

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE POLISH EASTERN PROVINCES FOR THE POLISH REPUBLIC

by

DR. W. WIELHORSKI

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Poland

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THE POLISH EASTERN PROVINCES
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WITH 4 MAPS AND 8 ILLUSTRATIONS



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THE IMPORTANCE OF THE POLISH EASTERN PROVINCES FOR THE POLISH REPUBLIC

AN exposé given at a meeting of the Polish Association for the North-Eastern Provinces, in Edinburgh on the 31st of October, 1942.

It is quite an embarrassing question to speak of the importance of the Eastern provinces for the Republic. These areas, now jeopardised by foreign covetousness, constitute half of the area of Poland. The question therefore needs an answer similar to that, for example, as to whether one half of the human body is necessary to keep the other half alive. In one half we have the kidneys, in the other, the liver; part of the brain matter included in one half controls certain organs and components of the other, etc. A harmonic whole is only possible by preserving both parts intact and in full collaboration. From their very nature, they constitute an indivisible organic whole, while the inter-relation of the two symmetrical parts is based on complete mutual dependence. Either of them, taken separately, would be incapable of satisfying the common requirements of human existence.

The genius of a nation moulds its own life in the world surrounding it; it tethers nature to its will. On the other hand, external factors, together with neighbouring human groups, react in their own way and develop the qualities of the individual, who himself determines the conditions of his social and personal life.

Surroundings not only evolve the individuality of a whole nation, but also constitute the chief basis for its life. Thought, will and the action of human muscles are the reagents to external reality.

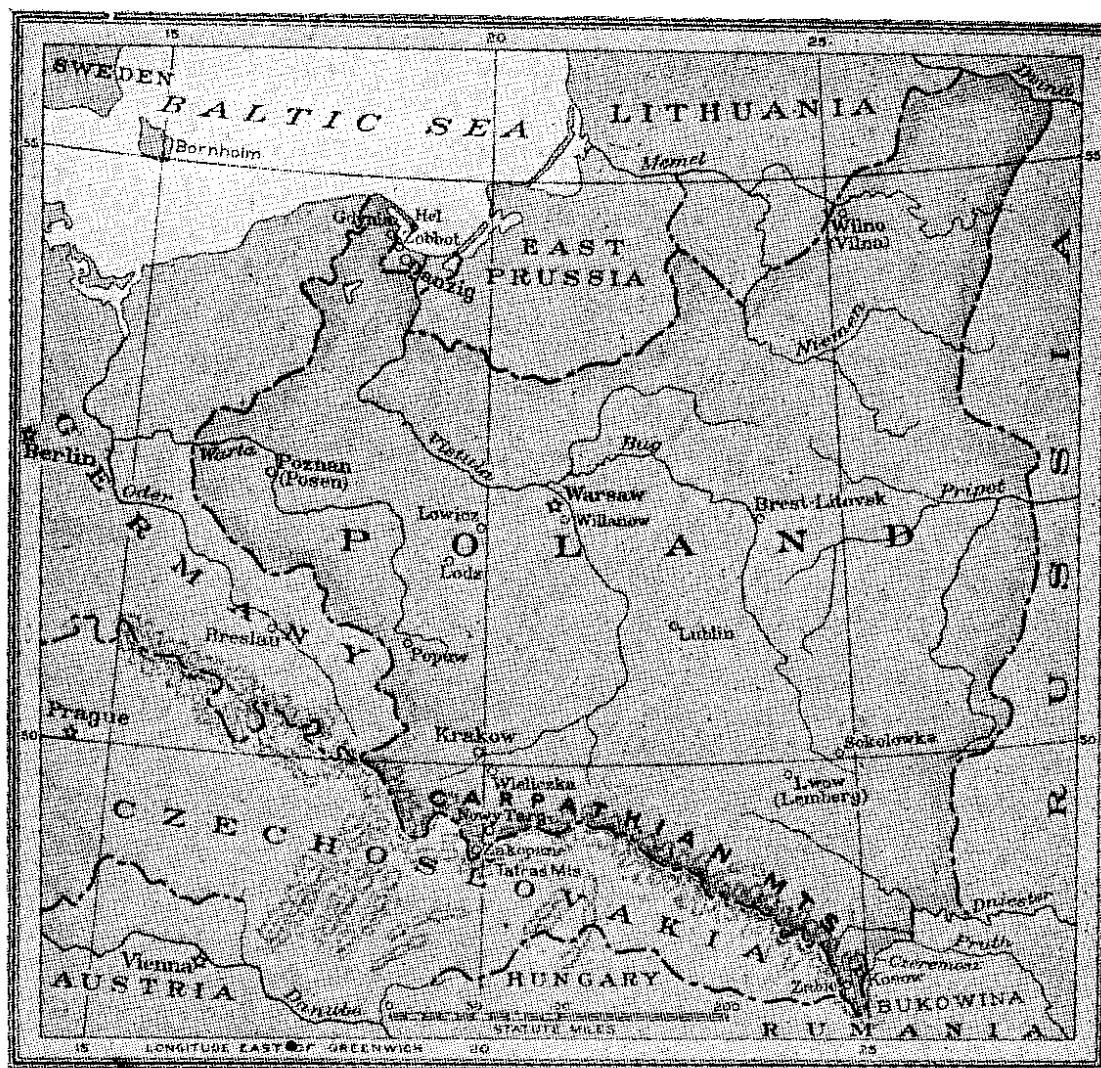
On this account, therefore, the bond existing between an ethnical group and its soil is something which cannot be broken. It has its own intrinsic logic which is as real as

CIA-RDP08C01297R000400260001-1 en out of its native area and thrown into new natural conditions of existence, ceases to be itself; a process of metamorphosis follows and its face soon begins to alter—the result is sometimes atrophy; a deep change is, however, inevitable.

In the course of history, only such groups have been able to survive and attain a definite national physiognomy in Europe as have found appropriate conditions of terrain. We Poles have many faults and assets—elements of strength as well as traits of weakness. We possess, however, a very definite national characteristic, which is our ethnic characteristic; no one has ever doubted that. History has moulded our individuality. It has been able, for a thousand years, to weave a yarn of State existence, starting from the settlements of our early ancestors. It has been able successfully to preserve our characteristic psychic features as well as our native soil in the face of many a foreign aggression—this is also a certainty. Facts are always stronger persuasives than arguments, however clever and intricate they may be.

The above facts also furnish sufficient proof that our geographical position, generally recognised as difficult, is nevertheless good enough to ensure existence. The open plains lying between the Baltic Sea and the Carpathian range are to-day the birthplace of a nation of Poles who have every right to consider themselves as the heirs to these lands; we have enough grounds for that title. We survived there; we are there now and will continue to be there. We must, however, fully realise the meaning which the material foundation possesses as regards the existence of our nation. We should understand the importance of every particular component of our land. Only then will we be able to defend it successfully from our enemies.

The Poles inhabit part of a great domain which constitutes a geographical and political unit of major importance in Europe and for Europe. This domain is like a bridge between the Baltic and Black Seas in the area where the continent is at its narrowest between them. Over this bridge lie the shortest, and therefore the cheapest, com-



A map of Poland's frontiers with the Carpathian range as the natural frontier in the South. The outlet to the sea was very inadequate for a nation of 35 millions.

commercial roads between the countries of Northern Europe, situated in the Baltic Basin, and the markets of the Balkans and the Near East. This Baltic-Pontic Bridge possesses, moreover, an important junction of waterways, which up till now has not yet been adequately developed in the Vistula and Dniester basins. In this junction, the exact location of which is on the Carpathian foothills which distribute the tributaries of the San and the Dniester, lie incalculable economic possibilities for the future.

Through Poland and Roumania, which too forms part of the above-mentioned bridgeway, run also the shortest railroad communications between the Baltic and the Black Sea—the Dantzig (Gdansk)-Constanza railway. In the days gone by all the commercial vectors leading from the ‘amber’ coast of the Baltic to the centres of the Byzantine civilisation led through Poland. The western road led through ‘The Moravian Gateway’ to the west of the Tatra range and through Silesia and was called the ‘Roman Route’. The eastern road followed the Rivers Dnieper and Dvina and was known as ‘The Greek Road’. In the present era these have been superseded by rail- and air-ways and by short stretches of inland waterways. One of these was the projected Vistula-Dniester canal.

The possession by Poland of the water junction between the Rivers San and Dniester, in the South, is one of the essential natural conditions for her national existence, just as her southern border must be based on the full length of the Carpathian range. Both are of cardinal importance. They are, moreover, just as obviously as the Vistula estuary, safeguarded by sufficient areas of defensive territory on both the sides of Gdansk and Gdynia.

Who deprives Poland of any of these factors, whether in the North or the South, simultaneously endangers those natural components which take away, once they are lost, the economical foundations for a Polish State and consequently the possibilities of political existence. Owing to a lack of natural borders in the East and the West, such a State can only survive if strongly based on the Baltic and the Carpathians—the only strong border-elements of the North and South.

CIA-RDP08C01297R000400260001-1 : the Piast dynasty in the fourteenth century laid the foundations of the Polish State in the South by securing the Eastern Carpathians and gaining control over the San and Dniester waterways. In the fifteenth century the first Jagellons fortified our State in the North, by reuniting Pomerania with it and securing the Vistula delta with Gdansk (Dantzig). From that moment the true power of Poland, as an independent State, began to flourish.

At the moment we are witnessing a bid for uncontrolled expansion by the Germanic national group which is endeavouring to occupy the Baltic-Pontic Bridge and intends to gain control of the nations which inhabit these areas and convert them into slave gangs. The war which Hitler started with Russia in 1941 undoubtedly had this as its chief motive.

If the Baltic peoples, the Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, Roumanians, Greeks, Bulgars, and Yougoslavs succumb to the Germans, the hegemony of the latter over the rest of Europe will be ensured for many a year. The native peoples of the geographical bridge spoken of above should essentially be the masters of their own destinies. Their efforts will have to be directed towards the formation of a solid political system which will defend the independence of every one of them, against aggression from whatever direction it may come.

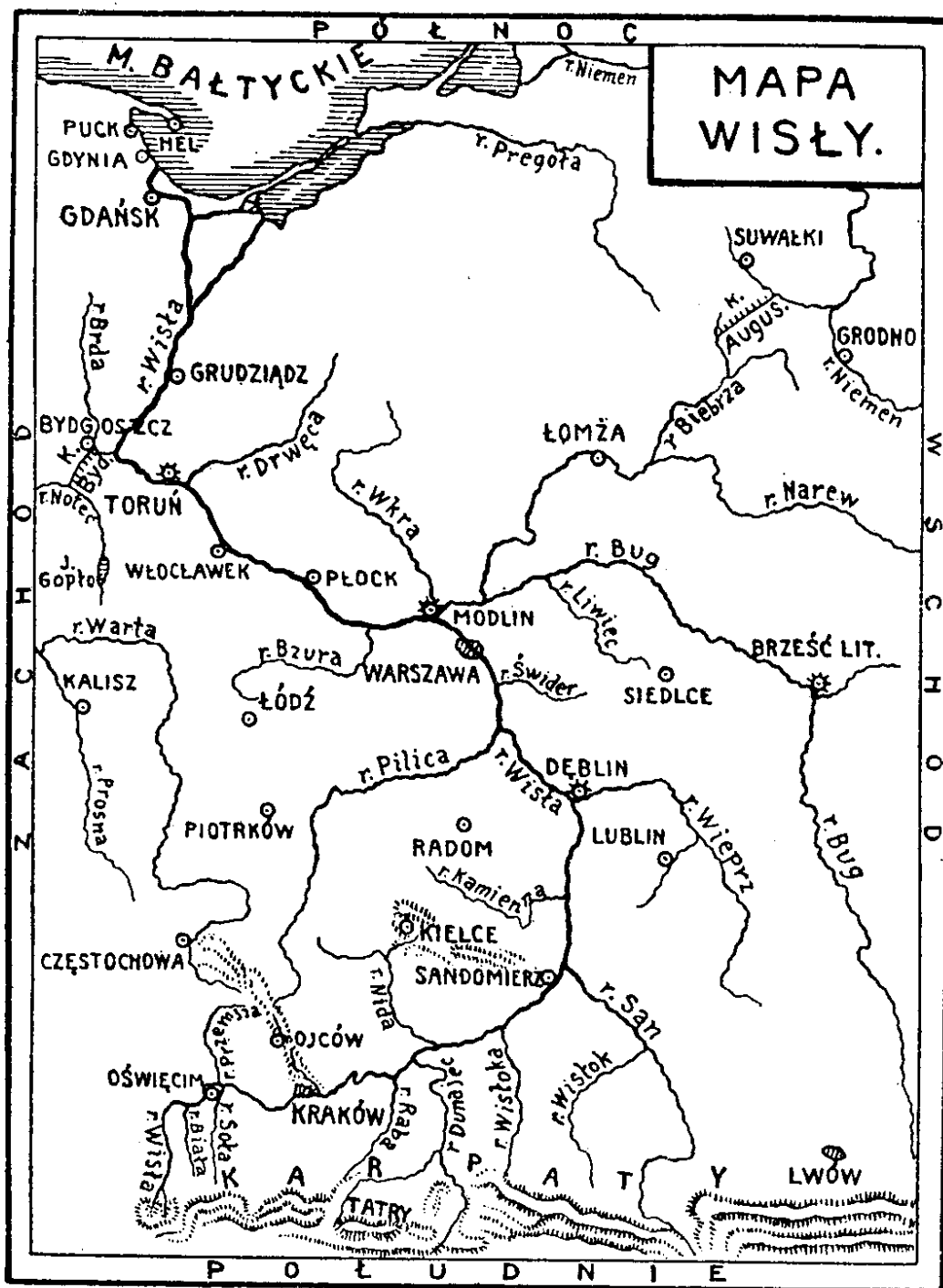
Poland occupies a dominating position on that bridge. She is the keystone of the contemporary defence of that Middle Zone of Europe, which is being called to life by events. To deprive Poland of the position of an independent power and thus subject her to the will of one of her mighty neighbours, would destroy any practical possibility of forming an effective defensive bloc in any part of the Baltic-Pontic isthmus.

It could therefore have been anticipated that there would be no dearth of cunning and deliberate efforts, aimed at crippling Poland, territorially, to such an extent as would again deprive her of the status of an independent State.

CIA-RDP08C01297R000400260001-1 , we have strong reasons for the belief that the idea of creating a stronger political grouping of the nations of Central Europe, after this war, should meet with the approval of the conquering English-speaking powers—especially the British Empire. The nations inhabiting this area of Europe constitute a natural ally of Great Britain against any power seeking to gain control over the continent. They are her ally for two reasons: firstly on account of their burning will for independence and secondly because of their economic possibilities. The great majority of the nations alluded to have furnished sufficient proof for this assumption in the course of the last century. They formed strong political units, full of vitality and energy, after having emerged from recent political slavery. In politics only those who desire to be free deserve to be aided. But here this condition has been fulfilled.

At the same time the peoples of Eastern Central Europe (the Balkan States), while undergoing their political emancipation starting from the second half of the nineteenth century, had shown an extensive adaptability for economic organisation, in which a high degree of dynamism was evident. It should be noted that there were substantial obstacles to be surmounted in that respect. To induce the investment of substantial international capital in the areas of the Vistula, the Danube, the Dniester and the Niemen was a thankless and slow task. In the West that part of Europe was considered 'unsafe', and was made to pay a high insurance premium for the alleged insecurity of the investment. Due to this, sound and secure capital was difficult to come by and in its place came a flow of speculative investment on harsh and rapacious terms.

The native economic capabilities of each particular State thus, in effect, thrown on their own resources, acquired a very favourable light against a background of such unfavourable conditions. Resourcefulness, diligence and adaptability to surmount adversities helped these nations (at least in their great majority) and became universally recognised.



A map of the river Vistula with its main tributaries, which gather the majority of waters from the East.

IT IS, HOWEVER, ESSENTIAL THAT, after this war this area should be so strengthened politically as to ensure favourable conditions for western investments and long-term loans to aid post-war reconstruction, in order that too high rates of interest be no longer demanded to recompense capital jeopardy.

The political consolidation of the nations concerned, from the Gulf of Finland to the Aegean Sea, will enhance in the whole world the idea of their solidity as independent political organisms, worthy of enjoying confidence in long-term relations with the great money markets of the world.

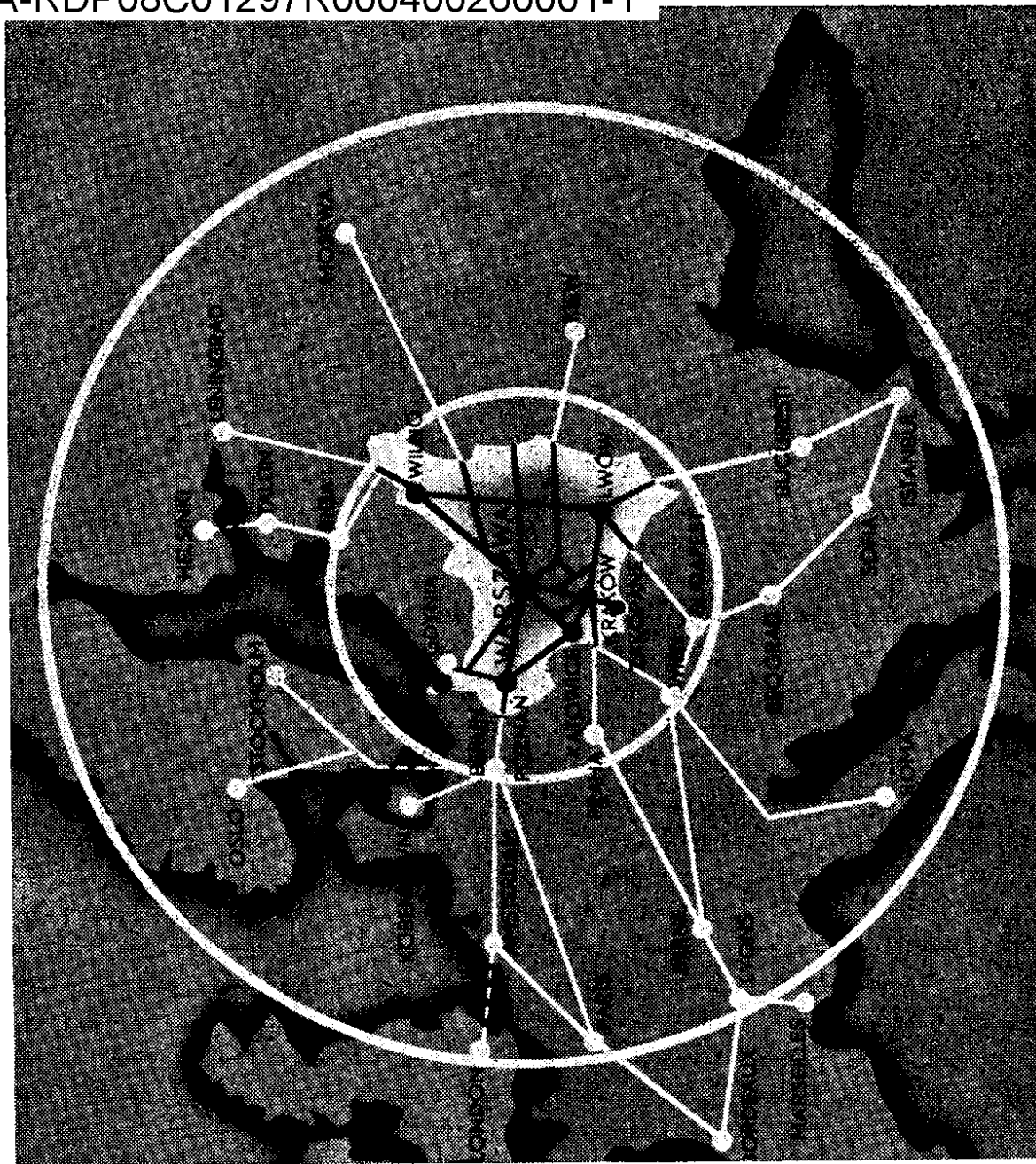
Again, the nations of the Baltic-Black Sea Bridge and the Balkans tend to be the allies of Great Britain on account of their geographical position, inviting Great Britain to base the elements of future European security on that part of the continent as a highly important area for every purpose, including that of maintaining her control over the seas. In this case both the Baltic and the Mediterranean are involved.

In days gone by, control of the seas could be maintained by holding islands and narrows. Gibraltar, Malta, Suez, Singapore, etc., were keys of ocean control.

The problem of the defence of such fortresses and their effective strength to withhold an assault by an enemy fleet depended on the range and power of the guns placed on the respective coasts. The adjacent land areas were almost irrelevant as far as the ruling of the seas was concerned. The advent of the modern aeroplane has ended this epoch once and for all.

Modern strategy, on both land and sea, will in future be dependent on air power, operating in conjunction with fleets or land armies, and air power requires great land areas capable of holding and defending small islands and peninsulas as bases for its operations. Thus there will be a need for a widespread network of aerodromes, military garrisons, factories, plants, air schools, etc.

The nations ranging from the Gulf of Finland to the Balkans could provide Great Britain with an ideally planned



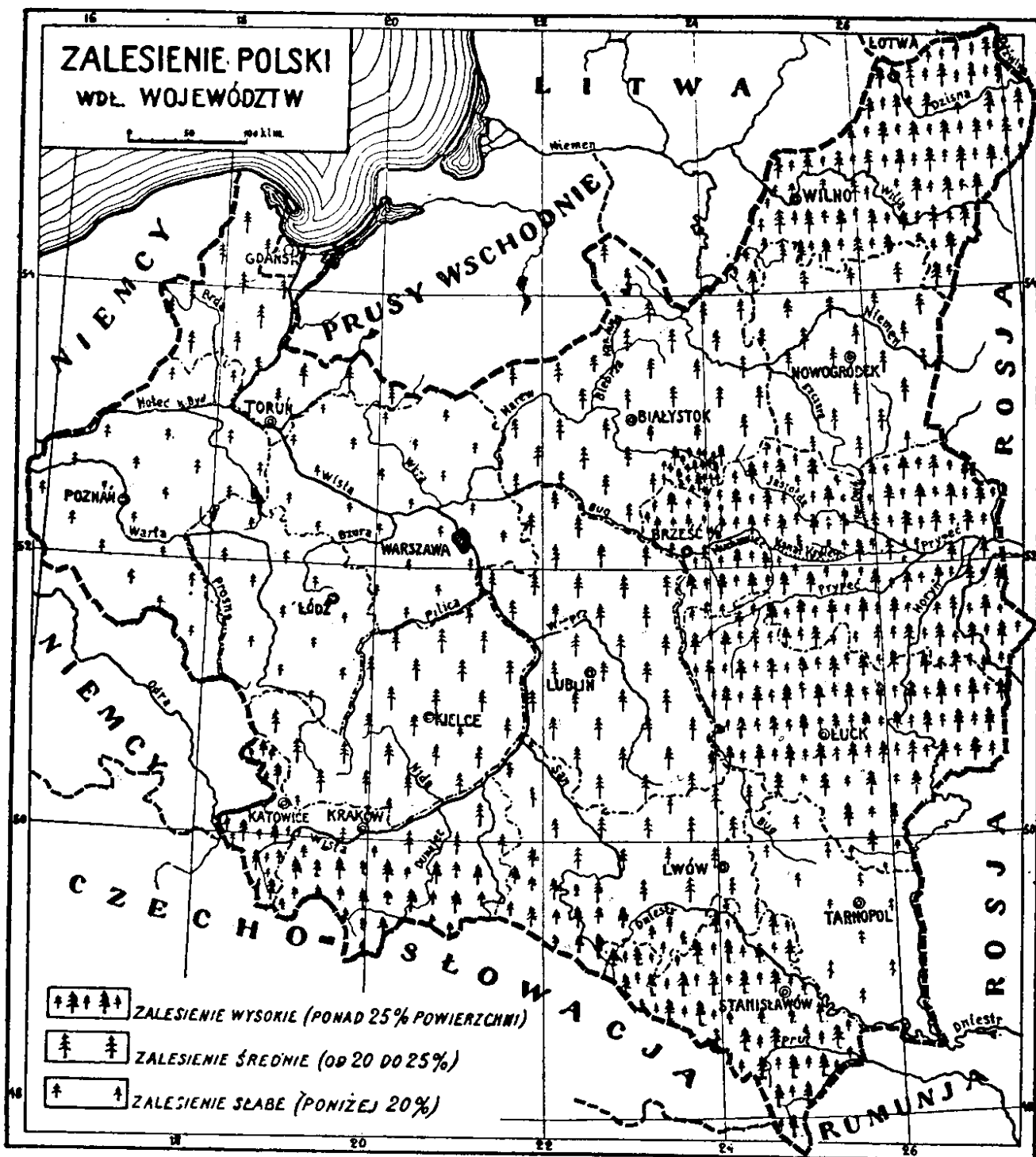
A map of pre-war airway communications between Poland and
the rest of Europe.

CIA-RDP08C01297R000400260001-1 on which all the elements of future security and European defence could be adequately founded, air defence in particular. A strong air force based on this area would be able to control the German plain in the West, the Baltic Sea from the North and the Mediterranean from the South. If a plan on this basis were to be brought into effect, there would undoubtedly never be a repetition of the experiences of this war, so terrible for all the allies. The Germans would never again find themselves able to invade Crete or Norway.

The nations situated between Germany and Russia, ranging from the Gulf of Finland to Greece, occupy an area of 600,000 square miles, with a population of over a hundred million. This is something on which air defence can well be based. Moreover—and this point is of paramount importance—the area concerned is inhabited by peoples whose interests are in no way and at no point contradictory to those of Great Britain. This state of affairs opens great possibilities of development.

In the light of the above reflections, the matter of the territorial integrity of the Polish Republic, in the boundaries existing till 1st September, 1939, acquires a specific character for the future. We know of plans of shifting the Eastern boundaries of Poland to the Rivers Bug and San. What would be the consequence of this in the fields of defence, economics and population? What would be the results firstly for Poland and secondly for all the nations inhabiting this area of Europe?

The Soviet-German Demarcation line of the 28th September, 1939, breaks the Polish State area by a line running zig-zag from north to south, along the Bug and San rivers. It leaves, to the East of this boundary, 70,000 square miles, i.e. 51.6 per cent of the area of Poland as it was on 1st September, 1939, and, according to a reckoning made for the same date, 13.2 million inhabitants. The Soviet occupation also intercepted about a million people, both civilian and military, evacuated to the Eastern areas from other parts of Poland, before the advancing German



A map showing the location of forests in Poland. The thickest forests are in the East, North East and South East of Poland.

... together, therefore, there were over 14 million people, i.e. 40 per cent of the population of Poland, on the part of Poland occupied by the Soviet authorities.

Should, after this war, a new boundary similar to the one described above, be imposed on Poland, the diameter of that State, which was before the war some 400 miles in a straight line from West to East, would be reduced to 210 miles in the North and about 160 klm. in the South. Its length from North to South, which reached 600 miles, as the crow flies, from the Dvina to the Carpathians, would now come to barely 320 miles in straight line, along the new borderline.

The fraction of the Polish State allowed to remain in the West would find itself in an absolutely hopeless strategic position. Modern mechanised war entails the necessity of possessing substantial areas for adequate manoeuvre, both in defence and attack. Should Poland be halved in the way described above, the belt of territory left would be too narrow, reckoning from East to West, to allow for undertaking any tactical operation on a large scale. Moreover this territory would by no means be able to undertake the organisation of an independent air defence system, being too shallow for such an enterprise.

The Polish Republic, reduced to the above dimensions, would only have 60 per cent of its present population. It would therefore fall to the rank of a 'Small State' whose effective forces would render any major defensive action impossible. Such defence requires besides substantial man-power at the front, a still larger inland army, working on the soil, in industry, in the transport system and for the maintenance of the fighting forces. An effort such as would be required by the exigencies of modern war, would be too great a task for a Poland reduced by half. She would have become a political non-entity incapable of undertaking her own defence.

A much diminished area and small resources of man-power would reduce Poland to a role of a typical 'buffer state' without any military individuality of her own. Poland would become, as a fatal consequence, part of the

CIA-RDP08C01297R000400260001-1 powerful neighbours, subordinated to him from the military, and hence from the political point of view.

Under such conditions, Poland would no longer possess any attraction for her Northern or Southern neighbours on the Isthmus between the Baltic and the Black Seas. Geographically disfigured and reduced to a fraction of her former whole, she could no longer be the pillar of any political edifice in the Middle Zone of Europe. The Western strip of her territory is, in itself, too narrow to carry such a construction and in these conditions there would be no chance of a successful organisation of this part of Europe; it would find itself crippled from the very outset.

The above reflections provide adequate proof that the existence of every sociological group, known as a nation, is closely bound up with its natural surroundings. A reduction of its territorial basis automatically reduces the vital activities of its organism and a major amputation foreshadows its extinction. An analysis of the structure of Poland within her boundaries of 4th September, 1939, i.e. before the war, shows that her possessions in the East constituted only the barest minimum of her vital needs, whereas in the North-West she was deprived of even the most essential geographical elements.

At the peace treaty, signed at Riga on the 18th March, 1921, the newly re-born Polish Republic consented in the greatest possible measure to a compromise as to the territorial settlement with the other contracting party. She assured herself of the barest minimum of breathing space in the East and the minimum of conditions of defence and in consequence also of life and constructive development. A further reduction of these historically Polish territories in the East would render her prospects of an independent existence wholly illusory.

The actual possibilities of the defence of its territories is a vital problem of every country. In the history of the world, all states who did not possess physiographical conditions for defence, or lost them in the course of

CIA-RDP08C01297R000400260001-1 inevitably failed to survive.

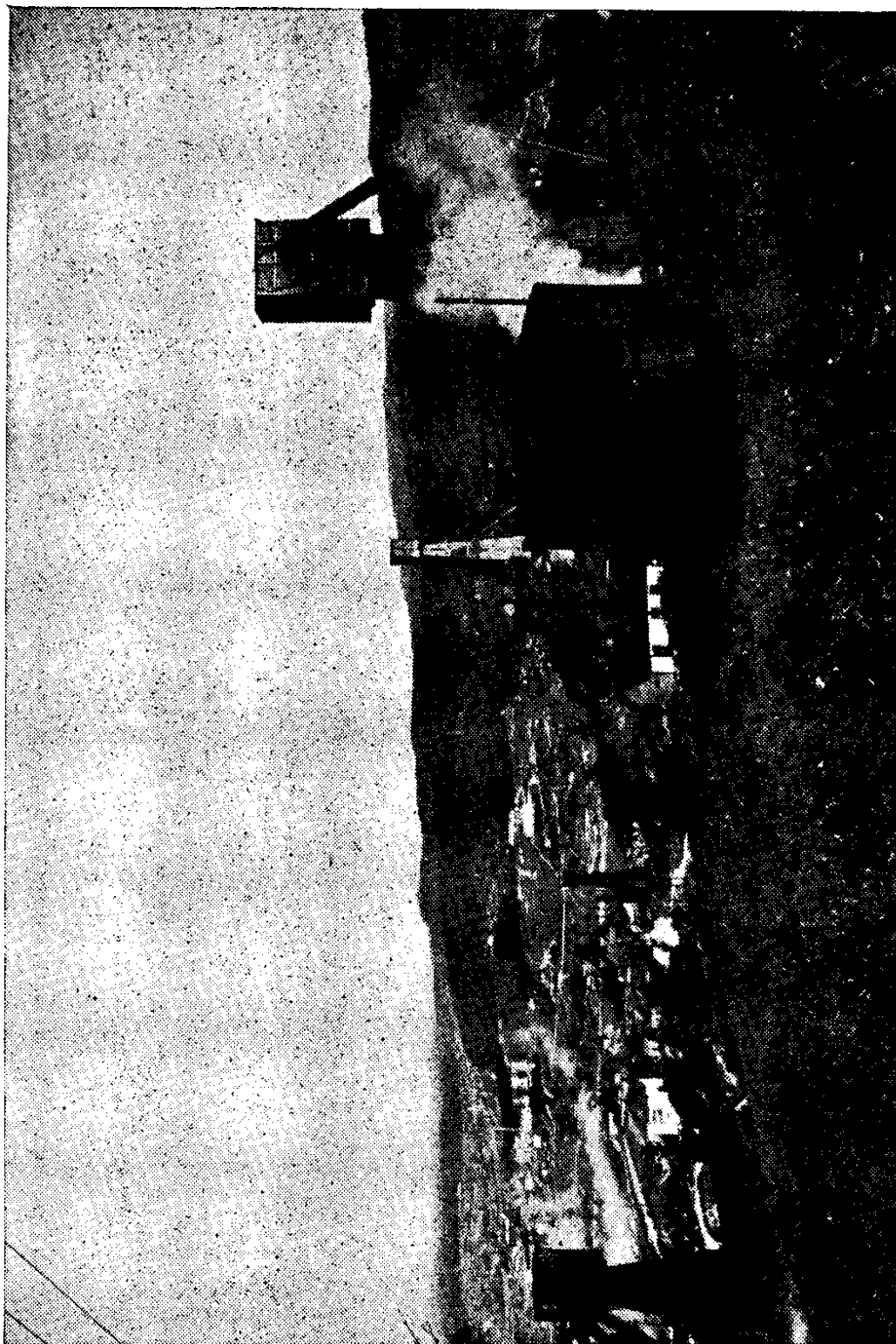
At the moment, this is the very danger which hangs over Poland.

The results of halving Poland would be no less fatal for the other nations inhabiting the Baltic-Pontic Isthmus. The Eastern frontier of Poland, thus reduced, would not extend in the North beyond the present borders of East Prussia. The Baltic States would thus be faced by completely new geographical conditions. The Polish-Russian border, up till now, formed a prolongation towards the South of a nearly straight, longitudinal line running from the Gulf of Finland along the Estonian-Russian and thereafter the Latvian-Russian frontiers. In the South, Polish territories, namely the districts of Vilno and Suvalki, formed an understructure for Lithuania and Latvia, constituting with them a solid, closed area based, from the North and West, on the Gulf of Riga and the Baltic.

In the circumstances which would thus ensue only Lithuania would have a small sector of her Western frontier adjacent to Poland and only then on condition that East Prussia had become united to the latter. In such a conjuncture, however, this would be less than probable. The weak never enjoy any advantage in politics ; more often it is they who are called upon to make sacrifices. Should the Baltic States, therefore, forfeit their structural support from Poland, they would find themselves embraced on the South and East by Russian territory. The maintenance of their independent status would be a hopeless cause, being paradoxical both from the geographical and the political points of view.

That is the state of things, therefore, which is obviously one of the aims of those who are endeavouring to deprive Poland of her Eastern half. Such would be the outlook in the North.

In the South, the new layout of the Polish national borders would no longer be based on the Eastern Carpathian range. The watershed between the Rivers San and the Dniester would fall outside Polish territory. Roumania would cease to be Poland's neighbour and



A view of Boryslaw, a town in South Eastern Poland, being
the centre of Polish petroleum industry.

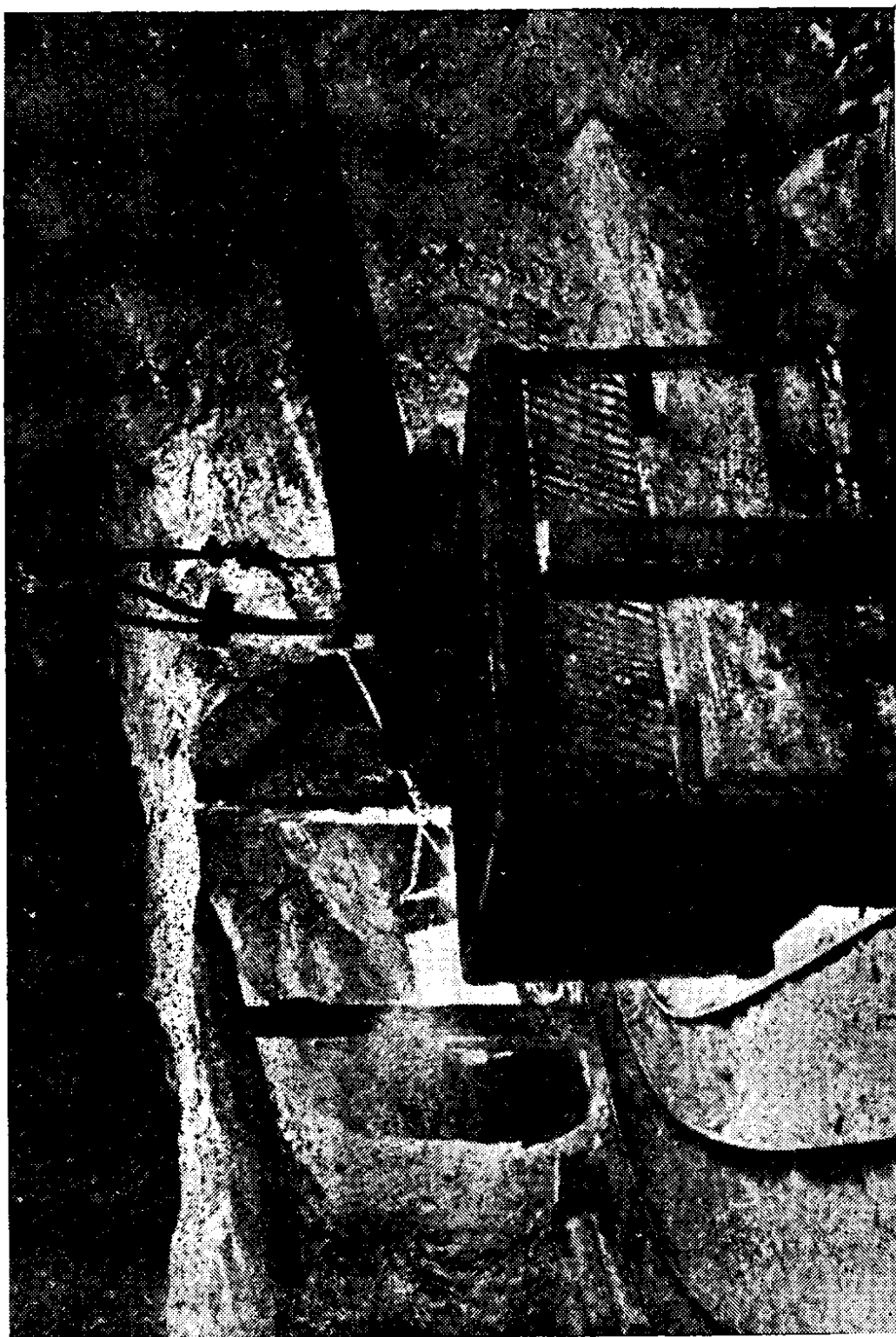
Hungary would find herself an immediate neighbour of Russia. The natural geographical and political continuity of the European isthmus would cease to exist. For it is impossible not to assume that the amputation of Poland's eastern provinces would not be followed by its natural, and politically much more plausible, consequence, namely the depriving of Roumania of the provinces of Bukovina and Bessarabia ; it is much less distasteful to take away territories from adversaries than from allies.

From Tallin and Riga in the North, down to the Danube in the South, totally new conditions would ensue. Part of the nations of the area referred to would forfeit immediately, openly and entirely, their independent existence ; part, territorially curtailed, would temporarily retain the character of nominally independent states : in reality they would nevertheless have to resign themselves to being not only dependent but vassal.

The area surrounding the Baltic-Pontic Isthmus would be partially broken up and would cease to constitute a solid political structure with any bearing on future European events. It would however become a passive object, a roadway, through which dissolving currents could freely flow westwards and southwards and, primarily, towards the Mediterranean narrows. This is the final word on the situation.

A short survey of the above conditions sufficiently explains the inevitable consequences of dividing Poland in two, from North to South and depriving her of her Eastern half. The whole natural structure of that sector of Europe would thus fall into ruin, both in the North and South of Poland. The independence of the nations of this region would cease to exist. It is therefore to be fully expected that the attack will continue, with full force, against the frontiers of Poland. A breach in the central sector of the isthmus would decide the resistance of the whole front and would entail an upheaval affecting both flanks.

Let us imagine in turn what would be our conditions of life in a country with her Eastern boundaries running on



The interior of a potassium-salt mine in Stebnik, South Eastern
Poland. Potassium salts are used as manure.

THE THE OF THE RIVERS Bug and San and who, as mentioned above, would be deprived of 51.6 per cent of her territories and of about 40 per cent of her population. Let us realise what the loss of these territories would mean to us. To do so, we shall have to make a review of the economic resources of our Eastern provinces.

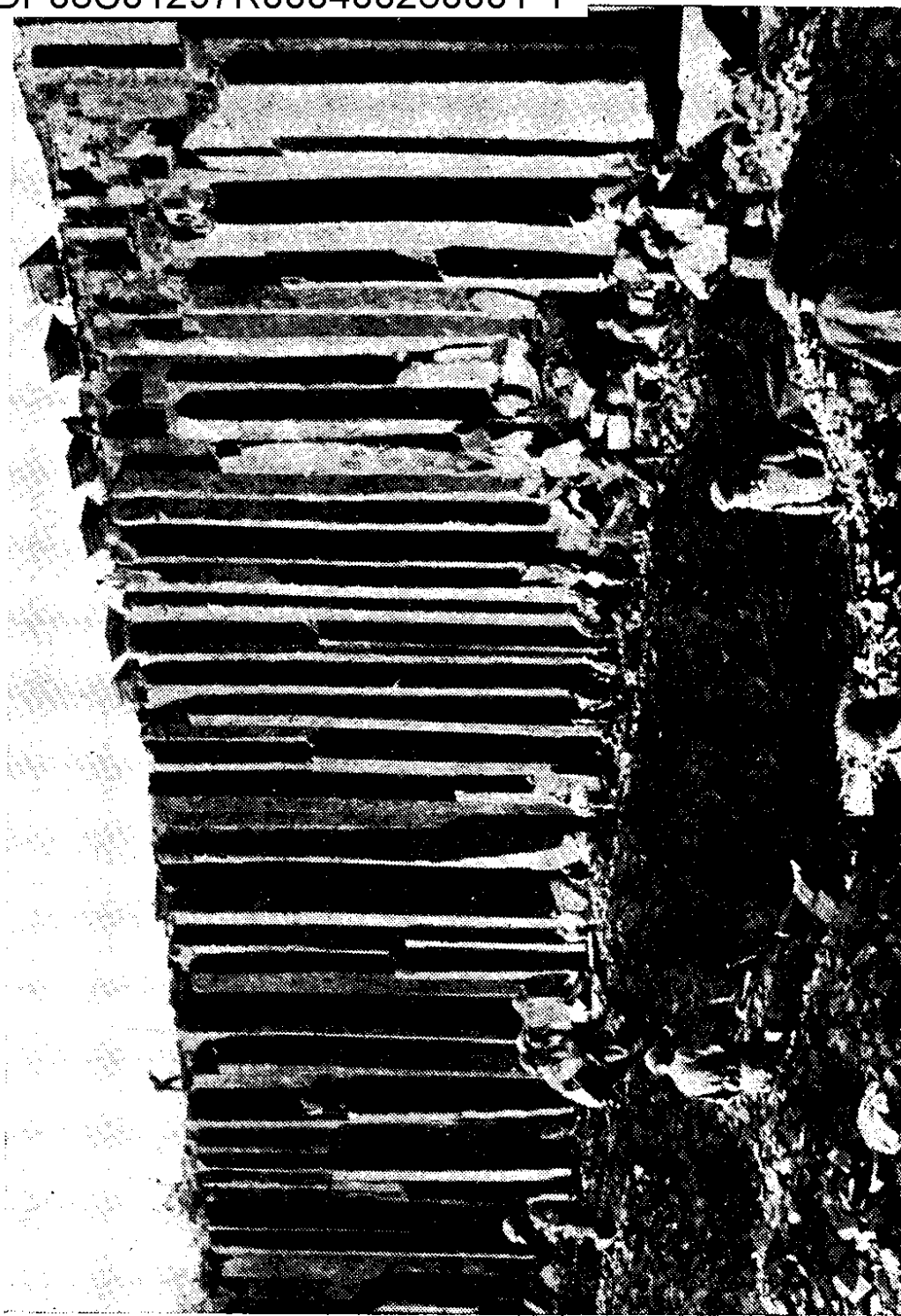
In the first place the loss of sources of motive power so vital to our young national economics, just rising to life in the pre-war period and so cruelly crushed since the outbreak of the war, would be sorely felt. The reconstruction of our economic life will need plenty of labour and capital to master and exploit all hidden sources of energy. The latter are irreplaceable treasures. The Eastern provinces of Poland contain 5,060,000 ha. i.e., 56.6 per cent of the country's forests. This one figure is sufficient to show how the loss of these areas would affect our supplies of fuel and timber—both indispensable items in the period of post-war reconstruction. We would also lose half our supplies of peat, invaluable as fuel, and raw material for our chemical industries, most of which is to be found in the Eastern provinces.

The water power originating in the Eastern Carpathian range and the possibilities of exploiting the water power of the river system of the Dniester, Prypeć and Niemen are estimated at 42 per cent of the entire amount of Polish 'white coal', which more or less corresponds to 1,600,000 H.P.

As regards fluid fuel, the modern form of energetic power most in demand, 85 per cent of Polish oil and natural gas is to be found East of the River San at the foot of the Carpathian mountains and the whole of Polish ozokerit in the same region. The loss of this area would, in this respect, be disastrous for Polish economic life.

Apart from the above our Eastern provinces have in the district of Kałusz rich potassium mines and, in the valley of the Dniester, deposits of phosphates.

Poland remained a backward country as far as installed roads were concerned. She will urgently need material for their construction and repair and the demand for it



A basalt-stone quarry in Janowa Dolina, near Kóstopol, district
of Volhynia in Eastern Poland.

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st of its kind, lying only a few yards under the surface and therefore the cheapest to exploit, is the so-called ' Volhynian stone ' found in the districts of Sarny and Kostopol. Granite, basalt and other kinds of hard crystalline rock found in these regions constitute the best and elsewhere not available material for road-building and used to be transported as far westward as Silesia for the construction of highways and large buildings.

Finally the only supplies of kaolin adopted for use available in Poland are also situated in the Volhynian border area, on the banks of the River Słucz.

These sources of energy and mineral resources will be needed for re-building and industrialising Poland and for the construction of a network of modern highways. The eastern part of Poland has 5,000 miles of railway lines, i.e. 38.4 per cent of the country's total railway system, and about 13,000 miles of highways, i.e. 30.5 per cent of Poland's total.

Poland's Eastern half is above all an agricultural country with very large possibilities of development in this field. The reconditioning of the soil, if conducted by the State on a large scale, and the advancement of agricultural technique could do wonders in this respect. It would at least double the production of arable land and treble the output of meadows and pastures.

Of the country's total the threatened Eastern Areas comprise 42 per cent of the orchards, arable lands and gardens and 63 per cent of the meadows and pastures. Because of their climatic conditions and especially because of the fertility of their soil these lands are of priceless importance to agriculture and to all industries affiliated with it.

The rich black soil of Volhynia and Podolia, representing one half of the most fertile soils in the country, is well suited for the intensive cultivation of wheat, barley, sugar beet and rape-seed. It has climatic conditions unique in Poland for the production of hops. The valley of the River Dniester and certain parts of Pokucie and Podolia,



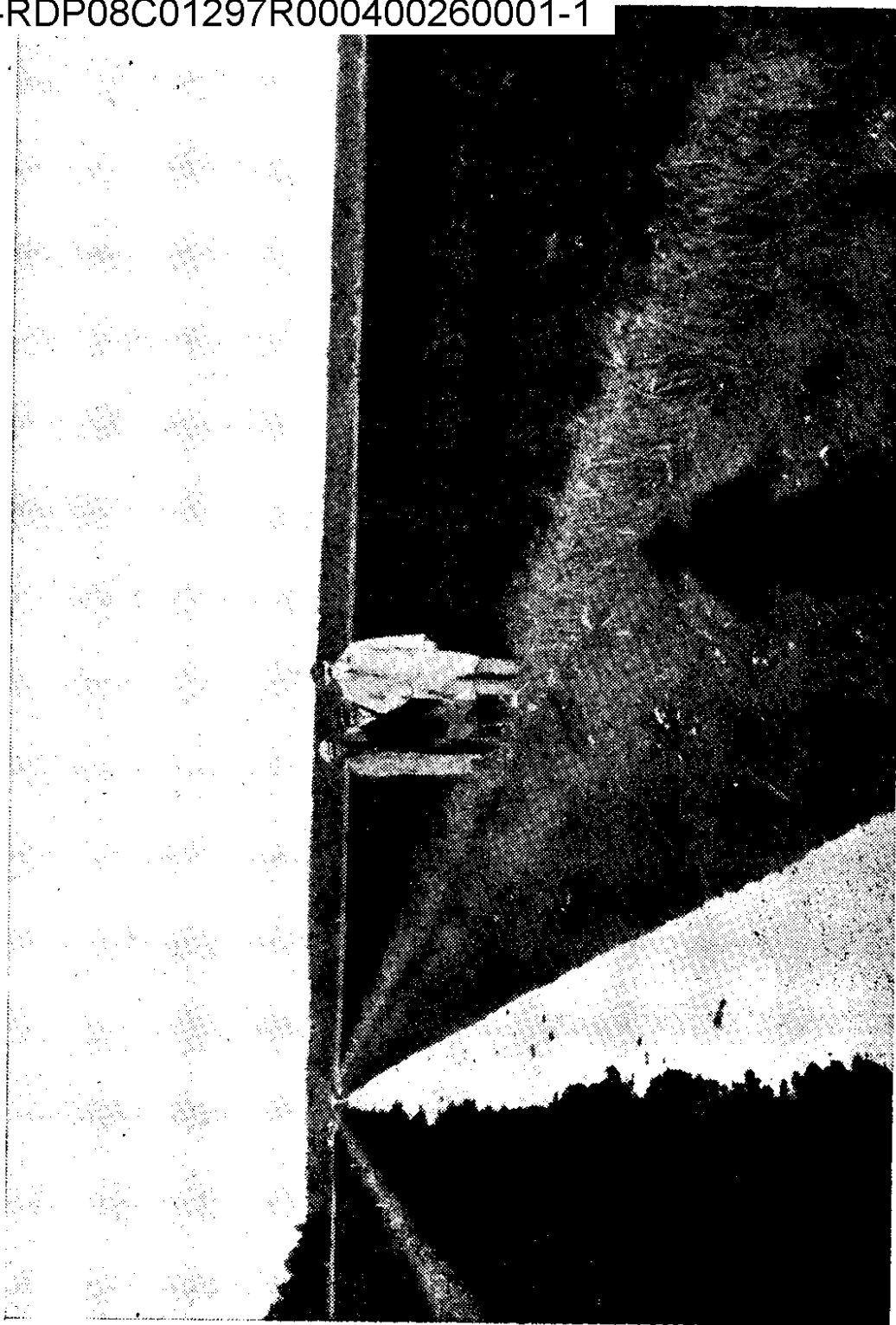
A map showing the main Polish railway tracks, binding the Western and the Eastern parts of Poland.

CIA-RDP08C01297R000400260001-1 operation of the sun, are especially suited for the cultivation of the vine, and the intensive production of peaches, apricots and other delicate types of fruit. The cultivation of tobacco in Poland was, to the extent of 80 per cent, confined to these districts. Let us add that the tobacco industry was a very important item in our economic life and developed most favourably in the last pre-war years. Finally, all the country's production of poppy-seed, sunflowers, water melons, pumpkins, etc., is concentrated in its South-western region, on the River Dniester.

Poland's production of the raw materials required by her textile industry also is centred in her Eastern districts, flax being produced mainly in the North-eastern sector, including the basin of the River Prypeć, and hemp in the South-eastern part of the country. Neither flax nor hemp is cultivated on any important scale in the Western part of Poland.

These areas, especially after the draining of the soil in the basin of the River Prypeć, will be Poland's chief purveyor of milk, butter, fats, meat and leather. They will not only supply the Western industrial centres of the Republic but also make an important contribution to that branch of export. Obviously before attaining that result we will have to accomplish great improvements in drainage, animal breeding and organisation. The results we had already obtained in this field give great encouragement for the future. The possibilities open to us are very large.

What we said above is just to show that the most important branches of our economic life are closely linked with our Eastern provinces. There is no place for a more detailed picture. We trust, however, that this outline will be sufficient to prove that our Eastern provinces with their own peculiar economic features and their tasks to fulfil, are, as regards their supplies of fluid fuel, timber, peat, textile raw materials and their agricultural, fruit growing and cattle raising possibilities, a harmonious fulfilment of the Western part of the country with which they form one economic unit. The Western counties of Poland, rich



The immense task of drying the marshy districts of the Polesie district was successfully started in many places, where special 'melioration' ditches were dug.

CIA-RDP08C01297R000400260001-1 re the centre of the heavy, the textile and the chemical industries. Their density of population (117 per sq. klm. according to the census of 1939) is twice that of the Eastern provinces (65 per 1 sq. klm.).

Thus, the danger we fear consists of a cut through a living body, producing drastic consequences for the economic life of both parts concerned.

Now for questions of population. In the Eastern part of Poland three-fourths of the population (75.2 per cent as compared with the average figure of 61.3 per cent for the whole of Poland) were deriving their living from agriculture, forestry, fruit growing, fishery, etc. Only 18.1 per cent (against the average figure of 29 per cent of the Polish total) were employed in handicraft, industries, mining, commerce, and civil services (social insurances, transportation, health service), 80.8 per cent of the Eastern population of Poland belonged to the countryside, the residents of towns and boroughs amounting only to 19.2 per cent.

The country's ancient civilisation has imprinted its mark upon the villager's life and psychology. Irrespective of whether they speak Polish, Ukrainian or White Ruthenian in their homes, they all feel strongly bound up with the Slav ethnography of a recent epoch—one for all the three national groups. These analogies and similitudes are best illustrated by the folklore of these regions.

National costumes, decorative art, industry and architecture in the material order, and customs, legends, traditions, and beliefs in the spiritual, formed a genuine substratum for modern intellectual culture, and Western Christianity has for centuries been shaping the souls of the people. To-day their attitude towards all problems of social life and economic need is practically identical regardless of national groups.

The Roman Catholic Church and legislation modelled on Roman law have been the factors responsible for the development of the people of this part of Poland for many centuries.

CIA-RDP08C01297R000400260001-1 the population of these provinces was 58.8 per cent Catholic (Roman and Greek), and 29.3 per cent Orthodox, Roman Catholics amounting to 33.4 per cent and Greek Catholics to 25.4 per cent. In consequence two-thirds of the population were within the sphere of Latin ascendancy. Before 1839, the year the government of the Tsars suppressed the Uniate Church in the lands it had seized from Poland, the percentage of the Orthodox population was evidently much lower.

A feature common to the whole rural population is the clearly outlined individualism in economic life, a strong feeling for personal property and family tradition. Rural collective property (frequent in Russia) never was known in Poland, this probably being the reason for the hostility of all the landed peasantry to any plans for the socialisation of the land. The peasant's economic selfishness, based on a family background, takes its roots in the continuity of age-old traditions of the Western Slavonic nations. There are no differences in this respect in the feelings of the Orthodox and the Catholic.

The last census in the Eastern provinces of Poland showed 10.2 per cent Jews and 0.8 per cent Protestants, mostly German and Czech colonists. There was also a small percentage of Calvinists among the native Polish population, historic remnants of the age of the Reformation.

The census of 1931 gave the following division according to mother-tongue :

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|------|----------|
| Polish | - | - | - | - | - | 39.9 | per cent |
| Ukrainian | - | - | - | - | - | 34.5 | „ |
| White Russian and other local dialects | | | | | | 14.5 | „ |
| Jewish | - | - | - | - | - | 8.7 | „ |
| Lithuanian | - | - | - | - | - | 0.6 | „ |
| German | - | - | - | - | - | 0.6 | „ |

There were no more than 130,000 people, i.e. 1.0 per cent of the entire population who spoke Russian as their native language.

The national consciousness of the urban population can be said to have been crystallised, but that population was

CIA-RDP08C01297R000400260001-1 tal. The rural population was the decisive factor.

Fifty years ago the feeling of ethnical identity was awakened. In the neighbouring districts, formerly under Austrian rule, the same development began one generation earlier, thanks to constitutional liberties and a higher level of education.

The data concerning the native languages of the Eastern provinces of Poland show that the population there ethnically mixed with a relative majority of Poles, obtaining 40 per cent.

The second place in the language and nationality index is occupied by the Ukrainians with 34.5 per cent and third by the White Russians with 14.3 per cent. The ethnical element responsible for the organisation of life in the Soviet Union and expected by some people to assume the leadership in this part of Poland is represented by exactly one per cent of the population.

It is true also that the conception of religion, morals, economics and of the relations between State and citizen, brought in to Poland from the East and propagated by new-comers from the U.S.S.R., proved to be definitely adverse to the local population.

The rule of the Soviets in the area in question would mean something quite different from fostering civilisation and cultural life of various ethnical groups, its ultimate aim being the education of the so-called 'Soviet citizen'. The policy of the Soviets within their own Union is—from a national point of view—a process of Russification carried out by methods condemned not only by Western Europe but even by pre-revolutionary Russia.

When after the first world war the Russian Army and bureaucracy left the country, the number of remaining Russians was negligible: a very small number of merchants and men of the professions in towns, some land-owners and, here and there in the countryside, a village of Russian colonists. That was all.

Tsarist Russia failed in her 122 years' rule over the Eastern provinces of Poland (1793-1915) to Russify the



A timber-yard in Skole, South Eastern Poland, showing huge quantities of timber stored there for export.

The natives of Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have not only succeeded in preserving their individuality but entered upon a period of distinct national regeneration.

In that period the Poles of the Eastern provinces have consolidated their positions in these areas, the Ukrainians and the White Russians have gradually awakened to national consciousness. Attempts to colonize the country with a Russian urban and rural population met with complete failure. The figure of 130,000 Russians in a total of 13,000,000 makes that sufficiently clear.

If Russia obtained satisfactory results in the Russification of the natives of Asia, all her attempts to do the same in Europe with nations inhabiting the lands to the West of her and conquered in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have never been successful and ended after four generations in a big fiasco.

These facts are of fundamental importance. We have to keep them in mind especially now in view of recent historic developments.

The explanation of the failure of the Russification of the banks of the Dzwina, Niemen, Prypeć and Vistula is very simple. There is too little in common between the mentality of the Russians and the natives of these lands. The Poles, the White Russians, the Ukrainians and all the nations of the Baltic area have a Western mentality, a strong sense of personal dignity and a clearly outlined individuality. They want to be shown respect and confidence in public life and be allowed freedom of initiative especially in the field of economics. Their minds were shaped by Roman jurisprudence and Christian doctrine and they can fit into a democratic organisation. Therefore the various shades of Eastern tyranny and totalitarianism which condemn individuality would never find the slightest response in their souls.

Poland has never been attracted by Russia and this is why, in spite of large funds spent on the Russification policy of compulsory attendance at Russian schools and pressure exercised in this respect by the Army and the



This is the way how timber is being floated through the Augustów Canal which joins the rivers Niemen and Vistula, over the Augustowski Lakes.

ed during the 122 years of Russia's rule over the Eastern half of Poland. Human souls are not easily won by brutality. This is one of the fundamental laws of psychology.

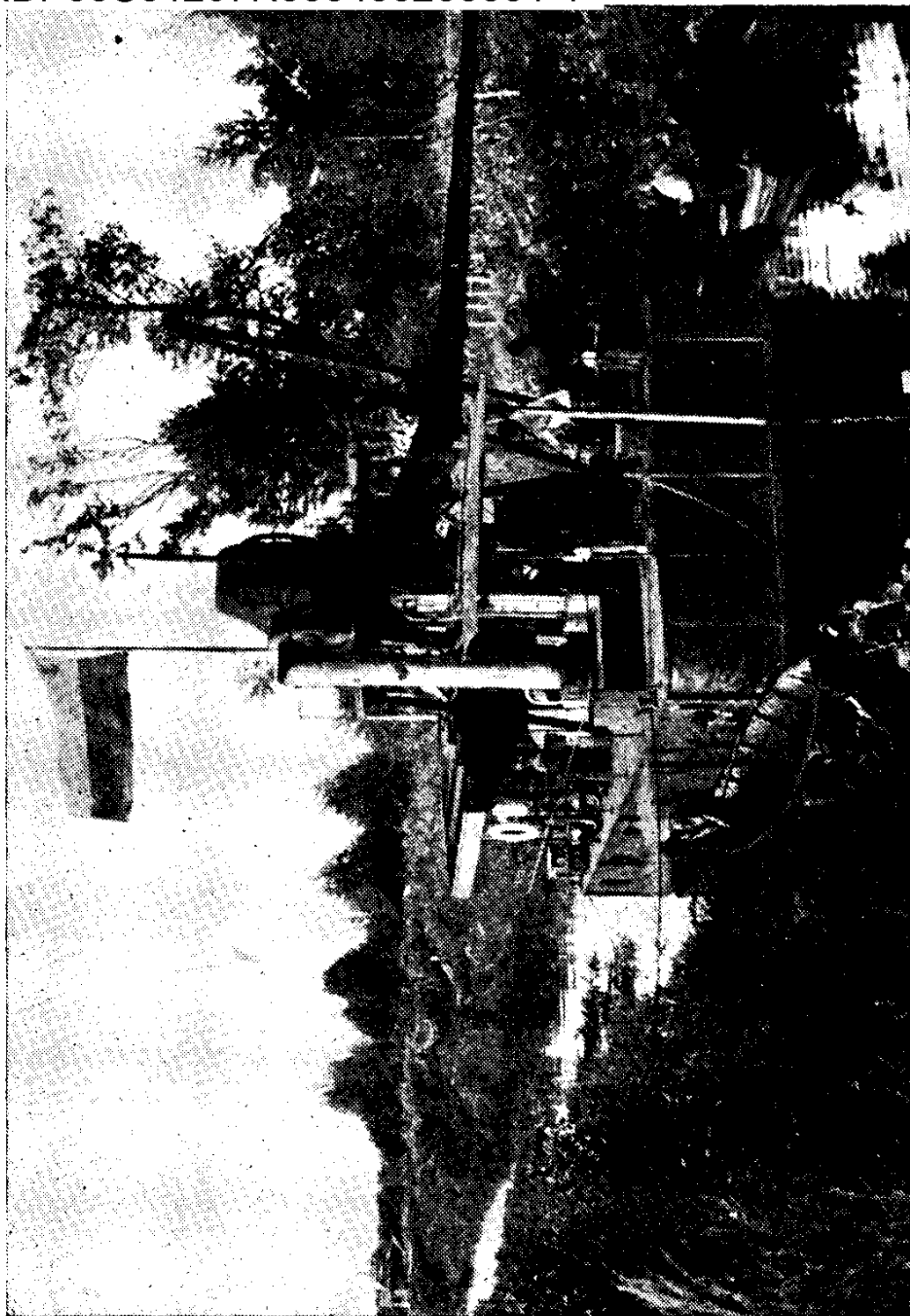
The policy of the Tsars aimed at an extermination of the Polish element. The Kościuszko insurrection (1794), the Napoleonic Wars (1807-1812), the period of conspiracies (1846-1848), and finally, the insurrections of the nineteenth century provided ample excuses for the reprisals in which the Russian Government revelled. Nevertheless, and in spite of executions, mass transportations to Siberia, confiscations of property, deprivation of citizens' rights, etc., the Polish population not only remained in the majority in the Eastern provinces but retained there its due place as the leading factor in intellectual and public life.

The Polish element in this area is represented in all classes and it is utterly wrong to believe, as some are apt to do, that it is confined only to that of the land-owner.

In 1921 there were in the seven Eastern voievodships of Poland about 7,500 Polish estates of more than 50 ha. each. This means that some 30,000 Poles belonged to the so-called land-owners' class. It would only be right to suppose that as a result of the parcellation of big estates conducted in these areas for the last twenty years the number of the local Polish population should have diminished. Meanwhile we know on the strength of the estimates for 1st September, 1939, that the number of Poles in the Eastern part of Poland totalled 5,270,000. For Eastern Galicia only, this figure in 1931 was 2,100,000 for the countryside and 770,000 for the towns. The Poles in these provinces belonged to all classes and professions, the Ukrainians and White Russians being represented in the rural and the Jews in the urban (handicraft and commerce) population.

Poland's progress Eastward in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was a natural result of the Polish-Lithuanian Union, and she advanced peacefully as a pioneer of Christianity and civilisation. She never had any aggressive tendencies and used her sword only for defensive purpose.

Polish civilisation had no difficulty in assimilating the



The Oginski Canal, binding the main waterways Pripet and Niemen, is an important link in the system of Polish Eastern waterways.

CIA-RDP08C01297R000400260001-1 ation of the newly united lands and allowed them every opportunity to distinguish themselves in the service of the Republic. Many leading characters of Polish history were of mixed Polish-Ruthenian or Polish-Lithuanian origin.

There was a perfect unity between Poland and her new Eastern provinces which eagerly accepted the Western culture brought them. Lithuanian regional patriotism went side by side with a genuine attachment to the Polish language, customs, and civilisation. The most illustrious statesmen, celebrated scientists, poets and martyrs, who died for common ideals, were born of this union. If we only quote the Royal Prince St. Casimir and St. Andrew Bobola (who both are to-day the venerated patron Saints of these areas), Wasyl and Konstanty Ostrogski, Chodkiewicz, Zółkiewski, King John Sobieski, Reytan, Kollataj, Kościuszko, the Princes Czartoryski, Chreptowicz, Czacki, Naruszewicz, the brothers Sniadecki, Traugutt, Niemcewicz, Moniuszko, Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Piłsudski, Paderewski, Orzeszkowa, Rodziewiczówna, Emilia Broel-Plater, etc., etc., the list will be long enough and there are still many, many others whose names are well known all over the world and famous in the history of Poland.

The most striking feature of these illustrious Poles of the Eastern provinces was probably a combination of outstanding intellectual capacity with an iron will, perseverance, and personal courage in the struggle for their ideals. These vast border lands became the nursery of strong characters and, in relation to the Western parts of Poland, a bastion against Muscovite, Tartar or Turkish invasions. A perpetual state of war, hardship, and privation—such was the school of life these gallant men went through.

They handed down to posterity traditions of the most faithful and uninterrupted service for the country and as models to more thousands and millions of men, who were or still are performing their hard everyday duties with true heroism in their souls. They were responsible for the prominent share in the insurrections of the nineteenth century taken by the population of the Eastern and especially the North-eastern provinces.

ian, Ukrainian and Jewish population, evacuated to Russia during the world war, returned to the Eastern provinces of Poland in 1920 and 1921. The Poles had been the most successful in sending the evacuation orders of the Tsarist authorities. After her rebirth the Republic of Poland opened her frontiers to all these re-emigrants irrespective of their nationality.

They settled again in their old homes and, for twenty years, had every opportunity to work in peace. Poland had nothing against the return of her national minorities to provinces which she again took under her rule after an interval of a hundred years. She believed they would be no obstacle to the administration of the country.

What happened twenty years later was entirely different. As soon as, in the autumn of 1939, the Red Army invaded these areas, more than one million of the native population of various nationalities, but with a majority of Poles, was transported to Russia by the Soviet authorities. It was thought wise from a political point of view to remove about 10 per cent of the population previous to making any attempt to master the country. Deportations in the first place affected all social leaders and the educated classes.

It is easier, as a rule, to enforce a new political system in a country deprived of its leaders. Therefore there is no ground for wonder at these measures. But, on the other hand, it would be worth while to compare the systems of policy as towards their population of the two countries representing two different systems of government and probably more : two different centres of intellectual culture and civilisation.

THE END



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