

LETTERS ON POLISH AFFAIRS

BY

CHARLES SAROLEA

*Professor in the University of Edinburgh ;
Belgian Consul in Edinburgh ;
LL.D. (Montreal) ; D. Jur. (Cleveland) ; D. Litt. (Liège) ;
D. Ph. (Brussels)*

EDINBURGH

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LETTERS OF JOHN RUSKIN

1861

TO THE EDITOR OF THE
LONDON STANDARD

SIR, I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst.

in relation to the article on the subject of the proposed new edition of the

Standard, and in reply to inform you that the same has been forwarded to the

proper authorities for their consideration.

I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Yours, &c.

J. RUSKIN

Editor of the London Standard

10, Abchurch Lane, London, E.C. 4

PREFACE

THE following pages are not primarily a plea for Poland, they are a plea for Europe. There is one *Leitmotiv* which underlies them, namely, that the Polish Problem is not a national problem but an international problem. To speak of Polish nationalism is a confusion of terms.

For a Pole cannot be a nationalist. He never was a nationalist in the German sense of the word, and he has been the first to apply the federal principle in his relations with other nationalities living under the authority of the Polish State. Poland has suffered too much from the aggressive nationalism of Germany, Russia, and Austria, to be misled by the nationalist heresy. Poland can only be true to herself by discharging the international mission which history and geography are imposing upon her.

Nor are these pages an attack on Germany. Poland may have everything to fear from Germany. Germany has nothing to fear from Poland. A strong Poland could only be an enemy to the new Germany if Germany retained the imperialist aims which she pursued before the war. But Poland would and could

throw no obstacles in the way of peaceful co-operation. And such a peaceful co-operation is as necessary to Germany as to Poland, and it depends on her unconditional acceptance of the new order and on her frank admission of the crimes and blunders of an evil past.

Last, not least, these Polish Letters are not an argument against the Treaty of Versailles. It would be an easy as well as a futile task to criticise many of the provisions of the Treaty. To a policy of insurance and counter-insurance we may prefer an international order based on a strong League of Nations, which would be the supreme arbiter of law and order. But such a League does not exist, and until it exists, Europe cannot do without a consolidated Poland. A weak Poland can only encourage the designs of German and Russian reactionaries. Without the bulwark of a consolidated Poland, the old menace of a Russo-Prussian Alliance would once more become a formidable reality.

We have thought it necessary to state in the First Letter the exact position of the Polish Problem as it appeared on the outbreak of the war. In no other country is the knowledge of the Past so essential to the understanding of the Present.

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LETTERS ON POLISH AFFAIRS

INTRODUCTION

By G. K. CHESTERTON

THESE lines, hasty as they are and unworthy of so great a subject, appear in this place because I feel that no one should lose the chance of saying a word for the disputed but vital cause of the Polish nation. Though I cannot claim, and indeed very few can claim, the detailed historical knowledge of the author of this book, I can certainly claim to have been from the first a partisan of the Polish ideal, even when my sympathy was mainly an instinct. The instinct was never a prejudice, or even what is commonly called a sentiment. It was not one-sided; for I had heard next to nothing on the Polish side. It was not founded in praises of Poland; for, as Professor Sarolea points out, praises of Poland in this country are unnaturally rare. It was almost entirely founded on the denunciations of Poland, which were by no

means rare. I judged the Poles by their enemies. And I found it was an almost unfailing truth that their enemies were the enemies of magnanimity and manhood. If a man loved slavery, if he loved usury, if he loved terrorism and all the trampled mire of materialistic politics, I have always found that he added to these affections the passion of a hatred of Poland. She could be judged in the light of that hatred; and the judgment has proved to be right.

Every one of the facts that have since appeared has proved it to be right. Every action of the Poles has confirmed the sympathy and confounded the prejudice, a prejudice once unfortunately very widespread in our own Press and public opinion. The internationalists represented the Poles as wildly wrong in their claims against Prussia in Silesia. The Poles were adjudged to be almost entirely right by that very international tribunal which the internationalists set up as their ideal. The Poles were described as "hysterical children," incapable of discipline or practicality or of anything except anarchy. The hysterical children answered by inflicting the only practical defeats that have fallen upon Bolshevism, and breaking it on the field of battle, while we could only rail against it in the newspapers and surrender to it in the mart.

Amid so much that is interesting, therefore, the greatest interest of this book will be found

in the Letter on the Conspiracy against Poland. There are, of course, dupes as well as conspirators, and what is hatred in the few is only ignorance in the many. But if we ask to what the tradition can really be traced, it is certain that its origin is simply and solely in something that we knew for five years under the name of "Kultur."

Middle Europe is a sinister phrase in more senses than one. Middle Europe has played the part of a middleman. It has done so in the most customary sense of cheating both parties. The German, as he would express it, has been the interpreter between the Western Europe of French and English and the Eastern Europe of Poles and Russians. In any case, the interpreter is a translator, and certainly in this case the translator is a traitor. Most Russian ideas of Western civilisation were simply German ideas of German civilisation. But it is equally true of most Western ideas of Eastern barbarism, even of the whole idea that all Eastern things were barbaric. Above all, this was the cause of the inconceivable delusion that the high civilisation of Poland is barbaric. It is one of the thousand cross-purposes created by this mystification of Mittel-Europa. Somebody said that Petrograd, significantly called Petersburg, was a window looking to the West. It is almost equally true that Berlin was the one window really looking to the East. In

short, the Western nations, and especially the commercial nations of England and America, always saw Eastern Europe through a German professor's spectacles. And those goblin goggles, if they sometimes magnified Russia, always diminished Poland.

Now the deepest delusions of Teutonism, even when they are stricken, die very slowly. The patriotic Englishman is still largely unconscious that about three-quarters of his native prejudices were taught to him by a German spy. Indeed I suppose it is the definition of a prejudice that it is an opinion held by somebody who has forgotten where it came from. Somebody told the Englishman that the Poles are an anarchical sort of people. The Englishman feels as if he knew it for a fact, though as a fact he has forgotten who told him, or who professed to know it at all. As a matter of fact, the authority which told him was the same authority which told him that Germany was bound by a law of nature to expand at the expense of Belgium and Denmark. It was the same that told him the Ems forgery was a mere formality, enabling the simple piety of Prussia to defend itself against the immoral militarism of France. It was the same authority which asked for the freedom of the seas, and then murdered Captain Fryatt for defending himself against pirates. There never was any other authority, except one which happened to be in close alliance with

it—the German Jew, who was in this matter working with the German. The Jew had indeed his own national quarrel with the Polish peasant, and even with the Polish squire. Since the Jew has become a Bolshevik, he may possibly state that quarrel in a manlier fashion as befits a nation. In this sense it is all to the good when the Jew becomes a Bolshevik, as when he becomes a Zionist. He is attacking Europe frankly and courageously along a line of his own. But until the birth of Bolshevism, though the German Jew might be Jewish in his motive, he was German in his theory. It was Teutonism that he invoked from the first against the Poles, as he invoked it at the last against the Belgians. It was in his capacity of golden-haired Nordic giant, that Herr Moses Mendoza trampled on the Catholic relics and the broken Polish sword.

But the chief source of the prejudice was Prussia ; and that low type of imperialism which she spread in Europe. In a world of many remaining evils and bewilderments, we may safely say that this imperialism will pollute it no more. The virtues that thrive with Poland are pushing their way to the surface—the virtues of the peasant and the patriot. By all the instincts of historical imagination we know when those virtues are set free, and a fresh hope has come into the world. Poland can now grow to the great in something more than

tragedy. And it is probable that the eyes of her children's children, looking across that very Eastern battlefield where the crowned vultures are as dead as their carrion, will follow higher and higher into the sky the flight of the silver eagle.

FIRST LETTER

THE POLISH PROBLEM ON THE EVE OF THE WAR

AT the end of the eighteenth century a State which had played an important part in the history of modern civilisation was effaced from the map of Europe and its territory divided between Prussia, Russia, and Austria. The partition of Poland had been a foregone conclusion from the beginning of the century. For generations the three Empires had been sowing dissension amongst the Polish noblemen and fanning religious hatred, and had rendered government impossible in the elective monarchy. At last the designs of the three neighbouring states had been fulfilled. The deed had been done, and, to use the delicate witticism of Frederick, yclept the Great, in his letter to his brother, Prince Henry, the three monarchs were about to "communicate and partake of the eucharistic body of Poland."¹

The deed was done, yet the ultimate political purpose of the three despots was frustrated.

¹ Sorel, *Question d'Orient*.

The Polish nation was killed as a political state, but not the Polish nationality. Ever since the fatal partition Poland remained an open sore in the body politic of Austria, Russia, and Prussia. The Polish question was behind every great difficulty which arose in Central Europe. On the one hand, it created a solidarity of reaction and despotism, the three Empires being equally interested in preventing the realisation of Polish national aspirations. Above and behind the pre-war Triple Alliance of Austria, Germany, and Italy, there was another secret and sinister Triple Alliance of the three emperors, held together by a common interest to keep down the Polish nationality. On the other hand, the twenty-five millions of Poles distributed along that historical frontier line where the three continental Empires met, were also held together by the invisible bond of common sufferings, common traditions, and common aspirations.

Every political symptom seemed to indicate that in the long end the spiritual bond of the people would prove stronger than the tyranny of their oppressors. For a hundred years insurrections, followed by merciless repression, lawlessness, and violence, were the order of the day. But Germany, Austria, and Russia, if they succeeded in killing the political body of Poland, did not succeed in killing her immortal soul.

I

The destinies of the Polish nation were very different and yet very similar in each of the three Empires. In Austria the Poles enjoyed practical autonomy, and more than once played a leading part in the Austrian Parliament. But relegated, unfortunately, to a remote corner of the Austrian State, separated from Prussia, and Russia, and Poland, mixed up with an enormous population of pauperised Jews, engaged in a religious and racial conflict with the Catholic Uniate Ruthenians, artificially stirred up by a Machiavellian Russian Government, the Galician Poles led a precarious political existence.

In Russia the Poles continued to be oppressed by the Bureaucracy of the Czar. They continued to be deprived of the use of their language as well as of their religious and political rights. Yet the Russian persecution made the Poles not weaker but stronger. They ceased to rise in open rebellion, but they opposed against their oppressors that passive resistance and determination which sooner or later must conquer. In 1914 Russian Poland was perhaps the richest part of the Russian Empire, and every Russian Pole felt that the day was drawing near when Polish autonomy could not be withheld any longer.

In Prussia the persecution of the Poles had been no less persistent. It did not assume the

violent forms which it took in Russia; it did not lead to wholesale massacres and bloody insurrections. It borrowed the forms of the law; it called in the assistance of the Code. But it had been even more systematical, more methodical, more hypocritical, and equally odious. And it might be asserted that the Prussian Government was even more hated by the Poles than the Russian Government. Certainly persecution was as disastrous a failure in Prussia as it had been in Austria and Russia. So far from suppressing or repressing the Polish nationality, so far from depressing its vitality, the Prussian persecution only stimulated it.

The rapid increase of the Polish population gave alarm to the Prussian Government. "The Poles were breeding like rabbits" was the lament of Prince von Bülow. Provinces which for generations had been German now became Polonised. Even Silesia sent several Polish members to the Reichstag. And the increase of the Polish population extended to the towns as well as to the country. The strict regulations of the Roman Catholic Church on mixed marriages still further favoured the expansion of the Polish nationality. Wherever a Catholic Pole married a German Protestant the second generation became Polish and Catholic.

This rapid Polonisation was a severe blow to Prussian pride and a source of grave anxiety

to Prussian patriotism. Were the Prussians going to be driven back in the East? Were the frontier provinces, the marches of the Empire; was Silesia, the hard-won prize of Frederick the Great; was the very cradle of the Prussian monarchy to come into the possession of an alien race, irreconcilably hostile? Was the tragedy of Bohemia, which once had been German and which now had become Czech—was this going to be repeated once more? And when the inevitable day of reckoning came between the Slav and the Teuton, would Prussian Poland be allowed to fall into the hands of Prussia's hereditary enemies?

For the Prussian rulers merely to propose such a question was already to solve it. The Polish nation was a danger to the Vaterland, therefore it must be crushed. The Prussians always had an almost morbid sense of national patriotism, but they always had little regard for the patriotism of others.

In 1886 Bismarck decided to interfere with the natural law of increase, and to check the Polish infiltration. The problem was: What form ought that interference to take? How could the advance of the Polish population be arrested most efficiently and most rapidly? The Turkish method of Armenian massacres was not to be thought of. The method of wholesale transportation used by Frederick the Great was equally out of the question.

Such methods could not be used in our degenerate days. To restrict the Poles, like the Jews in Russia, within a certain area, within "a pale of settlement," was impracticable. To disperse the Poles all over the German Empire would only be to spread the disease, for owing to their gregarious habits the Poles would continue to form little islands of Slavonia. The inventive genius of despotism, which in Bismarck was never at fault, finally suggested to him, as a last resort, a vast scheme of Government colonisation (*Ansiedelung*) which was soon to be followed by compulsory expropriation (*Enteignung*). The Prussian Government was to acquire extensive estates, and German settlers, mostly Protestant, were to be established on them. And if that first experiment did not succeed, if sufficient land could not be acquired by free purchase, then a second experiment would be attempted, the Polish landowner and the Polish peasant would be compulsorily expropriated.

In 1886 the famous colonising commission, the "Ansiedelungs Commission," was appointed.

As the Poles were gradually to be dispossessed of their land, so they were to be deprived of their language. The use of Polish was prohibited in public meetings. The national language was soon ousted from the schools, and children were forbidden to pray to God in their mother tongue.

Those methods might well be considered objectionable from a moral point of view, and injurious to the fair fame of German civilisation. They might also be considered perilous from a political and conservative point of view. At a time when Prussia was honeycombed with Socialism, it was surely a dangerous precedent to violate the rights of private property and to resort to wholesale expropriation. At a time when the religious passions roused by the Kulturkampf had gradually subsided, it might be dangerous to raise once more the Catholic question which in Poland was intimately bound up with the linguistic and racial question. And finally, the unjust persecution of the Prussian Poles might rouse the four millions of Austrian Poles, whose weighty political influence might be used against Germany in the Triple Alliance.

But if the methods used by Bismarck were doubtful and dangerous they were deemed necessary. *Not kennt kein Gebot*. Bismarck, the great enemy of the Jesuits, never hesitated to adopt the principle which is supposed to be the lodestar of the Jesuit order: the end justifies the means. The end was sacred. The end was the salvation of Prussia: the end was to safeguard the future of the German race, which was imperilled by the Polish invasion.

The mere fact that the colonisation scheme was initiated by Bismarck prejudiced half of the educated Prussians in its favour. Bismarck had

decreed a policy, therefore it must be good. At the end of his life Bismarck appeared to his countrymen not only as a great statesman, but as the incarnate genius of statesmanship. In the Walhalla of national heroes he had become a demi-god. The worship of Bismarck was a religion even to Liberal politicians and especially to the National Liberals, who were nationalists first and Liberals afterwards.

It is difficult at the present day to understand how any critical student of German politics could have believed for one moment in the infallibility of Bismarck's policy. Few statesmen have made more grievous mistakes. It is true that he achieved the one great object of his life, the unification of Germany; but it has become increasingly doubtful whether that object would not have been attained without Bismarck—if more slowly, then all the more securely and permanently. One fact is certain, all the political schemes of Bismarck in the latter part of his life have been uniform failures.

He wanted an understanding with Russia, yet he failed to prevent the Franco-Russian Alliance.

He did not foresee or direct the colonial aspirations of his countrymen, and thus missed opportunities for expansion which were never to recur.

He initiated the *Kulturkampf*, he was beaten by little Windhorst and had to go to Canossa.

He decreed the Sozialisten Gesetz, and his anti-socialist laws only stimulated the growth of the Socialist Democratic Party.

He was the Master Builder of the German Empire, yet he was ignominiously dismissed by the German emperor; and he spent the last years of his life in carrying on a vindictive campaign, which undermined the solidity of the structure which he had built up.

But the last legacy of Bismarck was also the most fatal. No other part of the Bismarckian policy shows more glaringly the fatal weakness of his methods. The anti-Polish legislation operated for a quarter of a century. A civil war raged, and widened the gulf between the two races. Lawsuits, without number, accustomed the people to defy the law. Little children were taught to abhor the language of their oppressors. The Polish school strike of 1907 was an unexampled phenomenon in modern history, and it lasted over a year. The Colonisation Commission spent over five hundred million marks. The price of the land doubled. The landowner has been enriched. The taxpayer was made poorer. But the Polish peasant was not made poor, he was made richer. And what was worse, the Polish peasant did, in the end, retain the land of his fathers, and after twenty years the area occupied by the Poles was actually larger than it was before. And not only was the Polish

peasant richer, not only did he own more land, he had also become politically stronger. He had had to fight the German with his own methods. He had been taught virtues which hitherto were foreign to his nature. He had been educated by his oppressors into self-sacrifice and thrift, into organisation and discipline.

In 1914 the two races stood facing each other in irreconcilable opposition. A few concrete facts will illustrate better than any general statements the conditions of affairs which, at the beginning of the twentieth century, prevailed in Prussian Poland.

The following anecdote illustrates the close connection which existed in Prussia between the land question and political loyalty. It shows that, under the regime which ruled in Prussia, the owner of a large estate was as completely the master of the votes of his tenants as was the English landowner in the Golden Age of the "rotten boroughs":—

The owner of a vast estate, in whose boundaries was included one entire electoral district, assembled his tenants and dependents, and promised them a banquet in the event of all the votes, without a single exception, being favourable to the Conservative candidate. The banquet did not take place because, at the declaration of the polls, there was found that one vote, one single vote, had been given in

favour of the Liberals. That vote had been given by the shrewd landowner himself in order to save the cost of the banquet!

In 1908 the following scene was enacted before a Prussian law court:—

“Accused Biedermann, how much does your patrimony amount to?”

“I do not know exactly.”

“But approximately?”

“I am the most highly-assessed Polish taxpayer, and I pay into the Imperial German Treasury more than thirty thousand marks a year.”

“You are a born German, as your name suggests, and late in life you have learned Polish?”

“That is not true. My grandfather took part in the great Polish revolution.”

“Is it true that you buy the land of German landowners, in order to transfer it to men of your own race?”

“I do not only buy German land, I also acquire and resell Polish property.”

“Is it true that you employ the services of German middlemen, whom you bribe to acquire German property?”

“Exactly so. I do my best to imitate the German Government Colonisation Commission, which hires Polish middlemen to expropriate my fellow-citizens.”

“You then confess that you take advantage of the good faith of the Germans?”

"I would like to have all the millions which would be required to acquire the estates which are offered to me every day."

"By what insidious means do you succeed in bribing your German agents, and making them a gang of traitors to their country."

"I have never sought them out. They come and ask me to employ them, and I accept them or refuse them according to the needs of the moment. The other day a major in the army presented himself to me, and offered to assist me in deceiving the Germans in the interest of the Polish nationality. By the way, that major was not a civilian!"

"Is it true that you never resell an estate which you have acquired unless you are perfectly sure that it remains in Polish hands?"

"Exactly so, Mr President. That is my duty as a Pole."

II

In this great Polish controversy, which, until the eve of the war, continued to rage in the German Empire, it is important that we should closely and impartially examine the arguments adduced on both sides.

An acute and sympathetic French observer, M. Huret, in the fourth volume of his great work on Germany, came to the conclusion that the question was a hopelessly complicated and

perplexing one. If he meant to say that the question was one which roused much bitterness and passion, that it was almost impossible to obtain reliable facts and statistics, then M. Huret was no doubt right. But if he meant to suggest that the arguments for and against the Prussian policy were so evenly balanced that it was impossible to say which side is right, then we contend that M. Huret's statement cannot be accepted. The Polish question, so far from being complicated, was tragically simple. It was not necessary to be a statesman to see the main issue, and it was not necessary to be a statesman to foresee the event. The most ignorant citizen versed in the elements of political science could clearly see why the Polish experiment failed, and could draw the political and moral lessons implied in the failure.

The Prussian argument has already been outlined, and can be summed up in a few clauses. The Poles had an instinctive hatred for the Prussians, and could not be assimilated by any conciliatory methods. As they increased much more rapidly than the Prussians—indeed, to repeat the expression of Prince von Bülow, as they were breeding like rabbits—some means must be used to check the Polish advance. It was essential to the integrity and preservation of the empire that the eastern and south-eastern frontiers should not fall into the hands of a

disaffected race. In case of a war with Russia, the disaffection of the Poles might determine the issue of the campaign. In the case of a revolution in Russia there might be a rebellion in Prussian Poland, the Prussian Poles might be induced to join their Russian brethren and attempt the reconstruction of the old Polish kingdom.

The scheme of the Colonisation Commission was claimed to be the only possible one that could ward off a great national danger. It was necessary for Prussia. It was also beneficial to the Poles. For any means, however unpleasant at first sight, which can hasten the assimilation of the two races, was to be commended in the interest of the Poles themselves. They were an inferior race. They were not a *Kulturvolk*. It was a blessing to them to be compelled to adopt the higher culture of Germany. They had already prospered exceedingly under the firm but just rule of Prussia. They spoke a dialect which isolated them from the civilisation of the world, and it was a benediction to them to be compelled to speak the language of Goethe! As they were children, and ungrateful children, they must be treated like children; and no methods of mere persuasion, no methods short of actual compulsion, would achieve the desirable consummation.

The argument which justified the oppression of the Poles in the name of a higher civilisation

was the old argument which in all ages and in all countries has been used to justify the appeal to brute force. In the name of a higher civilisation the English in former days oppressed the Irish. In the name of a higher civilisation the Russians persecuted the Jews and the Finns. In the name of a higher civilisation the Magyars oppressed the Slovaks, the Croatians, and the Roumanians.

To any patriot the culture of his own country must needs be superior to that of any other. Above all, to a German there could only be one higher culture. Had not the Emperor proclaimed that the German is "the salt of the earth"?

Through the whole Polish controversy there always runs one *Leitmotiv*—the supreme contempt of the Prussian ruler for the Polish subject. And so persistently have the Poles been maligned, so entirely are we depending even for the bare facts of Polish history on the authority of their oppressors, that it is difficult to give an impartial statement of the Polish side of the case. But, if we try to rid ourselves of preconceptions, it is obvious that the Poles have been more sinned against than sinning. We do not believe in any inherent incapacity of the Poles to govern themselves. The Polish nation never had a chance. Poland was hemmed in on three sides by three mighty Powers. The anarchy of Poland was the

unavoidable consequence of her geographical position and of historical fatalities. Any strong Polish Government, any drastic reform of the *Liberum Veto* Constitution, was impossible, because neighbouring kingdoms were interested in maintaining Polish misgovernment, they were interested in fishing in its troubled waters. Religious peace was impossible, because neighbouring kingdoms were doing their utmost to sow religious dissension.

And, admitting that the Polish nation like every other nation did make grievous mistakes, no nation paid more dearly for them, or retrieved them more heroically; no nation was greater in misfortune. If the Poles do not deserve to be called a *Kulturvolk*, we confess we do not know what are the criteria of a cultured people. Surely a nation which has produced great men in all branches of human activity, which produced a Copernicus, a Sobieski, a Kosciuszko, a Dombrowski, a Mickiewicz and a Chopin, is not a nation of mere barbarians. A nation which for a hundred and fifty years asserted itself against overwhelming odds has proved its right to live. Although Prussian journalists were apt to indulge in an unworthy pun and did associate the "Slav" and the "slave," a nation which by heroic rebellion or passive resistance succeeded in frustrating the three most mighty military empires of Central Europe, is not a nation of slaves, but a race of free men. The

Prussian might have conscientious scruples against rebellion, he might passively submit to the dictation of the Junkers, and boast of his love of order and authority. The war has taught us the nemesis of docility. The war has shown that the submissiveness of the Prussian is not necessarily a criterion of a higher civilisation. The war has shown that the Pole who rebelled against oppression and injustice stood, at least politically, on a higher level than the Prussian who accepted them.

It is therefore impossible to agree with the pre-war argument which has still done duty in the Silesian controversy, that the Germans may claim a higher civilisation. Nor is it possible to agree with the pre-war argument drawn from the inveterate hostility of the Pole. If the Pole had enjoyed the benefits of a just and free government, the probability is that he would not have hated his rulers. The Germans held that the Poles deserved to be persecuted because they are disaffected. But they were disaffected only because they were persecuted, and it was inevitable that they should become every day more hostile as the persecution became more persistent and more brutal.

But even if the Poles could have admitted the Prussian culture to be superior, even if they had admitted that the Poles were animated with an instinctive hatred for their oppressors, the whole argument would still have been irrelevant.

The question was not whether the Pole hated the Prussian nor why he hated him, the question was not whether the oppressor was superior to the oppressed, the question was not whether the increase of the Polish population imperilled the safety of the Prussian State; the ultimate question was on the even lower level of *Realpolitik*, whether the policy of oppression had been successful or could be successful. Surely it ought not to have been necessary to convince Prussian publicists who prided themselves on being practical politicians, that a policy can only be judged by its results. Pedantic doctrinaires and university professors might argue *ad infinitum* on the justice or injustice of the case; on the merits of the Prussians and the demerits of the Poles, on the justification of the means or on the sacredness of the end. The ultimate question was:—even assuming both the means and the end to be justified, were those means conducive to the end in view?

The facts had spoken with crushing eloquence. The persecution had defeated its purpose. It has failed and was bound to fail. The Prussian Government have aimed at taking away their land and their language from a people passionately attached to both. They had misunderstood the temper of the subject race. They had shown a total lack of sympathy and imagination. They had ignored moral forces. They had appealed to sordid interest. They had ignored sentiment

and instinct. A liberal policy would probably, in course of time, have won over the Poles. At any rate they might have learned that a knowledge of German was as important as a knowledge of Polish; just as the Boers have been taught that English is as important as Dutch. By prohibiting the Polish language they made a love of the native language a matter of patriotic duty. By trying to deprive the Polish peasant of the land they only made the native land dearer to him.

The Englishman who studies the Polish question involuntarily thinks of Ireland. In both cases we meet with the same opposition of race and religion. In both cases we find the same arguments used against a just and conciliatory policy. The Irishman had to be denied Home Rule because the safety of Great Britain demanded it, because the Saxon was superior to the Celt, because the Catholic was inferior to the Protestant. In both cases the same errors were visited with the same punishment. But in comparing the two situations the impartial observer must remember that the exact parallel exists, not between the Prussian methods of to-day and the English methods of to-day, but between the Prussian methods of to-day and the English methods of the eighteenth century. The Prussian nationalist can derive no satisfaction from the recent tragedy in Ireland which bears no relevance

to the Polish Problem. So far are English and Prussian methods at the end of the nineteenth century from being in the least similar, that nothing illustrates more eloquently than Ireland and Poland the difference between English and Prussian politics, and the enormous advance made by the English people in the science of government.

For the methods used by the English in Ireland were in 1900 exactly the opposite of those used by Prussia in Poland. The English Government also did establish "a Colonisation Commission." But instead of using public money to deprive the Irish peasantry of their land, as the Prussians did, the English Government made an enormous sacrifice to expropriate the English landlord and to transfer the soil to the Irish people. And the success which attended the agrarian Irish policy initiated by Gladstone, and carried out by the Conservative Government, is the best proof of its wisdom, even as the failure which attended the policy of the Prussian bureaucrats is the best proof of its folly.

SECOND LETTER

THE ORGANISED CONSPIRACY AGAINST POLAND

I

ONE does not require to be particularly observant or well informed to realise that the Polish Government and the Polish people have not too many friends in this country or in any other country, except perhaps the Latin countries. Poland has to-day what may be called a very bad Press. The fact is all the more remarkable because we might have expected a young state which is struggling into existence to be able to rely, if not on the support, at least on the sympathies and moral encouragement, of its neighbours. Of such moral encouragement there seems to be very little trace. I do not refer here to frank and outspoken individual criticisms of the Polish people, nor do I suggest that all the accusations against the Polish Government are unfounded. Indeed I am willing to admit that the Polish Government have made some serious mistakes—such as the Kief adventure in the summer of 1920. It would have been a

miracle if that Government had not made any serious mistakes. In a country which had been devastated by seven years of civil and foreign war, where everything had been levelled to the ground and had to be built up again, where the old rulers had been dismissed and where no new government had taken their places, the years of transition from the old to the new were bound to be much more difficult than in countries in possession of a settled government.

II

The attacks against Poland to which I am here alluding do not refer to the occasional and inevitable blunders of a new government; the attacks are general, they are systematic, they are deliberate, and they are organised. We have to deal with a conspiracy of denunciation, and the misrepresentations are levelled not only against the Polish Government but against the Polish people. If a pogrom is perpetrated somewhere in Eastern Europe, it is at once imputed to the murderous Poles, until a student of Russian geography points out that the particular town where the pogrom took place was situated in Podolia or Volhynia. If the Polish Government refuse to allow the use of the Yiddish dialect in the public schools, and if they insist that Polish shall be the national language of the Polish State, that wicked Government

is accused of violating the sacred rights of minorities, although no Jew in Whitechapel or in the Bowery would dare to demand that the English language should be abolished in the schools of London or New York. If the Poles assert their claims to the town and district of Vilno, they are accused of aggressive jingoism, although Vilno is one of the sacred cities of Polish history, and although the union between Poland and Lithuania has been closer and of longer duration than the union between Scotland and England. If the Poles venture to protest when the munitions intended for their armies are held up in Danzig, they are reminded that Poland has no rights to Danzig, although it was a stipulation of President Wilson as well as the manifest purpose of the Treaty of Versailles that Danzig should be the Polish outlet to the sea. If Poland defends herself against the invasion of the Russian Bolshevik, she is accused of having taken the offensive, although in repelling the Bolshevik invasion she is defending her own existence, and not only her own national existence but the future of European civilisation. It will be a thing incredible to future historians that her very sacrifices in saving us from the hordes of Lenin and Trotzky have been imputed to her as a crime.

III

In the face of such a conspiracy, the question which will at once occur to the reader is this: Who are behind that conspiracy and what are the motives? Starting from the old adage, "Is fecit cui prodest," in order to answer that question we have only to ask ourselves the further question—Whose interest it is that Poland shall not be allowed to live?

The reply is an obvious one. Poland has many enemies. First, she has two formidable external enemies. Neither Russia nor Germany are likely to agree willingly to the consolidation of the Polish State. Germany especially is not likely to submit permanently to the mutilation of Prussia, to the separation of Eastern and Western Prussia by the Polish Corridor. Moreover if Poland lives, there is an end to that dream of a Russian and German alliance which is the main hope and which has almost become the obsession of the new Germany.

But Poland has an even more formidable internal enemy. She has to face the opposition of those three millions of Jews whom Russian persecution has dumped on Polish soil. I am making no accusation against the Jews. For the almost insuperable difficulties of the Jewish problem, neither the Jews nor the Poles are to blame. And to state those difficulties is not to proclaim oneself an Anti-Semite. Both the Poles

and the Jews are the victims of Tsarist oppression. The very German papers who are accusing the Poles of Anti-Semitism declare that Germany will have to shut her gates to any Jewish immigration from Poland. The Jews are the "salt of the earth," but as I am trying to show elsewhere there is too much Jewish salt in the Polish dish. There is no room in the new Poland for such a vast population and that population can only be assimilated by a slow and painful process. In the meantime, if a prosperous middle class is to arise under normal and peaceful conditions, a considerable proportion of the Polish Jews will be threatened in their means of existence. On the other hand, as the Polish Jews speak a German dialect, and as the majority do not consider themselves as Polish citizens, they are the natural vanguard of German penetration in Eastern Europe. And as they have an acquired genius for trade, they are the necessary middlemen between Germany and Russia. If the German-Russian alliance did become a reality there would be a great future for the Jewish race in Eastern Europe. On the contrary, if Poland is to live and is to become prosperous, the power and influence of the Jews in Poland must inevitably decline.

IV

The student of history never ceases to wonder when he sees how the same phenomena will reappear again and again in almost exactly the same form, without the present generation learning the lessons of the past. The present conspiracy against Poland has its parallel and counterpart in the Anti-Polish propaganda which was raging during the whole of the eighteenth century, and a careful study of the methods which were then employed is of the utmost interest to-day. Just as to-day Russia and Prussia are mobilising the public opinion of the world, so in the eighteenth century they tried to discredit the nation which they were about to destroy. And the success of that propaganda was amazing, if we judge it by what it accomplished. To-day we are all agreed that the partition of Poland was a foul crime, and the fruitful parent of other political crimes. But the contemporaries thought very differently from ourselves. Indeed they are generally to be found on the side of the murderers. Frederick, yclept the Great, and Catherine, who is also yclept the Great, in carrying out their Polish policy were described as magnanimous and liberal minded sovereigns who were intervening only with a view to maintaining law and order, and to securing the rights of the "dissidents" or non-conformists. D'Alembert, Diderot, Grimm,

Voltaire, all the French encyclopedists vied with each other in trumpeting abroad the achievements of those enlightened despots who were inspired with the loftiest motives in "partaking of the Eucharistic body of Poland."

V

The Anti-Polish propaganda of the eighteenth century was marvellously successful. But I am not sure whether the present propaganda has not even been more successful. The enemies of Poland possess in the International Press an even more efficient instrument at their disposal, and present conditions are even more favourable than they were in the days of Voltaire. It is even easier to-day to prejudice public opinion against Poland. For, as the result of her seven years of foreign war, Poland finds herself, without any fault of her own, in an appalling situation. Her industries are stagnant. Even as in Belgium, the German invader has removed every engine from the factories. The whole land has been systematically looted. The very trunks of the trees on the public roads have been felled and levelled to the ground. The country is flooded with worthless paper money and has the worst exchange in the world. You are able to get six hundred Polish marks for one English shilling, twelve thousand Polish marks for one English sovereign. Trade is paralysed

because it can neither buy raw material to manufacture goods nor export those goods in order to improve its currency. The government and administration is disorganised. And that new Government, animated with the best intentions, including men of the highest native ability, is without experience, without financial resources, and without adequate authority. It is called upon to make bricks without straw. And it is confronted with difficulties which even the strongest Government might be unable to overcome.

In the presence of such awful conditions, nothing is obviously easier than to discredit both the Polish Government and the Polish people. To any fair-minded and impartial student, they are, of course, absolutely innocent. The Polish people have, as I said, no responsibility whatsoever for the present situation. That situation is partly the result of the Russian maladministration before the war. It is also the result of the devastating German invasion, and of an equally devastating occupation. It is the result, finally, of the Bolshevik invasion. But the enemies of Poland have only to describe the terrible conditions as they are, and then, by practising an easy trick, to shift the responsibility for the chaos and paralysis and bankruptcy, and they at once achieve their malevolent purpose. They discredit the new State. They undermine its moral, as well as its

financial, foundations, and they create the impression that Poland is not destined to live. As the Polish workers who had to emigrate temporarily into German industrial districts were described as seasonal workers, the new Polish State is described as a Seasonal State. *Polen ist ein "Saisonsstaat," Es ist "lebensunfähig."*

VI

If such an impression were allowed to take possession of the public opinion of the world, if the present conspiracy were allowed to spread, it might inflict incalculable and perhaps irretrievable damage to the Polish Commonwealth. We have the evidence of recent German history, and of such pro-German authorities as Professor Hans Delbruck and Dr Bernhard, in his standard pre-war book, *Die Polenfrage*, that the Polish people in Posen have been able to hold their own even against the might and majesty of the Prussian State, and that in tenacity, in discipline, and even in organising power, the Polish peasant is at least a match for the German peasant. Recent history has established beyond contestation that Bolshevism can strike no root in the Polish peasant communities, that the Pole has a sense of law and order, that he is a hard worker, so excellent a worker that he was everywhere in request

in the German Empire, and that Westphalia alone absorbed hundreds of thousands of seasonal Polish immigrants. Recent history has also proved that he is thrifty, and that by his thrift he was adding to his acres even more rapidly than the Junkers. In other words, recent history has abundantly shown that the Pole need not be afraid of the German whenever the odds are even, when the competition is conducted fairly. But to-day the odds are not even, and obviously the Poles must be helpless against a conspiracy of lies and misrepresentations, they are helpless against the antipathy and hostility of a prejudiced world.

VII

In the face of such a conspiracy the Government of Poland must awaken to a sense of its responsibility. It can no longer look on with indifference. It cannot content itself with replying to a conspiracy of lies by maintaining a conspiracy of silence. Hitherto the Polish Government may have thought it beneath its dignity to answer those misrepresentations. They may have relied on the intrinsic justice of the Polish cause. They may have pinned their faith to the Treaty of Versailles. They may have believed that Europe in her own interest is bound to support them. They may have been too absorbed by their internal

troubles to find the necessary time and energy to fight an invisible foe. But the Anti-Polish conspiracy has now assumed proportions when it has become dangerous to the very existence of the Polish State. It is therefore urgent that to a propaganda of lies the Polish Government shall oppose a propaganda of truth. If the systematic education of public opinion can be so powerful where its object is the diffusion of lies, what ought not to be its power if its object is the diffusion of the truth? A signal recent instance, the publication of Mr Keynes's book has shown what one single work can do to lead or to mislead public opinion all over the world. Let the Polish Government state the Polish case with candour and courage, let them state their difficulties with frankness, and I believe that the truth will prevail and that the Polish people will once more win that goodwill and those sympathies which they so urgently need and which they so fully deserve.



THIRD LETTER ¹

POLAND AND THE TREATY

I

IN almost every editorial on the Silesian incidents, British papers solemnly declare that they take their stand on the Treaty of Versailles. They tell us the Poles shall not be permitted to tear up that Covenant. They indulge in grave sermons on the sanctity of international agreements. Unfortunately those appeals to the sanctity of Treaties, although they may be very impressive, are also very unreal. One might answer that there is nothing very sacred nor very wise about the Treaty, that those journals which, on this occasion, are pleased to talk about the sanctity of the Treaty of Versailles, are generally the most anxious to insist on its revision or on its repeal. But the real answer is that the whole policy of the Entente with regard to Poland is a flagrant violation of the spirit of the Treaty of Versailles ;

¹ This letter appeared in the *Scotsman*.

for the main object and purpose of the Treaty was to establish Poland as a bulwark against any future German or Russian aggression. And the Poland that was thus being restored was not to be a weak Poland but a strong Poland. To use a favourite metaphor: when we throw a bridge over a dangerous abyss a parapet of rotten wood is worse than no barrier at all because it creates a false and dangerous sense of security. To have a weak Poland would be worse than to have no Poland at all, for a weak Poland would be a constant temptation to her enemies, and would be a centre of friction and disturbance.

II

If there were any doubt as to the earnest purpose of the Allies to create a strong Poland, we have an uncontrovertible proof in the Treaty of Versailles itself. So convinced were the Allies of the vital importance of Poland in the economy of Europe that they did not shrink from the dangerous solution of breaking up Prussia and of tearing from the Mother Country Königsberg, the cradle of the Prussian Monarchy, the Holy City of the Hohenzollern. Submitting to so radical a policy, to such a dangerous surgical operation, the Allies clearly indicated their understanding of the role which Poland was expected to play under the new order. They

knew the risks involved and the sacrifices that might be necessary. They knew that Germany would never submit to such a mutilation, and that when she did recover her strength Poland would have to defend her "corridor" against the whole armed strength of the Fatherland.

III

If, then, this was the purpose of the Allies, as it obviously was, to establish a strong Poland, the Allies could not be under any delusion that Poland would be strong from the beginning either by her own inherent strength or by the "fiat" of the peacemakers of Versailles. For the Allies knew perfectly well that Poland could not possibly be inherently strong from the beginning, that, on the contrary, she would be for many years one of the weakest, and that at all times, owing to her geographical position, she would be one of the most vulnerable States of all the new creations. She was an infant State, and infants do not reveal their strength from the moment of their birth. She had an inexperienced Government, and even politicians somehow have to learn their trade. The country had been ruined by the ravages of six years of war. Poland is threatened on both sides by powerful neighbours. She has to solve an internal problem more difficult than any internal problem which any other Power has to solve,

namely, that of assimilating four millions of Jews speaking a German dialect.

IV

It is obvious, therefore, that if Poland was to become a strong Power, she had to be made strong with the co-operation and through the combined and systematic efforts of the Allies. It was, for instance, the duty of the Allies to arrange some form of international credit and to prevent the Polish exchange from falling below a minimum level. It was the duty of the Allies to help to restore the industries which had been destroyed by a ruthless invader. If Poland were attacked, it was the duty of the Allies to give Poland every military assistance in their power. And if Poland made mistakes, as she was bound to do, it was no less the duty of the Allies to use every patience and forbearance.

V

Those were some of the things which the Allies implicitly agreed to do for Poland, and which they were expected to do, not indeed in the interest of Poland, but in the interest of Europe. Unfortunately they have done none of those things. They have not maintained the Polish credit, and the Polish mark stands to-day at 3600. In this rich country with

infinite economic possibilities, the Polish shilling is worth to-day one twelfth part of the German mark, and a fraction of an English farthing. In other words, the country is on the verge of bankruptcy, and is smitten with industrial paralysis, not being able to import anything from abroad. And please let us remember that this consummation has been reached not through the fault of Poland, but simply because her industries have been ruined by the Germans, and because for the last two years Poland had to fight the battles of Europe and to resist the invasion of the Bolshevists. And when Poland was fighting the battles of Europe, not only was no military support given to her, but even the munitions which were sent to the Polish armies were held up with the consent of the British in the very city of Danzig. And that Polish city of Danzig, Polish by virtue of the Treaty, was treated as if it still were a Prussian town.

VI

In vain do we urge as an extenuation of our policy that the Polish Government have made very serious mistakes, and that the Polish people have been unwise and impetuous, and restless and troublesome. Even assuming those accusations to be true, I would ask here again: Had we a right to expect that an infant State should have avoided what much

older States could not have avoided? Could we expect Poland to make bricks without straw, and to reveal wisdom without experience, or to reveal supernatural restraint in the face of aggression? Here again I would ask: Was it not the duty as well as the interest of the Allies to show some generosity and magnanimity in the event of unavoidable blunders being made?

VII

In conclusion, I would only like to say that if the presence or absence of policy is persisted in, or, in other words, if the Allies do not revert to the spirit of the Treaty of Versailles, if they allow Poland to become bankrupt and exhausted or politically disintegrated, if they do not provide her with the means of defending her national existence, we must be prepared for the consequences: Before ten years are over, Poland will have ceased to exist, once again her hereditary enemies will march over the prostrate body of their victim, and once again, to use the immortal phrase of Frederick the Great, Germany and Russia will jointly partake of the Eucharistic body of the Polish nation.

FOURTH LETTER ¹

THE SILESIAN CONTROVERSY

I

WE have proved how the Polish policy of the Entente has been from the beginning a flagrant violation of the spirit and purpose of the Treaty. Let us now turn to the policy followed with regard to Silesia. Here again we find a succession of half-measures, of contradictions, of confusions, and of delays. To-day we are accusing the Polish Government of having fomented and encouraged the Silesian insurrection. On the contrary, it is the policy of the Allies which has brought about the present undesirable consummation. For three years they have allowed inflammable material to accumulate, and when at last the inevitable conflagration came, they had deprived themselves through an incredible lack of foresight of the means of extinguishing the fire. England in particular had withdrawn every single soldier from the plebiscite area. Thus to disarm oneself was to invite disaster.

¹ This was written before the decision of the League of Nations.

II

The peacemakers of Versailles, at a time when there was still some unity of purpose amongst the Allies, had ceded Upper Silesia to Poland. The Entente in those days had accepted the Polish point of view, and the cession of Silesia had been incorporated in the original draft of the Treaty, as presented to the German plenipotentiaries. Every reason seemed to justify such a solution. Upper Silesia is, and always has been, a territory predominantly Polish. It only became German through one of the great crimes of history, the filibustering invasion of Frederick the Great, which, in the words of Macaulay, has been the prolific cause of all the political crimes which followed. If we take our stand on ethnography or language, the last available German statistics of 1910, which could not be supposed to be unduly favourable to the Poles, yet gave them a very substantial majority in the whole of Upper Silesia, the administrative Prussian district of Oppeln. The German census indicated a Polish population of twelve hundred thousand, as compared with a German population of eight hundred thousand. It is very interesting to note in this connection that as recently as 1916 a striking ethnographical map, drawn up by Professor Dietrich Schæfer of the University of Berlin, concedes to the Poles the whole of Upper Silesia.

If we take the economic point of view, it is obvious that Silesia is even more essential to Poland than to Germany. She needs the coal supplies of Silesia if she is to be allowed to develop her infant industries.

Last, not least, for political and military reasons, it is eminently unsafe to leave in the hands of the Prussian militarists such a potential arsenal as the Silesian industries.

III

We do not know what were the secret influences and reasons which decided the Allies to reconsider their policy. One apparent reason given was the critical position in the whole of Europe with regard to coal, and the urgent need of keeping up the most intensive coal production. Another apparent reason which was emphasised by the Germans was the impossibility for Germany to pay her indemnities without the Silesian coalfields. If France was really induced to yield to that German economic argument, she was soon to find out that she was giving up the substance for a shadow.

IV

Whatever may have been the reasons for the sudden change of policy with regard to Silesia, the fact is that a compromise was agreed upon and that it was decided to substitute a consulta-

tion of the electorate for the retrocession, pure and simple, of Upper Silesia.

In the light of later events, we cannot help feeling that the procedure of a plebiscite was an unpolitical and dangerous measure, and that it was bound to defeat the very purposes for which it was devised. It could not tend to increase industrial production, but rather to decrease it. It did not hasten the restoration of peace, it tended to maintain unrest and to stir up political passion to fever heat.

We ought to add that a plebiscite, whatever its results, was bound to be grossly unfair to Poland. If the Poles had been consulted in the matter, they could no more have accepted it than the French would have accepted a plebiscite in Alsace-Lorraine. A plebiscite and a referendum may be fair methods of finding out public opinion, *but only under normal conditions and in a free country*. But Silesia was not a free country. She had been living under the Prussian heel. The Government had been accustomed for generations to import electors and to manipulate elections. And what was equally disquieting, the conditions in Silesia were not normal. Poland was being threatened with a Bolshevik invasion. A systematic conspiracy against the Polish currency had reduced it to a level which threatened the Polish finances with bankruptcy and the Polish industry with paralysis. What splendid arguments here to be used by German

propaganda! And ought we to wonder that the Germans made the most of it. What a splendid opportunity to frighten many amongst the Polish middle classes into deserting a forlorn hope? If they voted for Poland, their homes would be wrecked by Russian Bolsheviks and their properties confiscated. If they espoused the cause of Poland, they were espousing poverty and starvation.

For fifty years Germany had carried on a policy of compulsory colonisation and expropriation. Hundreds of thousands of immigrants, civil servants, and German colonists, have been allowed to swell the German numbers and to load the dice in the electoral game. When we want to find out genuine public opinion as expressed through a meeting, we take special care that such a meeting shall not be "packed" with the representatives of one side. Unfortunately the Silesian polling stations have been packed with 200,000 German immigrants.

Strictly speaking, the procedure of the plebiscite in a despotically governed country puts a premium on the brutal Prussian methods. First, brutal conquest, then systematic Germanisation and then nationalisation of industries; last, as an inevitable result, a plebiscite favourable to the conqueror.

V

The results of the plebiscite were what could be expected. At least one-third of the Polish-speaking population submitted to German pressure, and was terrorised by the obsession of Bolshevism and bankruptcy.

There were public rejoicings all over the Fatherland. I happened to be an eye-witness of those rejoicings, and to realise for myself that in German eyes the recovery of Upper Silesia was the essential condition of the recovery of German power.

In one sense the Germans had good reason to congratulate themselves. They had been able to save what seemed to be irretrievably lost. But in another sense the rejoicings were premature. The Germans had no doubt an apparent majority, but they had only a majority in the agricultural west, whose annexation was not insisted on by the Poles. On the other hand, the Poles had a majority of the communes in the industrial east, that is to say, in that triangle which was the main territory in dispute.

VI

Although the plebiscite was unfair to the Poles, they were quite prepared to abide by the results. It is a mistake to suppose that even the insurrectionist Silesian Poles were determined

to over-rule the finding of the plebiscite and to "jump the claim." Indeed the Korfanty lines were following pretty closely the lines of the plebiscite. It is not the Poles but the Germans who refused to abide by the results of the referendum. It is they who claimed Silesia as one indivisible economic whole. It is they who did claim that, notwithstanding the Treaty of Versailles and notwithstanding the Polish vote in the east, the Supreme Council had decreed that the whole of Silesia with the exception of the district of Pless and Rybnik was going to be surrendered to Germany. It is they who are already claiming back parts of Middle Silesia as well as the whole of Upper Silesia.

It is the provocative attitude of the Germans which was the immediate cause of the Silesian insurrection. The mendacious announcement by the German Press of the alleged decision of the Supreme Council was the match which set fire to the explosive material which had accumulated for the last three years.

It has been said generally in the British Press that the Silesian insurrection was an artificially fostered political movement, and that the Polish Government was subsidising it. The accusation is *prima facie* improbable. Is it credible that the Polish Government, which has its hands full of endless difficulties, would go out of its way to add another formidable problem to all its other troubles? To say that the Polish Government

incited the Silesian insurrection, is as absurd as it would be to say that the British Government was organising the Sinn Fein rebellion. In fact the Silesian insurrection has been a spontaneous rising of the Silesian working classes who have been exasperated by the intolerable delays of the Supreme Council, as well as by the aggressiveness of the German propaganda, and who are determined never to live again under the domination of German landed magnates and German captains of industry. It is a political and social rebellion as well as a racial protest.

The only way out of the present chaos was the honest acceptance of the plebiscite. Unfair though it has been to the Polish cause, it secures the industrial triangle to Poland and Polish it must remain. The reasons for such a settlement remained unanswerable. It is incredible that the Polish population which for five hundred years has resisted German assimilation should have been suddenly assimilated since 1910.

Nor has that part of Silesia become less necessary to Polish industry. Indeed its possession is an antecedent condition of the revival of Polish industry. Mr Keynes has tried to prove that Silesia is not necessary to Polish industry by tricky arguments unworthy of a scientific investigator. *First*, he has uncritically accepted with regard to the production and consumption of coal the German faked figures of

the pre-war Prussian census. *Second*, he ignores the fact that those Prussian figures only applied to the Polish provinces under Russian domination and did not include the Austrian and German territories of Poland which have been added to Poland by the Peace Treaty. *Third*, he forgot that those figures of coal consumption applied to conditions under which Polish industry was systematically ruined by the Russian Government. In his whole argument he assumed that the greater Poland of the Treaty of Versailles would need no more coal than the small Poland before the war, and that the Polish industries in a free Poland would remain at the same low level of efficiency as in Russian Poland.

The argument of Mr Keynes that Silesia is not necessary to Poland has been one hundred times refuted, not by the Poles, *but by the Germans themselves*. *The most convincing propaganda for Poland is the propaganda of the German militarists which appeared during the war*. The burden of every German pamphlet written during the war was that Poland was an economic appendage to Silesia, that therefore it was absolutely necessary for Germany to annex Poland. The Members of the Supreme Council would have done well if they had made a careful study of some of that eloquent war literature bearing on the inter-dependence between Germany and Silesia.

VII

It must be admitted in a very important sense that the Germans are quite right in their contention that Silesia is vital to Germany. But it is vital not for economic purposes but for military reasons. German writers have admitted again and again with cynical frankness that but for the Silesian coal-mines and the Silesian industries, Germany could never have resisted for four years the combined onslaught of the world. Through Germany surrendering Upper Silesia she renounces for all times her dream of military supremacy. Now that Germany has lost the iron ore of Lorraine, she needed more than ever Upper Silesia as a military arsenal. Surely it was not in the interests of Europe to supply her with such an arsenal. Poland coming into possession of the coal-mines of Upper Silesia can only use them in the interests of international peace. On the contrary, if Germany had retained possession of those mines, there was at least a probability that she would use Silesia for purposes of war. The interest of Europe even more imperatively than the national interests of Poland demanded that Upper Silesia should go to Poland. Security and world peace were the higher reasons which had to over-rule all merely material or national reasons.

FIFTH LETTER

THE POLISH QUESTION IN THE LIGHT OF EUROPEAN HISTORY

WE have seen how in the discussion on the recent Silesian incidents, the British Press with striking unanimity appealed to the Treaty of Versailles. It warned the Polish people that whatever happened the Treaty must be respected. The Polish Government have no reason whatsoever to dread or to shirk such an appeal. Poland will be safe as long as the Allied Powers remember what they have been forgetting ever since 1919, namely, the spirit and the purpose of the Treaty. Poland will be safe as long as the Allies remember that the Polish question is not a national question, but a European question.

I

For, indeed, it has been one of the main purposes of the Treaty of Versailles to make the Polish Problem an international issue. Unless we accept that proposition, many of the essential propositions of the Treaty simply become meaningless. Already, in 1917, President Wilson put the restoration of Poland in the fore-

front of his Fourteen Points. But the Treaty of Versailles went much further. It made the restoration of Poland an integral part of a constructive European policy. The Polish Problem henceforth became something more than a question of sentiment or of ideal justice, its solution implied much more than a mere adjustment of frontiers. In the conception of the political architects, Poland was to be the corner-stone of the new international fabric: remove that corner-stone and the whole fabric must inevitably collapse.

II

There is no reason for supposing that any one of the peacemakers of Versailles had made any very profound study of European history. And yet they acted as if they did understand and as if they did implicitly accept what is perhaps the most impressive lesson which the history of modern Europe can teach us. That lesson is what may be called the Polish lesson. For one hundred and fifty years Poland had been wiped out from the map of Europe and had become only the shadow of a name. Yet the Polish ghost continued to haunt every European Chancellery. The Polish enigma continued to be the riddle of the European sphinx. Those who failed to solve that Polish riddle, failed to grasp the deeper meaning of the groupings of the powers, the deeper motives of statesmen.

To use the language of scholasticism, Poland is one of the "universals" of political science. It must be conceived *sub specie æternitatis*.

III

The clear realisation on the part of political thinkers of the vital importance which the Polish question has played in modern diplomacy, may be said to date from the appearance of two epoch-making historical works which were published in the early seventies. I refer to the *Question d'Orient* by Albert Sorel, and to the *Secret du Roi* by the Duc de Broglie. Both works abundantly prove that already, in the middle of the eighteenth century, Poland had become the centre of gravity of European politics, and that already in the days of Voltaire and of Mme. de Pompadour there was the closest inter-dependence between Polish history and Universal history. That inter-dependence has continued uninterrupted for two hundred years. We can trace it in the French Revolution. We can trace it in the Wars of Napoleon. We can trace it in the diplomacy of the Holy Alliance, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and in the diplomacy of the Triple Alliance at the end.

IV

Let us consider first one extraordinary anomaly of the Wars of the Revolution which

hitherto has been strangely concealed from English readers, and which Lord Eversley, in his excellent book on the *Partitions of Poland*, has perhaps been the first English publicist to emphasise. In 1793 England embarked on that war of the giants which was to rage over two continents for a quarter of a century. That war began with the disaster of Valmy, of which Goethe, an eye-witness, justly said that it opened a new era in the history of mankind. The Allies of England seemed to hold every trump card. Yet they were ignominiously beaten. France seemed on the verge of the abyss. Yet she was victorious. Historians explain the unexpected victory as one of the miracles of the Revolutionary faith. The true explanation is to be sought, not in the forest of Argonne, but in the plains of Eastern Europe. The explanation is, that the Allies of England were not interested in the subjugation of revolutionary France. They were only interested in suppressing Poland. England had subsidised Prussia in order that she should wage a crusade against French Terrorism, but it was against Poland that Prussia spent the English millions. It was for that reason and for no other that the Allies were beaten. England had been bleeding *pour le Roi de Prusse*. The French Revolution was saved not mainly because of the heroism of the *Sans Culottes*, but because at a critical moment Poland diverted the main forces of the

enemies of liberty. Not for the first time nor for the last was Poland sacrificed to the cause of liberty.

V

The inter-dependence between Polish history and European history continues all through the wars of the Napoleonic Empire. Two distinguished writers, Albert Vandal in France and Professor Askenazy in Poland, have studied the diplomatic and political aspects of those wars. Their two works are complementary because Askenazy leaves off at the precise point where Vandal begins. Both works reveal the philosophy and deeper meaning of the gigantic struggle. There is the duel by sea between France and Great Britain, and there is the duel by land between France and the three central Empires of Europe. But whilst the issue of the maritime war is the naval supremacy of England, the issue of the continental war is the supremacy of Russia and Prussia. And the stake in the continental struggle is the independence of Poland. In vain does Napoleon establish the Grand Duchy of Warsaw. The Corsican failed to make of an independent Poland the condition *sine qua non* of peace. On this single occasion in his career, the Man of Destiny followed divided counsels, he hesitated between two conflicting policies. And we know from the Memorial of Saint Helena how bitterly

he regretted this great blunder of his career. That blunder was the exact counterpart to that which the Allies are in danger of committing to-day. The establishment of a Grand Duchy of Warsaw was indeed sufficient to alienate Russia and Prussia, but the Duchy was not strong enough to be a bulwark against Russian aggression. How different would have been the history of Europe if Napoleon, remembering the heroism of the legionaries of Dombrowski and Poniatowski, had thrown in his lot with Poland and had followed a consistent Polish policy.

The inter-dependence between Polish and European history which is thus strikingly revealed both in the wars of the Revolution and in the wars of the Empire, is maintained all through the nineteenth century. If you take a broad view of that history, it appears as one prolonged struggle between the two opposite principles of liberty and despotism. France and Great Britain (to which at a later period Italy was added) stand for liberty. Austria, Russia, and Prussia represent reaction. In the first half of the nineteenth century the liberal principle on the whole prevails and European peace is insured. With 1848, the *Annus Mirabilis* of social upheavals, comes the crisis of liberty, and from that year despotism is on the ascendant in Europe. And the reason for the defeat of liberty and for the triumph of despotism is an obvious one: in the second half

of the nineteenth century the forces of liberty are hopelessly divided. On the one hand liberal Italy joins and supports reactionary Prussia, thus betraying the cause of France which has so generously helped to liberate her. On the other hand liberal England supports both Prussia and Austria. A brilliant English thinker, Mr Gilbert K. Chesterton, during the war wrote an illuminative book on what he calls the *Crimes of England*. The main thesis of Chesterton is something more than a paradox. As Mr Chesterton says, the main crime, or, as we would rather say the main blunder, of England was that in almost every crisis of modern history until 1914 she was the staunch ally of Prussian militarism.

VI

The crime and the blunder were all the more fateful because, whilst the forces of liberty were divided, the forces of despotism, on the contrary, were indissolubly united. The Drei Kaiserbund was one solid block. The three reactionary Powers might occasionally appear to quarrel, but at the decisive moment the quarrel was always made up. So intimately were the policies of Russia and Prussia bound up that Bismarck could seriously think of entering the Russian diplomatic service even as Baron von Stein and Nesselrode had done before him. He knew that even though he might serve the Tsar

of all the Russias, the Tsar himself was in the service of the King of Prussia—I have developed this argument in my book, *German Problems and Personalities*.

And what insured the solidarity of Russia and Prussia and Austria, was mainly the Polish question. It was the division of the Polish spoils that necessarily kept the robbers united. The three Empires could not afford to quarrel seriously with each other because they were committed to a common policy of oppression in Poland. And they could not afford to give liberty to Poland as they were pledged under the Treaty of Vienna, because liberty for Poland would have meant liberty for their subjects.

If any reader thinks that I am exaggerating or misreading the meaning of European history, let him study the *Memoirs of Bismarck*, which for fifty years have been the Law and the Gospels to every German student of *Realpolitik*. From the beginning to the end of his career, the Polish-Russian policy of Bismarck stands in the forefront of his pre-occupations, and it is his Russian policy which was one of the causes of his dismissal.

VII

And just as Poland kept Russia and Prussia united before the war, so she will keep them united in the future, for neither Russia nor Prussia can accept the establishment of an

independent and a strong Poland. The causes which have been operative all through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Central Europe continue to be operative to-day.

In one of the most illuminative passages of the book, to which we refer in a later letter, the Prussian Field-Marshal Moltke admits with cynical frankness that the independence of Poland is incompatible with the power of Prussia. "After the Polish Republic surrendered the shores of the Black Sea to Russia, all her rivers and all her highways henceforth ran through Prussia. Prussia cut it off from the sea and from the world. The Vistula was the last artery of the Republic and Prussia was in the possession of the mouth of that river. In fact, one does not see how Poland could live as an independent State apart from Prussia. No one would maintain that this independence could be secured by the mere possession of Danzig, or by the freedom of the Vistula. Woe to the nation whose life depends on a piece of paper in which it does not find a safeguard in its old strength! In one word, sooner or later, either Prussia had to become Polish or Poland had to become Prussian. The Republic had to cease to exist." (Moltke, ii., p. 135.)

These prophetic lines were written in 1832 by the future Prussian Field-Marshal. No doubt they would still be endorsed by the successors of Moltke. They still ought to warn

us as to what would be the fate of Poland if Germany once more had the power to determine that fate.

VIII

When we think of the future of the Treaty of Versailles, our thoughts involuntarily hark back to that other great European Treaty which concluded the Napoleonic Wars. At the Congress of Vienna, just as at the Congress of Versailles, the Polish issue was the dominating issue. We may add that the statesmen of Vienna, just like the politicians of Versailles, solved the problem in the sense of Polish liberty and autonomy. Poland became a constitutional kingdom under Russia. Unfortunately the autonomy of Poland, proclaimed by the Treaty of Vienna and solemnly guaranteed by all the signatory powers, remained a dead-letter. And this violation of the Treaty was a foregone conclusion. One could not, with impunity, entrust the liberties of Poland to the despot of all the Russias. One might apply to Russia what Lincoln said of the United States before the War of Secession: Russia could not be made half slave and half free. It was impossible to grant freedom to Poland whilst freedom was withheld from all the rest of the Russian Empire.

The compromise of Vienna, from the nature of things, was therefore doomed to fail, as compromises are apt to fail when they embody two contradictory principles. In vain did the Powers

remind the Russian Tsar again and again of the provisions of the Treaty of Vienna. In vain did the Polish people rise again and again to defend their rights, which were guaranteed by Europe. No doubt if the Powers which had signed the Treaty of Vienna had acted together, Polish freedom might have survived and the cause of liberty would have triumphed, not only in Poland, but in Europe. But here once more the forces of progress were divided. France followed one policy and Great Britain followed another. In 1863, when a ruthless Russian soldiery was shooting down the Polish insurrectionists in Warsaw, France made a solemn protest even at the risk of embroiling herself with a powerful potential ally, and called on Great Britain to intervene. But England refused to discharge her international obligations. But whilst England refused to support France on behalf of Poland, Prussia did intervene to support Russia against Poland. Once more the liberties of Poland were suppressed and drenched in the blood of her children.

IX

Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht ("The history of the world is the Supreme Court of humanity"), a court from which there can be no appeal. The broad facts which we have given are an eloquent commentary on the philosophy of contemporary European politics,

and on the supremacy of moral law in the governance of the world. They are a challenge to the apostles of the *Realpolitik*. They are a convincing demonstration of the significance of Polish liberty in the international order.

Again and again crimes and blunders have been committed. Again and again inexorable retribution has followed every blunder and every crime. And the longer the punishment was delayed, the heavier the penalties. Again and again, the Liberal Powers of Europe have failed to be true to themselves and to fulfil their internal obligations. Again and again, Great Britain, following a policy of splendid isolation or of mistaken self-interest, has betrayed the cause of freedom.

Will the same blunders be repeated? Will England in 1921, as she did in 1863, go once more her own way, leaving France to follow the opposite policy? Will Poland once more be surrendered to the tender mercies of her enemies?

Every Liberal who knows the issues which are involved must devoutly hope and trust that at the eleventh hour the present dissension between Great Britain and France will make place to unity, and to a rational and a consistent and a European policy; that they may revert to the constructive aims of the Treaty of Versailles; and that they will jointly pledge themselves to defend the cause of Poland, which always was, and which remains, the cause of freedom and civilisation.

SIXTH LETTER

A DEFENCE OF POLAND BY FIELD-MARSHAL VON MOLTKE¹

WE drew attention in our first letter to the extraordinary conspiracy of lies which seems to have been organised by sinister forces against the new Polish State, both in America and in Europe. The restoration of a strong Poland is one of the chief purposes of the Treaty of Versailles, yet the critics of Poland unanimously proclaim that Poland is not going to live—to use the German phrase, “*ist nicht lebens fähig*.” The wish is no doubt father to the thought, but it is by no means impossible that if the dark conspiracy were to succeed, the wish might be fulfilled. On the other hand, if Poland were not destined to live, it would be not because she does not deserve to live, it would not be because the existence of Poland would have ceased to be necessary to Europe, but because Europe would not have provided Poland with the means of maintaining and defending her existence.

¹ *Fas est et ab hoste doceri.*

In the meantime that conspiracy is undermining the confidence of the world in the future and in the stability of Poland, and by artificially and systematically wrecking the Polish currency, it is threatening the country with bankruptcy. For unfortunately those Anti-Polish lies are generally accepted because the average man is ignorant of the Polish language, which is one of the most difficult of European languages, and because the Englishman is therefore at the mercy of "Polish" news concocted and circulated by the German Press.

The accusations launched against the Poles of to-day are only a repetition of the accusations which have been heard for two hundred years; they are a repetition of those accusations which were launched by Catherine the Great and by Frederick the Great, when they were preparing to "partake of the Eucharistic body" of their victims. In all times it has been a favourite method with tyrants, after they have committed an injustice, to justify themselves by slandering the victim which they have wronged. History is always repeating itself. The past is always the key to the present. And to no country does the truth apply more closely than to Poland. Since 1795 the Poles have had to live almost entirely in the past, for the simple reason that they had no present and apparently no future. But quite apart from the tragedy of the partition of Poland,

the great factors which have made Polish history are to-day what they always were. The national character is the same, the geographical conditions are the same, Poland is inspired by the same ideals, she has to fulfil the same historical mission, and she is exposed to the same perils.

It is because there exists such a close correspondence between the past history of Poland and the burning problems of to-day, that it may be of interest to English students to turn to a strange book on Poland which was written and published in 1832 by Field-Marshal von Moltke. It is called *Darstellung der Inneren Verhaeltnisse und des gesellschaftlichen Zustandes in Polen* ("An Exposition of Internal and Social Conditions in Poland"). The book is now almost forgotten, yet it remains to this day a most illuminating interpretation of Polish history and a most penetrating analysis of Polish character. Moltke wrote it when public opinion in Europe had been roused against Russian atrocities, when he himself was still under the influence of his Danish upbringing, when he was fresh from writing a romance, when the rule of blood and iron had not yet become supreme in Prussia, when his great rival was still sowing his wild oats in his native Brandenburg.

Moltke's tribute to the qualities of the Polish people are all the more convincing because they

are entirely involuntary. He wrote his book, not as a plea for Poland, but as an argument in favour of the Prussian State. Moltke is no doubt impelled by the study of Polish history to proclaim that the Poles were a great people, but his immediate object is to prove that their greatness was only the greatness of individuals, and that all the individual virtues of the Polish people could not save them as they did not possess the blessing of a strong State, such as Prussia or Russia. In the following comparison between the destinies of Russia and those of Poland, Moltke sums up both the purpose of his book and his own philosophy of history :—

“At an early period the independence of the (Russian) people was lost in serfdom, that of the nobles in the absolute power of the princes. The will of the individual was lost to sight more and more in the will of the State, or rather in that of the head of the State, who united in his person the highest civil and ecclesiastic power, in a manner unknown in any other part of Europe. Hence the unity and strength manifested in the enterprises of the (Russian) State, and its quick development, for despotism is the best government for barbarians. The Polish annals are thus the histories of great men, the Russian annals the history of a great State. In the former, we see the virtues of the individual contending with the faults of the community ; in the latter, a line of princes with hereditary power

who force a nation to assume a higher civilization." (Moltke, *Vermischte Schriften*, ii., p. 121.)

But perhaps the chief interest of Moltke's book is that it provides us with a reply to all the Anti-Polish commonplaces of the present-day historical literature. There is not one of the recent accusations against the Polish people which is not answered in the suggestive pages of the old Field-Marshal. And it is indeed both piquant and paradoxical that it should have been left to the Prussian "genius of war" to undertake an Apology for Poland, and to correct our misconceptions and prejudices about them.

I

Our first and most common misconception is that Poland was a survival of a feudal age, that it was ruled by magnates whose tyranny reproduces that of mediæval chieftains. Moltke has been one of the first to explode that historical heresy and to prove that in the Polish Republic there was no kind of feudal superiority or of feudal dependence.

"No Polish noble was the vassal of a superior lord—the meanest of them appeared at the diet in the full enjoyment of a power which belonged to all without distinction. It is here that we find the fundamental difference between the Polish Constitution and the Feudal States of the West and the despotism of the East." "The mutual relations of the nobles were based upon

perfect equality among all, and as much independence for the individual as was compatible therewith." (Moltke, ii., p. 66.)

II

Our second misconception is that Poland was an oligarchic State. Moltke clearly saw that Poland was essentially a democracy, more democratic indeed than any other contemporary State; that it was a Republic where the authority of the King or of the aristocracy had been surrendered to some three hundred thousand sovereign personalities (Moltke, ii., p. 66); where the sense of equality was so tyrannical that the will of one citizen was sufficient to paralyse the action of the State. As a Polish philosopher, Mr Lutoslawski, has said—in the eighteenth century the number of full citizens in Poland was about 14 per cent. of the inhabitants, while in England, half a century later, the electors formed less than 2 per cent. of the population.

III

A third accusation which was already made against the Poles a hundred years ago, is that they are an aggressive, a militarist, and imperialistic people. Moltke admits, of course, that they were a military people for the simple reason that they had always to be ready to defend their independence against the foreign invader.

But he does not admit that they were militarist or aggressive.

“An offensive war was contrary to the constitution and rendered almost impossible by the organisation of the State. It was illegal for the nobles to be kept under arms for more than three weeks, or for them to be led more than three hours’ march across the frontier.” “When the example of her neighbours forced Poland to establish a standing army, it was not placed under the immediate control of the King. He appointed a royal Field-Marshal for Poland and one for Lithuania, but he could not deprive them of office. A definite portion of the subsidies were voted by each diet.” (Moltke, ii., p. 83.)

“Poland is the only European State which down to the sixteenth century possessed no military force, except that of its armed and mounted nobles.” “An admirable peculiarity of this warlike nobility was the simplicity of their habits. They lived the greater part of the year on their estates; there they spent their income, practised an extensive hospitality, and remained at a distance from, and independent of, the Court. The wealth, which the noble obtained from his subjects, returned to them again. A few benches, tables, and carpets formed the furniture of the richest palatine. The women did not care for luxury. . . . Good armour and excellent horses formed the sole splendour of the men.” (Moltke, ii., p. 74.)

Moltke might have added that the Polish people were the first people who introduced the principle and the practice of self-determination. He might have added that as early as the fifteenth century they united with, and for three hundred years continued to be united with, Lithuania—an important historical fact which both the Lithuanian people and Mr Lloyd George are apt to forget at the present day.

IV

A fourth grievance which is constantly adduced against the Poles, is that they are a clerical and an intolerant people. Their alleged intolerance was indeed a pretext for the interference both of Russia and Prussia. It was in the name of the "dissidents" or non-conformists and in order to defend freedom of conscience that Catherine, yclept the Great and the Liberal, claimed the right of intervention in the affairs of Poland. And so well was the Anti-Polish propaganda organised that all the Liberal philosophers from Voltaire to Diderot applauded and approved the policy of the Russian and Prussian tyrants. As Moltke tells us, the commonplace about Polish intolerance was a monstrous one.

"The ancient Poles were very tolerant. They took no part in the religious wars, which devastated Europe in the sixteenth century and seventeenth century. Calvinists, Lutherans,

Greeks, Schismatics, Mohammedans, long lived peacefully in their midst. The Poles actually forced their Kings to swear that they would tolerate all sects." (Moltke, ii., p. 75.)

V

Closely related with the accusation of intolerance is the accusation of Anti-Semitism. Again and again the Polish people have been accused of organising pogroms against the Jews. The truth is that Poland, as Moltke informs us, was justly called the "Promised Land" of the Jews. In 1096 the Jews fled to Poland, where at that time there was more religious tolerance than in the rest of Europe.

Poland certainly was then, and remained for centuries, the only country which offered a refuge to the persecuted Israelites, and if there is such a thing as national and historical gratitude, the Jewish people are under an eternal debt of gratitude to the Polish people.

"The Jews had their own diet, every province sent deputies to Warsaw, where they formed a great assembly and elected their own Marshal, whose appointment was confirmed by the Government. In short, next to the nobles, the Jews formed the most influential and powerful class in their country." (Moltke, ii., pp. 94 and 105.)

VI

A sixth accusation against the Poles is that they are a servile people, and that owing to the tyranny of the landed magnates the peasants were reduced, and are still reduced, to the condition of serfs. The real truth is, of course, that in no country does the peasantry play a more important part in Government than in Poland. The Polish parliament to-day is largely a parliament of small-holders. The Prime Minister, M. Vitos, is himself a peasant. And so it was in the past. The fact that there was no such serfdom in Poland as existed in Russia and Prussia is admitted by Moltke.

“The peasant did not belong to the lord, he could not be sold. The estate might pass into other hands, but the peasant was not obliged to leave his farm. The fact that he could possess land prevented him from ever becoming a mere serf.” “The peasant was well off, he could raise money on his property and had regular tribunals. . . . He enjoyed the possession of home and land. . . . The Polish peasant enjoyed these privileges at a time when villeinage existed in all the rest of Europe.” (Moltke, ii., p. 93.)

VII

We come to a seventh misconception about Poland. As compared with Western Europe, Poland is often represented by its enemies to be

a semi-barbarous country. That assumption remains one of the stock German arguments in the Silesian controversy. The Germans tell us that they are entitled to Upper Silesia because they are more efficient, better educated, more civilised. The Poles are not entitled to Upper Silesia because they are an inferior race, they are *minderwertig*. The Prussian supermen in their propaganda literature are never tired of pointing out that the Poles have scarcely risen above a state of barbarism, of Sarmatic anarchy.

Very different is the conclusion of Moltke. He informs us that already in the fifteenth century, Poland was "one of the most civilised States of Europe."

"The rapid development of other States and their increasing subordination to the will of their rulers, allowed them to act with growing unity. The admirable qualities of Poland's citizens enabled it, however, to maintain an influence, in spite of the primitive simplicity of its laws, the unlimited respect paid to the privileges of the individual, and the necessarily slow development of the State." "We may add that the Poland of the fifteenth century was one of the most civilised States of Europe. It is true that the virtues of the citizens had much to atone for in the badly-organised Constitution of the Republic, so that moral qualities had to supply the place of good laws." (Moltke ii., p. 76.)

VIII

But perhaps of all the prejudices against Poland, the most universally accepted is that they are a people of reactionaries. It is amusing to note that it is the very opposite accusation which is brought forward by Moltke. In his opinion, the weakness of Poland is that it is not like good old Prussia, that it has always been too ready to believe in the new-fangled notions of liberty and democracy. And the judgment of Moltke is right. It may be said of the old Polish Constitution that it has anticipated by three or four hundred years the most modern ideals of democratic government.

We have indicated very briefly Moltke's views on the characteristics of Polish character and Polish history, and we have seen that the Field-Marshal never hesitates to do justice to the splendid qualities of the people.

It is true that the picture which Moltke gives us of Poland and the Polish people only applies to the great age of the Polish Commonwealth, and that he is as severe in condemning a later generation as he is generous in his appreciation of an earlier generation. No one has seen more clearly the causes of Poland's downfall. But what Moltke tells us of the deeper causes of the decline and fall of the Polish Republic, is even more instructive and more topical to-day, than what he says about its greatness. With

the honesty of a soldier, Moltke tells us that Poland fell, not mainly because of the shortcomings of her citizens, but because of the fatality of her geographical position and especially because of the ambitions of her neighbours.

"The conquest of Poland was the aim of the rulers of Russia, and this Republic, one of the oldest of European States, discovered with terror that it lay between the two newest monarchies of the continent, and that its geographical position was an obstacle to their further development." (Moltke, ii., p. 122.)

"The position of Poland made it a stumbling-block to two powerful neighbours, who had in the last centuries made immense progress and whose rapid development was certain either to bring about their own ruin or to annihilate all obstacles." (Moltke, ii., p. 134.)

In one of the most illuminative passages of the book, the Prussian Field-Marshal admits with cynical frankness that the independence of Poland is incompatible with the power of Prussia. "After the Polish Republic surrendered the shores of the Black Sea to Russia, henceforth all her rivers and all her highways ran through Prussia. Prussia cut it off from the sea and from the world. The Vistula was the last artery of the Republic, and Prussia was in the possession of the mouth of that river. In fact, one does not see how Poland could live as an independent State apart from Prussia.

No one would maintain that this independence could be secured by the mere possession of Danzig or by the freedom of the Vistula. Woe to the nation whose life depends on a piece of paper in which it does not find a safeguard in its old strength! In one word, sooner or later, either Prussia had to become Polish or Poland had to become Prussian. The Republic had to cease to exist." (Moltke, ii., p. 135.)

These prophetic lines were written in 1832 by the future Prussian Field-Marshal. No doubt they would still be endorsed by the successors of Moltke. They still ought to warn us as to what would be the fate of Poland if Germany once more had the power to determine that fate.

As I said at the outset of this letter, the causes which were operative in Eastern Europe in 1832 are still operative to-day. The geographical conditions have not altered. The ambitions of the neighbours of Poland are to-day what they always were. It was the tragedy of Poland in the eighteenth and in the nineteenth centuries, that whereas her enemies were united, her friends were divided. Is that tragedy to be repeated in our own generation? To avert such a disastrous consummation, let us accept the lessons of the Prussian "genius of war." *Fas est et ab hoste doceri.*

SEVENTH LETTER

THE JEWISH PROBLEM IN POLAND

I

EVER since the Armistice, public opinion has been periodically startled by the news of cruel Jewish pogroms in the new State of Poland. And all over the world there has been an outburst of indignation against those incorrigible Poles who are thus using their newly-won freedom to oppress their fellow-citizens of Jewish persuasion. The extraordinary thing about those accusations is that whenever they have been examined, they have proved themselves to be entirely unfounded. There have been numerous Anti-Jewish pogroms in Bolshevist Russia, although a large proportion of the Bolshevik leaders in the Russian Government happen to be Jews. But there have been no Jewish pogroms in Poland. There have been various encounters in Vilno and elsewhere between Polish troops and Jewish rebels, and rebels have been killed, an accident which occasionally happens in civil war. But those Jewish rebels have been killed, not because they

were Jews, but because they were rebels. When the *New York Herald* published some sensational revelations about Jewish pogroms in Poland and showed us gruesome pictures of massacres in Kishinef, it forgot that the city of Kishinef is situated in Bessarabia, about 250 kilometres from the nearest Polish frontier. It also forgot that those gruesome pictures referred to events which took place in 1905 under the old Tsarist regime.

A few months ago, at the request of the Polish Government, the United States Government made an investigation into the condition of the Jews in Poland. The Commissioner sent by President Wilson was Mr Morgenthau, late Ambassador in Turkey, and himself a Jew. Ambassador Morgenthau was specially qualified for the task. He is a man of outstanding ability, he is the author of one of the most interesting books of the war and had already conducted an investigation into the Armenian pogroms in Turkey. Mr Morgenthau, in his inquiry, proved beyond the possibility of contestation the baseless nature of the accusation. He further gave the Polish Jews the wholesome advice to try to be loyal citizens to the New State, warning them at the same time of the incalculable damage which was being done not only to the New State, but to the Jewish cause, by the irresponsible charges hurled by the Jewish papers against the Polish Government and the Polish people.

II

We may start then from the assumption that there are no Anti-Jewish pogroms in Poland. At the same time, to say that there are no pogroms does not mean that there is no Jewish problem. On the contrary, there does exist a Jewish problem, and it is perhaps the most difficult political problem that confronts statesmanship in the world to-day. It is even more perplexing, more elusive, than the Irish problem. The Irish problem might be solved in twelve months by a statesman gifted with sympathy and imagination. But not even a big man with clear vision and a stout heart could at once dispose of the Jewish problem in Poland. The difficulties existed long before the war. It ought to be our endeavour to grasp those difficulties and to analyse them calmly, impartially, *sine amore et studio*. We ought especially to realise that those difficulties have not been created either by the Poles or by the Jews, but that both the Poles and the Jews have been the tools of an evil Russian policy, that they have been the victims of circumstances and of forces beyond their control, that the present situation is the outcome of definite historical causes, of geographical conditions, and of definite economic realities.

III

Before we enter on our subject it is necessary to make one preliminary remark. The Jewish people are a very remarkable people, endowed with many wonderful gifts. But no more than any other people can they claim to have a monopoly of all the private or public virtues. Like other nations they have made many grievous mistakes. Like other nations, they contain to-day many undesirable elements. And granting that they have been unjustly persecuted, it is also true that those very persecutions have left those taints which oppression and slavery often leave in their train.

To state unpalatable facts is not to proclaim oneself an Anti-Semite. Yet the Jewish Press has acquired the very unpleasant habit of starting the warwhoop of Anti-Semitism whenever a writer, however friendly to the Jews, ventures to state any facts which may in any way reflect on the Chosen People. Two years ago, at the request of the Jewish Literary Society of Edinburgh, I gave an address on "The Future of the Jewish People." In the course of my address I pointed out the danger to the Jewish race arising from the decisive part which Jewish leaders were taking in the Bolshevik movement. This statement of mine roused an indignant protest from the Jewish

Rabbi in Edinburgh, who simply and flatly denied a fact which was patent to all the world. The incident is a characteristic illustration of an attitude which we may observe every day in every country. The sooner the Jewish Press drop this intolerable attitude the better it will be for the Jewish Cause.

Jewish writers have never hesitated to make ample use of their own highly-developed critical faculties in order to expose the weaknesses and shortcomings of every community and of every class in the Gentile world. They ought to allow the same liberty to others. They ought to allow Gentile writers to apply their much less developed critical faculties to the scientific investigation of the Jewish problem.

IV

The main factor of the Jewish problem in Poland is the demographic factor. It is the concentration of an enormous Hebrew population in a comparatively small area. It is not easy to get accurate statistics, but it is computed that over five million Jews are located within the limits of the New Polish State. It ought to be specially noted that this formidable concentration is the result both of Polish tolerance and of German and Russian intolerance. Again and again during the last few years the Jewish Press have been systematically

accusing the Polish people of intolerance. It does not seem to occur to them that the very presence of the Jews in Poland in such overwhelming numbers is a refutation of that accusation. Poland has given a refuge to the Jews at a time when they were being massacred, despoiled, and hounded out of every other country in Europe. And not only were the Jews given shelter, they received special privileges and they formed autonomies and communities. If there exists any such thing as collective gratitude, then I submit that, by their magnanimous policy, the Polish people ought to have earned the undying gratitude of the whole Jewish race.

We ought, therefore, to remember when making any inquiry into the condition of the Polish Jews, that Poland has been from the Middle Ages the "promised land" of Israel, that in this "promised land" the Jewish people have been able to establish self-governing communities and have multiplied exceedingly. Even by the mere operation of the Malthusian law, by the mere natural increase of a very prolific race which encourages early marriages and large families, the problem of the Jewish population in Poland would have become very acute and a point of saturation would have been reached. But the already large existing Jewish population in Poland, has been enormously increased in recent generation by the

insane policy of the Russian Government. The Jews have been driven from the greater part of the Russian Empire, and have been cooped up within the so-called pale of settlement whose limits very nearly coincided with the limits of historical Poland. Whereas in the Middle Ages Poland became the refuge of all the European Jews, in modern times it also became the dumping ground of all the Russian Jews.

V

A large alien population in any State, however strong, is always a serious problem. The difficulty is greater in Poland, not only because the alien Jewish element is disproportionately large, but because the new Polish State is still very weak. The problem is more difficult still because that alien population has not been assimilated. And let it be noted that it has not assimilated, by the deliberate policy of the Jews themselves. In other countries the small minority of Jews has gradually been merged in the population. They may for some time retain the gregarious habits of the Ghetto as they are doing in the United States, where over one million Jews continue to press together in the slums of New York, although they have a whole continent open to colonisation. But in other countries they are gradually absorbed in the community. In Poland the Jews refuse to

be absorbed. The Polish State is quite ready to give equal privileges and opportunities to the Jewish population. They are anxious that all the barriers between Jew and Pole should be removed. But the Jew does not want to become a Pole, he prefers to remain a Jew.

We are familiar with the radical denationalised progressive revolutionary type of Jew. We are not familiar with the conservative, reactionary nationalist Jew of Poland. We are familiar with the Jewish internationalist, we are not familiar with the Jewish nationalist. Yet the Polish Jew is the most bigoted, the most fanatic of nationalists. He continues to live in the Middle Ages, he feeds on the Talmud and on the Zohar. He retains his long gabardines and his corkscrew curls. He continues to dispute whether an egg which is laid on the Sabbath may be eaten and whether that Sabbatical egg is not an unclean egg. The women continue to shave their hair on the day of their marriage. They continue to speak and to write their German-Yiddish jargon. And lest a Christian might know what it is they are writing, they camouflage their German writing in the disguise of Hebrew characters.

We must emphasise the importance of that racial separation of that Jewish nationalism if we are to grasp the Jewish question in Poland. When we consider any misunderstandings between the Jew and the Christian in Poland, we

must not forget that the misunderstandings are due not to the attitude of the Polish people but to this deliberate Jewish policy of isolation.

VI

But even if the Jews did desire to be assimilated, the fact is that they cannot be assimilated. There are too many of them. During the war I had the honour to act as Chairman in a Debate between a Jewish gentleman and Mr Roman Dmowski, the Polish Plenipotentiary at Versailles; as the controversy was getting somewhat too animated, I intervened for one moment in the discussion in order to relieve the tension of the atmosphere. I am sure, I submitted, that Mr Roman Dmowski is prepared to admit that the Jews are the "salt of the earth." On the other hand I feel sure that Sir Leo Levison would also be prepared to admit that there may be too much salt in the Polish dish. I believe that those words did sum up the gist of the problem.

Normally, in all human communities, social life depends on a certain equilibrium of social forces, on a balance of the population as between town and country, as between sex and sex, as between class and class, as between profession and profession. There was a time in the Middle Ages when there was an unhealthy preponderance of the clerical population, because

each man wanted to enjoy the advantages and immunities of the Church. There are cities to-day, such as Edinburgh, where every tenth member of the community is a lawyer. There are countries where there is an alarming overproduction of women, where, as in Great Britain, there are two million more women than men. There are countries like the Central American Republics where everybody has the ambition to be a politician. Similarly there are countries such as Great Britain and the United States where the town population is steadily growing at the expense of the country. This unhealthy disturbance of the balance of social forces, this unequal distribution of the population, is part of the Jewish problem in Poland, that his activities are bound to be largely parasite. It is not attacking the Jew to say that he is not an agriculturist or an artisan, but a trader and a middle-man. Nor am I attacking him when I state the fact that he has had to concentrate more and more in the towns precisely because he is a trader. We are not unfamiliar with the same problem in other European or American countries. New York is suffering from the Ghetto habits and the commercial idiosyncrasies of the Jews, as there are now more than one million Jews in the American metropolis. But in Poland this evil is not the exception, but the universal rule. Every Polish and Lithuanian town, Warsaw,

Lodz, Vilna, Grodno, Kovno, Krakow, and Lemberg all suffer from the same congestion.

VII

The abnormal proportion of Jews in the Polish towns has had one disastrous social effect amongst many others. It has prevented the emergence of a Polish middle class. It is the fashion to-day to attack the Bourgeois. He is reviled by the Socialist agitator, exploited by the trader, and taxed out of existence by the State. Yet it is one of the safest generalisations of history that a strong middle class is essential to the welfare of any nation. There is no instance known to the sociologist where any State has maintained its stability or where a nation had achieved any conspicuous success without the assistance of an intermediate class of burghers. Now it has been the misfortune and weakness of Poland that no large middle class has ever emerged in Polish history. To that cause more than to any other can be traced the downfall of the Polish Republic. And the absence of a Polish middle class in the past has been largely due to the presence and pressure of an abnormal number of Jews. There is a vicious circle in the economic life of Poland. On the one hand a Polish middle class cannot rise as long as the present concentration of the Jewish population persists. On

the other hand, if a Polish middle class did become both conscious as a class and sufficient unto itself, the Jewish population in the cities could no more make a livelihood. The Jews would have to live by taking in each other's washing.

Here again present difficulties are not of recent origin. They are rooted in the past. One remarkable incident which happened immediately before the war illustrates the economic antagonism between the Jewish population and the rising Polish middle class. About 1910 the national party declared an economic boycott against the Jews. It was an inopportune and a dangerous move, as Mr Roman Dmowski found out to his cost. But the Christians were able to urge that they were only applying to the Jews those very economic methods which the Jews were applying to the Poles. The Jews maintained the strictest economic solidarity and clannishness amongst themselves. The Christians were merely retaliating. It was not a conflict between the nationalism of the Poles and the internationalism of the Jews. It was a struggle between two nationalisms. To the solid Jewish block, the Poles opposed their own block of equal solidity. Once again it was, I admit, a dangerous experiment, and one which could not lead to internal peace. But the whole relations between the Jew and the Christian on the present footing were them-

selves abnormal and unhealthy. And the fault lay with the Jews much more than with the Poles, although, as I said before, the original responsibility rests with the policy of the Tsarist regime.

VIII

To the economic difficulties of the Jewish problem we must add the political difficulties. The Poles are as intensely patriotic as the Jews. They are more intensely patriotic than any other European people. Their patriotism may be measured by their sufferings and by their sacrifices. For 130 years they have lived and moved and had their being in an ideal Polish State. And now, when in the fulness of time that State has been restored, they discover with dismay that the Jews, on whose support they had a right to rely, are the secret or overt enemies of the State. They discover that the Polish Jew is primarily a Jew, that he is secondarily a German, but that in the majority of cases he refuses to be a Pole pure and simple. In this connection there is one very important fact which is not generally realised, the fact, namely, that 95 per cent. of the five million of Polish Jews speak a German dialect. It is almost universally assumed that what is called the Jargon or Yiddish is merely a Hebrew slang with an admixture of Polish and German words. But Yiddish is nothing of the kind. It

is a German dialect with a sprinkling of Hebrew and Polish words. Every traveller in Poland can apply a very simple practical test. A Warsaw Pole cannot possibly understand a Polish Jew. Even a Spanish Jew could not possibly understand a Polish Jew. On the other hand a German would have no difficulty in understanding him, whether that German hails from Breslau, or from Berlin, or from Aix-la-Chapelle.

And not only do the Jews speak a German dialect, which they have a perfect right to do, but they claim that this dialect shall be used and recognised in the public schools of the Polish State. Such a claim is intolerable, and would not be admitted by any Government. What would the English people say if the Jews of Whitechapel insisted on eliminating English from the board schools of England? What would the American people say if the Jews insisted that English should be eliminated from the public schools of the Bowery? And it is obvious that no English or American Jew would dream of urging such a demand. Why, then, should they urge it in Poland?

IX

But not only do the Jews insist on retaining their German language; what is even more serious, a large section do not conceal their political sympathies for a Russo-German

Alliance. A political contingency, which the Poles consider as their greatest peril, the Jewish nationalists consider as their fondest hope. One may understand that during the war the Jewish population in Poland should have sided with the Germans, because the issue was uncertain, and because it may have been safer to side with the strong. But now that the Polish State is established, the Jewish attitude is more difficult to understand, yet it has scarcely changed. Many Polish Jews still believe that the Germans will eventually win, and they are prepared to help the Germans to win or to do nothing to prevent them from winning.

There is one quite reasonable explanation for the Jewish attitude, although there can be no justification. The Jews seem to think that their future is bound up with Russia and Germany. They have everything to hope from a German-Russian Alliance. Under present conditions in the New Poland, the Jewish activities will be circumscribed within very narrow limits. On the contrary, in a Russo-German Empire extending from the Baltic to the Pacific, there would be boundless scope for the commercial expansion of the Jewish people.

X

To the extravagant claims of the Jewish nationalists for the recognition of the Yiddish-German dialect, to the sympathies for a Russo-German Alliance, must be added another cause of political friction, namely, the part which the revolutionary section amongst the Jews is taking in understanding the foundations of the present order. Bolshevism in Poland, as in most other Central European countries, is largely controlled by Jews, and the Bolshevism of the Polish Jewish Bunt is fiercely resented by the average law-abiding Pole. For the average Pole is a law-abiding citizen. The Polish State is no doubt a democratic State, but it is a democracy of peasants. Two-thirds of the representatives in the Polish Parliament are simple crofters. And it is in the nature of a peasant republic to be conservative, because a peasant is rooted in the soil, he has his feet firmly planted on the mother earth, he has a stake in the prosperity of the country. It is inevitable, therefore, that in Poland, as in Russia, Bolshevism should have no more determined enemies than the peasants. This is one more political and social cause for antagonism between the Polish peasant and the Jew. There have been Bolshevik riots in which a large number of Poles and a smaller of Jews have been killed. But, as I already pointed out, let it be quite clear that those

riots have been Bolshevist riots and not Anti-Semitic riots, as they have often been described. The Jews that have been killed have been killed because they were revolutionists and not because they were Jews. To call the resistance to Jewish Bolshevism an attack on Jewry would be as absurd as to call the resistance to Sinn Fein an attack on the Roman Catholic religion.

XI

From what has been said in the preceding pages, the reader may realise how much explosive material has accumulated in Poland. Between the Pole and the Jew there are a hundred differences: differences of language, of religion, of race and of manners, of economic interests and of political sympathies. Every cause which makes for hostility has been operative in Poland on a large scale, and for hundreds of years. And when we calmly and impartially examine the situation, the wonder is not that there should have been sporadic outbursts of violence, the miracle is that there should have been so little, and that any outbursts which did occur should have been stopped so quickly and with so little effusion of blood. In any other country civil war would have been almost unavoidable. That there should have been no pogroms in Poland as there have been in Hungary or in Ukraine, that there should be no civil war

as in Ireland, is one more proof of the pacific and tolerant spirit of the Polish people.

There is a superficial way of looking upon every racial or national struggle as a melodrama, where perfect heroes are at war with consummate villains. But truly the struggle between the Pole and the Jew is not a cinematographic melodrama. It is a human tragedy, where both sides have been victims of historical, geographical, and economic forces over which they had no control. Therefore there is no short cut to a solution of the Jewish question in Poland. Patience, forbearance, justice, and charity may do a great deal. But even after statesmanship has done its best by mutual concession and compromise, the Jewish problem will still remain the riddle of the Sphinx. Zionism was believed by some enthusiasts to be the great remedy, but it now turns out that the Jewish State of Palestine is less hospitable to the Jews than the Polish State has always been. As the British High Commissioner, Sir Herbert Samuel, himself a Jew, has already declared that Jewish immigration into Palestine will have to be regulated. Failing Zionism, the great countries of Europe and the United States and Brazil may help the Polish Government by relieving the Jewish congestion, and by absorbing a fraction of the congestion of the cities. Before the war, hundreds of thousands of Poles, both Christians and Jews, had to leave

their country every year. The necessity for such emigration may continue for years to come. But whatever may be done in that direction, it certainly will not relieve the present racial tension. It certainly will not help the cause of the Jewish people if irresponsible Jewish writers continue to hurl unjust accusations against the Polish Government, and shake the credit of the Polish people. As long as the Jews remain in Poland they will have to co-operate with the Polish nation, who have been more hospitable to them and more tolerant than any other Christian people. And they will have to be loyal supporters of the Polish State which has proved itself ready to extend to them all political and social rights which are granted to every Polish citizen.

EIGHTH LETTER ¹

LIBERAL FIRST PRINCIPLES AND THE SILESIAN CONTROVERSY

As a student of international politics I followed with the keenest interest the controversy on the Silesian Question, not only in the British but also in the French Press. In comparing the thousand and one articles which have been poured out on both sides of the Channel, one cannot help being struck by one strange paradox. In this controversy, the French papers are unanimous, whereas in England they are divided. And what is even more perplexing, in France it is especially the Liberal Press which is enthusiastic in support of the Polish cause, whereas in England it is the Liberal papers who are the most determined opponents of the Poles.

What is the explanation of the paradox? The facts of the Silesian Controversy are surely the same whether they are interpreted by a

¹ This letter was sent to the *Manchester Guardian*. Its Liberal logic was unanswerable, and as the *Manchester Guardian* could not answer it, this great Liberal organ followed the more prudent course of not publishing it.

Frenchman or an Englishman, and the creed of a Liberal is the same whether it be held in France or in Great Britain. Who then is right? Is the clear French intellect bemused by the terror of another German aggression? Or are French journalists, in supporting the Polish cause, simply loyal to a tradition which for one hundred years has been the Liberal tradition in France as well as in the whole of Europe? And if this French loyalty to a Liberal tradition be the true explanation, shall we then conclude that it is the British Liberals who are betraying their convictions in a vital matter of foreign policy, just as they recently betrayed those convictions in vital matters of domestic policy?

The only way to answer those questions is to go down to the bottom rock of first principles. We shall not get nearer the truth by discussing the Polish Question with reference to alleged French or British interests, or by an appeal to the necessities of the Franco-British Alliance, or by an appeal to the Treaty of Versailles. We shall only find out the truth by asking ourselves, as Cobden or John Bright or Gladstone would have done: What is the logical connection between the Silesian Question and the Liberal programme, and quite especially in relation to those four cardinal tenets of the Liberal creed—namely peace, free trade, agrarian reform, and self-determination?

I

Inasmuch as Liberalism stands for international peace, a consistent Liberal ought obviously to favour such a solution of the Silesian Question as would increase the chances of peace and lessen the chances of war. If we are to decide by that test, I submit that we ought to support the Polish solution rather than the German solution. Upper Silesia is the armoury of Germany. Without it Germany could not have carried on the war. Without it she cannot dream of ever again realising her plans of revenge. The military importance of Silesia has been again and again recognised by the Germans themselves. In the Central Hall of the German Government Buildings of Oppeln, which are at present the headquarters of the Inter-Allied Commission, the attention of the visitor is attracted by a huge shell, bearing two dates, 7th May 1816—7th May 1916, with the superscription, "On the occasion of the first centenary of the foundation of the Arsenal of Breslau. Four million shells coming from Upper Silesia." Ought not those four million shells cause the pacifist to pause and ponder? Is it safe to hand back such an arsenal to the people who are still dreaming their dreams of revenge, and who are still convinced that the war policy of their Government was right and that they are the innocent victims of their enemies? And what

is the alternative before us? If Upper Silesia is given back to the Prussians who stole it two hundred years ago, Germany may use it and probably will use it for military purposes. If the industrial triangle in Upper Silesia is given to Poland, Poland can only use it for industrial purposes. If we adopt the German solution there is at least a considerable risk of war. If we adopt the Polish solution, there is a certainty of peace, as it is inconceivable that a small Power hemmed in by two formidable neighbours should ever be the aggressor or enter into an unequal conflict with one of those neighbours.

II

Inasmuch as Liberalism stands for Free Trade, a consistent Liberal ought to favour such a solution as would promote the unhampered commercial intercourse in Central Europe and as would least interfere with the natural channels of trade. What are the natural channels of trade so far as Upper Silesia is concerned? To which economic area does Upper Silesia belong? Does it belong to the German area or to the Polish area? Here again the answer has been supplied by the Germans themselves. During the war, at a time when the Germans were still hoping to win the war and were resolved on annexing

Poland, they tried to prove in pamphlets innumerable that the prosperity of Silesia was bound up with that of Poland. They asserted that, economically, you could not separate the one from the other. And, in point of fact, the German economic thesis was perfectly right. Upper Silesia does belong to the economic system of Poland. Berlin got its coal from England and from the West. Poland got its coal from Silesia, and, conversely, Silesia got its food supplies from Poland. Poland is the agricultural Hinterland of industrial Silesia. The main trade route was not *via* Silesia to Berlin, but *via* Silesia to Warsaw. That is the fundamental economic issue. Poland is more dependent on Silesia than Germany, and Silesia needs Poland more than Germany. We are confusing that economic issue when, like Mr Keynes, we are adducing misleading statistics which refer only to one section of Poland and which refer only to pre-war times when Poland belonged to three rival commercial systems. And we are even more obviously confusing that issue when we measure the needs of the enlarged Poland of to-day by the pre-war needs of Russian Poland, where a reactionary Government did everything to hamper production and to interfere with the natural trade routes.

III

Inasmuch as Liberalism stands for a comprehensive land reform, a Liberal ought to support such a solution as would secure in Upper Silesia the land for the people. Again judging by that test, I believe that we ought to support the union with Poland. Upper Silesia is at present a land of magnates and captains of industry. Six German noblemen, Prince von Ujest (110,000 acres), Prince von Pless (105,000), Prince von Ralibor (80,000), Prince von Stolberg (66,000), Prince von Hohenlohe-Ingelfingen (65,000), Count von Donnersmarck (50,000), own between them about one-fourth of the territory. Fourteen coal-owners control 92 per cent. of the production of the coal-mines. One single nobleman, Count Ballestroem, owns five coal-mines, eleven iron-mines, seven zinc-mines, and two explosive factories.

On the contrary, Poland is now a land of peasant proprietors, and has already carried out a gigantic scheme of agrarian reforms. Her Prime Minister, Mr Xvitos, is himself a peasant, and two-thirds of the members sitting in Parliament are small peasants. If the Polish part of Upper Silesia be given to Poland, agrarian reform, the democratisation of the country, must be the inevitable consequence.

IV

Inasmuch as Liberalism stands for self-determination, a Liberal ought presumably to support the solution which is in accordance with the wishes of the majority of the Silesian people. And the enormous majority of the people of Upper Silesia are Poles. The German Census of 1910, which if it erred in any direction did err on the German side, declared a Polish population of 1,200,000, and a German population of 800,000. Even the adulterated plebiscite has allotted in the industrial triangle the majority of the communes to Poland. That majority would have been considerably larger but for the oppressive methods of Germanisation carried on for fifty years before the war, but for the presence and pressure of a German bureaucracy still in control, but for the 200,000 votes of the German immigrants, and but for the unscrupulous propaganda of the German landowners and captains of industry, who have made the most of the present internal difficulties of Poland, and of the present bankrupt condition of the Polish finances.

We have tried to prove that whatever may be the Liberal principle which we apply to the investigation of the Silesian Question, the application will prove to be favourable to the Polish solution. If that be so, how shall we explain that the

Liberal Press should be almost unanimously on the side of the enemies of Poland? One simple explanation is that Poland is far away, that we are ignorant of Polish conditions and unable to read the Polish newspapers, and that for Polish news we are almost entirely dependent on German newspapers. But an even more obvious explanation is that the British Liberal Press has been made the unconscious tool of powerful financial and political interests. Anyone who happened to travel in Germany on the eve of the Silesian plebiscite can have observed for himself the frantic efforts displayed by the German nationalists and the huge sums of money that were being spent. Upper Silesia is largely owned, as I stated, by a few landed magnates and by a small number of captains of industry. These men know that the retention of Silesia is for them a question of life and death, that if Poland gets part of Upper Silesia there is an urgent danger of a drastic agrarian reform, and that under Polish rule their economic monopoly is not likely to endure. Therefore they have spared no sacrifices to ward off an imminent catastrophe. And we can see to-day the fruit of their sacrifices and the result of their propaganda in the attitude of the British Press and in the present collapse of the Polish Exchange.

I hold no brief for Poland and I certainly hold no brief against Germany. On the contrary,

my hopes for the future are based on the liberation of Germany from the materialistic, imperialistic Prussian regime which still holds the German people in its grip. All I have attempted to do is to solve a grave question of European policy by the test of fundamental principles. And all I want to impress on consistent Liberals is this, that if they really believe in peace, if they believe in free trade, if they believe in agrarian reform, and if they believe in self-determination, they are bound, even more than their Conservative opponents, to support a Polish solution of the Silesian Question.

The first of these is the fact that the
theology of the church is not a static
entity, but a living and growing
entity, which is constantly being
renewed and reformed.

The second is the fact that the
theology of the church is not a
mere collection of dogmas and
doctrines, but a living and growing
entity, which is constantly being
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The third is the fact that the
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NINTH LETTER

THE GERMAN OCCUPATION DURING THE WAR : A POLITICAL TRAGI-COMEDY

I

THERE is one thrilling episode in the history of the World War which has not received the attention which it amply deserves, namely, the vicissitudes of the German occupation of Poland. And it is easy to understand why our attention should have been hitherto turned away from that chapter. During the war Poland was cut off from the West by the German victory. She was hidden from our view behind an impenetrable veil. To-day it is still cut off by our ignorance of the Polish language and of Polish conditions. Even to those who try to gather some information about what did happen between the years 1914-18, the situation appears extraordinarily complicated. There are currents and cross-currents. There are wheels within wheels. We can see threads running and intrigue spinning between

Cracow and Warsaw, between Lublin and Lodz, from Berlin to Vienna, from the German Headquarters at Pless to the Austrian Headquarters at Teschen. To add to our difficulty of getting at the truth, Polish historians themselves do not seem particularly anxious to reveal the strange history of the German occupation, and of the relations which existed between the conqueror and the conquered. They seem to feel that in some way the Polish politicians did compromise themselves by playing a double game and by serving the German Devil. They seem to feel that there is some colour of truth in the accusation of Lloyd George that the Poles were enlisted in the ranks of the enemy.

II

A dispassionate study of the German occupation will prove that the Poles have no cause to be ashamed of the difficult part which they were called upon to play. I am convinced that the history of the relations between Germans and Poles will be looked upon one day as one of the most creditable pages in the annals of the Polish people. They revealed during the war the same indomitable spirit, the same passion for liberty, the same resourcefulness which they showed throughout their national history.

If we look at it from one point of view, the history of the German occupation of Poland is a ghastly tragedy, for no people suffered more than the Poles during those four terrible years. But looked at from another angle, it will rather appear as a political comedy. It shows us how German intrigue and German duplicity was confronted by Polish patriotism. It shows how the Pole caught the German in his own net, how at every stage he outwitted and out-manceuvred the enemy. It exhibits the struggle of two temperaments, of two races, and two ideals, of two policies and two diplomacies. It is the conflict of spirit against brute force, of brain-power against military power. And in that conflict the spirit emerged triumphant. In August 1915 when the German conqueror entered Warsaw, Poland lies crushed, prostrate at the feet of a ruthless conqueror. Yet, in the end, it is Poland that wins. "*Polonia victa ferum victorem cepit.*" The moment of the final disaster is also the moment of supreme victory. The history of the German occupation of Poland presents us with one of the supreme paradoxes of modern times. Having attempted in vain to interest Europe in her righteous cause, having struggled in vain for 140 years to recover her independence, Poland at last received that independence at the hands of a reluctant enemy.

If the conflict between the Polish patriot

and the German bully during the occupation demonstrates the characteristic qualities of the Polish people, it also demonstrates the fatal weakness of the Germans. There is a startling contrast between the perfection of the military machine and the political incapacity of the invader. The Germans for 200 years looked down upon the Poles as the inferior race, as the "*minderwertige Basse*." Yet when we examine the relations between the two nations during the occupation, the Poles prove themselves immeasurably superior as a political people. The German shows himself to be totally devoid of tact, of a sense of realities. He has no resourcefulness, no imagination, no adaptability, no gift of sympathy. At every move of the diplomatic game his defeat seems a foregone conclusion.

III

It is especially interesting and illuminating to compare the occupation of Poland with the occupation of Belgium. At first sight there are many striking resemblances. We find the same heroic temper in both conquered peoples, and in the conqueror we find the same brutality, the same duplicity, the same rapacity. We also find the same methods of oppression. The Germans in Poland as in Belgium rob the

factories of their machinery, they requisition all the available food and all the raw material; they deport in tens of thousands the workers who refuse to do the bidding of a ruthless soldiery. And we also find in both countries the same inevitable material results—starvation, financial bankruptcy, and economic ruin.

IV

But great as are the resemblances, the differences are even greater. The problems of the occupation were much simpler in Belgium, both for the Belgians and for the Germans. The Belgians knew their duty and did it. They opposed an uncompromising resistance to the enemy, they waited confidently and patiently for the final victory. In the case of the Poles the problem was not any doubt as to whether the people were determined to do their duty, but the difficulty of finding out exactly where their duty lay. There were hundreds of thousands of Poles in the Prussian Army and in the Austrian Army, confronting hundreds of thousands of Poles in the Russian Army. The duty as it appeared to the majority of the people was a divided duty. They had a choice of enemies and of evils. The Belgians had only one enemy, the Poles had three, even if we count the three million Jews as loyal Poles

and as trustworthy friends. The Russian enemy was worse than the Austrian, the German was worse than the Russian. So fundamentally different were the conditions in Belgium and in Poland that the same terms "activism" and "passivism" had entirely different connotations in the two countries. In Belgium, all activists were traitors to their nationality. In Poland, activism was but a different way of serving the national cause.

But not only was the Polish problem much more difficult to the Poles, it was also infinitely more difficult to the Germans. The Pan-Germans might foolishly hope to retain Belgium as a permanent conquest. The sober German statesmen looked upon Belgium only as a pawn and as an asset to bargain with at the end of the war. The Belgian problem was at best an outside problem, an international problem. Belgium was a foreign country, and its occupation was only temporary. On the other hand, Poland was an internal question, and it was a burning question. One part of Poland was a Prussian province, another part was an Austrian province.

There was another vital contrast. In Belgium, the Germans were sole masters of the situation. In Poland, they had to divide the administration with their Austrian allies. Until the end, the occupation of Poland was an Austrian-German condominium. And the two partners were by

no means agreed as to the division of the spoils.

V

The moral and political results of the German occupation in Belgium and in Poland were as different as the political conditions. In Belgium, the Germans used the Belgian population as instruments of their aggressive designs. In Poland, it is the Poles who used the Germans as the tools of their own national policy. In Belgium, the Germans succeeded in dividing the Belgian people. In Poland, it is the Poles who succeeded in dividing the Germans. They succeeded in driving a wedge between the military government and the civilian government. They also succeeded in bringing about a breach between Germany and Austria. In Belgium, the Germans found an independent people and turned it into a subject population. In Poland, the Germans found a subject population and were compelled to raise it to the dignity of a free people.

VI

Almost from the beginning of the war, Poland was the theatre of the greatest German victories. The conquerors of Poland—Hindenburg and Ludendorff—became the heroes of a

national Epic. Whereas the war in the West very soon became a dreary trench war and a war of position, the Polish war permitted of sweeping advances and spectacular conquests. Every morning the German jingo could read of German triumphs in the East, he could mark on the map with his little flags the rapid progress of the German hosts.

The Polish campaign was one of Napoleonic dimensions. But like Napoleon, Hindenburg was confronted ever since the month of September 1914 with formidable difficulties. He discovered that it was much more easy to conquer Polish territories than to consolidate his conquest. He found himself in possession of a vast area with inefficient supplies and with scanty means of transport. He was compelled to immobilise large forces which were badly needed in the West. And the possession of that vast territory was very precarious. At the beginning of the war there was the constant dread of a Russian offensive, just as at the end of the war there was the dread of Russian Bolshevism. In the autumn of 1914, Hindenburg, after a sensational advance, had been compelled to make as sensational and as hurried a retreat. Poland would not be safe for Germany until it was made into a buffer state, until it became a bulwark against the Russian enemy.

VII

It was the anxious sense of the Russian danger and of the precariousness of the German occupation which at an early date inspired the politicians of Berlin with the idea, first, of Germanising the western part of Poland, second, of exploiting against Russia the Anti-Russian feelings which existed amongst a large section of the Polish population. In the early months of the occupation, the military Headquarters concentrated on a plan of Germanisation. The Pan-Germans had it all their own way. A politician of the purest Prussian water, Herr Cleinow, was entrusted with the German propaganda. He mobilised the 400,000 Germans of Lodz, the Manchester of western Poland, where industry and trade were almost entirely in German hands; he tried to win over the three million German Polish Jews. So confident was he of success that he was not content to let the Jews speak their Yiddish-German jargon, although it contained 85 per cent. of German words. He was determined that the Jews should entirely give up their German dialect for the "*Kultursprache*" of Schiller and Goethe. He achieved the unexpected and undesired result of rousing the bitter opposition of the orthodox Jewish communities, who were passionately attached to their medieval speech.

VIII

In the opening months of 1915 the Germans began to realise that a policy of Germanisation was hopeless, that a policy of conciliation was necessary, and that indeed it might be possible to make political capital out of the traditional hatred of the Polish people against Russia. Herr von Mutius, a very able and clear-sighted Prussian officer who had been transferred to the diplomatic service, was appointed to take the place of the ineffable Cleinow and became the guiding spirit of the new policy of conciliation. The Governor-General, von Beseler, a mixture of the scholar and the soldier, and an exceptionally sympathetic type of the political German General, was converted to the methods of von Mutius. The watchword henceforth was to make friends with the Poles, to encourage the national spirit, to humour the national weaknesses, to glorify the memories of Polish history. A German-Polish Encyclopædia was prepared, the Polish Classics were translated. Herr Naumann (the famous author of "*Mittel-Europa*"), Professor Brückner, Herr Guttry, published eloquent pleas on behalf of the Poles, deploring the German mistakes of the past. German experts in Slav studies wrote learned books in order to prove the elective affinities which existed between the German character and the Polish character. Germany was declared to be

the natural ally of Poland against the common Russian enemy. The German armies alone could realise the Polish aspirations after liberty.

IX

But if the Poles wanted to win back their liberty, they must be prepared to fight for it, they must be prepared to pay the sacrifice. They must raise an army of Polish volunteers and co-operate with their German-Austrian allies. They must not look upon their independence as a gratuitous gift, they must show themselves worthy of it. Let them remember the precedent of the Napoleonic wars. The volunteers of Dombrowski had fought in every European country. The last of the Poniatowski had won his Marshal's baton on the battlefield of Leipzig. Was there not a noble example given to them even in the present war? In August 1914 had not Pilsudski raised his Polish legions to fight the Muscovite?

X

To the student of Polish-German relations it is difficult to understand the German mentality which could entertain so wild a scheme. How could the Poles fail to see through the German game? How could they forget the oppression

of centuries? The brutal methods of expropriation and colonisation which were still being followed in Prussian Poland told them what they might expect from their new friends in Berlin. The German policy during the occupation, the ruthless requisitions, the insolent behaviour of the soldiery, the deportations, abundantly proved that the Prussians of William II. were not different from the Prussians of Frederick the Great or Bismarck. It was impossible to believe in the sincerity of the German protests of friendship.

But even if the protests had been sincere, there could be no co-operation between temperaments so fundamentally different. Nor was it in the power of the Germans to solve the Polish question. The tragedy of Poland consisted in the fact that three Empires had combined to partition the Polish Republic. Those three Empires, therefore, had to be vanquished before the partitioned territories could be reunited and before the Polish Republic could be restored. Only a complete victory of the Allies could realise the national aspirations.

Perhaps in August 1915, immediately after the occupation of Warsaw, Germany might still have solved the Polish question in her favour, if she had exploited the prestige of her victory, if there and then she had proposed in a magnanimous gesture the reunion of all the Polish lands, if she had simultaneously given

autonomy to Posen and liberty to Congress Poland. In other words, if Germany had done to Poland what England did to the Transvaal and what she is doing to-day to Ireland, then she might perhaps have conciliated the Polish people. But how could sober German politicians ever hope to gain their confidence by the present policy of oppression and repression? The colonisation and expropriation laws were still enforced in Prussia. The requisitions still went on in occupied Poland. A severe censorship was still suppressing the expression of free opinion. Polish workers were still deported like slaves in their tens of thousands. The country still continued to be starved.

XI

How were the Poles going to respond to the advances of the enemy? For 150 years the Poles had been accustomed to deal with similar advances. Even as recently as the beginning of the war, every Power had been courting the Polish maiden. Russia had promised autonomy. Austria was promising an equal partnership in a trialist Habsburg Monarchy. The Entente and America were promising complete independence. The policy of all the Powers had been variable and unreliable. None had been disinterested or platonic. But not one of the Powers had been

less platonic than Germany. Not one had been more capricious or had passed more suddenly from brutal enmity to hypocritical friendship. The Poles were not taken in by the unexpected and violent demonstrations of German love. They were on their guard. Their motto was: "*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes.*" The Poles possess in a high degree a sense of humour, of which the Germans are totally devoid. They must have been intensely amused at those gushing protests of sympathy on the part of their hereditary oppressors. They must have been even more surprised at this sudden conversion to the gospel of nationalism of a Government which had always trampled down nationalities.

XII

In the face of this unexpected change of German policy, the position of the Poles was extraordinarily difficult and delicate. They had to live with the German occupants. As long as the occupation lasted, a *modus vivendi* had to be found. The Poles had to pretend that they believed in the German protests of sympathy. They even had to profess their belief in the German military scheme. The pretence was all the more easy because the Poles had good reasons to hate the Russian autocracy.

The Poles therefore declared that they were quite willing to fight the Russians, even as they fought them in the days of Napoleon. They only submitted that the German scheme would have to be slightly modified. The Germans promised autonomy *if* the Polish people would behave. Let the Germans first give autonomy and the good behaviour of the Poles would follow. The German Government promised independence *if* the Polish people raised a Polish army. Let the Germans first grant independence and they would find that a Polish Army would be raised. The Poles had been taught by bitter experience that in times of war the promises of Governments could not be trusted. Their ancestors had fought the battles of Napoleon, but Napoleon had not given them their freedom. Moreover, even from the point of view of *Realpolitik* the German Government ought to understand that only a national Polish Government working on the national Polish spirit could hope to succeed in raising a national army. And a Polish Army would only fight well if it fought under a national flag in the national cause.

XIII

The Polish argument seemed unanswerable. Von Beseler hesitated and haggled. Ludendorff was doubtful. But the Germans were already

committed and pledged to their new policy of conciliation. In any case, they had to go one better than the Russians. There were even greater risks in doing nothing than in accepting the Polish plan. Moreover, it was necessary to impress the public opinion of the world. The German Government in the summer of 1916 was preparing its peace offensive. A declaration of Polish independence would have an enormous effect in America. It would divide the enemy. It would be a moral triumph. It would dispel the Entente legend of an oppressive Prussian militarism. Instead of appearing as an oppressor, the Prussian would appear as a liberator. Moved by all those reasons, von Beseler and Ludendorff surrendered. On the 5th November 1915 the independence of Poland was proclaimed.

XIV

The Poles got their independence, but the Germans did not get their army. In the Austrian General Government of Lublin the total number of recruits which were passed as fit for service was 59. In the German General Government of Warsaw, the results were not much better. A few hundred volunteers instead of the 500,000 that were expected was not a very creditable result and would not go very far to fill up the depleted German reserves.

And not only did the Germans not get their new legions, but even the old legions of Pilsudski proved very doubtful allies. They were undisciplined and ungovernable. They refused to consider themselves as the soldiers of the Central Powers. They were only the soldiers of Poland. After many unpleasant incidents they were incorporated into the Austrian Army, and General Pilsudski was interned in a German prison, from which he was to emerge in 1918 as the first President of the Polish Republic.

The whole scheme had thus proved a lamentable fiasco. The Polish Army was a phantom Army. It almost appeared as a ridiculous hoax. And the worst of it was that the hoax could not be admitted by the Germans. They had been outwitted, they had been taken in, and they could not even complain. Von Beseler had to swallow the bitter Polish pill and had to put on as pleasant a face as he could. To do otherwise would have admitted failure not only before the public opinion of Germany, but before the tribunal of the world. Nor was it possible to go back on the policy which had been adopted. Austria would not have allowed it.

And having gone so far, one had to go still further. One concession led to another. First, a Polish municipal government was established in all the big cities. Then a Provisional Council was appointed. At last, three Regents were proclaimed. Neither the Town Council nor

the Provisional Councils nor the Regents proved compliant tools of the German Government. Von Beseler had not been long in Warsaw before he began to discover that Polish public bodies were not so easily managed as Prussian public bodies.

XV

The Poles had not only secured independence for themselves, they had incidentally rendered two enormous services to the Allies, they had inflicted two severe blows on the Germans.

The first service to the Allies' cause was that the declaration of Polish independence widened the breach between Germany and Russia. That service was all the greater because German intrigues in the autumn of 1916 were just about to succeed in Petrograd. The Russians were becoming tired of the war. A Pro-German Government was in power. Stuermer and Propopow were preparing their great betrayal and were manœuvring for peace. In November of 1916 a separate peace between Russia and Germany was, to say the least, within the limits of probability. The declaration of Polish independence by Germany and Austria made such a peace impossible. It roused the Russian national spirit, it stiffened Russian resistance.

XVI

The declaration of Polish independence rendered a second service to the Allies which was of even more far-reaching consequences. Hitherto the oppression of Poland had been a bond of union between the oppressors. Hitherto the alliance between Russia, Prussia, and Austria had been a Black Mass in which the three accomplices jointly partook of the body politic of their victim. Henceforth a liberated Poland was to be a bone of contention between the accomplices. The proclamation of Polish independence first helped to drive a wedge between Austria and Germany. And what was even more ominous, within the boundaries of the Austrian Empire itself, it helped to drive a wedge between the Slavs and the Hungarians. It reopened the whole problem of Central Europe and Eastern Europe.

The Germans had created the kingdom, but who would be the new king? They had established a protectorate, but who would be the protector? Above all, what would be the exact status of the new Commonwealth?

There were three possibilities, and each one bristled with insoluble difficulties, both to Germany and to Austria.

As a first alternative Poland might become a vassal state of Germany and towards that vassal state the Prussian Polish province of Posen

would inevitably gravitate. Prussia instead of gaining would thus lose a province. In any case, Austria would not accept such a solution without due compensation for the sacrifice of Galicia.

As a second alternative, Poland might become a Federal State within the Austrian Monarchy. The Poles might accept such a solution, as they had always been better treated under Austrian rule than under Russian or Prussian rule. But Germany would protest because an Austrian Poland would still continue to attract the Poles of Posen and Silesia, and because over such a united Austrian Poland Germany would exercise no control whatsoever. In any case, Hungary would also protest. A new Polish State within the Habsburg Monarchy would ensure a predominance of the Slavs and would put an end to the Hungarian supremacy.

As a third alternative, there remained the solution of an entirely independent Polish State. But such a solution would have the disadvantages of both the Austrian and the German solution combined. Without any compensation Austria would lose Galicia, and Germany would lose Posen. And what was worse, such a united Poland would be too strong to be a mere instrument of a German-Austrian policy. Nor could one overlook the further danger of such a State coming one day within the Russian sphere of influence. In any case, it provided no strategic

frontier for the German Empire and therefore the military party were bitterly opposed to it.

The possibilities of those three alternatives and the constitution of the New Poland were discussed in endless conferences, they were the subject of heated controversies. No other single cause contributed more to undermine the alliance between Germany and Austria. It exasperated their mutual rivalries. It revealed the differences in their war aims. And the conferences and controversies led to no acceptable decision. The jealous lovers did not secure the Polish maiden, they only quarrelled among themselves.

To sum up, the diplomacy of the Poles obtained four substantial results. First, they obtained their national independence for themselves. Second, they made impossible a separate peace of the Central Powers with Russia. Third, they made possible a separate peace of Austria with the Allies. Fourth, they brought about a constitutional conflict between Austria and Hungary and they helped to prepare the disintegration of the Dual Monarchy.

XVII

The Poles had acted a difficult part and they had acted it with consummate ability. General Pilsudski might not possess the qualities of

Cavour, but he showed that he possessed the qualities of a Garibaldi. No doubt the Poles had been compelled to co-operate with the Germans and to submit to some of their terms. They had to enter into unpalatable compromises. But they never accepted a compromise where any vital interests of their country were involved. They did not sell their national birthright for a mess of Prussian pottage.

Not only were the Poles placed politically in a very difficult position, they also found themselves morally in a very ambiguous and false position. Even as Italy after 1859 had to steer a middle course between Prussia and France, so Poland in 1916 had to steer between Austria and Germany. The Poles had to play a double game, but the duplicity was unavoidable and the country seemed hopelessly divided. There were rival parties, all equally convinced that their own policy was the only right one. There was the Pro-German party and there was the Pro-Austrian party. There was the Pro-Russian party and there was the Pro-Entente party. But although they had to bargain with the enemy, they had the best of the bargain. Although they had to enter into a compact with the German Mephistopheles they proved more clever than the Devil. Although they were divided as to their methods, they were all united as to the aim to be attained. The activists and the passiv-

ists were both thinking of Poland, and in the end both served the Polish cause.

XVIII

The Polish Provisional Government and the Regency have been severely criticised by the Poles themselves. Those criticisms seem to me to be entirely unjust. The Provisional Government did the best they could under most trying circumstances. It was comprehensible that Mr Dmowski and his colleagues on the National Committee from the distance of London and Paris should have been tempted to belittle the efforts of their countrymen who were living under the German yoke. In fact, the Polish Government acted with magnificent courage and showed inexhaustible resource and ingenuity. In a desperate situation they never lost hope. They turned defeat into victory and servitude into independence. They deserved well of their country.

And they deserved equally well of the Entente. For the accusations of the Entente critics are even more unjust than the accusations of their Polish fellow-citizens. One may smile when the Germans accuse the Poles of base ingratitude. But we feel indignant when we find Mr Lloyd George launching the same accusation. If there has been any ingratitude, it has been

on the side of the Entente. For although it is true to say that the Entente helped to save Poland, it is even more true to say that Poland helped to save the Entente. For four years Poland had to fight her battle single-handed. She was left in the lurch by the Allies. She was betrayed by Russia. She was abandoned by France. I have before me a copy of Maeterlinck's *Débris de la Guerre*. The book was to have contained an eloquent plea on behalf of Poland. Instead of the plea, we find twenty blank pages. The eloquent plea was suppressed by the French censor, and it can only be read in the English translation. Until the Russian Revolution, the very name of Poland was "tabu" in France, simply because the Russian oppressor would not allow that name to be mentioned. The cause of Poland was only taken up by the Entente after the Poles themselves had already won their battle. Instead of unjustly criticising the Polish people, let us recognise the sacrifices which they incurred, the sufferings which they endured and the services which they rendered to the common cause.

