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 150 Southampton Row  
 LONDON, W.C.1

★ **POLAND AND THE PEACE** ★

First published, February, 1944

Picture on cover shows Wanda Wassiliewska, addressing soldiers of the  
 1st Polish Division in the U.S.S.R.

Printed and Published for the Russia Today Society by the London Caledonian Press  
 Ltd. (T.U. all Depts.), 74 Swinton Street, London, W.C.1.—16467

1944



# POLAND AND THE PEACE



By

**GEORGE  
 AUDIT**



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A RUSSIA TODAY PAMPHLET



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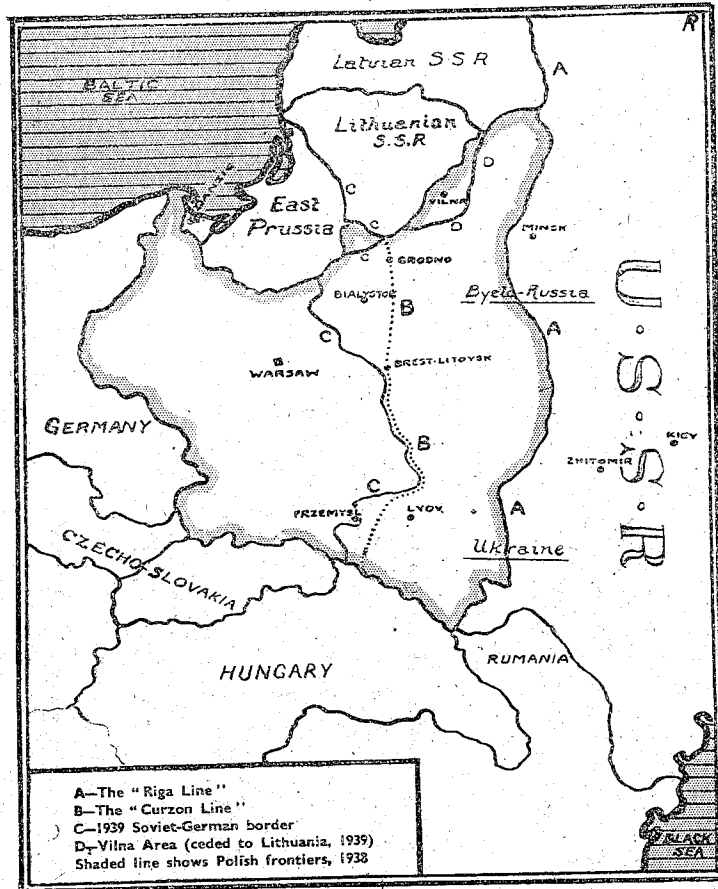
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# POLAND AND THE PEACE

By GEORGE AUDIT



(For Notes see page 3)

"NO one gave more trouble than the Poles." That is how Mr. Lloyd George, in his book, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*, summed up their activities in the two years that followed the war of 1914 to 1918. Now once again the wild ambitions of the Polish rulers are bidding fair to prolong the war and ruin the peace.

The relations of the fighting allies, Britain, America, and the Soviet Union, become ever closer and more friendly. But the Polish Government in London has no relations with the Soviet Union. More than that, it continues to attack the Soviet Union as openly as it dares, and is the rallying-point outside Nazi Germany for the still very strong anti-democratic and anti-Soviet forces throughout the world.

What is the record and character of this Government that it is always out of step? What are its real aims? Can it be trusted? Does it represent the Polish people? Can it live at peace with Russia?

These are the questions which, since the Red Army crossed the pre-war borders of the Polish State, demand an immediate answer. Why is it that this event, which heralds the approaching complete liberation of Poland from German Fascism, and the doom of Hitler in 1944, brings no joy to

## NOTES

A—The Riga Frontier. The territory between the Curzon Line and the Riga Frontier contained 11 million people—over 9 million of these were Belo-russians (in the north) or Ukrainians (in the south). This frontier remained unchanged until the beginning of the present war.

B—The Curzon Line. Based on the ethnographical findings of the Polish Affairs Commission of the Peace Conference, this line was proposed to the Soviet Union on behalf of the Poles by the British Foreign Minister, Lord Curzon, and accepted by the Soviet Government. But in 1920 Pilsudski renewed the war with reorganised armies and forced the Soviet Union to agree at the Peace of Riga in 1921, to a new frontier much farther to the east.

C—The 1939 Frontier. When Poland collapsed in September, 1939, the Red Army reoccupied the territory as far west as the Curzon Line and also the western part of Bialystok in the north and parts of Western Galicia in the south.

D—The Annexed Area of Vilna. In 1919 Pilsudski seized the Lithuanian town and district of Vilna. The Peace Conference had just awarded it to Lithuania. In 1939 the Soviet Government restored Vilna to Lithuania.

the hearts of the Polish rulers in London? Why do they see in the Red Army's victories not the guarantee of Poland's freedom but, in the words of *Dziennik Polski*, official organ of the Polish Government, the approach of "the most serious and moral crisis of the war"?

## POLAND AFTER 1918

**B**EFORE the last war Poland as a State did not exist. The Polish people, divided into three separate provinces, lived in subjection to Germany, the Austrian Empire, and Tsarist Russia. The setting up of an independent Poland was one of the major war aims of the Allied Powers. One of President Wilson's famous Fourteen Points promised "an independent Polish State . . . which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations"; and in the Treaty of Versailles Poland agreed that her boundaries in the East should be "subsequently determined by the principal Allied and associated Powers."

It was at this point in the peace-making that "no one gave more trouble than the Poles." Lloyd George goes on to say:—

"Having once upon a time been the most formidable military Power in Central Europe—when Prussia was a starveling Duchy—there were few provinces in a vast area inhabited by a variety of races that Poland could not claim as being historically her inheritance of which she had been reft. Drunk with the new wine of liberty supplied to her by the Allies, she fancied herself once more the resistless mistress of Central Europe. Self-determination did not suit her ambitions. She coveted Galicia, the Ukraine, Lithuania, and parts of White Russia."

The time seemed ripe for a Polish campaign of conquest in the East. The imperialist Pilsudski dreamt of succeeding in the task which had been too difficult for the Kaiser's Germany—the *Drang nach Osten*. He wanted nothing less than to reconquer the old Polish-Lithuanian empire, stretching from the Black Sea to the Baltic. This was the first of the long series of imperialist aggressions dressed up as "crusades against Bolshevism." It was Pilsudski who set the fashion which German, Italian, and Japanese Fascists were to imitate so profitably during the twenty years that followed. It was hoped that the young Soviet Republic, still weak, and beset as it was with internal enemies and interventionist armies, would be unable to resist these plans.

True, the Polish people were in no condition for another war. Thousands were dying of starvation and disease. It

was only thanks to the bringing in of millions of pounds' worth of American foodstuffs that complete ruin was avoided. But that did not deter Pilsudski.

Impoverished Poland was mobilised, and in the course of 1919 her armies overran Eastern Galicia in the south and snatched the town of Vilna in the north, notwithstanding the fact that the Peace Conference had recently awarded Vilna to Lithuania.

In 1920, Pilsudski's armies attacked the Soviet Republic and occupied Kiev.

"Poland's avowed object," stated Mr. Asquith in the House of Commons on August 10, 1920, "was to get rid of the comparatively limited frontier, not an ungenerous frontier . . . and to go beyond it to the ancient boundaries of Poland of 1772. As I say, it was a purely aggressive adventure. It was a wanton enterprise."

The Polish freebooters had not the strength, however, to carry through their plans. The Red Army by a sharp counter-blow reoccupied Kiev, and in a campaign that turned the invading armies into a disorderly rabble, drove them back to the gates of Warsaw.

## THE CURZON LINE

**T**HE adventure had misfired badly. Pilsudski turned to the Allies for protection against the "Bolshevik menace." It was at this stage that the British Government put the famous Curzon Line proposals forward. The Polish armies, it was proposed in a telegram signed by Lord Curzon, then British Foreign Minister, were to retire to this line until a Peace Conference could be held in London.

The Curzon Line was based on the detailed investigation of the Peace Conference Commission on Polish Affairs. On April 21, 1919, the Commission reported on the Northern Sector of Poland's Eastern frontier. The Southern Sector was fixed in the East Galician Statute adopted on November 20, 1919, but cancelled a month later in deference to Polish opposition. Nevertheless, the Allied views on Galicia were restated in the "Certain Frontiers Treaty" of August 10, 1920.

By the time the Conference of Ambassadors met in 1920 to discuss the frontier question, Poland was already in occupation of her conquests. This first open act of defiance of the Allied Powers was a great success. Setting a precedent for all subsequent acts of appeasement, the Conference accepted

the accomplished fact and salved its conscience by calling on the Polish Government to carry out a plebiscite at the end of twenty-five years to determine whether the annexed Ukrainians wished to remain inside the Polish State or to rejoin their own people.

Although great care was taken to include within the Curzon Line all territories with a Polish population which could be assigned to Poland without adding much larger numbers of non-Poles, the Poles were given to understand that, should they be able to establish valid ethnic claims beyond it, these would be considered.

The Polish emigré Government claims that in the territory occupied by the Soviet Union in 1939, territory roughly approximating to that prescribed as non-Polish when the Curzon Line and the East Galician Statute were drawn up, there were 40 per cent. of Poles.

Although even a minority as large as 40 per cent. does not seem to offer any valid reason why the majority of 60 per cent. should be subjected to Polish rule, there are ample reasons for doubting whether in actual fact the Polish proportion was anywhere near as large as 40 per cent.

For instance, to quote *The Times* of January 12, 1944:—

"Of the Ukrainians in East Galicia, 60 per cent. were entered as speaking Ukrainian, while 40 per cent. inhabiting the same district and differing in no way from the others in their speech, were registered as speaking the 'Ruski' language (which does not mean Russian, for which there is a different name in Polish, 'Rosyjski,' and a separate column in the statistical tables). Or again, in the province of Polesie, where there were very few Poles, two-thirds of the population, 707,000 in number, were registered as speaking the 'local' language, which was no other than White Russian."

*The Times* adds that whilst such sources of confusion can be easily traced, it is impossible to check with any degree of accuracy misleading entries in the census itself, and adds a number of examples.

For instance, it quotes the case of the Roman Catholic Belo-russians, of whom it says: "Roman Catholicism was known in Western Russia as the Polish faith."

*The Times* points out that the census of 1931 in East Galicia showed 1,600,000 Roman Catholics, over 3,000,000 Greek Catholics, and about 550,000 Jews. It comments:—

"It is to say the least remarkable that between 1911 and 1931 the Roman Catholics in East Galicia should have increased by more than a third, while the number of Greek Catholics seem to have suffered a slight decline. Roman Catholics and Greek Catholics live intermixed in the same districts and even in the same communes were affected more or less in the same way by war or emigration, while the natural increase was, if anything, greater among the Greek Catholics."

The final conclusion of *The Times* is that, on a liberal estimate, there were hardly more than two and a quarter to two and a half million Poles east of the Curzon Line in a total population of over 11,000,000.

## POLAND'S EASTERN COLONIES

The misgivings of the peace-makers of 1919 proved only too completely justified. From the very beginning, the Polish Government treated the alien populations as a kind of serf colony. Everything that could be done was done to prevent their development. Poland, herself the poorest and most backward country in Europe, tried to solve her problems, not by breaking up the enormous landed estates of the Polish aristocracy, but by a more intense exploitation of the eastern provinces. Vast tracts of land, not only in Poland but in Western Ukraine and Belo-russia, were owned by Polish landlords, who either did not wish or did not know how to develop modern industry or make farming pay by introducing scientific methods. Poland remained an almost entirely agricultural country, and agriculture was carried on by the most mediæval methods.

Here is a description of farming in Polish-occupied Belo-russia, from the pen of a writer of strong anti-Soviet opinions, which would have aptly fitted a European village at the time of the Black Death:—

"No one can visualise the privations endured by the population owing to the physical conditions of the land. At the end of each winter cattle are reduced to moving skeletons. Horses, having exhausted their winter supply of fodder, are propped up in their stalls in the hope that spring may arrive in time for them to be carried to the pastures before death releases them from their sufferings. The peasants themselves are often in little better plight; mere skeletons racked with fever and malaria, their clothes, skins and rags, and their foot-coverings of bark cut from trees." (*Peasant Europe*, by H. Hessel Tiltman; 1936.)

In Eastern Galicia two-thirds of the large landed estates were owned by Polish noblemen. The mass of the population lived in the utmost poverty, 60 per cent. of them on dwarf holdings of less than two hectares (in 1921). What then of the much-advertised breaking up of the larger estates in Galicia?

In the ten years up to 1929, 227,000 hectares were "confiscated" by the Polish Government and made available for peasant settlement. This represented only one-tenth of the area of the estates in Eastern Galicia. The great land-

owners were at liberty to decide to whom the confiscated land should go, and the Government behind them gave a great deal of it to Polish settlers in an attempt to strengthen Polish hold on the province.

Some further facts will show what was the real state of the conquered territories under Polish rule :—

The entire coal, iron, and steel industry of Poland and 80 per cent. of its textile, sugar, cement, and electrical industry were situated west of the Curzon Line. The people living west of the line consumed 95 per cent. of all coffee and tea.

Ukrainians in schools and offices were forbidden to use their native language. Three thousand Ukrainian schools, the national theatre, Lvov's one university, and many other Ukrainian cultural institutions were closed down.

Count Skrzynski cynically admitted in 1923 in his book, *Poland and Peace*, that the people in the annexed territories are not "indisputably Polish."

"Poland," he wrote, "*took these provinces, which are inhabited by a majority of White Russians and Ukrainians, in order to regain at least part of her former land reserves for the purposes of colonising the surplus of her population.*" [*My italics.*—G. A.]

## PACIFYING THE UKRAINE

THE Ukrainian people did not take such treatment lying down. Nearly every year there were uprisings in one district or another. In the crisis year of 1930, when unemployment was widespread, the Polish Government made an outbreak of rick-burning the pretext for launching a campaign of mass torture and repression against the defenceless Ukrainian peasants. In the districts of Lvov, Stanislavov, and Tarnopol, priests and peasants were flogged in hundreds, women were raped, cottage homes unroofed, peasant Co-operative Societies looted, libraries of Ukrainian books destroyed, and ruinous requisitions for foodstuffs levied upon village communities whose only crime was that their inhabitants spoke the Ukrainian language. At least 20,000 Ukrainians during the three months between June and September, 1930, were arrested and thrown into prison, including sixteen of the twenty-six representatives of the Ukrainian National Party in the Sejm, the Polish Lower

House. The Minister of the Interior, Skladkowski, used aeroplanes against the peasants of the Lvov district, and in the Volhynian district tanks and artillery. Over a thousand people were slaughtered.

Though no such "pacification," to quote Skladkowski's term, was carried out in Belo-russia, there the dreaded concentration camp of Beresa-Kartouska, infamous long before Dachau, dominated and terrorised the whole country.

"Another pacification of the Polish Ukraine," reported the *Manchester Guardian* as recently as in 1938, "has been going on since the early spring. In the autumn of 1930 the Polish Ukraine was pacified by detachments of the Polish cavalry and mounted police who went from village to village arresting peasants and carrying out savage floggings and destroying property—the number of peasants who were flogged ran into many thousands. This time the 'pacification' is taking on other forms; a general assault on Ukrainian political, educational, and economic organisations has been going on almost without intermission." [*Manchester Guardian*, October 10, 1938.]

At the Peace Conference of 1919, the British representatives had urged that a High Commissioner be appointed to protect Ukrainian interests. This the Poles refused to accept, and instead gave a guarantee that a liberal measure of Home Rule would be given to the Ukrainian people. Their callous betrayal of this promise during the last twenty-five years' is one reason why the Ukrainian people so fervently welcomed the liberating Red Army in 1939 and will welcome it again in 1944.

## POLAND AT MUNICH

IN Poland, Fascism early mounted the saddle. When in 1925 the Polish Peasants' Party introduced an extremely modest measure of agrarian reform, the big estate owners and militarists were seized with alarm, and in the following year Pilsudski overthrew the Government by force and set up a military dictatorship. In 1934, Colonel Beck signed a treaty of friendship with Nazi Germany, and introduced on the same day a Fascist constitution. Poland was thus the first to come out openly as the friend of Hitler. Later in the same year, after the admission of the Soviet Union to the



League of Nations, Colonel Beck declared that Poland would no longer accept League control over the fulfilment of her obligations to the Jewish, Ukrainian, and Belo-russian minorities and repudiated the clause of the Treaty of Riga governing this—Beck had shortly before given guarantees to Hitler that the German minorities in Poland would be well treated.

Although it was abundantly clear that Poland, unaided, could not hope to maintain her independence against the fast developing war might of Nazi Germany, her rulers steadily refused to consider measures of joint defence with the Soviet Union. Finally they joined with Hitler in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia at Munich, and seized the predominantly Czech district of Teschen.

To-day nearly all the Governments that participated in the Munich betrayal have publicly disavowed it. Poland has not. The Polish Government shares with Hitler the honour of still defending the Munich settlement. This is the comment of the Czechoslovak State Council on this in May, 1943:—

"The Council expresses regret that the Polish Government has to this day still not annulled the violent annexation of the portion of Czechoslovak territory which Poland seized in 1938 under Colonel Beck's regime in connection with the aggressive campaign of Hitlerite-Germany. . . . The State Council rejects this territorial claim of Poland with the utmost emphasis and declares that no Czechoslovak Government will ever, under any circumstances, recognise as valid the violent Polish annexation of Czechoslovak territory made in connection with the aggressive and imperialistic actions of Hitlerite-Germany."

#### "ANTI-BOLSHEVIK" VOLUNTEERS, 1939-1943

THE price for this pre-war Polish policy of collaboration with German Fascism was paid not by the Polish Junker-politicians but by the Polish people. In 1939 Poland, robbed of all her strength by the pro-Fascist policies of her rulers, went to pieces in a few days under the onslaught of the German Army and Air Force.

The Government of Colonel Beck and Rydz-Smigly was the first to abandon the struggle, and fled into exile across any frontier that was open. The Polish people, in Warsaw and on the Westerplatte, fought back heroically. But they fought without the means of fighting—and the consistent anti-Soviet policy of their Government over a period of twenty years had prevented them securing aid from the Red Army, the only ally that could have helped them. It was the most hopeless and betrayed battle in the history of modern times.

From the wreck, only the eastern colonies could be saved. The strong arm of the Soviet reached out to rescue the Ukrainian and Belo-russian populations. Thankful to be freed both from their Polish overseers and the still worse threat of enslavement by the German Fascists, they voted by a majority of over 90 per cent. to be incorporated once again with their own kith and kin living a free life in the Soviet Republics of Ukraine and Belo-russia.

During the following period, up to and after the German attack on the Soviet Union in June, 1941, the fugitive remnants of the Polish pre-war Fascist regime, after constituting themselves—together with certain "moderate" elements hitherto in emigration in France—the Government of Poland, devoted themselves to a campaign of open incitement against the Soviet Union. It was the most critical period of the war. Britain stood alone, fighting against tremendous odds for her existence as a free country, her whole prospect of ultimate victory depending, as Mr. Churchill has stated, on the hope of ultimately being joined by new powerful allies in the struggle.

The part played by the Polish fighter squadrons in the Battle of Britain, splendid though it was, did not offset the reactionary part played by the Polish Government. Everywhere the pro-Munich forces, in America and in Britain, that were hoping to turn the war against the Soviet Union, found support and encouragement from the Polish exiles. Everywhere they acted as a drag on the development of the democratic forces that were making their way towards understanding with the Soviet people.

There is no doubt that when Hitler launched his attack on the Soviet Union in June, 1941, he counted partly on the anti-Soviet mania of the Polish Government to prevent that Anglo-Soviet unity in arms which alone was capable of defeating his bid for domination of the whole world.

In 1941, General Sikorski signed a pact of friendship with the Soviet Union and the organisation of a Polish army on Soviet soil was begun. It was widely hoped that this event would mark the beginning of a Polish change of heart and policy towards the Soviet Union. But whatever may have been the real intentions of General Sikorski and the "moderates" who supported him, the real control of Polish

a practical possibility in the near future, prove still more clearly that it does not and cannot represent the Polish people.

The arrival of the Red Army at the frontiers of Poland's eastern colonies was the signal for fresh Polish sniping at the Soviet Government. The claim to the eastern colonies was publicly re-affirmed. If diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union could be restored, the Polish Government stated on January 5, 1944, it would be willing to instruct its supporters inside Poland to co-operate with the advancing Red Army.

Commenting on this offer on January 11, an authorised TASS statement stated:—

"The Soviet Government has repeatedly declared that it stands for the re-establishment of a strong and independent Poland, and for friendship between the Soviet Union and Poland. . . . The selfless struggle of the Red Army and the fighting operations of our Allies, which are developing, bring nearer the destruction of the Hitlerite war machine and liberation to Poland and other peoples. . . . Now the opportunity for the restoration of Poland as a strong and independent State is arising. But Poland must be reborn not by way of occupation of Ukrainian and Belo-russian territories, but through the return to her of the age-old Polish territories taken from Poland by the Germans."

The Note went on to say:—

"The Eastern frontiers of Poland can be fixed by agreement with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Government does not consider the 1939 frontiers to be unchangeable. The frontiers can be corrected in favour of Poland on such lines that the districts in which the Polish population is predominant should be handed over to Poland. In this case the Soviet-Polish border could approximately run along the so-called Curzon Line, which was adopted in 1919 by the Supreme Council of the Allied Powers, and which provides for the incorporation of Western Ukraine and Western Belo-russia in the Soviet Union."

The declaration issued by the Polish Government on this Soviet statement was marked by the hypocrisy characteristic of official Polish statements. It completely ignored the proposal that the Curzon Line should form the basis of the post-war Soviet-Polish frontier, and appealed to the British and American Governments to "mediate" between the Polish and the Soviet Governments. It was a manoeuvre on familiar Polish lines and the intention behind it was all too clear: to use the Soviet offer as a means of putting pressure on the Soviet Government, with the help, if possible, of reactionary forces in the British and U.S. Governments.

With the same hope of setting the democracies against their Soviet Ally, the Polish Press suggested by all possible means that the Polish Government was acting throughout in agreement with the British Foreign Office and the U.S. State Department.

The Soviet reply to this new attempt to bargain for frontiers bluntly put a stop to the game.

An official TASS statement on January 17 declared:—

- (1) The declaration of the Polish Government, in which the main question of recognising the Curzon Line as the Soviet-Polish frontier is completely avoided and ignored, cannot be considered as other than the rejection of the Curzon Line.
- (2) As to the proposal of the Polish Government on the opening of official negotiations between it and the Soviet Government, the Soviet Government believes that this proposal is intended to mislead public opinion, as it is not difficult to understand that the Soviet Government cannot enter into official negotiations with a Government with which diplomatic relations are interrupted.
- (3) Soviet circles draw attention to the fact that diplomatic relations with the Polish Government were interrupted through the fault of that Government because of its active participation in the hostile anti-Soviet campaign of slander launched by the German occupationists in connection with the "Katyn murders."
- (4) In the opinion of Soviet circles the above circumstances demonstrate once more that the present Polish Government does not wish to establish good-neighbourly relations with the Soviet Union

## POLAND AND THE PEACE

AS the Eastern frontier settlement imposed on the Soviet Union in 1921 helped to poison the peace after the Great War, so now, too, the annexationist plans of the emigré Polish Government constitute a standing threat to the anti-Fascist unity (forged at Teheran) between Britain, America, and the Soviet Union, and nurture the seeds of a new world war.

The people of Britain cannot afford to let Polish history repeat itself. The Polish Government must not be allowed to build up again a State vowed to hostility to our Russian Allies and capable of foolhardy attempts to isolate the Soviet Union once more from us. The record of this Government proves beyond doubt that as at present constituted it can only be a source of trouble and a menace to Anglo-Soviet friendship.

Only a Polish Government which will prove by deeds that it sincerely wishes to accept Stalin's offer of friendship can be tolerated in the post-war world. An end must be put once and for all to dangerous and predatory Polish ambitions for empire in Central Europe. It is plainly a vital interest of the British and American no less than of the Polish peoples.