

CURRENT MAGAZINES

Germans in Poland:—Mr. F. Wirth, in the *Contemporary*.

Danzig:—Dr. Hermann Rauschning, in the *World Review*.

Stalin's Ultimate Aims:—Madame Genevieve Tabouis, in the *New Republic*.

IT is recorded by Mr. Charles Phillips, who served just after the Great War on the American Red Cross Commission in Poland, that he once asked Marshal Pilsudski "And did you never give up?" "A Pole", replied the marshal, "*can* never give up". It sounds almost convincing, as one reads the Polish story, and observes that the national struggle—intermittent, but never abandoned in a thousand years—began last month to be waged again with a resoluteness which disappointment had served only to intensify.

One feels, too, that even for a people so long schooled by disaster this latest experience has had a bitterness all its own, and that in the Poles who could rise superior to it the tradition of a marvellous past was still further enhanced. Other disappointments had come from failure where even the most sanguine had cherished no more than a wild hope: here was the undoing of what even the most pessimistic had thought to be at length secure. At least not for a century and a half, not since the crushing of its nationality by forces destined yet to menace many another nationality in turn, had Poland tasted a real draught from the cup of success. Was it once more to be dashed from her lips?

In the spirit of Pilsudski's proud boast, she will no more give up now than she would give up at grim conjunctures of the past. She simply took up again her dauntless fight. But this time not alone! It is a fight for the liberties of the world, and nations which care for this cause are by her side.

The story of the new Poland is one upon whose stages and incidents it is instructive, at this fearful hour, to dwell.

I

In the cant of German propagandism, we are often told that the *Fourteen Points* specified by Woodrow Wilson were quite satisfactory, and that the source of later trouble lay in treacherous disregard by the victor of the conditions there set forth on which

Germany laid down her arms. Germany laid down her arms at a moment when she was altogether unable to insist upon conditions of any kind, as everyone who has studied the situation of November 11, 1918, is aware. But at least her professed acquiescence in the *Fourteen Points* makes it interesting to read again Point Thirteen:

An independent Polish State should be erected, which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish population, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant.

Contrast with this the recent pronouncement by Marshal Göring, that Poland in the eighteenth century was partitioned as unfit to be a sovereign state, and that the same quite sufficient reason now justifies the partitioning of that wretched country again!

Nowhere with greater clearness than in these so different attitudes to Polish (as to Czech) nationality does the contrast show itself between British or French government on the one side and German on the other. Overseas the colored races know that contrast well: it is manifest in the varying stories of French Algeria and German East Africa, of Basutoland or Bechuanaland under the British and the Herreros under Germany. But most glaring of all is the outrage when superior strength is used to dominate a race to which no "responsibilities of higher culture" can be pretended as excuse for rapine; a race distinguished long before Prussia had been seriously heard of in the cultural life of Europe. In the press of a little over a generation ago, sensational news was that of a "strike" by 400,000 school children in Polish cities and towns of the area then German, against the Prussian order that they should say the Lord's Prayer in German, not in Polish! Day by day we read of the disciplinary measures taken with those children to enforce their masters' usages in piety as in all else. It was a typical incident, suggestive—in the ungainly diction we have lately adopted—of "ideological contrast". One recalls, too, in Herr Hitler's autobiography his account of his own first interest in politics: how he felt enraged at those Austro-Hungarian statesmen who were handling the "lower"—that is to say, the Slav—races in Austria-Hungary with far too much indulgence, even encouraging them to think of themselves as racially on the same level as the German! That an ancient civilization, with its varieties of language and custom, its traditions and

memorials, has a right to considerate, even sympathetic encouragement in its native ways, and that such policy of justice is also the highest wisdom for strengthening a composite empire, seemed to that young Austrian house-painter in the early days of the twentieth century mere sentimental nonsense. When the Archduke Franz Ferdinand fell at Serajevo, the heart of this extraordinary Austro-Hungarian subject leaped with joy for the death of the heir to his country's throne: at least the Crown of St. Stephen would not be worn by that notorious panderer to the Slav nationalities!

Thus, with the record of a century and a half in mind, the men who drafted the new European order at Versailles did not entertain any thought of "securing better terms" for the Poles from the various over-lords, German, Russian, Austrian, to whom they had been subject. Time had been when that sort of solution might have served, but the time had come when the only mending was ending. No "minority statute" protecting Poles under their foreign allegiance, but the re-establishment of Poland as a sovereign state, with all the rights and opportunities which that status must involve. Especially access to the sea! Hence "the Corridor", and the Free City of Danzig.

In the flood of mendacity which constitutes the avowed Nazi method for public affairs, it is represented that this was wanton subjugating of German people to alien rule, and much sport is made of the ideal of "self-determination" by which its authors were professedly inspired. The truth is that the area now known as the "Corridor" was inhabited at the time of the settlement by a population predominantly Polish, and that the German statisticians themselves, in the years just before the Great War, had recorded for it a large Polish majority. That majority was soon to become one of 90 per cent to 10. And if it be objected that this rapid influx was due to the constitutional change, that the emigrants who chose exile and not the immigrants who poured in for "booty" were the natural inhabitants, a like reasoning must surely be applied to the case of Danzig. How, pray, did that old Polish city, a city whose buildings and memorials still speak to every tourist of its Polish past extending over centuries, become as it is now described, "ninety per cent German"?

The "partitioning" Powers are at least as much responsible for an artificial Danzig as the "Big Four" at Versailles for an artificial Corridor. And what could be more ludicrous than the affectation of concern by Prussia lest a race should be held

in subjection to alien rule? Don't we remember, as but yesterday, the case of Lorraine—renamed in German speech "Lothringen"?

II.

Poland's problem from the beginning of her new independent life was not that of her remaining Germans—the discontented minority belonging to the race which had suffered defeat, that the map-drawers of Versailles included within her rule. It was indeed open to doubt how far that German minority *was* discontented: the mechanized displays of enthusiasm for their Führer, which Germans must organize everywhere as "unanimous" if there is a majority for him at all, tell us nothing about how many of them genuinely feel. The obvious necessity of including in the new Poland some cities and towns with population overwhelmingly German must have been clear to reasonable people of whatever descent, if they thought for a moment about the geographical and ethnographic limits within which the architects had to work. But a far harder problem was that of the diverse types, developed by such contrasted experience and history under alien rule, which had arisen among the Poles themselves. In Canada we are familiar with the metaphor of a "mosaic", to describe the blending of racial groups, each of which respects the racial peculiarities of the rest, in a single Canadian citizenship. But the facility with which this has been achieved is explicable by much that was altogether lacking in Poland. Small wonder if twenty years of stormy life for the new order in Central Europe did not produce a result comparable to that of the generations of peaceful Canadian growth.

To realize Poland's difficulties, which go so far to excuse what is imperfect in her twenty years of sovereign administration, this composite character of her people must always be kept in mind. Her unity had to be built up out of three sections of Poles, who for a century and a half had been minority groups in three different countries. There was Austrian Poland, Prussian Poland, Russian Poland. Similar as they may have been "fundamentally", a century and a half under such contrasted institutions and usages and systems of law would make the groups very different when they were brought together again. Moreover, besides Poles, there were some 7,500,000 Ukrainians, a different race, whose members dislike the Poles very much indeed, in that blend. There were also "White

Russians", for whom Stalin and Molotoff have lately discovered a most remarkable, previously unsuspected, tenderness. And there was a very high percentage of Polish Jews: one hears of districts in which the Jewish percentage is as high as 80. Add to the puzzle, already grave enough, the consideration of the huge Polish illiteracy, inherited from the period under the rule of Russian Tsardom. Small wonder if the organization and working of a democratic representative system encountered many initial obstacles! The overturn of the first Constitution, and the establishment of a species of dictatorial rule in 1926, had at least available pleas to extenuate it. Poland's first "party system" proved a political horror, because a political chaos, of its own.

Quickly advice began to pour in, with suggestions of a remedy which was sure to prove worse than the disease. What part Colonel Josef Beck, the Foreign Minister of Poland, took in the interchanges of the last few years, some historian will yet set forth, no doubt with many a surprise for the reader. Count Ciano, from Italy, who visited him some time ago on what was facetiously called "a hunting trip", seems to have tried to reassure him when the omens were darkening. Just about the same time Victor Gayda opened a campaign in the Italian press, pointing out to Poland how little the democracies could do for her, and how deeply the Axis powers sympathised with her difficulties. There had been a story about a loan from London to Warsaw; Victor Gayda was very scornful about that. "Italy", he wrote, "does not offer money, but she offers the strength of her national ideals, the dynamism of a realistic policy of justice in the European balance of power, in which alone Poland's full national interest can be defended." Mussolini himself supplemented this in a flaming passage about how like to each other were Italy and Poland:

Sprung from the courage and tenacity of its sons, the new Poland, like Fascist Italy, was built by the determination of her young generation of soldiers. To the ancient ties of civilisation which united our two nations, there is added in these years the bond of this common idealism.

If, as the latest bulletins—arriving while these lines are written—would suggest, Mussolini is proposed by Hitler as suitable intermediary in the coming "Peace Drive", will the Führer have this profession of the Duce's faith about "the new Poland" in mind? And will it mean anything then, for either Duce or Führer?

III.

The historian who traces the progress of events in Europe during this tragic autumn will find a suggestive topic in a reference made the other day by Hitler to that notable Pole, Josef Pilsudski. For him, it seems, the Führer has deep respect. So long, we are told, as Pilsudski had control over the destinies of Poland, the Reich could negotiate with some hope of harmony with her neighbor. It was with those wretched democracies that no fruitful proposal could be discussed!

Pilsudski, indeed, was not democratically-minded. One can well understand how the Constitution he imposed upon Poland, and still more his method of imposing it, made Hitler regard him as at least a very promising beginner in authoritarian ways. But that the famous Polish marshal had any confidence in German good faith or in German honor is a ridiculous pretence, now put forward (after his death) to disparage his countrymen by comparison. No one had better cause than Pilsudski to appreciate the worthlessness of a Prussian promise. The last sixteen months of the World War were spent by him in Magdeburg Prison, under German guards, in helpless rage against the deception by which he had been misled.

The story of his campaigns in the field and of his negotiation with crafty diplomats abroad, eager to enlist his maximum service for a minimum price, casts light on the whole Polish problem. Pilsudski's childhood was spent among those Poles who thought without ceasing of their desperate revolt against Russian rule in 1863. The reminiscences of his family were of the horror which marked the suppression of that movement—especially of the reign of terror in Warsaw under General Mouravieff. He grew to manhood in circumstances and under influences which made him think of Russia as Poland's implacable enemy and tyrant. Taking advantage of this, and with a view to the war which must come before long, the Austrian authorities facilitated every scheme by which he and young insurgents of his type might conspire across the border for an attack on Russia. It was with such important cooperation in view, not for Poland's sake but for their own, that the master minds at Vienna were at least as hospitable to anti-Russian Poles as the master minds at Belgrade to anti-Austrian Bosnians. Hence the training and equipment of Pilsudski's "legionaries" on Austrian soil. And Germany, to whose direction the Austro-Hungarian policy of that time was subject, saw her own similar

chance to encourage an internal movement against her eastern enemy.

Lured by such prospect that Germany and Austria-Hungary would reestablish a sovereign Poland, the marshal served with enthusiasm in the first months of the World War as an Austrian officer. But he quickly discovered that it was the Russian section of his country alone which his Teutonic masters had any thought of setting free. How far they would have carried out even this, if victory had crowned their arms, the present attitude of the German-Russian partners is enough to suggest. Pilsudski's wild revolt against his betrayal landed him in Magdeburg Prison, whence he was delivered only on the downfall of his betrayers in November, 1918. It has been the common experience of those who trusted in the same quarter, as Colonel Josef Beck, now in flight into Roumania, has reason to know.

Post-mortem glorifying of Pilsudski is but the last illustration of the falsehood in which the Führer specializes.

IV.

Inevitably the case of Poland in 1939 recalls that of Czechoslovakia in 1938. And yet the story of antecedent happenings was so different in the two as to make thoroughly different the problems of their coming restoration.

Czechoslovakia, like Poland, was established partly as an act of long belated justice to a Slav people whom Teutons had oppressed, partly as a safeguard of the new order in Europe through a strong custodian whose interest was to preserve it. But Poland did not represent, as Czechoslovakia represented, the democratic ideal. Men such as Marshal Pilsudski and Colonel Beck were removed far indeed in temperament and purpose from men such as Masaryk and Edward Benes. No tourist from Great Britain or France returned from Warsaw, as many returned from Prague, to dwell with ecstatic praise upon the experiment in complete, considerate, progressive democracy which he had there seen under trial. It is not unfair to say of the Poles that their treatment of their racial minorities—such as the Ukrainian, the White Russian, above all the Jewish—fell far short of the spirit in which the Czechs set a pattern to the world. And though Adolf Hitler combined profuse compliment to Poland with savage attack upon Czechoslovakia for her treatment of the German minority, every listener knew that this was but another example of preference

for the large over the small lie which the Führer has declared to be part of his oratorical technique.

The Poles have indeed numerous virtues, but in their twenty years of independent life (since 1919) they have not shown the sort of virtue which expresses itself in democratic institutions. When Mr. Lloyd George recently reproached their government with its character of reactionary feudalism, there was much, for example, in its system of land tenure that he could quote to justify it; when a Moscow leader incited peasants of Polish Ukraine, into which his troops had moved, to assail their ancient enemies (that is, the Polish feudal landlords) with scythe or pitchfork or any other weapon which came to their hand, he knew how like the Polish grandee had been in his ways to the grandee of Tsarist Russia. So the horrors of the Bolshevik Revolution began to be imitated in those parts of Poland where the presence of Russian troops assured the revolutionaries of impunity. It is probably true, as Mr. Lloyd George says, that the Red Armies invading Polish Ukraine met with cordial welcome from the peasant inhabitants. A frantic flight of the landowners across the border into Roumania showed expectation that developments would continue after the Soviet pattern. These facts are recalled with no desire to render the plea for a restoration of Poland less impressive. That a country is not "democratic" is no reason why another, incomparably worse in that respect, should despoil it. I mention these points merely to suggest that the Russian and the German invasions by no means fall under a single heading of censure.

The allowance fitly to be made for the handicap of a past very different from that of Czechoslovakia has been well brought out by a recent historian. Mr. Robert Machray has put it thus:

When the World War broke out in 1914, the darkest hour in the long captivity of Poland appeared to be reached. The culmination of the national tragedy seemed to come when more than a million Poles were mobilized on opposite sides by the belligerent Powers. Unfortunate conscripts, they were compelled—the ultimate horror and degradation—to mutilate and kill each other, on what had been their own territory, by command of those who had riven it from them. At the moment, upwards of twenty million Poles were subjects of the Russian, Austrian and German Empires: twelve millions in Russian Poland, five millions in Austrian Poland, and the rest in German Poland, as these regions were widely, if not generally, designated.

That "democracy", inaugurated all of a sudden in a country thus made up, should have failed within the first ten years, and have given place to a scarcely veiled dictatorship, is not

surprising: it would have been surprising if the result had been different, and the Czechoslovak parallel is wanting in the features needed to make it apply. If success came earlier at Prague than at Warsaw, it was in a great measure because Warsaw had much more than Prague's initial difficulties.

V.

That the German invader must be cast out, and Poland be reconstituted a sovereign State, is obvious. But is it equally obvious that the Russian invader must have a like fate, if and when the Allied forces are victorious? That this too must "in consistency" be done, the Nazi propagandist, in desperate anxiety to bind Russia to the cause, is tireless in arguing. But the British and French refusal to treat Russia as an enemy, on the same footing as Germany, indicates a quite different purpose. And there are reasons for this, deeper than the tactical.

The Russian "justification" for what strikes the outside observer as a most untimely—as Mr. Chamberlain said, a "cynical"—step might be summarized thus. "Poland was in frightful disorder, and without taking any side in the war there, it was but reasonable for us to provide protection for millions of our people within its borders whose own government had ceased to exist. We are there in strict conformity with our resolve to be neutral in this conflict of Germany on the one side with Great Britain and France on the other. But plainly the territory called 'Poland' was in danger of being somehow redistributed, rearranged. As it contains so great a section of our kinsmen, we feel that we must look after Russian rights in that turmoil. And, unfortunately, the only voice which is now heard in Europe is the voice of those who speak with arms in their hands. Hence our mobilization, and our 'invasion'."

Is this altogether false? It has to be acknowledged that Poland did hold millions of Russians and of the kinsmen of Russians under her sway, in territories never assigned to her by any Treaty of Versailles or other instrument internationally lawful. It is true that she seized large blocks of Russian soil, as she seized Vilna from the Lithuanians, in sheer disregard of the League Covenant which she professed to honour. Likewise it has to be remembered that her stubborn refusal to allow Russian troops even passage across her land in cooperation with British and French for her defence was a primary cause of the break-down in the Franco-British-Russian negotiation

of a few months ago. That the Soviet troops are now within her borders on a very different mission is, in no small measure, the fault of the Warsaw Government which had lately the fate of Poland to determine.

In the ultimate issue—which it is perhaps far too soon to discuss, but which cannot be kept out of mind in any review of the past—why might not the “indisputably Russian” parts of Poland revert, if they so desire, to Russia, while the expulsion of Germans is made complete and final? The intruders are there with altogether different records to justify them, altogether different purposes to serve, altogether different methods to use. That the combined action formally apparent, but insisted upon from Berlin in terms suggestively different from any we get from Moscow, arises in no fundamental unity of purpose and must before long develop the discord of two national interests more sharply conflicting than any other two in Europe, is plain. It seems both the present policy and the manifest wisdom of the allied powers to recognize and promote the contrast.

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