

Poland,  
(1947)

**THE NEW POLISH-  
GERMAN  
BORDER**

**SAFEGUARD OF PEACE**

**By Stefan Arski**

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**T H E N E W  
POLISH-GERMAN  
B O R D E R**

**SAFEGUARD OF PEACE**

***By* Stefan Arski**

**1947  
POLISH EMBASSY  
WASHINGTON, D. C.**

## POLAND'S NEW BOUNDARIES



*Shaded area: former German territories, east of the Oder and Neisse frontier, assigned to Poland at Potsdam by the three great Allied powers: the United States, the Soviet Union and Great Britain. The whole area comprising 39,000 square miles has already been settled by Poles.*

# CONTENTS

**Springboard of German Aggression — Page 8**

**Foundation of Poland's Future — Page 21**

**Return to the West — Page 37**

**No Turning Back — Page 49**

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## FOREWORD

*A great war has been fought and won.*

*So tremendous and far-reaching are its consequences that the final peace settlement even now is not in sight, though the representatives of the victorious powers have been hard at work for many months. A global war requires a global peace settlement. The task is so complex, however, that a newspaper reader finds it difficult to follow the long drawn-out and wearisome negotiations over a period of many months or even of years. Moreover, some of the issues may seem so unfamiliar, so remote from the immediate interests of the average American as hardly to be worth the attention and effort their comprehension requires.*

*Unfortunately, there are no really remote problems in this small world, no problems which can be treated with indifference. The Second World War was kindled in Europe and broke into flame on the Polish-German frontier, a trouble spot far removed from the American continent. There were many in this and other countries who hoped that the conflict could and would be localized. It was not. On the contrary, it soon engulfed the whole world. People who thought that the Sudeten problem and the Danzig question had nothing to do with their own interests learned, to their unpleasant surprise, that they would have to fight a war as the consequence of their indifference. Now, at a time when the efforts of the victorious nations are being dedicated to the creation of a satisfactory peace settlement, there should certainly be no expression of indifference.*

*Solutions affecting countries distant from the American continent will in one way or another affect the destiny of the United States itself, whether they deal with the islands of the Pacific or the boundary delimitations of the countries of Europe.*

*The purpose of this booklet is to present to the American reader the problem of the Polish-German frontier. This is no ordinary border dispute, like many conflicting border claims arising after every war. It involves not only the future relations of Poland and Germany, but—as we shall demonstrate—the security and peace of the whole of Europe and, for that matter, of the entire world, including the United States. It merits, therefore, special consideration by public opinion everywhere.*

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*In areas long ago seized by Prussia, signs of a Polish heritage remained. The Polish White Eagle on the medieval fortifications of Kladzko attests the original character of this Silesian city.*

*In the interest of clear understanding, let it be stressed from the outset that this booklet upholds the fairness and wisdom of the solution adopted by the Big Three at Potsdam. This solution moved the Polish-German border westward to the Oder-Neisse river line. We submit that this line should be recognized as the permanent border between Poland and Germany.*

*The Potsdam solution is a far-reaching one. It has brought about the transfer of approximately 39,000 square miles of territory, equivalent in area to the state of Virginia. It resulted in extensive shifts of population. These changes have occurred with the full knowledge and consent of three Allied governments, American, British and Soviet, which signed the Potsdam Declaration, and which are represented on the Allied Control Council for Germany. It was this Council which, on November 20, 1945, ordered the removal of the Germans from the entire area.*

*As a matter of fact, the problem of the Polish-German border does not await a solution, for one has already been agreed upon. The solution, moreover, has been implemented by placing the former German territories east of the Oder-Neisse line under Polish administration and by removing the German inhabitants. Whoever advocates any change in the present settlement thereby advocates the revision of an already established frontier.*

*To say the least, such a revision would result in unhappy, not to say dangerous, consequences. Millions of people would have to move again—some of them already have been moved two, three and even four times during the past six years—and serious political upheavals would be certain to follow.*

*The Polish-German frontier was established on the Oder-Neisse line immediately after Germany had been defeated. For all practical purposes the case was closed except for the final technicality of legalizing this border settlement by the terms of a peace treaty. To open the question again and make it the subject of bargaining would be to awaken the spirit of German revisionism and encourage the growth of German nationalism. Every student of German affairs knows that, no matter how fair and just a peace settlement may be, the German nationalists have always found pretexts to claim foreign territory. As examples one may cite the case of the so-called Polish Corridor and of Alsace and Lorraine after the First World War. What has happened in the past could most certainly happen again.*

*Should any of the Allied nations now suggest the reopening of a border question which has not only been solved but already put into effect, it would embolden the German nationalists to raise new and more far-reaching demands. The political and psychological effects of Germany's unconditional surrender would thereby be nullified.*

*Even if the Potsdam solution were not the best possible one—though we maintain it is—it should none the less be upheld to avoid lending encouragement to a recently defeated German nationalism and imperialism.*

*We shall undertake to prove beyond a doubt that the Potsdam solution was the only one the Allied leaders could have adopted. It should be apparent to anyone who observed the behavior of Germany after the First World War, that the Potsdam settlement should not and must not be revised. Can we afford to forget Hitler's blackmail methods so soon? Do we not recall how after every annexation the Fuehrer was wont to affirm that he had "no other territorial claims," only to present new and more impudent ones, clothed in the same argument, once his demands had been accepted? If we want to avoid a repetition of this painful experience, we had better uphold the Potsdam solution. It is a safeguard of peace.*

## **SPRINGBOARD OF GERMAN AGGRESSION**

On August 2, 1945, a few months after Germany's unconditional surrender, the heads of the three main victorious Allied powers signed an agreement known as the Potsdam Declaration. It was the first detailed outline of Allied policy towards defeated Germany. The purpose of this agreement was to implement the decisions of the previous Crimea Conference in order "to assure that Germany never again will threaten her neighbors or the peace of the world."

Significantly enough, the Potsdam Declaration includes a lengthy paragraph dealing with the question of the future frontiers of Germany, namely, with her eastern frontier. This paragraph states that, pending the final delimitation of this frontier, the former German territories east of a line running from the Baltic Sea immediately west of Swinemuende and thence along the Oder River to the confluence of the western Neisse River, and along the western Neisse River to the Czechoslovak frontier, including the portion of East Prussia south of Koenigsberg and the territory of the former Free City of Danzig, shall be placed under the administration of the Polish state.

In distinction to the rest of Germany, divided into four zones of occupation, the *former* German territory—and the Potsdam Declaration clearly designates it as such—east of the Oder-Neisse line, is not to be considered as an area temporarily assigned to the military occupation of the Allied armies, but as a land granted to Poland. The Potsdam Conference, however, was not a peace conference. It was not concerned with the final delimitation of any borders. Accordingly, it was only natural for these territories to be placed under the administration of the Polish state and not under its sovereignty, for the final delimitation of the new frontier and the formal assignment of these territories could be effected only by the peace treaty between the victorious Allied Nations and defeated Germany.

It was not an accident that the heads of the main Allied governments incorporated this decision concerning the future borders of Germany and Poland in their first statement of policy after the defeat of the enemy. For the settlement of this border problem by the territorial reduction of Germany in the East is one of the necessary safeguards

against future German aggressions. Thus the problem of the Polish-German frontier, the problem of Poland's western border, was viewed in its proper light, not as a purely Polish issue dealing with more or less well founded territorial claims against a defeated enemy, but as a logical element in the solution of the German problem as a whole. And therefore the question of the Polish frontier in the West cannot be treated apart from the general settlement of Germany's future. It is a part of a solution which has for its purpose the elimination of German aggression for all time.

Let us by no means forget that twice in a generation Germany has started wars that in turn developed into world wars, nor that twice in a generation Americans have had to cross the Atlantic and fight the Germans in order to safeguard the United States and the Western Hemisphere. To her immediate neighbors, however, Germany has been a constant menace for centuries. Especially has this been so since the rulers of Prussia began to build their militaristic state, based territorially in large part on areas conquered from their neighbors—and above all from Poland. The partition of Poland, initiated by Frederick the Great, was a decisive step toward the creation of a powerful Prussian state and its domination over other German states. To quote a Polish writer, J. M. Winiewicz:\* “Prussia's rise to greatness during the last two centuries has been owing to her appropriation of Polish territories. From being an insignificant border duchy, Prussia reached the rank of a European power, and began to influence German thought and policy. Prussia's Polish acquisitions enabled her own aggrandizement at the expense of other German states.” (*The Polish-German Frontier*, by J. M. Winiewicz, London, 1945.)

Thus the centuries old *Drang nach Osten*—drive toward the East—brought about the emergence of Prussia as a dominating power in Germany. In the nineteenth century, Otto von Bismarck, the “Iron Chancellor”, waged three unprovoked and successful wars against Germany's neighbors: Denmark, Austria and France. These aggressions were the final steps leading to the creation of the Second German Reich, a fateful development, the consequences of which were paid in many millions of lives on the battlefields of two world wars.

It has taken the united efforts of the free peoples of five continents

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\* At present, Polish Ambassador to the United States.



*The desolation left behind by the Germans is suggested by these scenes in the city of Gdansk shortly after its liberation. Many other places in the regained territories underwent like destruction, so that Poland must grapple with huge reconstruction tasks.*



to halt Germany's tremendous war machine and save modern civilization from complete destruction. It would bring humanity to certain disaster if we were forced to fight Germany for the third time to thwart her repeated efforts at conquest and domination. Before we find ourselves joined again in armed encounter with Germany, the German problem must be solved once and for all.

Do the German people possess certain peculiar characteristics that impel them constantly toward war and aggression? If so, these characteristics are certainly not of a racial or biological nature. Unquestionably the German nation, more than any other in Europe, is susceptible to imperialistic and militaristic ideas—but not because the Germans have lust for power and conquest in their blood, if we may be permitted to use the late Doctor Goebbels' terminology. The explanation lies in certain trends in Germany's history and social structure. These trends have created a special, and very dangerous, state of mind among a great majority of Germans.

It is not difficult to uncover the roots of the evil. The integration of a loose conglomeration of German states into a single nation was accomplished by Prussia, and the new German Reich was built around the Prussian state. Its social and political base was the class of big Prussian landowners generally known as Junkers, a group with a strong military tradition and feudal outlook. Thus from the beginning the modern German Reich was governed by the standard bearers of militarism and feudalism, lusting after power.

This dominant group influenced the development of industry in Germany as well, so that it adhered to one essential tenet: the creation of an instrument for future conquest and aggrandizement. The big German industrialists soon became an additional factor for aggression in the political life of their country. Alliance between the Junkers, big business and the old military caste brought about modern German imperialism with its far-reaching aims. A powerful militaristic and industrial state, ruled by reactionary social forces, stepped into the arena of international politics with obvious designs of conquest which led to the First World War. On the eve of the conflict, the German general, Von Bernhardi, stated openly: "Our people must come to understand that the preservation of peace can and must never be the aim of politics." (F. von Bernhardi, *Deutschland und der naechste Krieg*—Germany and the Next War, 1913.)



In contrast to the development in many other countries, expressions in this militaristic vein were not confined to the reactionary ruling groups. The middle classes and even the workers were deeply affected by them. Heinrich von Treitschke, the German historian, outlined the aims of German liberalism in a rather characteristic but significant manner: "Our German liberalism," he said in *Das konstitutionelle Koenigtum in Deutschland* (The Constitutional Monarchy in Germany), published in 1886, "must return to the old German conviction that martial force is the basis of all political virtues: in the rich treasure of Germany's glories the Prussian military glory is a jewel as precious and as loyally acquired as the masterpieces of our poets and our thinkers."

The strongly centralized German state was able to create a distinct atmosphere of discipline and obedience to which the whole nation responded. The "Iron Chancellor" was speaking candidly indeed when he said that the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71 had been won by the German teacher. The entire German school and educational system as well as large sections of German science and even of German art, worked hand in glove with the state in rearing successive German generations in this spirit.

It was called the Prussian spirit for it was a Prussian creation and, through Prussian domination, spread through the whole of Germany. The Prussian spirit was in sharp contrast to the democratic ideas of some sections of non-Prussian Germany; nevertheless, it triumphed decisively over the spirit of Heine, Goethe, Feuerbach and other representatives of German democratic thought.

Slowly there developed in Germany a peculiar hierarchy of social values. Military service became the highest ideal any German could achieve. To be an officer was to reach the pinnacle of social position and to achieve the truest measure of success. Every German family, whether of an industrialist, a small businessman, a peasant or even a worker, tried to follow the way of life of the Prussian gentry. Every family hoped and prayed that its ablest son would enter upon the career of a professional soldier.

It is not at all surprising that the defeat of 1918 and the downfall of the monarchy had only a superficial effect upon Germany's social and political structure. The republican forces had strong ties to the old German state and its accepted values. Ironically but quite charac-

teristically, the short-lived Weimar Republic preserved the dominant elements of the old Germany. "The Kaiser has gone but his generals remain," a German writer said. Hitler and his Nazi party had little difficulty in reviving the old spirit. With their skill in influencing the masses and their seductive ideology of the "master race," the Nazis succeeded in creating the most formidable war machine of all times.

Fundamentally, however, the social structure of Nazi Germany was formed of the same elements as that of Imperial Germany: a coalition of Junkers, big business and the military caste. Unquestionably, no other forces than these supplied the impetus for the rise of Hitler and his Party to power.

It was the money of big German industrialists and bankers, relayed to Hitler by their go-between, Hjalmar Schacht, that enabled the Nazi leader to finance his movement. It was the wily intrigues of Franz von Papen, acting on behalf of the Prussian Junkers, that put Hitler into the Reichschancellory. It is interesting to note how the direct interests of the East Prussian landowners dominated German politics at that time. Hoping to keep certain financial abuses connected with the huge government subsidies for East Prussia from coming to light, representatives of this group blackmailed the aging President Hindenburg into nominating Hitler as Chancellor.

In time a certain amount of criticism against the Nazi regime developed among these social groups; but no matter how disappointed they may have been with some of the policies of Hitler, they remained with him until the bitter end, knowing that his downfall would unquestionably mean the end of their social and economic position.

The chief difference between the Second and the Third German Reich appears to be that in the latter, broad masses of the German people were more efficiently integrated into a unified body and more thoroughly indoctrinated with the grandiose ideas of conquest. It is interesting in this connection to reflect that the defeat of 1945 has not been followed even by revolutionary outbreaks similar to the movements of 1918.

That the German people must be re-educated is an idea that has gained wide currency and is basically sound and correct. The German nation having for centuries been exposed to the influence of warlike ideas and taught to worship militarism, it is only natural to think that this process must be now reversed and the state of mind of the

average German radically changed. It would be a grave mistake to suppose, however, that this re-education can be accomplished by a mere change of textbooks and curricula in the German schools.

Since the present state of mind of the German nation is the result of a long historical process in which political, economic and social factors have played the decisive roles, we must create different social, economic and political conditions in Germany in order to reverse the process. The re-education of the Germans cannot be limited to their schools and colleges; it must start with a change in the whole environment in which present and future generations of Germans are to live. The final stage in this long process will be the creation of a democratic Germany.

The German people proved unable to accomplish this end by their own efforts. The abortive German revolutions of 1848 and 1918 were ineffective against the reactionary forces of their country, so that it became necessary for foreign intervention to defeat and destroy the German military state. The democratic forces of the Allied nations have the obligation and, at the same time, the unique opportunity of guiding Germany on the road to democracy.

Many factors are involved in the democratization of Germany. One of them is the revision of Germany's frontiers, and especially of her eastern frontier; for the eastern territories have played a special and distinct role in the development within Germany of those very forces whose reactionary and militaristic role has just been mentioned.

It is a well-known fact that East Prussia, Pomerania and in a measure Silesia were the cradle of Junkerdom and the Prussian military caste. Here were located the tremendous estates of the Prussian landowners. The sons of this landed aristocracy formed the nucleus of the Prussian officer corps and the German General Staff. The natural resources of Silesia formed a basis for the development of an important part of the German war industry. No less important to Germany's military plans was the agricultural production of her eastern regions. Their large yield of rye and potatoes made them a granary for the Reich, supplying Germany with the surpluses of food which made preparation for war possible.

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*Life stops at 12:30. In the desolated and broken ruins of Gdansk a church tower stands as the sole remnant in a street of rubble.*



Last but not least, these territories formed a springboard for military aggression against the East. Their strategic importance for military operations against Germany's eastern neighbors cannot be over-estimated.

East Prussia, however, was not only the cradle of Junkerdom, but, what is less well known, became a stronghold of Nazism. As early as 1924 the Nazis received 6 per cent of the votes cast in this area in the parliamentary elections. By 1932 they were the strongest party in the region, claiming 47 per cent of the votes, and in 1933 they rolled up a majority of 56.5 per cent.

For decades all these border regions of Germany were ridden by nationalistic movements. A nationally mixed population led to racial strife and efforts by the ruling German group to Germanize the Polish minority by force. Appeals for the "defense of the German border land" against the alleged menace of the Slavs served to inflame the imagination of the local German population and to give birth to various chauvinistic and semi-military German organizations long before Hitler started the Nazi movement and created his Storm Troops.

The concept of the "Greater German Reich," which played so significant a role in the indoctrination of the German people, has always been linked with the slogan *Drang nach Osten*. The doctrines of modern German imperialism dealt with plans of eastward expansion, whether their spokesman was the Kaiser with his heart set on reaching the Persian Gulf or Hitler dreaming of the subjugation of Russia. To this objective the eastern German provinces were absolutely indispensable.

It is quite obvious that a Germany deprived of these territories will not be able to prepare for another war, or at least not so quickly as with them. First of all, the establishment of the eastern frontier on the Oder-Neisse line will push Germany back almost to the spot where the *Drang nach Osten* began many centuries ago. Moreover, it will abolish once for all the menace of a reborn German feudalism and Junkerdom. With these territories gone forever, the old German gentry and the core of Germany's military caste are deprived of their economic and social base. True, in many other countries these reactionary and warlike groups were abolished through the rise of opposing social forces and the ensuing struggle for democracy. But as we have seen,

the Germans proved unable to get rid of a backward social structure by themselves. Consequently it became necessary for the sake of peace and security for this task to be accomplished by means of military defeat.

The territories in question formerly belonged to the Prussian state and formed one of the pillars of Prussia's power. With them, Prussia found it possible to extend her domination over the other German states. Deprived of them, Prussia to a great extent will lose her dominant position. That in itself will tend to make for equality among the various German states. Prussia's preponderant influence led Germany along the road to war. The weakening of Prussia will diminish her once overwhelming control over Germany's life, so that non-Prussian elements will have a better opportunity to exert their influence.

The revision of the German eastern frontier will bring about a substantial reduction of Germany's war industry and war potential. Although Silesia was not the Reich's only industrial region, it had always played a very important role in the German armaments program. There are, of course, highly industrialized countries which do not necessarily endanger the peace and security of other nations and of the world. But German heavy industry had been built with military plans in mind. Not alone the metal and chemical industries and the famous Krupp works served this purpose but German industry as a whole.

In the days of the Weimar Republic an anecdote illustrating the Germans' own attitude toward their industry had wide currency. The story concerns a German worker employed in a baby carriage factory. When his wife gave birth to a child he asked the management for a carriage and received it from the factory, but in parts which he had to assemble by himself. The next day the worker appeared before the manager and slightly embarrassed said, "Sir, no matter how I put it together, it always comes out as a machine gun."

Thanks to baby carriage factories of this sort and to the basic structure of her heavy industry, Germany was ready to start work for war the day Hitler took over and gave the signal.

It is conceivable, of course, that even without Silesia Germany will attempt once more to rebuild her war industry. To do so under this handicap, however, will certainly not be so easy and will call for a

much longer period of preparation than otherwise. And that is exactly what is needed to accomplish the re-education of the German people. The more difficult the preparation for war, the greater the chance of re-education.

In this connection, it is important to destroy certain political myths which were of great help to Hitler in convincing the German people that they must go to war. One of these myths is the idea of the "Greater German Reich." The detachment of the eastern territories put an end to German dreams of power and doomed the "Greater German Reich." It destroyed the legend that through conquest and robbery a nation can achieve greatness and prosperity for itself. It also gave the German people a taste of defeat. Almost everyone agrees today that the German nation has to be convinced that it has been totally defeated and that war does not pay. The most impressive evidence of defeat is the loss of territory, especially of territory won as a result of a long record of aggression and conquest.

These, then, are the chief reasons for the detachment from Germany of the territories east of the Oder-Neisse line. It is not a question of a "hard" or a "soft" peace, but of a *safe* peace. It is not a matter of revenge or of historical justice, although arguments might be advanced fully demonstrating the justice of the move. From an international point of view, it is simply a matter of political necessity. Those who may fear that harm will come to the German nation and its future generations from the new arrangement will find the answer to their misgivings in an article by Professor E. Kayser, published in a collective work, *Das Buch von dem Deutschen Volkstum*. Says Professor Kayser: "The widening of the German sphere of influence in modern times, as well as the extension of German culture toward the East, brought no advantage to the German nation as a whole. The consequences are still bringing disaster upon it today."

It is probably difficult for the average German to accustom himself to the reality of a loss of territory. Yet Germany provoked an aggressive war, as the Nuremberg verdict clearly established, and the time has come for every German to understand and accept the consequences of a centuries long policy of aggression and aggrandizement. A special responsibility rests with the German democrats. It is their duty to accept the Potsdam solution, recognize its salutary effect on Germany herself and advocate it among the German people.

A supreme test awaits the German democrats. They will be called upon to prove their sincerity and peaceful intentions towards Germany's neighbors. Because no country has suffered more from German aggression than Poland, a particular duty rests with the German democrats to seek a reconciliation with Poland and the Polish people. Unfortunately, there is little evidence as yet that much thought has been given to this obligation; on the contrary, the Allied Control Council for Germany recently had to rebuke certain German newspapers, professing to be democratic, for their anti-Polish articles. One German democratic writer, however, has had the courage to state Germany's guilt plainly. In an address in London in 1944, before the end of the war, Hans Jaeger, put the case as follows:

"The guilt against the Polish people is more than just a few years old. It goes back to the various divisions of Poland and even farther than that. Poland was for the Germans the scapegoat, and the indescribable hatred against the Poles was a consequence of Germany's bad conscience. . . . That was the general attitude. To hate the Poles was the thing to do—with the left nationalists as well as with the right ones. On many occasions we could observe a united front against Poland. Quite apart from the duty to make good, we have a special moral obligation on this point."

The most appropriate response to this moral obligation unquestionably would be recognition by the Germans, and especially by the German democrats, of the present Polish-German border solution. If German democracy is to prevail, it must combat revisionist and nationalistic sentiments among the German people; it must insist that the German nation make a supreme effort to convince the other peoples of the world of Germany's peaceful intentions. Words are not enough; clear evidence of good will and of a new attitude is required. If the German democrats fail in this obligation, there can be no hope for a democratic Germany. If they start again, as after the First World War, to undermine the peace settlement and build up demands against their neighbors, they will play into the hands of their enemies, the nationalists and Nazis, and share the fate of their predecessors of the Weimar Republic. In such an event, peace-loving nations will have to search for another solution of the German question. Humanity cannot afford once more to sacrifice peace on the altar of a resurrected German will to power.



There is no reason to be disturbed over the suggestion that the present border solution may hamper the normal development of Germany's economy and make Germany dependent on foreign assistance. Although the former German territories returned to Poland at Potsdam had played a large role in Germany's aggressive military plans and preparations, their loss will affect her peace economy very little. In 1934, at the beginning of Hitler's era, when his great armaments program was as yet in its early stage, the national income of Germany amounted to 52.7 billion Reichsmarks in all. Of this only 10 per cent originated in the area east of the Oder-Neisse line. If in the future the Germans do not spend the greater part of their national income for armaments, as they were accustomed to in the past, they will not find it difficult to compensate for the losses brought about by changes in their eastern frontier.

When the three Allied leaders reached their historical decision at Potsdam concerning Germany's eastern frontier, they followed a policy aiming at the complete destruction of German imperialism and militarism "in order to assure that Germany never again will threaten her neighbors or the peace of world." These are the exact words used in the Potsdam Declaration, signed by Truman, Attlee and Stalin.

Let us now examine the reasons why these territories had to be returned to Poland and why Poland urgently needed them.

## FOUNDATION OF POLAND'S FUTURE

Of all the United Nations none has been more deeply affected by the results of the recent war than Poland. In almost every sphere of her national life, Poland has undergone fundamental changes. Not only has postwar Poland acquired a new social and economic structure, a new system of democratic government and a new political set-up, but her frontiers have been so thoroughly revised that her territories have been moved over one hundred miles westward, resulting in tremendous shifts of population.

When the Nazi hordes invaded Poland on the fateful morning of September 1, 1939, the area of the country comprised some 150,000 square miles, and the population numbered approximately 35 million inhabitants. Prewar Poland, however, was a multi-national country. Her eastern territories were inhabited mostly by Ukrainians and Byelorussians, minority groups that gravitated strongly towards two neighboring Soviet Republics, namely the Ukrainian and Byelorussian. These numerous minorities could be kept under the domination of the Polish state only by force and constituted a major cause of prewar Poland's weakness. The situation contributed greatly to the deterioration of Polish-Soviet relations as well—relations which had never been friendly during the brief period dividing the two world wars.

The question of Poland's eastern provinces and the determination of Polish-Soviet boundaries was a widely debated issue during the recent war. It soon became clear that unless this problem were solved in a just and realistic manner there could be no durable peace settlement in Eastern Europe. The aspirations of the Polish Ukrainians and Byelorussians for unification within their national states could no longer be neglected if there were to be friendly relations between Poland and the Soviet Union and if permanent peace were to be established in this part of Europe.

As World War II was nearing its end and the three chief Allied leaders began shaping the future of the war-torn European continent, they came to a decision concerning the acute problem of the Polish-Soviet boundary. In February, 1945, an agreement was signed in

Yalta by Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, according to which the so-called Curzon line was accepted as the eastern border of Poland.

Were that to have been the final decision concerning Poland's post-war boundaries, it would have meant the reduction of Poland's territory to approximately 81,000 square miles, or to some 54 per cent of her prewar area. Poland thereby would have become a very small country, terribly overpopulated and entirely unfitted for independent existence, politically as well as economically. The Allied leaders at Yalta, however, reached the simultaneous decision that Poland should be compensated in a considerable measure through substantial accessions of German territories in the North and West. Accordingly, the Potsdam Conference moved the western frontier of Poland to the Oder and Neisse rivers.

The decision was an inevitable one. The Allied leaders, Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, had more than once stated one of the Allied war aims to be the re-establishment of a strong and independent Poland. Limited, however, to the area between the Curzon line and the old Polish-German frontier and without the newly acquired territories in the West and North, Poland would have been neither strong nor truly independent. Further she would have been utterly unable to rebuild her enormously devastated country and her shattered economy and to solve her urgent demographic problems.

Let us first examine the population problem. According to the first postwar census, dated February 14, 1946, Poland had nearly 24 million inhabitants. At the time of the census, however, a considerable number of Germans still awaited their evacuation from Poland. On the other hand, there were some 600,000 Polish war refugees and displaced persons in Germany, Austria and other countries; 200,000 Polish soldiers in the West; a large number of Polish emigrants in France and Belgium, and nearly 2 million Poles beyond the Curzon line who still awaited repatriation. It may be assumed that, after repatriation and resettlement is over, the population of Poland will number more than 24 million. If a population of that size were to be settled in the 81,000 square miles lying between the Curzon line and the old Polish-German frontier, it would mean a considerable increase in the average density of population per square mile. Even in normal times an increase in population would have created disturbing problems for the national economy of Poland, predominantly agricultural as it was. More than two-thirds of



*Above, Polish settlers, starting a new life, are seen passing in review before Polish officials in the regained city of Szczecin.*

*Below, a modern office building in Opole faces a medieval tower built by Polish rulers of Silesia belonging to the Piast dynasty.*



Poland's population lived on the land. For Europe as a whole, the percentage of the agrarian population was 55.6. Polish farms were continuously and hopelessly overpopulated. According to various official and unofficial sources, Polish farms had between 5 and 6 million superfluous laborers, that is, people who could neither be used for agricultural work nor find any other form of employment. Remaining on the land and accepted as an integral part of the peasant population, they were not included in the official unemployment statistics. The average density of population settled on cultivable land in Poland was almost twice that of France, Germany or Denmark. In certain regions it was three or four times greater, and this in a country with very primitive agricultural techniques. Were these techniques to be improved, the number of superfluous laborers would be greatly increased.

In more highly industrialized countries, the surplus of the agricultural population is usually absorbed into various branches of industrial production. Polish industry, however, was entirely unable to provide work for the constantly increasing number of unemployed farm hands. The only natural outlet for the crowded village population, therefore, became that of emigration. In the five year period, 1926-1930, almost half a million Poles left their country. Had it not been for immigration restrictions in the United States, that number would have been many times larger. In the following years, emigration fell off until, in the period just before the war, it came to a virtual standstill in the face of the growing difficulty of finding open countries. Today the opportunity for mass emigration is non-existent.

As we have noted, even in "normal" prewar times, Poland was faced with an acute population crisis scarcely soluble within the limits of her own economy.

But the Poland of 1945 and 1946 was far from being a "normal" country. The war, in which Poland twice served as a vast battlefield, along with six years of ruthless Nazi occupation, brought about enormous destruction and tremendous losses. It is difficult to evaluate the full amount of the destruction suffered by Poland. Official estimates put the total cost of Poland's material losses in the territory west of the Curzon line as high as 300 billion gold zlotys. At the official prewar exchange rate, this would mean the equivalent of 60 billion dollars. The figure cannot, of course, be judged by American standards, but must be visualized in relation to Polish conditions. The entire national

income of Poland for 1938 was estimated at less than 5 billion dollars, the entire industrial production was approximately 1 billion dollars. In other words, Poland's losses from war and occupation are equivalent to 60 years of her industrial production. That production, however, has been drastically curtailed as a result of the ruthless destruction the Nazis inflicted on Polish economy. Under these circumstances, a Poland economically crippled and territorially reduced would be utterly unable to provide an adequate living for a population confined to a small and ruined area.

Only with the help of the newly regained territories in the North and West can these demographic and economic problems be solved. The territories under discussion comprise an area of approximately 39,000 square miles, bringing the area of the present Poland to 120,000 square miles.

The territories assigned to Poland in Potsdam consist of:

1. The area of the former Free City of Gdansk (Danzig).
2. The southern part of East Prussia, lying south of a straight line drawn from Braniewo to Goldap and including the cities of Olsztyn (Allenstein), Elblag and Malbork.
3. The northwestern part of Upper Silesia, left to Germany after the first World War, with the cities of Gliwice (Gleiwitz), Bytom (Beuthen), and Opole (Oppeln).
4. Lower Silesia, with the cities of Wroclaw (Breslau), Lignica (Lignitz) and Glogow (Glogau).
5. Western Pomerania, including the former German province of Grenzmark, and the most eastern part of the province of Brandenburg, with the cities of Pila (Schneidemuehl), Starogard (Stargard), Gorzow (Landsberg), Koszalin (Koslin) and Slupsk (Stolp), the ports of Szczecin (Stettin) and Kolobrzeg (Kolberg) and the two tiny islands of Usnan (Usedom) and Wolyn (Wollin) at the Oder estuary.

Before the war, the area in question was inhabited by eight and a half million people. Approximately one and a half million were Poles, who are accepted, of course, by the Polish state as Polish citizens and may stay in the country. The rest of the inhabitants, numbering approximately 7 million, being Germans, have either already left for Germany or are about to leave.

Based on a rough estimate, the regained territory can easily absorb more than six million Poles. Cities and towns in this area with a poten-

tial population of more than 10,000 inhabitants are in a position to absorb approximately three million people. Since this territory includes nearly 15 million acres of arable land, it is possible to resettle here not only the Polish farmers and farm laborers repatriated from beyond the Curzon line but also a large part of the surplus farm population from the overcrowded villages of Poland proper, thereby easing an acute problem of overpopulation.

Even more important, the regained territories are rich in natural resources and highly industrialized. Although a considerable part of industry here suffered damage and destruction during the war, it is none the less in a position to absorb substantial numbers of Polish workers. According to the provisional estimates of the Polish Institute for Resettlement and Colonization, the western territories can provide jobs for approximately 3,500,000 people in mining, industry, transportation, trade and other branches of non-agricultural production. Further development of these industrial regions will greatly enlarge the possibilities and facilitate the absorption of the future natural increase in population.

In other words, the problem of Poland's overpopulation and rural unemployment, defying solution within the limits of the prewar Polish economy and further aggravated by the revision of Poland's eastern border, now encounters a ready solution through the acquisition of the former German territories. And it should be stressed that only in this way can these problems be solved. Any other solution would lower the standard of living of the Poles to a point well below the prewar level, which in itself was miserably low. The value of the annual mining and industrial output of prewar Poland amounted to approximately \$40 per capita, while in prewar Germany, France and Great Britain, it was five to six times as much. Only Rumania and the other Balkan countries had a lower output than Poland.

Taking into consideration the destruction and material losses Poland suffered during the war, we can easily imagine how severely this low prewar standard of living has been affected. We have already stated that the material losses of Poland amount to nearly 60 billion dollars, equivalent to the output of prewar Polish industry over 60 years. Even this figure, however, does not give an adequate picture of the situation. Whole branches of production have been put out of operation. Factories totally destroyed number more than 10,000. The losses sustained by the

Polish coal mines, excluding the newly acquired ones, are estimated to be as high as 700 million dollars. Figures supplied by the Polish Office of War Reparations show that the machine tool industry, vital for setting in motion the damaged industrial plants, has been particularly hard hit. Destruction and German requisitions brought it almost to a standstill. A similar state of affairs was to be observed in the textile industry. The losses undergone by these two branches alone amounted to approximately 400 million dollars. The metal and electrical industries, for their part, have been deprived of nearly 60 per cent of their prewar capacity.

No less serious was the damage inflicted on transportation and communication facilities. Poland has lost more than 40 per cent of her locomotives; 92 per cent of the railroad passenger cars and 98 per cent of the freight cars have been destroyed, damaged or removed to Germany. Motor cars, taken away by the retreating Germans, disappeared almost entirely. Approximately 30 per cent of the railroad trackage has been destroyed and an additional 30 per cent damaged, while 70 per cent of the large bridges have been demolished. Considerable damage has been done to the roads and communications. Gdynia, the only prewar Polish port, was left in ruins.

Poland's agriculture has been even harder hit. More than 400,000 farms have been partly or totally destroyed. The losses in livestock amount to 60 to 80 per cent of the prewar number; 3 million horses, more than 8 million cattle and 6 million pigs have been killed or taken away by the invaders.

Almost 300,000 buildings in the cities and towns and 400,000 farm dwellings are partly or wholly in ruins. It will take many years to rebuild the completely leveled Polish capital, Warsaw.

To undertake to estimate the losses sustained by Poland as a result of the exploitation carried out by the Germans during six years of occupation is to attempt the impossible. Polish economy was subordinated to German war needs and served as a sector of the over-all German war machine set up in conquered Europe. The natural resources of Poland, as well as her industry, agriculture and manpower, were freely drained by the Germans without regard for the needs of the Polish population. Forty-five million tons of wheat and 155 million cubic yards of timber were confiscated and carried off by the Germans. More than three million Polish slave workers were shipped to Germany.



These are the most striking items in the account of destruction suffered by Poland during the fateful years of World War II. Many of the losses can never be measured in terms of dollars.

It would be hopeless to undertake the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Poland solely with the resources in her possession outside the newly acquired territories. Poland would be left to depend entirely on foreign relief and foreign credits. The crippled state of Polish exports would make it impossible to repay these credits, even if they were granted on the most convenient terms.

Only with the resources and industrial capacity of the regained territories in the West can Poland hope to be in a position to rebuild her devastated land. Only with these resources can she organize her foreign trade so as to obtain essential goods from abroad and achieve a sound balance of payments. Let us now see how the newly regained territories will contribute to the rehabilitation of Poland and her people.

Among the most important assets of the former German region of Silesia are its coal mines. In Upper and Lower Silesia Poland has acquired some 60 new mines with a productive capacity of approximately 40 million tons yearly. This will increase Polish coal production by nearly 80 per cent and coke production by 150 per cent. In addition, there are several mines of brown coal with a yearly output of 10 million tons. Possessing coal in this quantity, Poland can meet her own demands and export a considerable part of the production. In fact, coal has become Poland's chief present export.

Although the iron ore is not particularly rich, it is sufficient to add considerably to Poland's prewar output of ore. Of special importance are the zinc and lead deposits which make Poland second to none in Europe in the production of zinc. Poland also has acquired valuable deposits of minerals hitherto unknown to her economy, such as arsenic, chromium, cadmium, berillium, nickel, uranium and even a little gold. There are also large copper mines in Silesia.

Of vital importance for the reconstruction of Polish cities and roads are the newly acquired Silesian quarries with a yearly output of 8 million tons of building materials. There are also rich deposits of refractory clay, of kaolin and of the raw materials for glass, china and pottery production.

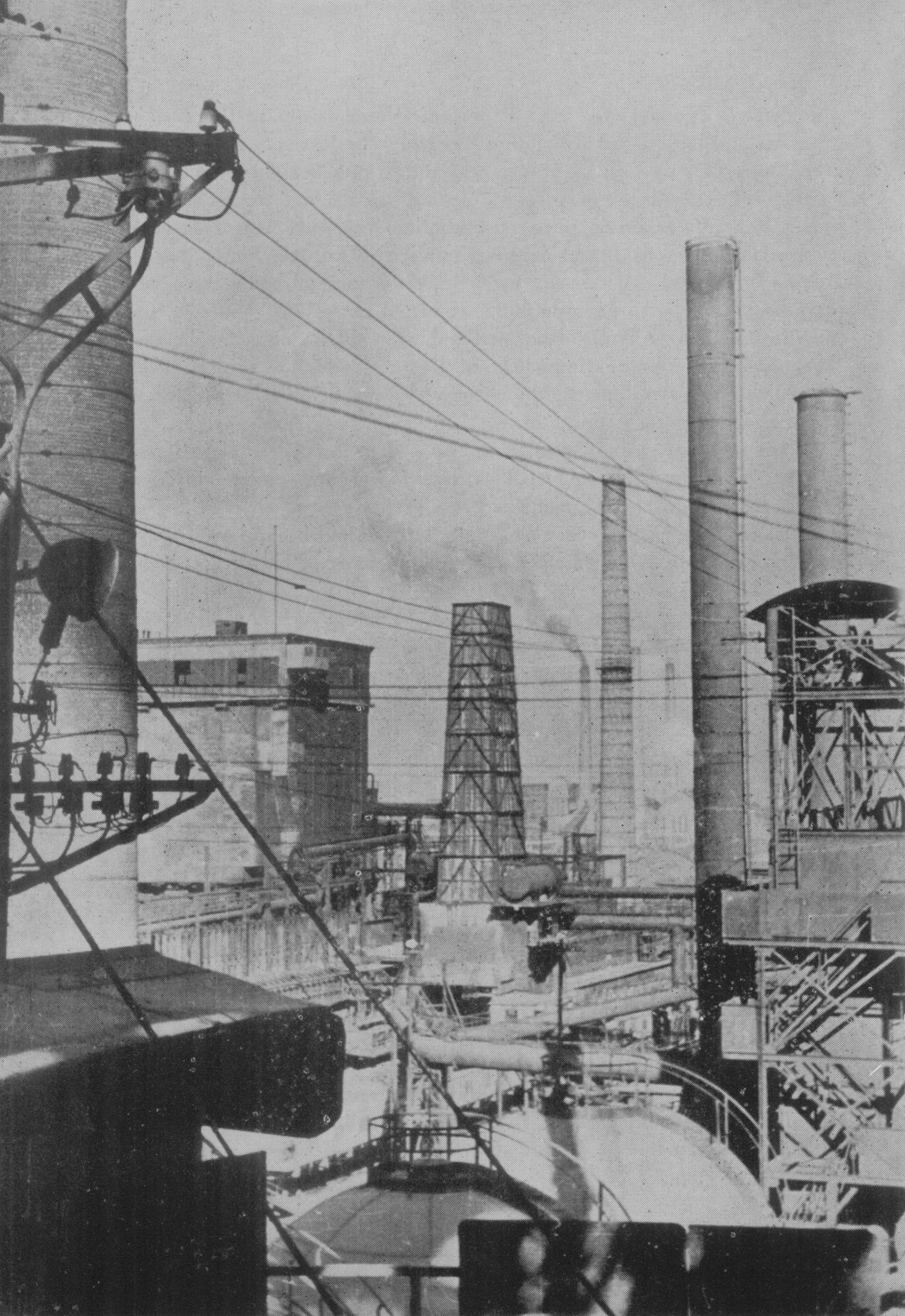
The natural resources of this region supply a basis for its industrial development. Of several highly developed Silesian industries, the metal

industry is probably the most important. Silesia is one of the greatest foundry centers in Europe. Poland will now be in a position to raise her output of pig iron by 40 per cent and to double the production of fine steel. The machine industry, turning out machine tools, railroad cars, locomotives, bridge parts, steam boilers, precision instruments and other machinery, is one of the most modern in Europe. Pottery, glass, china, brick and concrete are made from the mineral resources of the region, and a part of the output is exported to various countries. The textile industry is highly developed and will enable Poland to increase her production by approximately 60 per cent over the prewar level. Relatively less significant is the chemical industry, but paper mills and timber are of great importance.

One of the most characteristic features of the regained territories is their well-integrated system of transportation and communications. Although the network of roads and railroads had been partly destroyed in the final stages of the war and many bridges had been blown up, the Polish authorities, immediately after the cessation of hostilities, began extensive repairs.

Of the utmost importance to Poland's economy is the Oder River. It forms an excellent waterway, in fact, the best in Poland, navigable in its greater part and connected with other rivers through a system of canals. The Oder is the natural traffic route between industrial Silesia and the Baltic Sea. Heavy goods such as coal, coke, ore and iron can be transported conveniently and cheaply to and from the great port of Szczecin (Stettin), located at the estuary of the Oder. A characteristic of this river is that all its major tributaries, with the exception of the Western Neisse River, flow into it from the East to form a system of waterways now entirely within Polish borders. The Oder system is also connected with that of the other great Polish river, the Vistula; the two together form a unified system of Polish waterways.

The importance of the Oder transportation system to the economy of Silesia is indicated by official German statistics, according to which the total freight traffic on the Oder amounted in 1939 to 11 million tons and in 1942 to 15.7 million tons. A major part of the cargo consisted of coal and coke. Ninety-five per cent of the coal transported on the Oder was of Silesian origin and a comparable ratio prevailed for other commodities. Generally speaking, five-sixths of the tonnage transported on the Oder originated in Silesia and other areas situated on the right



bank of the river, in other words, from areas now entirely in the possession of Poland. Thus the Oder River is inextricably linked to the regions granted to Poland and, on the other hand, is of no economic value to the territories belonging to Germany.

The fact that the Oder River is inseparable from the Polish economy constitutes a fundamental argument against any new partition of the territories assigned to Poland at Potsdam, as has been suggested recently by certain people in search of a so-called compromise solution of the Polish-German border problem. The Oder and Neisse rivers are the soundest possible frontiers of Poland from the point of view of economy and transportation, and not from these points of view alone.

The Oder River connects the industrial regions of Poland directly with the Baltic Sea. Thanks to the new western frontier, Poland has acquired a broad and safe access to the sea, realizing in fact, the fulfillment of the thirteenth point of the Fourteen Points of President Wilson, which promised to independent Poland "a free and secure access to the sea." The access Poland acquired after World War I was far from being secure and free. The seacoast of old Poland was only 45 miles long. It was squeezed in between German-controlled territory and deprived of any ports. Even the port of Gdansk (Danzig), located at the estuary of Poland's chief river, the Vistula, was refused to Poland and established as a Free City, soon to fall under German influence. Thus the leading Polish waterway, the Vistula, was made useless as a transportation route.

The precarious political situation in Gdansk forced Poland to build the new port of Gdynia and connect it by rail with her mining and industrial region. From a political point of view the creation of the Free City of Gdansk probably represented the worst course that could have been followed. The Free City became a source of constant trouble to Poland and to the League of Nations as the supervising authority. The attitude of the Danzig Germans toward the League of Nations was probably best expressed by the Gauleiter of the Free City, Arthur Greiser, when he stuck out his tongue at the assembled delegates.

The narrow strip of Pomerania connecting Poland with the Baltic

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*With the regained territories in the West, Poland acquired large new resources in coal to aid in the process of industrialization. Surface installations at a mine in Lower Silesia are shown here.*

Sea, or the so-called "Polish Corridor," was repeatedly claimed by the Germans as territory of theirs which had been unjustly annexed by Poland. It became the prime objective of German revisionism. Even the German Social Democrats called it "an open wound in Germany's body," and supported revisionist claims for the "Corridor" and Danzig. Ultimately this territory was to become the immediate reason for the Nazi attack on Poland in 1939 and consequently for the outbreak of the Second World War.

The Potsdam agreement repaired the damage done at Versailles. Poland received a seacoast stretching for approximately 400 miles from Swinemuende to Elblag, with the two great ports of Gdansk (Danzig) and Szczecin (Stettin) and several harbors of second- and third-rate importance. The development of a Polish merchant marine and of an extensive seagoing traffic now becomes possible. Szczecin (Stettin), the most favorably situated port, is an excellent center for communication with other Baltic ports and a terminal for ocean-going ships. Thanks to its connections by rail and water, Szczecin is the natural port for industrial Silesia as well as for the agricultural provinces of Pomerania and Poznan. Szczecin, however, is not important to the Polish economy alone, but can also serve as a Baltic port for Czechoslovakia, since it has suitable connections with the railroads and waterways of that country. As soon as the damage inflicted on its harbor facilities during the war has been repaired, Szczecin will become a major center of seagoing traffic for Poland, Czechoslovakia and probably for some of the Danubian states as well.

The minor Baltic ports acquired by Poland will enable her to develop fisheries and will serve for smaller traffic.

The role assigned to Szczecin does not mean that the importance of Gdansk (Danzig) and Gdynia will diminish. The location of these two ports, now unified into one great harbor of Gdynia-Gdansk, makes them the natural outlet to the sea for the traffic from central and eastern Poland. By the incorporation of Gdansk into Poland it becomes possible to develop the Vistula River into a great waterway for central Poland.

It is not easy to appraise fully the economic value of the regained territories without a detailed and painstaking analysis, which is beyond the scope of this short review. To indicate their importance to Poland's

economy, however, we may compare two figures relating to Poland's industrial production. As we have already stated, the annual output of the mines and industries of prewar Poland was valued at approximately \$40 per capita of the population. Within the new boundaries, after industry as a whole has been set in motion, the per capita value of the yearly production will be twice this amount, or \$80.

The arduous task of rebuilding Poland has already been undertaken by the Polish people. A detailed plan, elaborated by the Central Board of Economic Planning, has been adopted by the Polish provisional parliament, the Polish National Council. The cornerstone of this Three Year Plan for Economic Reconstruction is the regained territories in the West. The over-all objective of the plan—to raise the standard of living of the Polish people to 10 per cent above the prewar level—can be realized only with the help of the natural and industrial resources of the regained territories.

The part these territories play in the plans for reconstruction is apparent from the following figures. Thirty-four per cent of the coal output called for by the Three Year Plan will be mined in the regained area; 25 per cent of the pig iron will be produced there, as will 34 per cent of the coke, 28 per cent of the output of the metal industry, 85 per cent of the railroad cars, 48 per cent of the building materials, 50 per cent of the textiles, 71 per cent of the superphosphate fertilizers and so on. Taking the 1939 index of production as 100, the output of electric power, as a result of the acquisition of these territories, will rise to 206, of steel to 139, of coal to 210, of agricultural machinery to 282 and of machine tools to 144. At the end of the three-year period Poland will be able to produce 300 locomotives a year, compared to 28 in prewar times, and 14,000 railroad freight cars in place of 500. Likewise the manufacture of trucks and tractors will begin. It is the industrial capacity of the regained former German territories that, in large measure, will make these gains possible.

It will not be an easy task to start the economy of the newly acquired territories functioning again and to integrate it with the economy of old Poland. Such a course, however, opens the road to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the devastated country and the solution of its demographic and economic problems. It is the only visible road to the future prosperity of the Polish people and they will spare no efforts to carry out the task they face. Especially is this so since they realize that

the new territories in the West offer them the only chance to recover from their present misery.

It is important that public opinion in the Allied nations be convinced of the inevitability of the Potsdam solution and of the necessity of upholding the present Polish-German border on the Oder-Neisse line. It would be a grave error to assume that there exists a half-way solution; that is to say, a compromise border drawn somewhat more to the East between the present Oder-Neisse line and the old Polish-German frontier of 1939. Any change in the present frontier on the Oder-Neisse line would deprive Poland of the advantages arising from the Potsdam decision.

The economic value of Silesia would be substantially lessened if Poland were to lose Szczecin (Stettin) or the Oder River as a natural waterway. Any partition of Silesia would be the source of serious economic and political difficulties, since it is an economically unified region. The detachment of the territory between the Oder and the Neisse rivers would deprive Silesia of the source of her power, for several power stations located in this area provide Silesian industry with electric energy.

There is probably no one even to suggest the return of Gdansk (Danzig) or East Prussia to Germany. From the political and strategic point of view, to do so would constitute a direct invitation to future German aggression. A glance at the map suffices to demonstrate how precarious Poland's political and strategic position was with East Prussia in German hands. The German *Blitz* against Poland of 1939 is sufficient proof that Poland could not even dream of successful resistance against a German onslaught. The same conclusion is valid with respect to the other former German territories east of the Oder-Neisse line. As the great German military leader, Field Marshal von Moltke, clearly stated, "either [the eastern provinces of] Prussia must become Polish or Poland must become Prussian."

Although the strategic security of a country does not depend exclusively on the configuration of its boundaries, nevertheless there is a close relationship. The prewar Polish-German frontier stretched for approximately 1,200 miles and, after Hitler had annexed Czechoslovakia, was lengthened to nearly 1,700 miles. Poland found herself encircled by Germany on three sides. No country in the world could



*Directions of German attack on Poland in September, 1939, showing the absolute indefensibility of the old Polish-German border.*



have elaborated an effective system of defense under such conditions, especially if its neighbor had been Germany.

The Oder-Neisse line shortens the Polish-German frontier to approximately 400 miles and eliminates two dangerous bulges: the East Prussian enclave, reaching far toward the East, and the triangular wedge between Poland and Czechoslovakia formed by Lower and Upper Silesia. Simultaneously, therefore, the security of both Poland and Czechoslovakia has been greatly increased. But the consequences are even more far-reaching. By means of this territory Germany endangered the whole of Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans. With the Potsdam decision on the Polish-German frontier, the security of the whole region has been strengthened materially.

The present Polish-German frontier forms an almost straight line running from the Baltic Sea to the Sudeten Mountains. While there are no attack-proof frontiers in modern warfare, there are degrees of military security. Poland, within her prewar boundaries, was virtually an open country deprived of any possibility of organized resistance against Germany. The present frontier makes a German attack on Poland far more difficult and costly.

Without doubt the balance sheet of the frontier changes in the East and the West is favorable for Poland, for she has exchanged predominantly agricultural, backward and undeveloped regions beyond the Curzon line for territories rich in natural resources, with a highly developed agriculture, a modern industry, a good system of transportation and communications and a long seacoast with several ports. Although even with the gains in the West, Poland now has a territory 21 per cent smaller than that of 1939, she has greatly improved her political and strategic position and finds herself favorably situated to develop as an independent nation with a balanced economy, looking forward to a prosperous future.

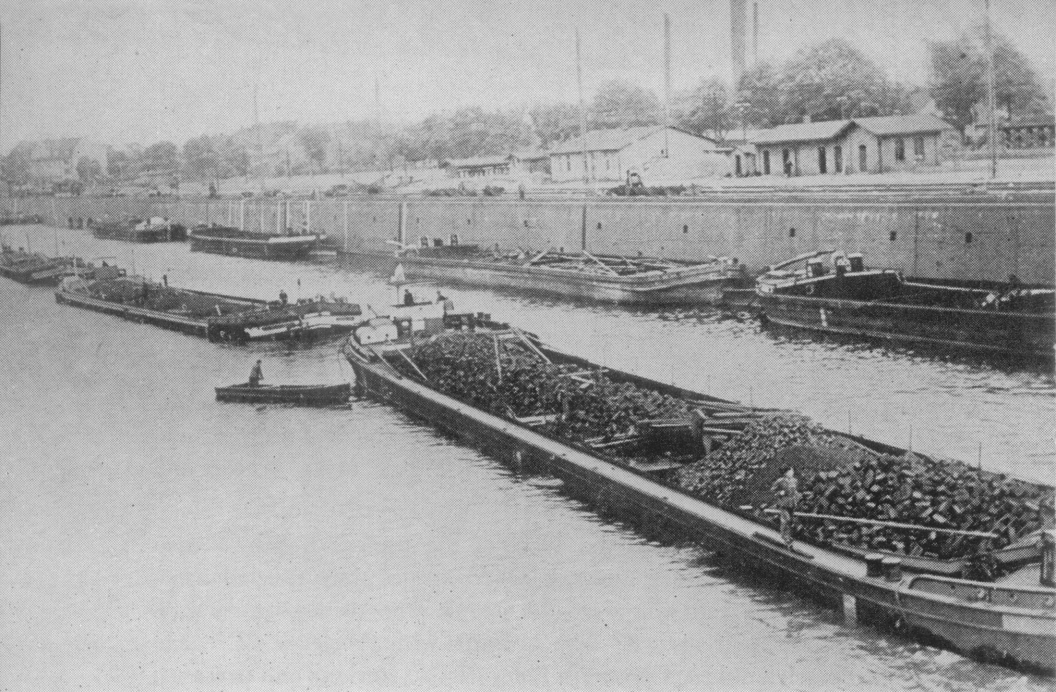
The future depends, of course, not only on Poland's frontiers but also on the international situation, on the durability of peace itself. With Germany, however, deprived of the eastern territories which traditionally have served as an armory and a springboard for aggression, the hopes for enduring peace have been greatly increased.

## **RETURN TO THE WEST**

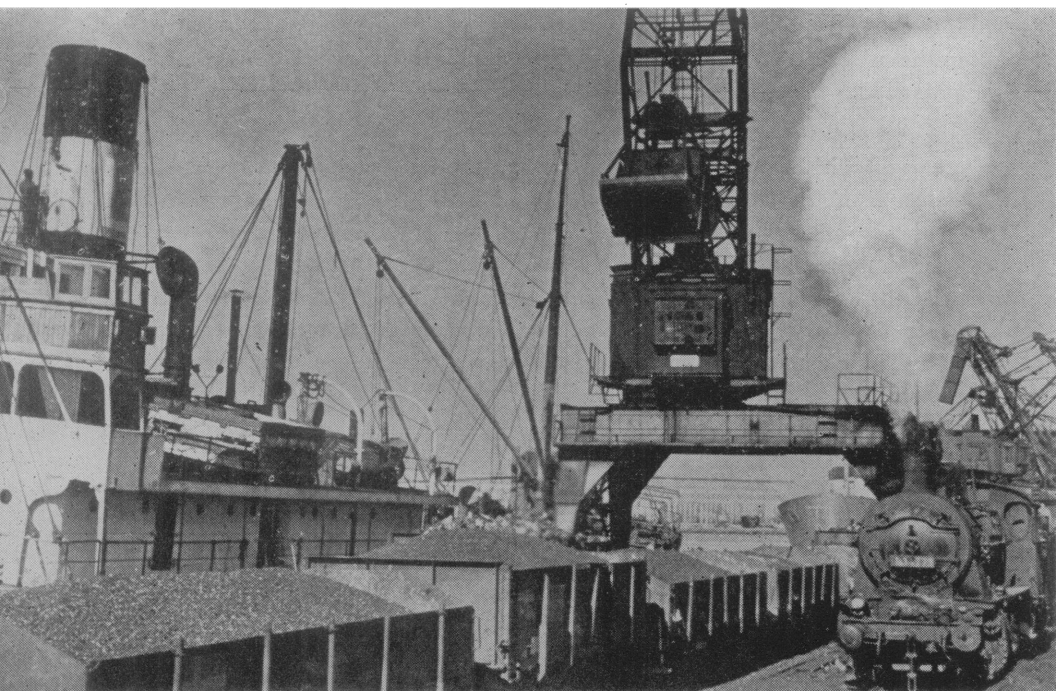
When spearheads of the victorious Soviet and Polish armies in pursuit of the retreating Nazis reached the areas along the Oder and Neisse rivers, they were, to their astonishment, greeted in many localities by unfurled Polish flags. Groups of men and women, their ragged garb bearing a diamond-shaped patch with the letter "P," gathered on the streets and the squares of otherwise deserted towns and villages and wildly applauded the passing Soviet and Polish tanks, trucks and marching infantry.

These were regions far to the West of the prewar Polish-German border. How did it happen that the Allied armies were greeted in so friendly a manner, and who were the people who demonstrated such enthusiasm over their arrival? The insignia with the letter "P" gave the unmistakable answer. They were Poles, Polish workers and peasants, forcibly deported to Germany for slave labor. Almost three million of them, men and women alike, even children, were transported, during the six years of occupation, to Germany. The Nazi war machine needed them desperately. A large part of these latter-day slaves, rounded up in Poland and deported to Germany by Fritz Sauckel's henchmen, were forced to work in factories, mines and foundries or on farms and estates in the area east of the Oder and Neisse rivers. In the area, that is, later assigned to Poland.

The Poles brought here by force to serve their German masters and marked with the sign of slavery were not the only people, however, to welcome the Soviet and Polish troops. All along the Neisse and Oder rivers, as far as Wroclaw and Szczecin, there were villages, towns, cities and whole regions inhabited by people speaking Polish and conscious of their Polish heritage. True, they were German citizens. They had never before seen Polish soldiers or Polish flags. But they were of Polish origin and they had never fully lost their cultural ties with the Polish nation. Some of them had already been partly Germanized, had partly forgotten their mother tongue, but even these still retained the memory of their Polish extraction. The predominant majority had become so deeply attached to the land where their ancestors had lived for



***Coal has become a major item in Poland's postwar economy. These views show it being loaded at a river port and transported to the regained port of Szczecin by way of the Oder River, lifeline of industrial Silesia and natural traffic route to the Baltic Sea.***



centuries that, despite German orders of evacuation, they decided to remain where they were rather than to migrate to Germany.

It was the sacred duty of every German to follow the explicit orders of the Fuehrer, the Nazi Party and the High Command, who had directed the German population to scorch the earth and move to Germany. The people of Polish origin, however, openly challenged these orders. Their assimilation with the Germans had been of a superficial character only; their attachment to the land was traditional and strong. And they, like the Polish slave laborers, had no reason for flight. They had been the original inhabitants of the country, their great-grandfathers living here long before any German immigrant had arrived. For hundreds of years they had withstood German pressure and terror.

How numerous was the Polish minority in the territories east of the Neisse-Oder line? It is very difficult to say. The German census after the First World War is not to be considered an impartial source of information, since it was conducted with the political motive of proving the overwhelmingly German character of these regions. In political discussions, therefore, the German census of 1910 appears as the basis for the determination of the ethnographic character of these territories. As the figures of 1910 are largely outdated, a series of complicated calculations must be undertaken to make allowances for shifts in population, natural increase and the political changes in the past 35 years, and thus bring the figures up to date.

It is indeed very difficult to estimate the percentage of people who still retain their Polish national or cultural consciousness. All estimates are of necessity approximate in nature. Nevertheless, the most conservative estimates put the number of Poles within these territories at approximately one and a half million. They were of course not equally dispersed over the whole area. The two greatest concentrations of Poles were in Upper Silesia and East Prussia. Smaller groups appeared in Lower Silesia and in Pomerania.

At first glance the proportion of Poles in the prewar population does not appear very impressive. In all probability it did not exceed 20 per cent.

To repeat, however, the Polish population in the former German territory was not equally dispersed. There were two large regions where it formed a considerable part of the population and, in some areas, even a majority. Such was the case in several counties of Upper Silesia,

left to Germany after the First World War, and in the southern part of East Prussia. In Upper Silesia, the Polish population formed an indisputable majority in the counties of Opole (Oppeln), Wielkie Strzelce (Gross Strelitz), Olesno (Rosenberg) and Toszek-Gliwice (Tost-Gleiwitz). There the Polish majority rose as high as 80 per cent. There were also counties with a Polish minority, which, however, amounted to more than 40 per cent, as, for instance, the counties of Kluczbork (Kreutzberg), Raciborz (Ratibor) and Nowe Miasto (Neustadt). Counties with a Polish majority were found as well on the left bank of the Oder River, as, for instance, Kozle (Kosel). Collectively the number of people of Polish origin in German Upper Silesia was estimated by Polish sources to be as high as 750,000.

A similar situation existed in East Prussia where the Polish population, estimated as approximately 350,000, formed a decisive majority in several border counties and a relatively strong minority in some others.

On these figures were based the Polish claims to Upper Silesia and to the southern part of East Prussia during the Paris conference in 1919, when the ethnographic principle prevailed as the basis for border solutions. Nevertheless, Poland was denied these territories and the question was solved by a compromise that left hundreds of thousands of Poles under German control.

It is not so much the actual number and percentage of the Polish population in these territories that is significant. As a matter of fact, it is remarkable that so relatively large a number of Poles managed to survive as did, in view of the fact that the Polish population had been exposed to a ruthless policy of denationalization at the hands of the Prussian authorities. What is relevant, however, is the historical and social character of the local Polish population.

These one and a half million Poles and people of Polish extraction, who at the outbreak of the Second World War were still living in the German part of Upper Silesia, in East Prussia and in Western Pomerania, are descendants of the once predominant Polish population. All of these territories were once inhabited exclusively by Poles and other Slavs and at different periods belonged to Poland. Prussian rule was established relatively late after a long period of aggressive wars and diplomatic intrigue and pressure. Some of these regions were given up by Polish kings, more or less voluntarily, at periods when Poland's foreign policy was deeply involved in plans for eastern expansion and

the country could not withstand the mounting pressure from both East and West. For the most part, however, these areas were taken away from Poland by force. Finally, at the end of the eighteenth century, the whole of Poland was divided at the initiative of Prussia among the three despotic powers of Prussia, Austria and Russia.

As soon as any of these provinces came within the orbit of Prussia, it became the object of intensive Germanization. The process usually took two forms. In the first stage, colonization by German settlers was encouraged. Subsequently the strongest possible kind of pressure was exerted upon the local Polish inhabitants to denationalize them and bring them under the influence of German doctrines.

By forcing Poles into the Prussian army and Prussian schools and by imposing restrictions upon the use of the Polish language, the Prussian authorities made considerable progress in this direction. In the second half of the nineteenth century the policy of Germanization was greatly intensified. Otto von Bismarck, the "Iron Chancellor," coined the slogan *Ausrotten* (Exterminate) and opened a period of unprecedented persecution. In a public statement in 1862 Bismarck told his countrymen: "Beat down the Poles until they have no spirit left in them. . . . All we can do is to exterminate them altogether."

It was the unique achievement of Hitler that he alone managed to surpass the brutality and ruthlessness of Bismarck's methods against the Poles. The Iron Chancellor deprived them of their schools, eliminated them from the civil service, forbade them to buy landed property and even prohibited them from building new structures on their own farms. The Polish language could not be used in courts and schools; and even private teaching of the language became punishable. Polish associations were dissolved, the Polish press was put under censorship and Polish children were forced to say their prayers in German. Large funds were appropriated by the German *Reichstag* for colonization, and particularly to buy out Polish property. With the support of the Prussian state special German organizations were formed to spread anti-Polish propaganda; they advocated the most violent measures against the Poles.

A liberal German, Christian Berger, himself not a Prussian but a Protestant minister from the Rhineland, described in his book, *Bismarcks Politik im Lichte des Christlichen Gewissens* (Bismarck's Policy in the Light of Christian Conscience), which was published after the

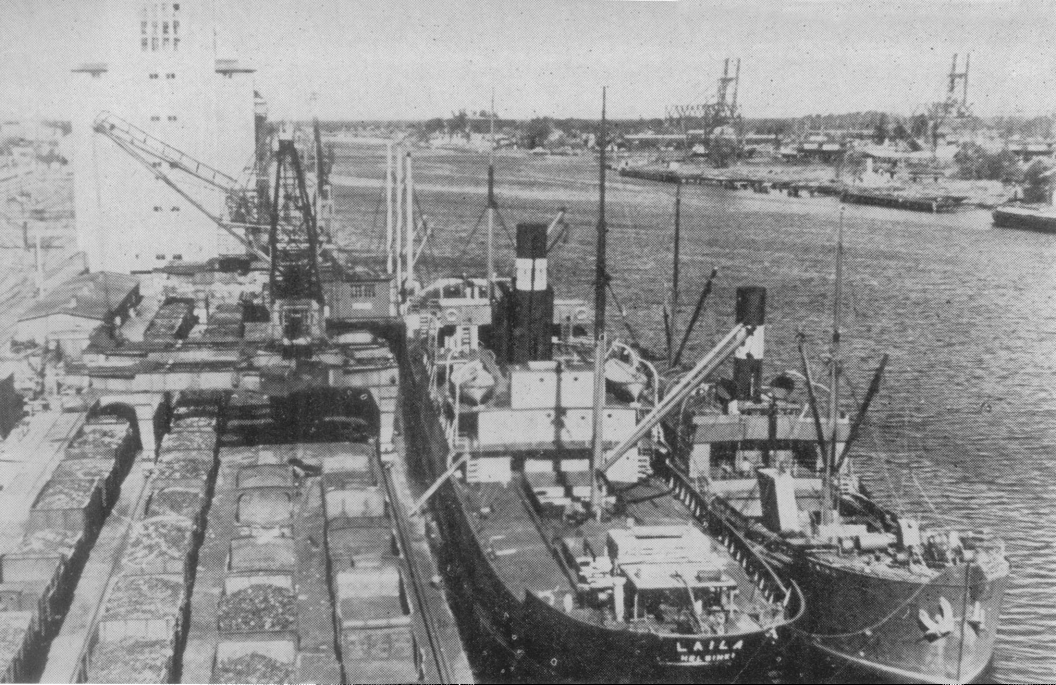
First World War, the eastern German territories as “a colony, an outpost, conquered and administered in accordance with the principles of war.” And so indeed they were! A battlefield of a centuries long struggle between the German invaders and the local Polish population. The power was on the side of the invaders; the subjugated Poles had to retreat step by step.

The Allied victory of 1918 did not improve the condition of the Polish population in the territories left to Germany by the Versailles Treaty. The German authorities became aware of strong ties between the Polish population of the German-held territory and of newly reborn Poland. During the plebiscite period, German semi-military bands, such as the *Selbstschutz*, *Orgesch*, *Freikorps* and the Black *Reichswehr*, terrorized the population with the connivance of the German authorities. A German writer, Professor H. J. Gumbel, in his book, *Verräter verfallen der Feme* (Traitors Will Be Dealt With by the Vehme Courts), admitted freely that: “A denunciation, an unjustified suspicion, in the given circumstances was sufficient. The man concerned was taken from his home and instantly shot. . . . All this only because the man was a Pole or was considered to be a Pole and worked for union with Poland.”

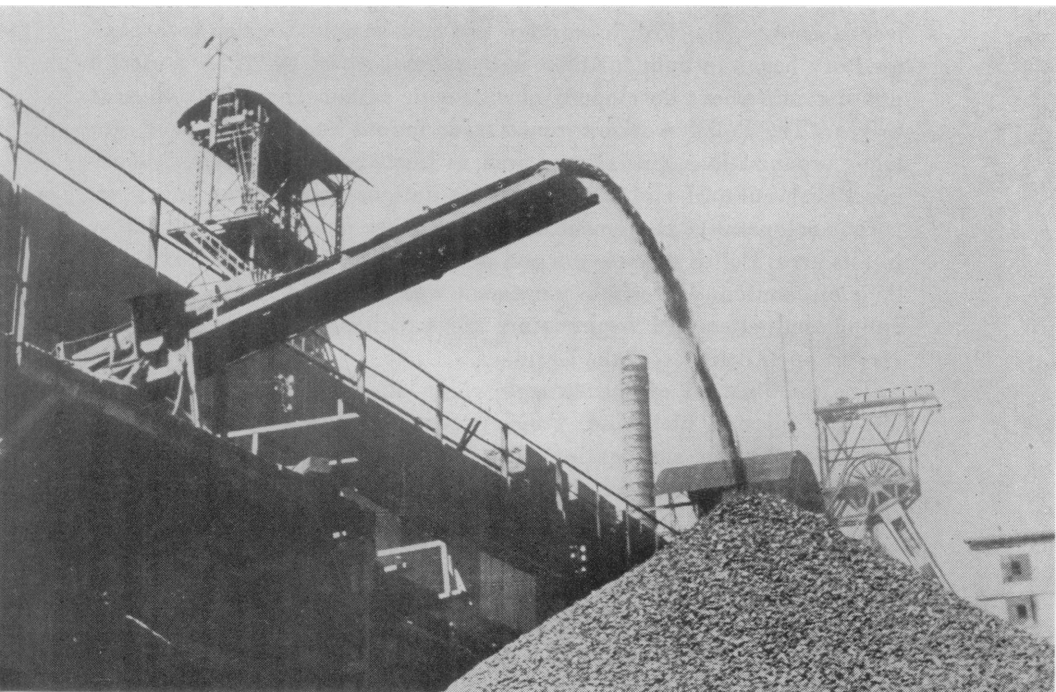
Until the complete collapse of Germany in 1945, there seemed little hope that the persecuted would be able to survive much longer. Had not the Second World War reversed the course of history, the remnants of the Polish population on German-controlled territory would have been doomed. Thanks to the victory of the United Nations, the survivors of the centuries long “silent war” in Silesia and East Prussia escaped final destruction. The invader has been pushed back across the Oder and Neisse rivers.

As in other border lands of Europe, the national conflict was interwoven with a social one. The surviving Polish inhabitants of these territories were peasants and workers. The inflowing Germans belonged to the upper classes. The old Polish gentry and aristocracy had been entirely Germanized or had sold out their property and left.

In Silesia more than half of the land belonged to 300 powerful German landlords who owned not only the landed estates but also a large part of the mines, foundries and factories. Silesia was the feudal domain of a handful of German families. By contrast, nearly 90,000 Polish peasant families together possessed 180,000 acres of arable land: two



*In the rebuilt ports of Gdansk (top) and Szczecin, coal is loaded for shipment to various parts of Europe. Poland has become one of the chief coal-supplying countries on the continent, sending fuel to Sweden, the Soviet Union, France, Italy and other nations.*





acres a family consisting of an average of 5 to 6 persons. Most of the workers and miners of Silesia were Poles. Of the 172,000 miners employed in the Silesian coal mines, 125,000 were Poles; of 58,000 foundry workers, 50,000. In East Prussia, 60 per cent of the land and 46.9 per cent of the land in use belonged to the Prussian Junkers. Of the 350,000 people of Polish origin, approximately 90 per cent were small farmers.

The lines of national division coincided there with those of social division. The struggle for national survival became a struggle for social justice. Since the Silesian workers belonged to a minority group, it was easy for the German manager to keep their wages and their working conditions below all German standards. A Polish writer, J. M. Winiewicz, in his booklet, *The Polish-German Frontier*, published in London in 1945, stated: "A comparison of the wages paid in Opole Silesia with those in the rest of Germany, not only in mining, after 1918, shows that the industrialists continued their exploitation of the workers and employees in this area. . . . The situation was not better in agriculture, which employed over a quarter of the population. . . . The social dependence of the Polish inhabitants facilitated the process of Germanization. . . . Where Germanization failed, the pressure of the German privileged ruling class crushed the endeavours of the Silesian people to give free expression to their political and national sentiments."

With the revival of national consciousness in Europe in the nineteenth century, the Polish workers and peasants in German-controlled territory began to fight for their national and social rights. A powerful popular movement developed. The struggle became harder from year to year. The Polish workers joined trade unions and formed their own labor organizations, Socialist as well as Christian Democratic. Numerous Polish cultural and educational institutions and a large and prosperous co-operative movement supplied further proof of Polish vitality in this area. Polish newspapers and periodicals sprang up and extended their circulation. The whole movement was subjected to violent persecution and attempted suppression. Nevertheless, it managed to survive in open defiance of the Germans.

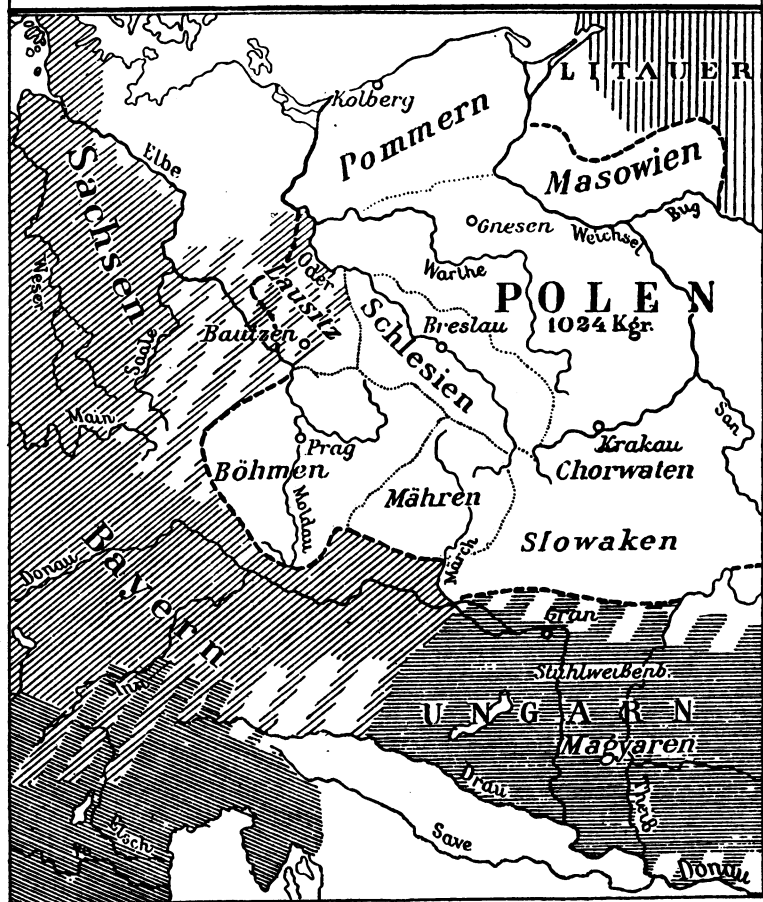
The culmination of the struggle came after the First World War and the Silesian plebiscite. Polish workers and peasants, after centuries of German subjugation, arose in armed conflict against their oppressors. In three successive uprisings they tried to free themselves

# Deutsch slawisch ungar. Grenzlande um 1000

▨ Deutsche    □ Slawen    ▤ Litauer

▩ Romanen    ▧ Magyaren

----Machtgebiet des Boleslaw Chrobry (992-1025)



German ethnographic map reproduced from Putzger's *Historischer Schulatlas* (*Historical School Atlas*), page 59, proving that the Slavonic population (white area) once inhabited territories even farther to the West than the present Polish-German border on the Oder and Neisse rivers.

from the German yoke. The movement was suppressed but eventually a part of Upper Silesia was returned to Poland.

Under the Nazis the pressure against the Polish population in the so-called "German East" became unbearable. The introduction of Nazi *Reichserbhofgesetze* (Laws of Agricultural Entail) and of the Law of Frontier Security provided legal means to dispossess Polish peasants from farms that had belonged to their families for ages. Every method was introduced to destroy the last vestige of Polish culture and to exterminate those who resisted. The pattern is too well known to be described here.

In spite of everything, approximately one and a half million Poles survived in this area. After hundreds of years of oppression and resistance, they have been restored at last to their motherland.

German historians and political writers are fond of referring to these territories east of the Oder and Neisse rivers as *ur-deutsche Laender*—ancient German lands. These claims are entirely unfounded. The territories, if anything, are ancient Polish lands, for their original population was beyond any doubt Polish or at least Slavonic. In any event it was not German. The relatively strong remnants of Polish population are evidence of this. Other proofs are found in the original geographical names of provinces, rivers and places, which are almost exclusively Polish. Finally, all these territories belonged to or owed their allegiance to Poland in the past. All of them were taken over by Prussia as the result of aggression or by political pressure and blackmail.

In three hundred years of expansion Prussia systematically robbed her neighbors of territory and population, establishing thereby a basis for power and domination in Europe. This warlike and aggressive attitude was by no means limited to Prussia's relations with Poland. Austria, Denmark, France and even German states such as Saxony and Hanover fell as victims to Prussian expansion, although the richest fruits of this policy, of course, were the partitions of Poland that Prussia initiated. In three successive acts of international robbery, perpetrated by the despotic rulers of Prussia, Austria and Russia, Prussia received the lion's share of purely Polish areas, moving her borders as far as the Vistula and Njemen rivers. Even the Polish capital, Warsaw, was incorporated into Prussia. At the Vienna Congress, however, Prussia was obliged to retreat a little to the West and

return a part of the annexed Polish territory, including Warsaw, to the Kingdom of Poland which was set up at this time under the Russian Tsars. Hitler alone moved the German frontiers farther to the East when he put the so-called "General Government" under the sovereignty of the Third Reich.

Such are the historical "rights" upon which Germany can base her territorial claims. If they were to influence any settlement for postwar Germany, we might as well withdraw the Allied armies of occupation from Germany and return to her all the areas ever touched by the feet of German soldiers. It seems obvious that a study of historical factors will not bring us closer to a workable solution of the problem of Germany's frontiers, unless we find in the history of German conquests some lessons that prove helpful in shaping our future policy toward Germany. Accordingly, what really matters is the safeguarding of international peace and security by means of the sound solution of economic, political and demographic problems.

Nearly eight hundred years ago, in 1157, the German Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa, wrote to Willibald, Abbot of Corvey: "On August 22, despite the opposition of the Poles who were lying in wait, with our entire army we crossed the river Oder, which, like a wall, surrounds that State, and, sweeping through the bishoprics of Breslau and Poznan, we laid waste the whole country with fire and sword."

Eight centuries later, the same glorious deed was repeated by Adolph Hitler, his task having been greatly simplified by the absolute indefensibility of the Polish western frontiers of 1939.

From the times of Frederick Barbarossa to those of his able successor, Adolph Hitler, the Germans have crossed the Oder River many times to attack their peaceful neighbors and have "laid waste the whole country with fire and sword."

Now for the first time in centuries the Germans have been decisively pushed back beyond the Oder, and the Poles have returned to their ancient lands in the West. This was the unique achievement of the Potsdam Conference.



*The port of Gdansk, not long ago a shambles and now partially restored, is the scene of busy commerce as seagoing ships return. The harbor has been unified with neighboring Gdynia and provides central Poland with an important outlet by way of the Vistula.*



## NO TURNING BACK

As recently as the summer of 1945 it was referred to as the Polish Wild West. A handful of American correspondents, on the scene immediately after the surrender of Germany, described the territories along the Oder and Neisse rivers as a desolated area, marked with unmistakable signs of the destruction undergone in the final phase of the war in the East. Cities, towns and villages were almost deserted; mines, foundries, factories and farms were idle. Trains were not running, telegraph and telephone lines were down, not a single radio transmitter was left. Polish and Russian troops were still fighting the numerous armed Nazi bands who hid in the woods and in the rubble of burned and ruined places.

Today foreign correspondents call it the Polish Ruhr, the Pittsburgh of Poland or the Polish El Dorado. As Sydney Gruson of *The New York Times* has stated: "Poland's new western frontiers may be subject to revision, as the Secretary of State, Byrnes, has stated and the Soviet Foreign Minister, Molotov, has denied, but a brief visit to the territories Poland gained from Germany lead to the conclusion that the Poles are there to stay. . . . There may be much to criticize in current Polish politics, but the spirit with which the Poles have taken on the enormous job of rebuilding the shattered western lands and the successes so far fill one newly arrived with admiration." (*The New York Times*, October 16, 1946.)

One may ask what has happened in Poland's newly regained western territories within the relatively short period of eighteen months which so deeply impressed the visiting foreign newspapermen.

First of all, a huge migration took place and entirely changed the outlook for the country. The migration was a twofold affair: millions of Germans left for Germany, millions of Poles entered the abandoned places. Contrary to a widespread belief, the evacuation of the Germans was only in part forced upon them. The great majority of the Germans left this area of their own accord. Their departure assumed the character of an exodus, a flight from an impending day of reckoning.

It began in the final phase of the war. When Germany's eastern front was disintegrating under the heavy blows of the Soviet offensive, the German military authorities gave the German inhabitants in the East peremptory orders to destroy everything possible and return to Germany. These orders did not have to be repeated. The psychological ground had been prepared by Nazi propaganda long before. Frightened and demoralized by this propaganda, which painted a terrifying picture of the fate that awaited them at the hands of the victorious Russians and Poles, the Germans did not hesitate in obeying the evacuation orders. Later on, as the Soviet drive grew in power and the Nazi New Order in the East began to crumble, the orderly evacuation developed into a wild rout. Panic-stricken people rushed wildly toward the West, abandoning their property, packing the roads and fighting their way across the Oder River.

As a result of the concerted efforts of the Nazi propaganda machine and the German High Command, millions of Germans left the territories east of the Oder and Neisse rivers long before the Potsdam Conference. The *Chicago Sun* correspondent, Irving Brant, estimates their number as "almost 6,000,000." (*The New Poland*, by Irving Brant, Universe Publishers, New York, 1946.)

Even after Polish officials had taken over the administration of the area in accordance with the Potsdam Declaration, the movement of the Germans toward the West did not halt. According to Brant it went on for months. But soon it took on a different aspect.

On November 20, 1945, the Allied Control Council for Germany reached an important decision concerning the remnants of the German population in non-German territories. According to a communique issued by the United States Department of State on December 7, 1945, "at its twelfth meeting held in Berlin on November 20, 1945, the Allied Control Council for Germany, pursuant to the agreement reached at the Potsdam Conference . . . approved a plan for the transfer of the German population to be moved from Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland into the four occupied zones of Germany. . . ." Stating that "many Germans have already migrated into Germany from Poland and from territory now under Polish administration," the Allied Control Council set forth its plan to move from these territories "the entire [remaining] German population of 3,500,000 persons," 2,000,000 of whom were to be admitted into the Soviet zone of occu-

pation and 1,500,000 into the British zone. None of the Germans evacuated from Poland were to be transferred to the American zone in Germany.

These figures require a certain amount of explanation. They are larger than would be expected, to judge from the prewar population of the former German territory east of the Oder and Neisse rivers. The reason is that they comprise not only the remnants of the German population in this area, but also the remnants of the prewar German minority in Poland and a certain number of German colonists settled during the war in western Poland, which Hitler had incorporated into the Reich.

The decision of the Allied Control Council was of the utmost importance to Poland. It was a clear proof of the intention of the four Allied powers represented on the Council, i.e., the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union and France, to remove the entire German population, or what was left of it, from Polish territory, including the former German provinces assigned to Poland at Potsdam. Although the Polish government, up to the time of Secretary Byrnes's statement in Stuttgart on September 6, 1946, had never expressed any doubts concerning the sincerity of the intentions of the governments that are signatories of the Potsdam Declaration, the average Pole was greatly disturbed by the continuing presence of German inhabitants in the regained territories. The decision of the Allied Council for Germany dispelled any apprehension arising in the minds of the Poles. To the average Pole, and German as well, it was a reassurance that the major Allied powers intended to enforce the agreements of Yalta and Potsdam. To a Polish settler who had come to the regained territory, it was an unmistakable sign that he might remain there safely. For if the Allies really wanted the rest of the Germans to leave, it could only mean that they had finally made up their minds and considered all the former German lands east of the Oder-Neisse line to be Polish territory.

The Stuttgart speech of Secretary Byrnes created, of course, a certain amount of confusion. For the Polish people, it was a symptom of the puzzling inconsistency of the American policy toward the Polish western territory. On the one hand, there was an American statesman questioning the validity of a frontier already established with full consent of the United States. On the other hand, there was an adopted



and implemented policy of removing the remnants of the German population from the allegedly disputed territory. And this removal was being conducted with the full approval of another representative of the United States, sitting at the Allied Control Council in Berlin. To make the whole situation even more mysterious and enigmatic, the American government did not raise any objection to the continuation of the transfer of the German population from this territory and did not try to invalidate the decision of the Allied Control Council of November 20, 1945, which formed the legal basis for the transfer. Indeed, it was very difficult to comprehend why the American government wanted the whole area to be cleared of the German population and at the same time suggested the possibility of returning at least a part of this area to Germany, although it had already been settled by Poles. In any event, since no objections were raised, the transfer of the German population to Germany continued and is still going on, and the settlement of the territory by Poles is proceeding without interruption.

According to the latest figures issued by the Polish Ministry for the Regained Territories, the number of Germans still awaiting transfer to Germany in January, 1947, was barely 588,000. Between mid-September and the beginning of 1947 more than a quarter of a million Germans had been evacuated to the Soviet and British zones of occupied Germany. This means that the evacuation is rapidly nearing its end and soon there will be no more Germans on Polish territory. Even now, their number is insignificant, for it does not exceed 7 per cent of the prewar population of the area. In other words, the problem of the Germans in the regained territory has, for all practical purposes, already been solved. The removal of the Germans in this area is an accomplished fact.

Another accomplished fact of even greater importance is the presence of more than four and a half million Poles and a steady influx of additional Polish settlers.

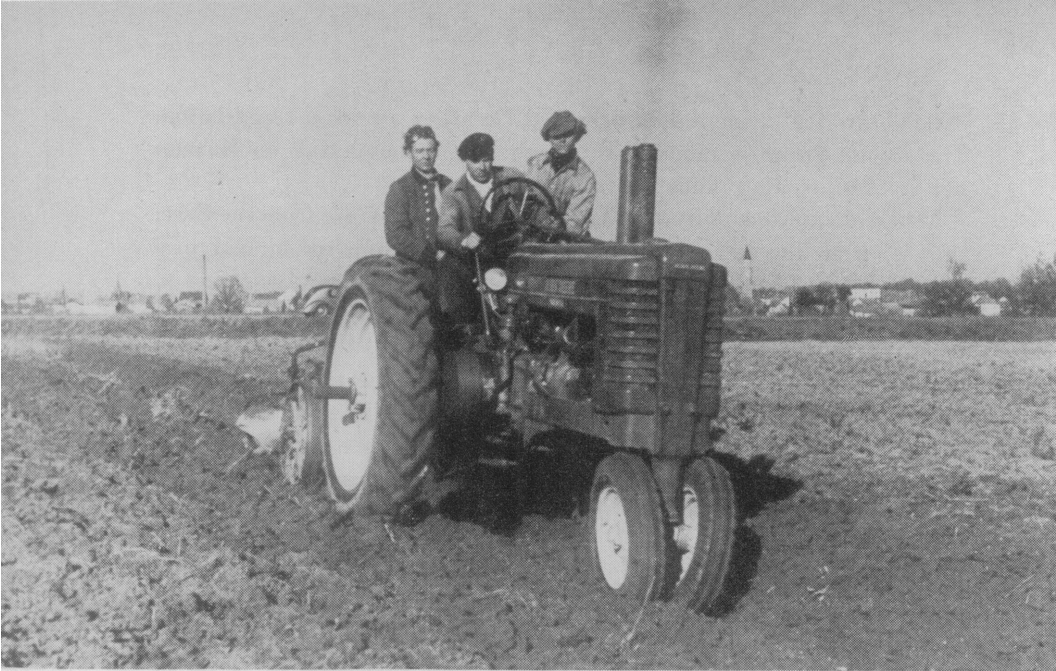
The present Polish population of the recovered territories consists of two groups: the former German citizens of Polish origin who withstood German terror and retained their Polish national consciousness, and the new Polish settlers who have been arriving steadily for many months. The first group consists of descendants of the original inhabitants of this country; they now number a million, while an additional

300,000 are still dispersed in occupied Germany awaiting repatriation. The second group is numerically much larger, amounting on November 1, 1946, to approximately 3,500,000 persons.

Where do they come from? The larger part of them are from the East; that is, from the territories beyond the Curzon line which had previously belonged to Poland, and from the Soviet Union. According to the agreements of September 9 and 22, 1945, between the governments of Poland and of the three Soviet Republics, Ukrainian, Byelorussian and Lithuanian, all the Poles residing in the territories of the aforementioned Soviet Republics have the right to migrate to Poland. More than 1,700,000 have registered with the proper authorities and been repatriated. Almost 90 per cent of these Poles have settled in the regained territories along the Oder and Neisse rivers. More than 200,000 Poles who had spent the period of the war in the Soviet Union and afterwards had been repatriated to Poland were also directed to the regained territories. Then there were more than a million Polish displaced persons and Polish soldiers from western Europe who returned to Poland. A hundred thousand or more of them went to the recovered territories to start their lives anew after years of exile. Finally, more than 1,300,000 Poles from Central Poland—people who had lost their homes during the war, whose property had been destroyed, whose houses had been burned down and bombed out, people from Warsaw and other places that were leveled and plundered by the enemy—rushed westward to seek new opportunities and better living conditions.

It was not an easy life for the vanguard of the settlers. It is still far from being normal and probably resembles rather closely the life of the early American pioneers. In the words of an American correspondent who visited this area in October, 1946: "It is a bitter pioneering life for these persons. There is little to be happy about. Food is barely sufficient, prices are high for the few goods available, homes are what were left after the shelling, bombing and seizures. Despite these hardships and the gloomy atmosphere that is the inevitable companion of those in a broken city, the Poles seem determined to stick to these territories. The determination may stem from the fact that they have no place else to go." (Sydney Gruson in *The New York Times*, October 16, 1946.)

The correspondent put it succinctly and exactly. Despite hardships



*Near Wroclaw, an UNRRA tractor is pressed into service to speed the recovery of agriculture in the regained territories. Below, a Polish girl tends spindles as a large mill in Bielawa gets into full swing. The Silesian textile industry underwent heavy damage.*



and obstacles, the settlers are determined to stay and rebuild the country. Besides they have no other place to go, their old homes having been destroyed or cut off by redrawn boundaries. This reality must always be borne in mind in discussing these territories. The Poles settled there after years of exile, of homeless life, of futile wandering. They have no other place to go. Any attempt to force them to move again would throw them into a desperate plight, extinguishing their last hope of rebuilding their lives.

More even than the existence of several million Polish settlers depends on this territory; namely, the existence of more than 25 million Poles who are now trying to rebuild their country and raise their wretched standard of living. How closely these efforts are linked with the regained territories we have already demonstrated. Let us now see what the pioneers in the regained territory have accomplished in the first 18 months after the country was taken over by Poland.

Of the four and a half million Poles now inhabiting the area, approximately 2,350,000, or 52 per cent, form the urban population. The other 2,150,000 represent the rural population.

To illustrate the progress of Polish colonization, let us quote a few examples.

The largest city in Silesia is Wroclaw (Breslau). In prewar times it was inhabited by 600,000 persons but in the final stage of the war it underwent terrific destruction. A fanatical Nazi garrison defended the city even after the fall of Berlin. Wroclaw had been under siege and surrendered only after the whole German army had laid down its arms in unconditional surrender. Before the last shots had been fired on Wroclaw's streets, however, a group of Polish officials numbering exactly seventeen persons entered the city and established the Polish administration. With the help of Polish and Russian soldiers, they tried desperately to extinguish raging fires and save whatever they could, concentrating their efforts on churches, libraries, hospitals, public buildings and the university campus. While they saved the city from total destruction, nevertheless most of its buildings and apartment houses were gutted and consumed, the streets were left covered with rubble, transportation was disabled, bridges were wrecked and the power station and water and gas works were out of commission. From time to time one could see among the ruins a few Germans in hiding.

All that was in May 1945. In eighteen months, the work begun by the seventeen pioneers has led to amazing results. The city has at present 180,000 Polish inhabitants and no Germans. More than 130 miles of streets have been cleaned of debris and repaved. Two of the three destroyed bridges have been rebuilt. Street cars and busses are running again, electric lights are burning, the waterworks are restored and the sewer system has been partly repaired. Thirty new school buildings have been finished and eighteen hospitals, three hotels and a theater rebuilt. The half-ruined university campus, now restored, is occupied by a Polish University and Institute of Technology, each with more than 3,000 students. Most of the professors and lecturers have been repatriated from the university at Lwow, a city east of the Curzon line. The wrecked radio transmitter has been rebuilt and now broadcasts regularly. Impressive art and book collections, formerly the property of the city of Lwow, have been returned to Poland by the Ukrainian government and brought to Wroclaw. Polish monuments from Lwow have also been transported here and mounted on the city's squares. Although many of Wroclaw's buildings still lie in ruins, life in the city has taken on a relatively normal appearance.

It may be said that there is nothing particularly spectacular in the rebuilding of Wroclaw; that there are other cities in Europe, equally or even more seriously affected by the war, which were even more quickly brought back to normalcy. But there is one significant fact: the dead city of Wroclaw has been restored to life by the new Polish settlers. All the work has been done with the hands of the Polish population. Upon the ruins left behind by the Germans, there has again risen the shape of a city after 18 months of unrelenting Polish effort.

This is the story of Wroclaw. The same story can be told of dozens of cities and towns, like Wroclaw ruined and deserted by the Germans, then rebuilt and resettled by the Poles. The largest port in the area, Szczecin (Stettin), is an example. In prewar times it was a city of 250,000. When the Polish administration took over the city, it was deserted by two-thirds of its German inhabitants: there were only 84,000 Germans and barely 1,200 Poles. Six months later in January, 1946, the number of Germans had diminished by half, while the Polish population had increased to 27,000. On October 1, 1946, there were 103,000 Poles and only 6,000 Germans in Szczecin. The Poles in Szczecin are centering their efforts on the rebuilding of the port,

which the Soviet military authorities returned to the Polish civil administration relatively late. Nevertheless, after a few weeks the port was able to accommodate its first passenger ships. By October, 1946, warehouses and stores covering an extensive floor space had been rebuilt. Several cranes have been repaired and two large silos are back in commission.

Let us look at Gdansk (Danzig), which underwent particularly wanton destruction. In less than a year, a large number of warehouses and stores was rebuilt from the rubble, 26 cranes were repaired, more than five miles of quay frontage was rebuilt and six miles of high tension electric cables were laid, to list but a few accomplishments. The smaller ports and the smaller cities and towns were the scenes of similar achievements, all the work of Polish settlers, Polish workers and Polish technicians and engineers and all paid for with Polish money.

Efforts directed toward the rehabilitation of cities and towns have made it possible to increase the Polish urban population in the regained territory to 2,350,000. The greater number of Polish settlers naturally went to the highly industrialized regions of Upper and Lower Silesia. Progress in the reconstruction of industrial, mining and transportation facilities was even more rapid than in the rebuilding of cities.

The most important factor in Poland's postwar economic development is coal. As already noted, Poland acquired in the former German part of Upper Silesia and in Lower Silesia a number of mines which hold out the promise of a great increase in the output of coal. The Silesian coal fields, comprising both Polish Upper Silesia and former German Upper and Lower Silesia, or a total area of more than 1,100 square miles, are among the richest in Europe. According to German sources, the coal reserve in this area is estimated at 76.5 billion metric tons, compared to 40 billion tons in the Ruhr basin and 56 billion tons in the Soviet Don basin.

Unfortunately, the Silesian coal mines came into the possession of Poland in extremely poor condition after ruthless exploitation and deliberate destruction by the Germans. Underground fires raged in most of the mines. Safety devices were in a very bad state. By the end of 1945, the fires were under control, safety conditions were improved and rehabilitation had started. The amount of destruction was

appalling. Many mines were without equipment or were flooded; a majority lacked electric power. The work of rehabilitation was made more difficult by the serious shortage of skilled personnel. Despite all obstacles, however, the Polish management succeeded in steadily increasing the output. By December, 1945, production of coal in the Silesian mines reached 54 per cent of the prewar level; in August, 1946, it amounted to 4.2 million metric tons, or 72.4 per cent of the prewar output.

Polish coal production is of vital importance to Poland and to the entire economy of Europe. Of 20 million tons of coal produced in 1945, nearly 30 per cent was exported. In 1946, the export of Polish coal met about 16 per cent of the demand of the coal-importing countries of Europe, excluding the Soviet Union. In 1947, Poland expects to meet 22 per cent of this demand and become the largest exporter of coal on the continent. Taking into account the coal exported to Russia (more than 3,250,000 tons in the first six months of 1946), Poland may already be considered as the chief coal-supplying country in Europe. This development shows how important the Polish-German frontier settlement was with respect to the economy of Europe. The Silesian coal mines will now play a much greater role in Europe's economic life than in prewar times, when a much smaller part of their production moved into European markets.

Doubtless the industries of the regained territories, when fully rehabilitated and set in motion, will really become "the Ruhr of Poland" or the "Polish Pittsburgh" described by the American correspondents. Before that happens, however, Poland must continue, as it has been doing, to invest a tremendous amount of work and capital.

Having noted the example of the coal mines, let us now turn to some branches of industry. Among the most important is the iron and steel industry. As a result of the border revision, Poland has acquired two large concerns, one in Silesia with an annual capacity of 275,000 tons of pig iron and 700,000 tons of steel, the other in Szczecin, with a capacity of 150,000 tons of pig iron. When the Poles took charge of the 21 plants comprising the two concerns in 1945, they discovered that, in addition to the damage resulting from the war, the Germans had deliberately dismantled the plants and removed a large part of the equipment and machinery. The complete reconstruction of these 21 plants will cost nearly 60 million dollars, a large part of which al-

ready has been invested, so that rehabilitation is in progress and the output is rapidly increasing.

In the metal industry of Silesia destruction was equally great. Nevertheless, the Poles have completely rebuilt two large railroad car plants in Wroclaw and in Nowa Sola. The first has an initial capacity of 360 cars a month with a large increase in sight.

It is needless to describe in detail the progress of every branch of industry. The examples already cited will indicate the amount of effort and money the Poles are investing in the mines and industries of the recovered territory.

With equal energy they are proceeding to rehabilitate transportation facilities. Transport along the Oder and Neisse rivers, when taken over by the Polish administration, was in a most appalling state. The rail network was completely disorganized. Out of approximately 24 miles of large railroad bridges, some 17 miles were destroyed. Of 14 miles of small railroad bridges, more than 6.5 miles were destroyed. Today more than 70 per cent of the large bridges, in terms of mileage, and 77 per cent of the small ones have been completely rebuilt. The number of passengers carried by the railroads in the third quarter of 1946 was 150 per cent greater than in the last quarter of the preceding year. Freight traffic on the railroads of the regained territories increased in the same period by 350 per cent; the passenger traffic handled by the bus lines increased tenfold.

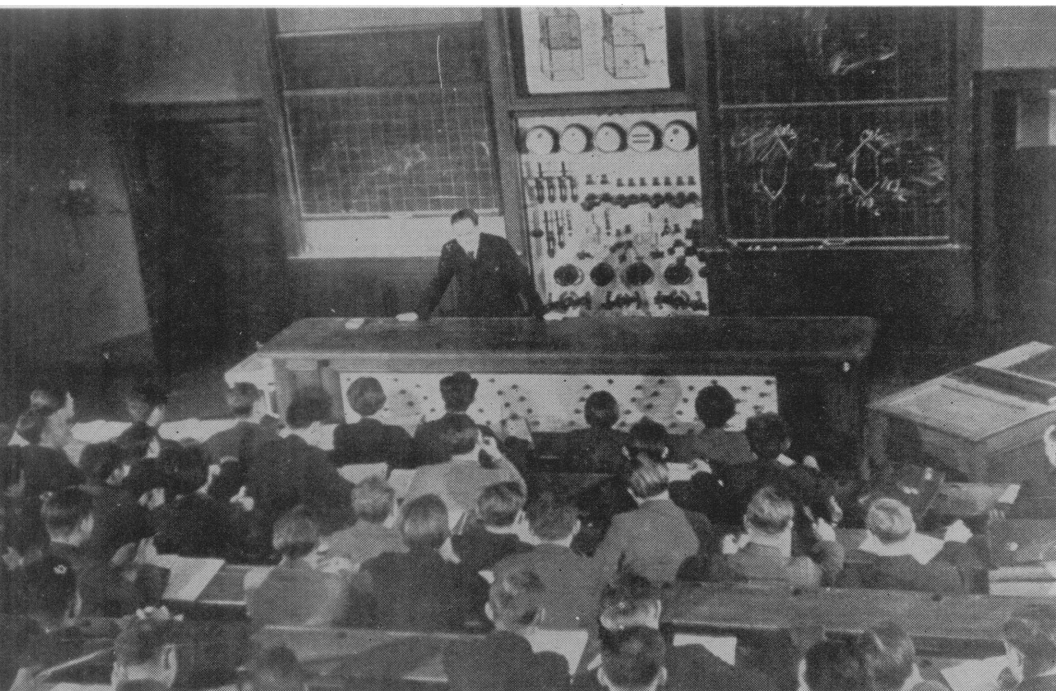
The transportation system, the mines and the large industrial plants in the regained territory, as in the rest of Poland, are under the management of the government in accordance with the nationalization laws passed by the Polish National Council. Private initiative, however, is by no means excluded from activity in the regained territory. In the process of the colonization of these regions, a large number of private enterprises has come into existence. At this time there are 28,000 privately owned commercial and trade enterprises, more than 5,000 small and medium-sized, privately owned factories and 20,000 or more artisan shops.

The principle of private ownership was fully observed in the settlement of arable land. Some 1,700,000 acres of arable land remain in the possession of the local Polish farmers. The rest, which had belonged to the Germans, was taken over by the Polish authorities, but only as a temporary arrangement. With the influx of Polish peasant





*Higher education is flourishing in Poland's regained territories. Students are shown above at work in the bacteriological laboratory of the University of Wroclaw. Below, a lecture is being delivered at the newly opened Technological Institute at Wroclaw.*



settlers, the land confiscated from the Germans was promptly divided among the new Polish farmers. Up to the present, about 8,800,000 acres of arable land has been divided into 340,000 individual farms of an average area of 25 acres. To facilitate the farmers' acquisition of necessary livestock, the Polish government sent to the regained territory more than 80 per cent of the horses, cows and other farm animals supplied by UNRRA and other foreign relief organizations. The government also extended to the farm settlers credits amounting in 1946 to approximately a billion zlotys. On September 6, 1946, a special law was passed, making the individual farm the private property of the settler.

The large landed estates of more than 250 acres, belonging formerly to the German landowners, will also be divided. So far, 400,000 acres of this land have passed into the hands of new settlers. These farms were organized on a co-operative basis. A large amount of undivided land is being kept for the benefit of the additional settlers who are expected.

Like other branches of local economy, agriculture in the regained territory was in very poor shape when the Polish farmers arrived. Through the concerted efforts of the Polish government and the Polish settlers, considerable progress has been made in rehabilitating the farm economy.

The development of cultural life in the recovered territory presents an impressive record. At the end of the last school year, on June 30, 1946, there were 4,000 elementary schools with 420,000 children enrolled and 9,773 teachers in the regained area. In addition, 54,000 children were cared for in nurseries and almost 8,000 in boarding schools. Twenty-seven thousand students were in attendance at 117 high schools with 1,162 teachers, and 8,000 in 108 vocational schools. There were 73 boarding high schools and 19 vocational boarding schools. Fifty-one teachers' seminaries had an enrollment of 1,660. Upon the opening of the 1946-47 school year, these enrollment figures were virtually doubled.

Progress in higher education was no less remarkable. We have already mentioned the University and the Institute of Technology in Wroclaw with more than 3,000 students each. To the list should be added the Institute of Technology in Gdansk with 2,300 students, a similar Institute in Gliwice with 3,000 students and a Medical Academy in Gdansk with 700 students. In Szczecin an Engineering College and an

Academy of Commerce will be opened soon, while in Sopota, near Gdansk, an Academy for Political Science has been established.

The amazing increase of the reading public in postwar Poland is nowhere more evident than in the regained territory. To meet the demand for more books and magazines, more than 800 libraries have been established there. An acute shortage of equipment has made it impossible to open more than 90 moving picture theaters, but efforts are being made to increase the number. Legitimate theaters have reached the impressive total of 110. By the summer of 1946, 33 museums had been opened to the public.

Radio equipment is scarce, and there are not enough low-cost, medium-sized receiving sets. However, four large radio transmitters—in Wroclaw, Szczecin, Gliwice and Gdansk—have been rebuilt from the ground up and now broadcast local programs and serve as local stations of the national network.

Even this brief and incomplete review of the work already done in the recovered territories will make it clear why the foreign correspondents were deeply impressed. Let us mention one more voice in the chorus of recent visitors to the area. General Charles Mills Drury, chief of the UNRRA mission to Poland and an impartial and well-qualified observer, gave his impressions after an extensive tour over the country along the Neisse and Oder rivers as follows:

“I was greatly impressed with the immensity of the job confronting the Polish government in rebuilding normal life throughout this vast territory which comprises one-third of the present area of Poland, but I was also impressed by the determination with which the Polish people are undertaking the task. We were in areas where the Poles had been operating as slave laborers for the Germans during the war. Now they are converting those same plants in which they served as slaves to the production of railroad cars and other reconstruction items.”

It is a tremendous undertaking in which the Poles are now busily engaged. The vastness of the projects of reconstruction in the regained territories is suggested by the scale of Polish governmental appropriations for this purpose, which already total 15 billion zlotys, a sum equivalent to 40 per cent of the national budget of Poland for 1946.

It would be a cruel irony indeed if the Poles, after all their sacrifices for the development of this territory, were forced to return even a part of it to the Germans. After six years of indescribable plunder and ex-

plotation at the hands of the Germans, the Poles are defying almost insuperable obstacles to rehabilitate and rebuild a country handed over to them by their Allies, only to discover that they might again be deprived, at least in part, of the fruits of their hard labor for the enjoyment of these same German plunderers. Such a travesty of justice would go down in history as one of the grimmest practical jokes ever played on a sad and suffering people.

Is it not fully understandable why the very idea of a revision of the Oder-Neisse border is so repugnant to the Poles? In this respect, the Polish nation is completely united—there are no differences of opinion between the extreme left and the conservative right wing of the Polish nation concerning this question. Polish Socialists, Communists and Christian Democrats, members of the peasant parties, liberals as well as conservatives, followers of the present government as well as its opponents, are alike united in opposition to any changes in the border settlement adopted at Potsdam. If there are any Poles who do not favor this settlement, they will be found only among small fascist groups that are fundamentally opposed to any solution based upon the peaceful co-operation of the great powers and the United Nations. The existence of such groups is inextricably bound up with dreams of a Third World War, the revival of fascism and the destruction of democracy. Polish fascists, like the fascists of all countries, do not want Germany to be weakened because they look toward Germany as the nucleus of the future war. Apart from insignificant groups of fascists, there are no Poles who would agree to a revision of the already established Polish-German frontier.

The opinion of the Polish nation with respect to the frontier problem was best expressed by President Boleslaw Bierut, at a meeting of the Polish National Council on September 21, 1946. Said Mr. Bierut:

“The decision to shift our state borders in a westward direction was neither a simple nor an easy matter for us Poles. . . . Only the triumphant idea of democracy helped the Polish people to accept and carry out willingly and smoothly the decision which reverses the direction of our historic development and which assigns to us new conditions of political, national and economic life. . . . But if there are politicians who believe that such changes can be decided and revised at will, depending on time and occasion, according to this or that idea, at the bidding of this or that body of politicians, there is no recourse left except to tell

them that they are mistaken, profoundly and fatally mistaken; there is no recourse left except to warn these politicians that their errors and opinions may engender disastrous consequences and that they unnecessarily disturb an international peace won through so much bloodshed."

In the past six years, Poland has been invaded, defeated, plundered, ruined, exploited and depopulated by the Germans. Millions of Poles were deported, forced to flee, expelled from their homes, forcibly moved in various directions, resettled and repatriated. Hundreds of thousands of Poles fought on all the fronts, in the West and in the East, on the land, on the sea, in the air and underground. Now they are trying to start life anew within their recently established boundaries. They are sick and tired of being pushed around. Above all, they fully deserve a period of peaceful existence without being made uneasy by the prospect of new changes and forced migrations which would endanger all that they have accomplished by hard work and unrelenting effort. In the words of the Polish Socialist leader, Joseph Cyrankiewicz:\*

"The Polish nation does not wish to be like a tramp, eternally sitting out his life in a railroad waiting room with luggage packed, ready to be shipped alternately to the West, and then, back again, to the East."

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\* Now Premier of Poland.

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