supported by Marshal Piłsudski, at that time Head of the Polish State, who gave expression to his views in his proclamation "To the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania" of April 19, 1919.

"Your country," he there said, "for a hundred and twenty years has known no freedom under the pressure of hostile power, Russian, German, or Bolshevik, which without consulting the people has imposed upon them foreign modes of action, hampering the exercise of the will and often destructive to your manner of life. This state of constant slavery—which I personally know well, since I was born in this unhappy land—must at last be brought to an end; and at last this land, forgotten as it seems of God, must win its freedom and the full right to declare its aims and needs without fear. The Polish Army, which I have led here to overthrow the rule of violence and superior force and to put an end to the government of the country against the will of its people, brings liberty and freedom of action to all of you. I desire to make it possible for you to deal with internal affairs and decide questions of nationality and religion for yourselves, without suffering any violence or pressure from the side of Poland. And so, notwithstanding that the guns are still firing and blood is still flowing in your country, I am not introducing a military administration, but a civil one composed of native sons of this land."

The most ardent upholders of Piłsudski's policy were to be found in the Polish Socialist Party.

I was at that time Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Polish Diet. Personally I had grave doubts respecting the feasibility of this programme. In 1917 and 1918 I had travelled through the length and breadth of the Ukraine and had reached the conviction that Ukrainian national consciousness existed at that time only among the small enlightened class, while to the masses of peasants and workers it was still completely foreign. When the small Bolshevik army (comprising less than 10,000 bayonets) attacked Kiev at the end of December 1917, it was defended by about 4,000 "free Cossacks" under Hetman Petlura. But the 500,000 inhabitants of the city looked on, to see who would win, with about as much interest as a crowd at a football match. They were afraid of the Bolsheviks, but they did not identify themselves with the Ukrainian Nationalist movement. Among the White Ruthenians the desire for a separate



state was still weaker. The religious consciousness was stronger among them than the national. The Catholics had a strong feeling of fellowship with Catholic Poland, whereas the Orthodox felt rather their kinship with Russia.

So neither the Ukraine nor White Ruthenia had sufficient strength to support an independent régime of its own. Were such to be set up, Poland would have to defend its separate existence against Russia: a task beyond the powers of a Polish State which was in the throes of reconstruction after more than a century of political subjection. Further, the question of Polish aid for an independence movement in the Ukraine was enormously complicated by the fact that less than half of the territory had belonged to Poland before the partitions, the part situated to the east of the Dnieper having detached itself from Poland at the end of the 17th century and put itself under the rule of the "Orthodox czar." To make an independent State out of only half of the Ukraine would be unjust. But to detach the whole of the country from Russia would have meant the exclusion of the latter from access to the Black Sea and to its richest coal and iron deposits, and the consequent end of its economic self-sufficiency. To that Russia would never have agreed. An independent Ukraine created by Polish armed force and not by the will and force of its own people would have been the cause of endless antagonism between Russia and Poland.

Consistently with my whole political activity on the side of England, France and Russia against the Central Powers throughout the period 1914-1918, which had compelled me (for I was an Austrian subject) to leave Galicia for Russia in 1915, I regarded it as the main task of Polish international policy to reach an agreed solution of the frontier question with Russia, red or white, in order that Poland might be free to concentrate all its strength on preparation for meeting the German counter-attack which was sure to come sooner or later. But I must confess that I had the decided support of only the right wing of the Diet, its left being equally decidedly in favour of Pilsudski's scheme, while the centre hesitated. This was not, after all, surprising, for both sentimental considerations and the loftiest traditions of the Polish struggle "for our freedom and yours," favoured a programme which proposed to liberate from Russian rule, no matter whether czarist or Bolshevik, all the districts torn from the Polish Republic in 1772, 1793, and 1795, and to give their populations full freedom to decide concerning their own political future. Further, the whole left wing were certain, and the majority of the centre confidently hoped, that if Poland by armed force aided the Ukraine and White Ruthenia to gain their political independence, they would, in gratitude, voluntarily enter such a union with Poland as existed at the end of the 14th century, or at least make a permanent, close alliance with it. Accordingly, Pilsudski's programme was widely known among the Polish public as the "Federative," or "Jagellonian" programme.

A supposedly federative programme was likewise being brought from the east by the Bolshevik army. It too proclaimed the creation of a White-Ruthenian and a Ukrainian Republic. But it was intended that these republics should be communist and closely united to Russia: so closely, indeed, that their supposed independence would have been more like the local government of an English county than the government of a British Dominion under the Statute of Westminster.

However, when the Polish-Soviet military operations took a turn unfavourable to the Red Army, the Soviet Government proposed peace negotiations on the basis of a division of the White-Ruthenian and Ukrainian areas between Poland and Russia. In a note addressed to the Head of the Polish State and signed by Lenin and Chicherin the Soviet Government made the following declaration:

"The Council of People's Commissars declares that the Red Armies will not cross the present line of the White-Ruthenian front, running near the following points: Dryssa, Dzisna, Polotsk, Borysov, Parichi, Ptich station, and Byelokorovichi. As regards the Ukrainian front, the Council of People's Commissars declares in its own name and in that of the Provisional Government of the Ukraine that the Soviet armies will not engage in military operations to the west of the line which they occupy near the towns of Cudnov, Pilava, Derazhnya and Bar."

"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 People's Commissars accordingly considered in January 1920, the Polish-Russian frontier along the line from Dryssa to Bar, as shown on Map VII (*see* page 22), would not be injurious to "the real interests of Russia," notwithstanding that this line is considerably to the east of the frontier, fixed by the peace treaty of 1921.

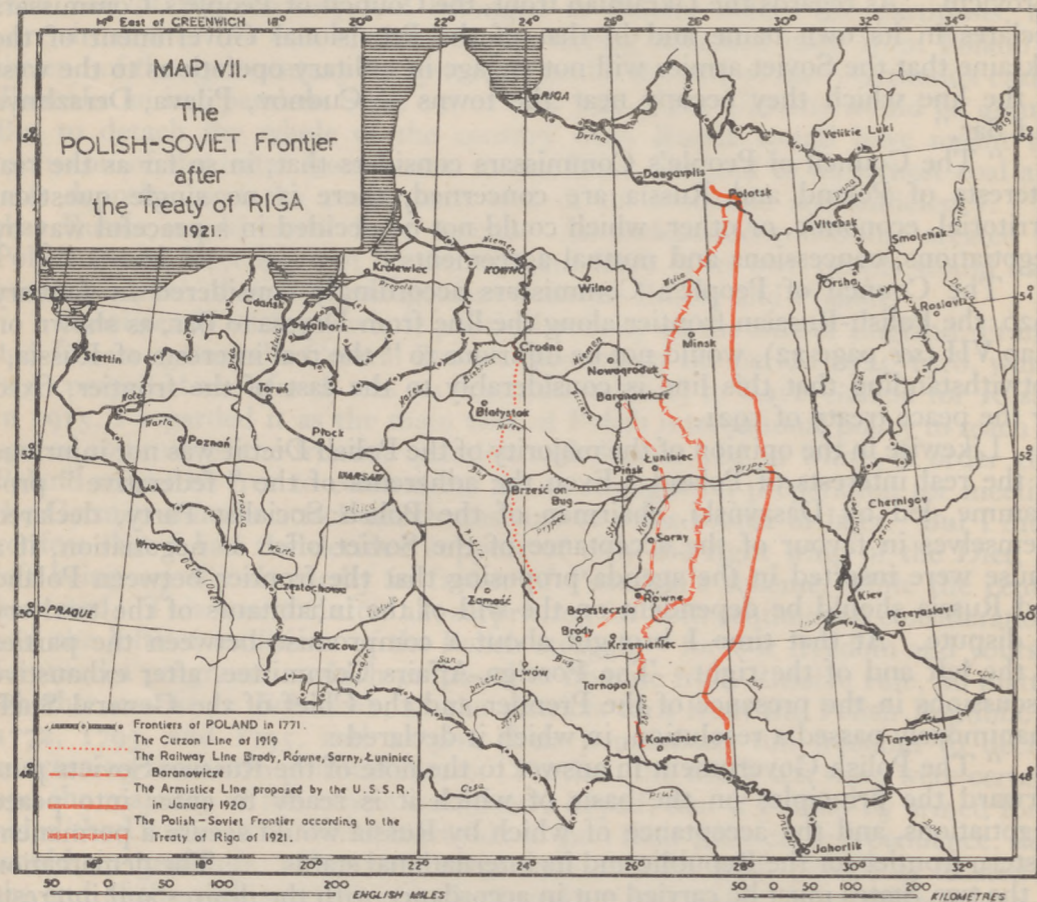
Likewise in the opinion of the majority of the Polish Diet it was not injurious to the real interests of Poland. Even the adherents of the "federative" programme, led by Daszyński, chairman of the Polish Socialist Party, declared themselves in favour of the acceptance of the Soviet offer of negotiation, if a clause were inserted in the agenda proposing that the frontier between Poland and Russia should be dependent on the will of the inhabitants of the territory in dispute. At that time I brought about a compromise between the parties of the left and of the right. The Foreign Affairs Committee, after exhaustive discussions in the presence of the Premier and the Chief of the General Staff, unanimously passed a resolution, in which it declared:

"The Polish Government in answer to the note of the Russian Soviets puts forward the principles on the basis of which it is ready to enter into peace negotiations, and the acceptance of which by Russia would secure a permanent eastern frontier for the Republic and its international status. . . . The demarcation of the two States must be carried out in accordance with the desires and interests of the actual population [of the areas concerned]. This has for long been the attitude of the Government and Diet of the Polish Republic. The Polish Republic is unalterably resolved to fix its eastern frontier in agreement with the local population and has the right and duty to demand likewise that the population of those districts which are situated beyond the present boundary of Polish administration, but belonged to Poland before 1772, be given the opportunity of freely deciding their own future allegiance."

Marshal Pilsudski was not very pleased with this resolution. For at that very time there had come to Warsaw a delegation from the Ukrainian Nationalist



army, which under Hetman Petlura was fighting in the Ukraine against the numerically superior Red Army, to ask Pilsudski for aid. In the course of several conversations which I had with him, I warned him that Petlura was deluding both himself and Poland when he promised a general outburst of Ukrainian patriotism if the general body of the Ukrainian people should see the Polish Army coming to its aid. To that kind of argument Pilsudski for a long time had only one answer: "Refusal of aid to a nation with whom we lived in a voluntary union for five hundred years would be an indelible stain on Polish honour."



But when I came to him with Premier Skulski and Daszyński, the leader of the left wing in the Diet, to tell him that the whole of the Diet regarded the Soviet proposal as likely to lead to a permanent understanding with Russia about the territories in dispute between it and Poland, and therefore thought that peace negotiations should be commenced at once, and the Ukrainians helped to gain their national liberty by these negotiations and not by armed action, Marshal Pilsudski agreed, and proposed to the Soviet Government that peace delegations from Russia and from Poland should meet at the town of Borysov.

Unfortunately, however, the Soviet General Staff, more strongly influenced as it seems to have been by Trotsky than by Lenin, gathered a large force near Borysov, and agreed to negotiate only in order to lull Polish watchfulness, and to gain time first to defeat General Wrangel's White Army, and then to throw all its forces against Poland. For this reason the Soviet Government firmly refused to conduct peace negotiations at Borysov. But this refusal served to convince not only Marshal Pilsudski's staff, but also the leaders of the left and centre in the Diet, of the insincerity of the whole of the Soviet peace proposals. They therefore authorized Pilsudski to send armed aid to Petlura. Having learnt this, I called upon the Foreign Affairs Committee to renew their demand for peace negotiations, though at some other place than Borysov. However, this time I and the members of my party found ourselves in a minority, so that I had to resign my chairmanship. It was not till a few months later, when my warnings against exaggerating the influence of Ukrainian nationalism on the masses of the Ukrainian people had, unfortunately, been justified, that the Foreign Affairs Committee again entrusted me with it.

I was decidedly opposed to Pilsudski's offensive against Kiev. And afterwards, at the time of his *coup d'état* in 1926, I fought against him. But I must do justice to his memory. Pilsudski's doubts as to the sincerity of the Soviet peace proposals at that time were well-founded, and it is not right to accuse him of imperialistic designs of conquest. He was in truth a chivalrous defender of "our and your freedom." He was perfectly sincere when he said in his manifesto to the Ukrainian people of April 26, 1920:

"The Polish armies will clear the territory inhabited by the Ukrainian nation from the foreign invaders against whom the Ukrainian people has risen in arms, in defence of its homes against violence, robbery and pillage. The Polish armies will remain in the Ukraine until such time as a truly Ukrainian government is able to take over the administration. As soon as a National Government of the Ukrainian Republic has appointed State authorities, as soon as armed bodies of Ukrainians stand on the border, capable of defending the country against a fresh invasion, and as soon as the free nation is in position to decide its own fate, the Polish soldier will withdraw behind the frontier of the Polish Republic."

The Ukrainian people were favourably disposed to the Polish armies which were driving the Bolshevik armies and administrators from the country, for the Bolsheviks forcibly took from the Ukrainian peasants their grain and cattle, for the relief of starving Moscow. But it was a far cry from mere favourable disposition to armed co-operation. There was, in fact, no such co-operation, despite the promises of Petlura and the assurances of the Ukrainian Nationalist leaders; although Pilsudski was joined for a time by the extreme Radical, Hetman Makhno, with whom the Bolsheviks had so far been unable to deal, owing to the support he received from the Ukrainian peasants. Pilsudski was compelled to carry on the struggle for Ukrainian independence with almost exclusively Polish forces. He began on April 28, and by May 8 he had already taken Kiev. But with it he occupied also an extensive area of territory. And the forces of which he disposed amounted to little more than 300,000 bayonets and sabres. The more the front line in the Ukraine was drawn out, the thinner



it became, for the volunteers who had been expected from the local population did not arrive in sufficient numbers. And by thus giving armed aid to Petlura, Pilsudski greatly weakened the reserves which otherwise he might have used for the strengthening of the northern, so-called White-Ruthenian, sector of the front. Meanwhile it was from this sector that the commander-in-chief of the Red armies operating against Poland, General Tukhachevsky, delivered his main counter-offensive. The Polish armies had to withdraw.

In July His Majesty's Government endeavoured to mediate between Poland and the Soviet Union, proposing, in a note of July 11, 1920, an armistice on the so-called Curzon Line and the holding "in London in the near future of a conference of representatives from Soviet Russia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Finland for the purpose of concluding a final peace with Soviet Russia." However, the Soviet Government declined the mediation of Great Britain, declaring, in its note of July 17, 1920, that it was ready to conclude peace with Poland only through direct negotiation. The Soviet Government expressed its good will to grant Poland wider frontiers than those indicated in the British note. It refused to stop its military operations. The Polish Government, however, agreed to negotiate with the Soviets even within the area of military operations and on the territory of the Soviet administration, at Minsk.

On August 14, therefore, a peace delegation left Warsaw for Minsk. It was composed of representatives of all parties in the Diet, of whom I was one, under the chairmanship of the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Jan Dabbski.

On that same day began the three days' battle of Warsaw, which ended in complete victory for the Poles.

The Bolshevik authorities did not make the Polish delegation's path easy. We only arrived at Minsk on the third day, when the retreat of the Soviet armies had already begun. Everything possible was done to prevent us learning the result of the battle. We were accommodated in a house with a garden surrounded by a high board-fence. Outside were sentries who did not allow the local population to come into the least contact with us. We were not allowed to go out into the town. We were *de facto* interned. The Russian newspapers which reached Minsk contained no war news at all. We had, indeed, a portable wireless transmitter and receiving set which we had brought with us for communication with our government at Warsaw. But at the hours appointed for our talks "atmospherics" invariably caused such disturbance as to make communication impossible. But from all this we drew the conclusion that things must be going badly for the Bolsheviks at the front. And five days after our arrival one of our wireless operators succeeded in catching part of a war-communicé broadcast from Warsaw. From it we learnt that the Bolshevik armies were in full retreat, having lost hundreds of guns and tens of thousands of prisoners. However, the Bolshevik delegation expected that we should be disheartened by the treatment we had received on the way to Minsk and after our arrival; so on August 19, its chairman, Danishevsky, laid before us the draft of a peace treaty which would have made Poland into a political vassal of the Soviet Union. The armed forces of the Republic were to be limited to 50,000 men, of whom only 10,000 might compose the regular army, while the

remaining 40,000 were to be a militia consisting exclusively of workers. Further, the whole equipment of the existing Polish army, except for light arms for the above-mentioned 50,000, was to be handed over to the Soviet Union. The complete demobilization of Polish war industry was to follow. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was to maintain an army of 200,000 on the Polish frontier. The frontier between Poland and the Soviet Union was to follow, with slight divergences, the line of the third partition of Poland; that is to say, it was to be slightly more favourable to Poland than the Curzon Line. Further, the Soviet Union was to have the right of free transit through Poland both for persons and goods; which in practice would have meant the right to send armies across Poland to the aid of German communists.

The Polish delegation asked for time to prepare its answer. In order to make us still further inclined (as it was thought) to concession, on the next day, August 20, a manifesto by General Tukhachevsky, commander-in-chief of the Soviet armies, was posted up in the streets of Minsk, accusing the Polish delegation of having "disturbed the peace in the most disgraceful manner. The Polish delegation, composed exclusively of spies and counter-espionage agents, is attempting to utilize its position for purposes of espionage." To increase the effect of this proclamation the commandant of the local Cheka came to the chairman of the Polish delegation and informed him that he would defend us to the best of his ability against the indignant populace, but doubted whether he would succeed. That same day, however, we got the above-mentioned fragment of the Warsaw broadcast. So at the next meeting of the peace conference our chairman first and foremost lodged a strong protest against General Tukhachevsky's insulting manifesto, and then declared that we absolutely rejected the Soviet proposals, which were designed to destroy the sovereignty of the Polish Republic and impose upon it the unilateral will of the Soviet Union, as though it were victor and Poland vanquished; whereas in point of fact it was the other way round. Having seen that we must know the true state of things at the front, Danishevsky changed his tone, expressed his regret for General Tukhachevsky's tactless procedure, and affirmed that his draft treaty was not final, but was merely a basis for discussion. Further discussion, however, turned out to be impossible, since the Soviet delegation was composed of third-rate yes-men, who dared not say anything which was not strictly within the limits of the instructions they had been given by Moscow. The negotiations therefore came to a deadlock. To save the situation there came to Minsk for semi-official talks with the members of the Polish delegation the communist Radek, of Polish-Jewish origin, who at that time filled a considerable role at Moscow.

With him we came to the conclusion that the scene of the peace negotiations should be transferred to a neutral country. At the same time we told him that Poland did not feel called upon to intervene in the domestic affairs of Russia, and that it was accordingly not waging war in aid of Wrangel's White armies, nor did it desire the destruction of the Russian Empire. Since Petlura's assurances regarding the general desire of the Ukrainian people for national independence had proved delusive, Poland was freed from any obligation to fight on for the independence of the Ukraine, and was prepared to give up its interest in the Ukrainian question if Russia would cease to interest itself in the



Polish-Lithuanian dispute and would agree to give Poland a frontier indispensable for its defence and including districts in which the prevalent culture was distinctly Polish. These talks convinced Radek of the sincerity of our peaceful intentions and dispelled Moscow's fears that Poland was fighting, not so much in its own interests as at the instigation of western-European capitalist circles who were anxious to see the destruction of Bolshevism. Accordingly an understanding was soon afterwards reached that the peace negotiations should be transferred to Riga.

There we met a very different delegation, composed of much more qualified persons under the chairmanship of the practised diplomatist Joffe, and provided with a totally different set of instructions. For Soviet diplomacy does not differ at all from the traditional diplomacy of czarist Russia, which was always complementary to military plans and strategic activities.

In January 1920, after a year of constant Polish victories, the Council of People's Commissars was ready to recognize as in harmony with Russian interests a frontier running a hundred kilometres east of that fixed at Riga; whereas a few months later, when the Soviet armies had advanced to Warsaw, the Bolshevik government prepared the draft treaty presented to us at Minsk, rendering Poland completely dependent on Moscow and making it into a bridge over which the communist revolution might pass to the west. But when the Soviet armies were again defeated by the Polish, Moscow sent to Riga a delegation prepared for a really reasonable compromise, in harmony with the Council of People's Commissars' declaration of January of the same year to the effect that "there is no single question, territorial, economic, or other, which could not be decided in a peaceful way by negotiations, concessions and mutual agreements."

On the other hand, the instructions given to the Polish delegation by its Government and Diet when it went to Riga were almost the same as those it had received when it went to Minsk. The Polish nation did not want its relations with Russia to be dependent on the temporary posture of affairs, or on changes of situation at the front. During the world war the great majority of its population had stood fast against the Germans. Even Piłsudski after the fall of the czarism—which he considered to be the chief enemy of Poland—ceased all co-operation with the Central Powers, for which he was arrested by the Germans and flung into the fortress of Magdeburg. And Poland did not change its anti-German attitude when it had regained its independence. In view of this, then, we desired good neighbourly relations with Russia, if only the grave injury done us at the time of the partitions were even partially made good by it. Accordingly, the instructions given to the Polish peace delegation charged it to reach a peace which should "put an end to the struggles which have been carried on by Russia and Poland for the territories in dispute between them, and should establish a basis for good neighbourly relations between the two nations. The State frontier should be determined by a just harmonization of the vital interests of both parties."

The final treaty of peace between Poland and the U.S.S.R. was signed on March 18, 1921. But military operations had been stopped immediately after the signature of the preliminary peace on October 12, 1920. The Polish-Soviet frontier was also preliminarily fixed at the same time. A week earlier a common communiqué had been issued by the chairmen of the two peace delegations, Messrs. Dąbski and Joffe, announcing that an understanding on all fundamental questions had already been reached. In point of fact a decision had been amicably reached on October 5 in the most important matter at issue, viz., the demarcation of those parts of the former territory of Poland detached at the time of the partitions in 1772, 1793 and 1795, which were now to be returned.

The first meeting of the peace conference at Riga took place on September 21. And on October 5, *i.e.*, fourteen days later, the Soviet delegation, having received authorization from the Council of People's Commissars at Moscow, accepted without modification the frontier line proposed by the Poles. The weather at that time was very fine. Military operations might have been continued for another six weeks. The Polish armies were pushing steadily forward. Afterwards and for many years sharp complaints were made against the Polish peace delegation, and myself in particular, as having been responsible for the formulation at the conference of our territorial demands, for having been over-hasty in arriving at a frontier settlement, instead of having drawn out the negotiations until the moment when our army had again reached the December 1919 front line. These complaints came from countrymen of ours, natives of the districts left in the Soviet Union, though they had been offered to Poland by the Union in January 1920. I never at any time had any feeling of resentment against those who made them. For I perfectly understood how extremely disappointed those Poles must be whose families had for a century and a half resisted the powerful russificatory pressure brought to bear on them by the czarist government, and amidst the harshest persecutions had never ceased to cherish the hope that at last the day of freedom and complete reunion would dawn for the Polish nation, torn apart by three partitions—when now, after rejoicing for nearly a year at the sight of Polish administrative officials, schools and soldiers in their towns, villages and countryside, they found themselves handed back, by the Polish-Soviet peace treaty, to a foreign totalitarian government still more ruthless than the former czarist régime.

In point of fact the Bolshevik government carried out such harsh measures directed to the extermination of Polish civilization from the districts east of the frontier fixed at Riga, that in eighteen years it reduced the number of Polish inhabitants from a million and a half to six hundred and twenty thousand. Between ten and twenty thousand of the population relinquished their landed possessions, their houses and their undertakings, and withdrew to Poland. But they frequently left near relatives behind, and afterwards lived in constant fear concerning their fate, and immeasurable longing for their native soil. It was indeed only too natural that they should not feel particularly grateful to the authors of the Treaty of Riga. And instead of taking ill of those—not very many, as a matter of fact—who gave public expression to their resentment against



me and my comrades on the Riga delegation, I felt deep respect for the civic discipline of those very numerous ones who, despite the great personal losses which they had suffered in consequence of the exclusion of their native places from Poland, yet said, "Thank God that we have at any rate lived to see our Country's independence!"

And now that I have mentioned my critics in connexion with the Treaty of Riga, I must admit that if we had, by drawing out the peace negotiations, given our army the necessary time to push a further hundred kilometres to the east, the Soviet Union would indeed, according to all the available data, have agreed to a frontier with Poland along the armistice line, through Dryssa and Bar (*see* Map VII), which it had proposed in January.

Why did we not follow this procedure?

Because we had not come to Riga with instructions to secure for Poland the greatest possible extent of territory and the furthest possible line of frontier towards the east, but with instructions to "establish a basis for good neighbourly relations between the two nations," by making a peace "without victors and vanquished," based on "a just harmonization of the vital interests of both parties."

The Polish delegation at Riga was composed not only of the chairman, Vice-Minister Dąbski and representatives of the six parties in the Diet,<sup>1</sup> but also of three representatives of the Head of the State and Commander-in-Chief, Piłsudski: namely General Kuliński and Messrs. Wasilewski and Kamieniecki. And I hereby affirm that all three of the latter co-operated honestly and successfully with the representatives of the political parties to conclude peace within the shortest possible time and bring military operations to an end in accordance with the above instructions. For there is no truth in the belief that Piłsudski was inspired by particular hatred of Russia, or had imperialistic designs of conquest. When, despite the assurances of Petlura and Makhno of a coming nationalist uprising in the Ukraine, the thirty million population furnished less than forty thousand sabres to fight for its independence, Piłsudski concluded that he must relinquish his federal programme; for it would be impossible to set up national Ukrainian and White-Ruthenian States by Polish armed force when the great majority of the population showed no patriotic feeling. He did, therefore, relinquish it sincerely and boldly.

He had desired a federation with Poland, based on the real will of the population, of regions which had once before been united with it in a voluntary union. And so he had desired to liberate them from the Russian rule which had been enforced upon them at the partitions by the czars and after the revolution by the Red Army. But when the realization of this project turned out to be impossible owing to lack of support from the masses of White-Ruthenian and Ukrainian peasants, whose national consciousness was undeveloped—he recognized the necessity of basing the security of Poland, not on its separation from Russia by buffer States such as an independent Ukraine and White-Ruthenia would have been, but by a permanent peace with Russia. And the

<sup>1</sup> Peasant Party, deputy Kiernik; Polish Socialist Party, deputy Barlicki; Christian Democracy, deputy Wichliński; National Labour Party, Waszkiewicz; Christian-Nationalist Fraction, Mr. Mieczkowski; and People's National Union, myself.

reality of such a desire was not to be determined by the existence of any temporary front line. Accordingly, the Polish delegation did not make its territorial claims dependent on the development of military operations. And there was no difference over this question between the representatives of the six parliamentary parties and the representatives of the High Command.

During the first ten days of the peace negotiations there were several plenary meetings of the conference, at which the delegates of both sides set forth the principles on which they proposed to base a treaty of peace. The Polish delegation put forward their programme on September 24. Following the instructions which had been given them, they declared: "The demarcation of a frontier between the negotiating parties in the territories detached from the Polish Republic by the former Russian Empire should be based on an equal regard by both parties for the following principles: (a) The termination of the struggle between Poland and Russia for the territories in dispute between them, and the establishment of a basis for good neighbourly relations. The State frontier should not be determined by reference to historical claims, but by a just harmonization of the vital interests of both the negotiating parties. (b) The just solution of questions of nationality in the above said territories in accordance with democratic principles. (c) The permanent assurance of each of the negotiating States against the possibility of attack by the other. Because Poland desires a freely negotiated peace and has no wish to dictate its conditions, it proposes to the other party a common determination of the frontier on the basis of the above principles."

There were, however, other subjects for discussion at Riga besides the question of the Polish-Soviet frontier. A number of fundamental questions were dealt with in the preliminary negotiations; *e.g.* the right of Poland to a portion of the gold in the former Imperial Bank of Russia; the return of libraries and works of art carried off from Poland to Russia at various times; the ensurance of each of the two countries against interference by the other in its domestic affairs; and the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens deported into the interior of Russia during the military operations of 1915. All these questions were dealt with by separate committees appointed from the ranks of each delegation and including also experts, which met for discussion. I was chairman of the Polish committee which drew up the proposals for our future eastern frontier.

As a general rule in negotiations of this kind each side at first puts forward its maximum demands, which are afterwards gradually reduced in response to pressure from the other side. This was the course followed by the Russian delegation. On September 28 at the plenary session Mr. Joffe proposed to us the same frontier as it had been tried to force upon us at Minsk. But as he met with determined opposition, he declared only four days later that the greatest territorial concessions which he was authorized to make extended to the railway line (shown on Map VII) connecting Brody, Równe, Sarny, Łuniniec and Baranowicze: a line closely approximate to that of the frontier as finally determined.

We, for our part, proceeded differently. The Polish frontier committee considered that if the peace treaty concluded by us was to be really a basis for good neighbourly relations, it should not be the product of a trial of strength,



or of the exploitation of a temporary military superiority of one side or the other, but should embody a reasonable compromise between the actual, permanent vital interests of both parties. Consequently we decided to formulate, not several variants between the maximum and the minimum of our territorial demands, but a single project for the equitable demarcation of a frontier in the territory taken from Poland by the former Russian Empire at the time of the three partitions.

This demarcation, we thought, should be made by reference, not to historical claims, but to the actually existing state of affairs, as expressed above all in the desire of the population of the various sections of the territory in dispute for incorporation with Poland or Russia respectively.

For it seemed to us incontrovertible that, if one of those States should incorporate districts a considerable majority of whose population desired to break away from it and unite with the other, the resultant situation would be an ever-smouldering source of conflict and sooner or later would lead to open war.

The most trustworthy indications of the real state of affairs in this respect we took to be the results of elections to the Duma and the national composition of the *zemstva* and municipal autonomous councils. At the first, and only really free, elections to the Duma in 1906, all the seven representatives in the government of Wilno (which included besides the modern voivodship of Wilno a portion of that of Nowogródek) were Poles.<sup>1</sup> In the government of Minsk, to which belonged the eastern portion of the modern voivodship of Nowogródek, seven out of nine representatives were Poles<sup>2</sup>; and in that of Grodno, with which was incorporated a portion of the modern voivodship of Białystok and almost the whole of the voivodship of Polesie, three out of seven elected representatives were Poles.<sup>3</sup> Further, the mayors of the two largest towns in White Ruthenia, Wilno and Minsk, were constantly Poles. And in the *zemstva* of the government of Wilno of those days the Poles had everywhere about 50 per cent. of the seats, and more than 55 per cent. in the three districts of Wilno, Święciany and Dżisna. In the government of Minsk, in only three *zemstva* (those of Bobruysk, Rzechitsa and Mozyr) did the Poles hold as few as 20-25 per cent. of the seats, while in two (Borysov and Igumeń) they held between 45 and 55 per cent., and in four (Pińsk, Slutsk, Nowogródek and Minsk) more than 55 per cent. But in districts much further to the east such as Dryssa and Lepel in the government of Vitebsk and Orsha in the government of Mogilyev there were more than 45 per cent. of Poles in the *zemstva* (cf. Map VI).

Taking these facts into consideration, we had every right to include in the area of prevalently Polish civilization the whole of the then Russian government of Wilno and the districts of Borysov, Igumeń, Pińsk, Slutsk, Nowogródek, and Minsk in the government of Minsk. Nevertheless, of these last six districts we laid claim only to Pińsk and Nowogródek, leaving the rest outside.

This we did because we took into account the future as well as the past. In the Russian Empire there was no universal franchise; and at elections to the Duma, the *zemstva*, and the local autonomous councils, the chief influence

(1) Ropp, Jałowiecki, Jankowski, Aleksandrowicz, Gotowiecki, Hryncowicz, and Węslawski.

(2) Lednicki, Lubecki, Janczewski, Lubański, Skirmunt, Wiszniewski, and Massonius.

(3) Żukowski, Kurop, and Sągajło.

was exercised by the possessing and educated classes. It is very noteworthy in this connexion that the local peasants and townfolk preferred to put their confidence in representatives from the educated Polish classes, rather than from the Russian. But we could not overlook the fact that in the democratic Polish Republic, which had universal franchise and in which agrarian reform was already being taken in hand (having been unanimously approved by the Diet six months earlier), the thoughts and emotions of the broadest masses of the people would constitute an increasingly important factor in political life. Nor the further fact that nationalist feeling scarcely existed among the White Ruthenians, and their leaning towards the Polish or the Russian civilization was dependent almost entirely on their attachment to the Catholic or the Orthodox Church. So first the Committee of which I was chairman, and afterwards the whole Polish delegation, accepted the principle that only that part of White Ruthenia should be incorporated in Poland where the Catholic population was in the majority. We were scrupulous in counting only White-Ruthenian Catholics in the area in question, so as not to make up a majority by including Poles, and we did not press for the incorporation in Poland of even so strong a centre of Polish culture as Minsk, which, as I have just said, always elected Poles to the Russian Duma, and to the presidency of the municipal council. For had we included Minsk we should have had to include also some districts in which, though they usually elected Poles to the Duma and the *zemstva*, yet more than 75 per cent. of the population were Orthodox. Following these two indications, viz., the confidence of the local population in Polish deputies as shown at the elections to the Duma and the autonomous councils, and the religious bond between White-Ruthenian Catholics and Poland (for they always used Polish prayer-books in church and sang the hymns in Polish), the territorial committee of the Polish delegation worked out a project for a frontier which should include on the Polish side the following parts of White Ruthenia: the whole of the former Russian government of Wilno, where the majority of the population were not only Catholic but Polish; and, of the former governments of Grodno and Minsk, the areas of the present voivodships of Białystok, Nowogródek, and (in part) Polesie.

Throughout this area the Catholic population is in a decided majority.

Possibly the British reader may be inclined to doubt the accuracy of the Polish statistics of nationality in an area where the national consciousness of the population is so little developed. But even the least conscious politically do not make false statements concerning their religion if they are sincere in their belief. And both the Catholic and the Orthodox population in Poland were always and are deeply religious and strongly attached to their churches. So the statistics of their religious adherence cannot be subject to doubt.

Now, according to the census of 1931, there were 2,090,000 Catholics and 1,690,000 Orthodox in the voivodships of Białystok, Wilno, and Nowogródek, which constituted the western part of the region with a White-Ruthenian population, incorporated with Poland by the Treaty of Riga. Russia could not put forward any serious claim, political, nationalist, or religious, to this territory, which embraced 78,000 square kilometres and had a population in 1931 of 3,686,000. For of the seventeen members by which it was represented in the



Duma, the Russians, at (I repeat) the only free elections, in 1906, elected only three. And according to the official Russian statistics the Russian language was used in daily life by scarcely 5 per cent. of the population of the government of Wilno; by 5.08 per cent. of that of Grodno; and by 4.39 per cent. of that of Minsk.

Accordingly, feeling their position in this region insecure, the Soviet Union had, in the spring of 1920, surrendered the town and the greater part of the former government of Wilno to Lithuania, in order to exclude from White Ruthenia the strongest centre of that Polish civilization which prevailed in its western districts. Yet the right of Lithuania to Wilno and the region round about was and is no greater than that of Russia. According to the figures given by the Germans after their registration of the population in territory of the Russian Empire which they occupied in 1916, the percentage of Lithuanians was as follows: in the town of Wilno 2.6%; in the district of Wilno 4.3%; in the town of Grodno 2.4%; in the district of Grodno 0.5%.

I think that anyone who desires to arrive at an impartial judgment on our Riga peace negotiations with Russia will at most reproach us with too great moderation in formulating our claims to parts of White Ruthenia, and will certainly not accuse us of excessive greed.

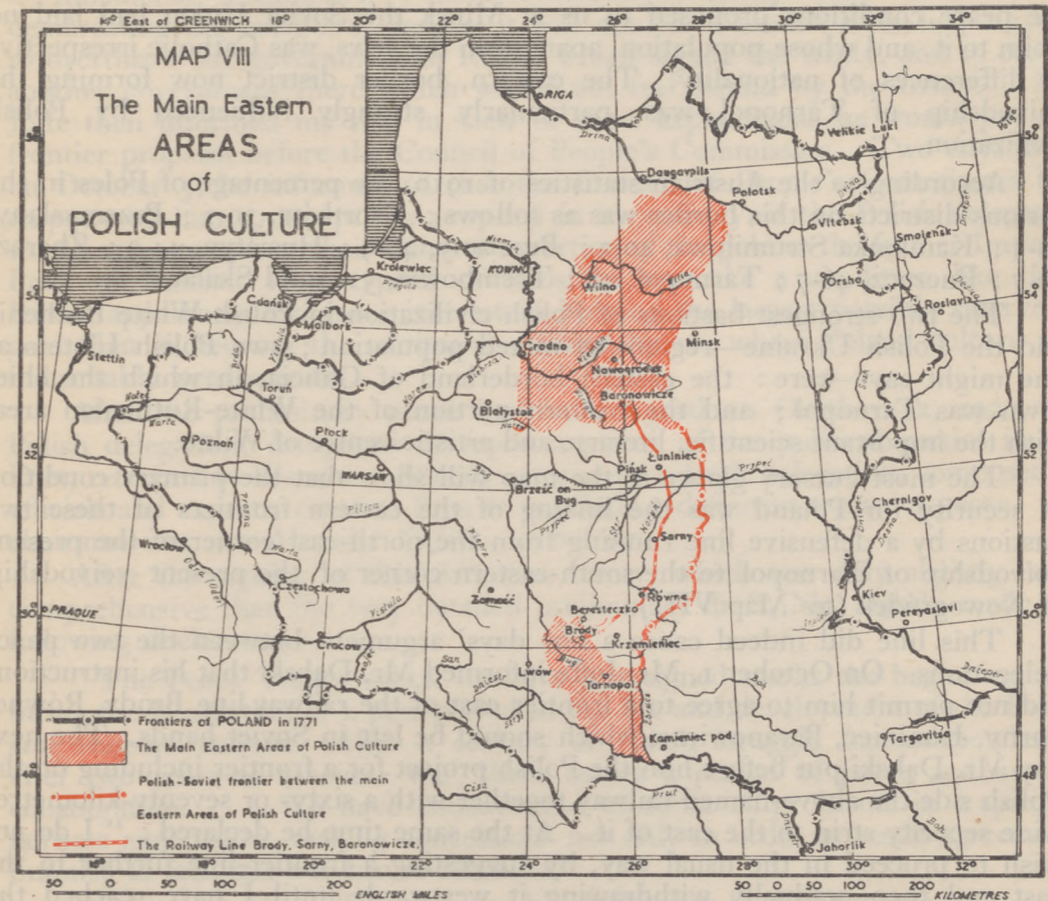
The northern part of the eastern frontier we asked for was so fully justified by the undoubted bias towards Poland shown by the population to the west of it that the only objection which Mr. Joffe, the chairman of the Soviet delegation, could bring against it was to point out that the right of Lithuania to a considerable portion of this territory had been recognized by the Soviet Union not long before. However, he soon agreed to the removal of the resulting difficulties for the U.S.S.R. by the insertion of the following statement in the draft peace treaty immediately after the description of the frontier:—

“The two Contracting Parties agree that, in so far as the territory situated to the west of the frontier fixed in Article 2 of the present Treaty includes districts which form the subject of a dispute between Poland and Lithuania, the question of the attribution of these districts to one of those two States is a matter which exclusively concerns Poland and Lithuania.”

It was a much more complicated problem to demarcate the frontier between Poland and the U.S.S.R. in the southern portion of the region taken from Poland at the time of the partitions, and inhabited for the most part by a Ukrainian population. For, whereas to the north of the Pripet, in Polish White-Ruthenian territory, the influence of Polish civilization is to be felt prevalently in the west, and the further east one goes the weaker it becomes—to the south the strongest centres of Polish civilization and influence were scattered, and as a rule were actually most numerous in the east. In czarist times this region was divided between the three governments of Volhynia, Podolia, and Kiev. The last-named was the most strongly russified. But even in it the Poles had about 50 per cent. of the seats in the *zemstva* of one district (Lipovets), and about 40 per cent. in three others (Berdichev, Skvira, and Tarashcha). Further, the Poles held 50 per cent. and more of the seats in the *zemstva* of the districts of Yampol, Haysin, Proskurov, Lityn, Latychev, Ushitsa, and Kamenets Podolski in the government of Podolia, and the districts of Starokonstantynov,

Zastawl, and Włodzimierz in the government of Volhynia. In the remainder of this government, *i.e.*, in the districts of Ostróg, Równe, Krzemieniec, Dubno, Łuck, Kowel and Zhitomir, the Poles held between 35 and 45 per cent. of the seats in the *zemstva*.

Had all the districts where the Poles had 50 per cent. and more of the seats in the *zemstva* been united to Poland, the southern sector of the Polish-Soviet frontier, as is shown on Map VI, would have run much further east than in the



sector to the north of the Pripet. Further, the south-eastern border of Poland would have taken in a country of almost 100,000 square kilometres, where about 75 per cent. of the whole population was composed of three and a half millions of Orthodox Ukrainians; and as the fundamentally democratic and liberal structure of Poland would rapidly have led to the rise of an educated class from the masses of the people, a strong national consciousness would soon have developed. Despite the sincere intention of the Polish State not to interfere in the domestic affairs of the Soviet Union, and in particular not to interfere in the Russo-Ukrainian problem, yet the existence of so large an Orthodox, Ukrainian population of rapidly growing nationalist tendencies would inevitably have



inspired Moscow with the fear lest a strong and dangerous centre of Ukrainian irredentism might be established in Poland.

Sincerely desiring a peace which should lay the foundations of permanent good relations between Poland and Russia, the Polish delegation decided at my suggestion not to push the southernmost sector of the frontier further east than the old eastern frontier of Galicia, which had belonged to Poland from the middle of the 14th century, and had never belonged to Russia, so that even in the peace conditions proposed to us at Minsk the Soviet Union had laid no claim to it, and whose population, apart from the Jews, was Catholic irrespective of differences of nationality. The eastern, border district now forming the voivodship of Tarnopol was particularly strongly influenced by Polish civilization.

According to the Austrian statistics of 1910, the percentage of Poles in the various districts on this border was as follows: Czortków, 39.1; Przemyslan, 39.5; Kamionka Strumiłowa, 40.3; Brzeżany, 40.9; Husiatyn, 44.2; Zbaraż, 46.7; Buczacz, 46.7; Tarnopol, 48; Trembowla, 51; and Skalat, 52.

The two strongest bastions of Polish civilization in Polish White Ruthenia and the Polish Ukraine—regions of mixed population; two Polish Ulsters as one might say—were: the eastern borderland of Galicia, in which the chief town was Tarnopol; and the western portion of the White-Ruthenian area, with the important scientific, literary, and artistic centre of Wilno.

The most cursory glance at the map will show that the primary condition of security for Poland was the linking of the eastern frontiers of these two bastions by a defensive line running from the north-east corner of the present voivodship of Tarnopol to the south-eastern corner of the present voivodship of Nowogródek (see Map VIII).

This line did indeed cause a few days' argument between the two peace delegations. On October 1, Mr. Joffe informed Mr. Dąbski that his instructions did not permit him to agree to a frontier east of the railway line Brody, Równe, Sarny, Łuniniec, Baranowicze, which should be left in Soviet hands. The next day Mr. Dąbski put before him the Polish project for a frontier including on the Polish side the above-named railway together with a sixty- or seventy-kilometre-wide security strip to the east of it. At the same time he declared: "I do not wish to proceed in the usual way, by suggesting a frontier-line further to the east and then gradually withdrawing it westwards until I have reached the maximum we are prepared to yield. I prefer at once to describe the line beyond which we are in no case prepared to withdraw."

On October 3 a conversation took place between Mr. Joffe, Mr. Dąbski, deputies Barlicki, Kiernik and myself. Mr. Joffe asked me how I justified the claim that the railway line should be given to Poland rather than to Russia. I replied that Russia with its population of 150 millions would never need to fear aggression on the part of Poland with its 30 millions; whereas the numerically stronger Russia might some day display aggressive tendencies against Poland, in which case not Russia but Poland would need the best possible defensive line together with the strategically important railway behind it. Continuing, Mr. Joffe asked what guarantee we could give him that

Poland would not let itself be pushed into war with the Soviet Union by the western capitalist world. To this my answer was as follows: "The best and surest guarantee of the action of States is given by a consideration of their interests. Now, the interests of Poland do not allow it to join in any kind of military co-operation with Germany. And the idea that Great Britain or France would ever send armies to Poland to join in a common expedition against Moscow is ridiculous. Further, if Poland concludes a treaty with Soviet Russia demarcating the frontier it desires, it will not be so foolish as to help anyone to overthrow the government in Russia which signed the treaty, and to set up another government there which would not feel bound by the treaty." Mr. Joffe then informed me that in view of these explanations he would put our frontier proposal before the Council of People's Commissars. Two days later, on October 5, he informed us that the Council of People's Commissars had empowered him to accept our proposal in its entirety, if the Polish delegation would agree to reduce their claim to a portion of the gold in the former Imperial Bank of Russia. How typical of Russians to make a condition like this! Russia apparently had more interest in keeping the largest possible reserve of gold than in keeping the territories claimed by us, where Poland culture was indubitably predominant.

After the preliminary peace had been signed on October 12, 1920, the Polish delegation, composed of representatives of the political parties in the Diet, returned to Warsaw. Shortly afterwards a fresh delegation, composed of officials and experts, came to Riga to conclude a definitive treaty of peace. Its chairman was vice-Minister Dąbski, as before.

After the signing of this definitive treaty, which was only slightly more comprehensive than the very detailed preliminary draft, Mr. Dąbski made the following declaration:

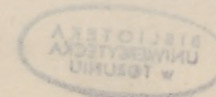
"The Peace Treaty which we have just signed marks the beginning and forms the foundation of a new period in the life and development of the Polish and Russian nations. After a century of Polish struggle for independence, after two years of a severe war, there comes a period of peace and mutual collaboration. . . . We have endeavoured to settle all problems in a spirit of fairness and justice, making concessions not only in order to reach agreement, but also to facilitate our future relations."

For his part Mr. Joffe concluded his declaration with the words:

"The peace negotiations lasted several months and encountered considerable difficulties, especially in the settlement of economic and financial problems.<sup>1</sup> I must state, however, that both at a time when guns were firing along the front line and blood was being shed, and during calmer periods the knowledge of affairs and tact displayed by the Polish Delegation and particularly by its President have assisted both the progress of the negotiations and their final satisfactory conclusion."

When concluding the Peace of Riga we made great sacrifices—not under compulsion, but in accordance with our own free decision—in order to assure

(1) Noteworthy words, showing as they do that the frontier negotiations encountered no particular difficulties.





permanent peaceful relations with Russia. In no small degree I was responsible for this decision. And for nineteen years I calmly bore the reproaches which were levelled at me for that reason, for I thought that permanent peace had really been established on our eastern borders. In 1932 a pact of non-aggression was concluded between Poland and the U.S.S.R., and in 1934 this pact was renewed and extended to December 1945.

But afterwards, when the German offer of a fresh partition of Poland was so quickly accepted by the U.S.S.R. in 1939, and in consequence I found myself along with hundreds of thousands of others of my countrymen in a Soviet gaol, sometimes, reviewing my life as I lay alone in my cell, I sadly asked myself whether I had done right in exacting from a million and a half Poles the heavy sacrifice of remaining outside the borders of their country in order to establish permanently peaceful relations with Russia, which had now proved a delusion. However, in July 1941, General Sikorski concluded an agreement with the Soviet Government annulling the Russo-German treaty for the partition of Poland, and with it the Ribbentrop-Molotov line of demarcation. And then again I said to my countrymen: You see, no Russo-German understanding can be permanent; while a proper understanding of the true interests of the Polish and Russian nations bids them maintain good neighbourly mutual relations and the widest political co-operation.

But, notwithstanding that we were engaged in a common struggle against the Germans, the Polish-Russian co-operation initiated by General Sikorski did not last long. Today it is non-existent.

And yet I sincerely believe that the logic of facts will lead, if not before the end of the war, at any rate after it, to the re-establishment of good relations between Poland and Russia. But this will not be accomplished by means of fresh sacrifices on the part of Poland. The experience of the last five years has taught us only too clearly that sacrifices made by the Polish nation for the sake of Polish-Russian friendship merely weaken Poland without diminishing the imperialist tendencies of Russia. Having convinced itself of the uselessness of the sacrifices made in 1920, the Polish nation will in no case agree to unilateral concessions. For it could not possibly put faith in the permanence of any fresh treaty of peace or of any new frontier determined by it, if the precedent set by Russia in unilaterally cancelling the Treaty of Riga and violating the frontier fixed by it were allowed to go unchallenged.

In 1920 we left about a million and a half Poles beyond the border, in the U.S.S.R. Now another million Polish citizens have been deported beyond the Urals, of whom about 115,000 left Russia in 1942, and are now in the Polish forces or in settlements for women, children, old people and other civilians. I hope that not more than one-third of those left behind have died of want, and that therefore about half a million are still alive. Are we finally to renounce them? Today the U.S.S.R. is putting forward claims to the whole of that part of Poland assigned to it by the Ribbentrop-Molotov treaty. This territory was inhabited by 5,274,000 Poles. About 800,000 of these, together with about 200,000 Ukrainians and White Ruthenians, were deported into the interior of Russia in 1940 and 1941. The practice of the Soviet Government in the

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area of eastern Poland which it occupied from the end of October 1939 to July 1941, leaves no room for doubt that if the present territorial demands of the U.S.S.R. were to be fulfilled, it would be equivalent to surrendering the more than four million Poles who were left in the eastern voivodships of Poland after the deportations to the most ruthless extermination. If the Polish nation agreed to that, in truth it would not deserve to survive.

There are people who think that the modification of the frontiers of a State is nothing more than moving a line a few millimetres on a map.

Whereas in truth it is a question of the most fundamental importance to millions of people.

I ask those of our British friends who advise us, with the best intentions, to give up to Soviet Russia our eastern territories, to put to themselves the question whether it is right and just to condemn millions of people who in Poland had their private property, protected by the State, freedom of speech, of association, and of political opinion, and the assurance of a religious education for their children at school, to the loss of all these rights by handing them over to a totalitarian State which does not recognize the right to hold private property, in which all political parties except the Communist are prohibited, where a man may be sent without trial (as I was), by mere administrative order, to eight years' compulsory labour camp, and where atheism is taught in the schools.

I repeat once more: good neighbourly relations between Poland and Russia are required, not only by the two countries' true interests, but also in the interests of permanent European peace. But the only possible basis for such relations lies in the principle put forward by the Polish delegation at Riga: namely, that of equal respect for the vital interests of both sides, and not the injury of the weaker by the stronger, or the unilateral breach of obligations voluntarily undertaken.



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