

POLAND

Key to Europe

Raymond Leslie Buell

*This book discusses the
and diplomatic
policy,
and presents a complete
picture of Polish political,
economic and social affairs.*

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POLAND

RECENT events have served to justify the thesis advanced in this book that Poland is the key of Europe. Set between two great powers Russia and Germany, Poland is in danger of being crushed. Should Germany and Russia fight, or should they make an alliance, Poland would probably be destroyed. On the other hand, if she succeeds in maintaining her independence, Europe may be saved from the domination of either Fascism or Communism. Such considerations have finally led Britain, as well as France, to give Poland a guarantee against German aggression.

The author expresses the belief that the fate of Poland is tied up with the historic rivalry of Germans and Slavs. He predicts that the rapidly increasing numbers and awakening national consciousness of the Slavs will make it difficult for the Nazis to dominate Central Europe.

Whether Poland can solve her serious economic and social difficulties depends not only on the European balance of power but also on world economic reconstruction. The population of Poland is increasing more rapidly than that of any other important country in Europe. Formerly Poland could support such increases with the aid of emigration, foreign loans, and international trade. But as a result of the growth of autarchy throughout the world, these aids have largely disappeared. Although Poland has resorted to state capitalism and public investment in a desperate effort to meet internal needs, she has not made any real progress in solving her acute over-population problem.

POLAND: KEY TO EUROPE

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by
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CONTENTS

PREFACE	9
I <i>The Importance of Poland</i>	15
1. GERMANS VERSUS SLAVS	16
2. POLAND AND NAZI AMBITIONS	20
3. THE ECONOMIC STRUGGLE	27
4. PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED	33
II <i>Lessons from the Past</i>	37
1. GRANDEUR OF THE PAST	38
2. THE DECAY OF THE POLISH REPUBLIC	45
3. THE PARTITIONS OF POLAND	49
4. THE PRESENT AND THE PAST	62
III <i>The Resurrection of a State</i>	63
1. POLAND PARTITIONED	63
2. THE WAR AND THE PEACE CONFERENCE	71
3. WAR WITH RUSSIA	79
4. THE TASK OF RECONSTRUCTION	86
IV <i>The Political System</i>	90
1. ORGANIZING A GOVERNMENT	90
2. THE 1926 'COUP D'ÉTAT'	93
3. THE PRESENT CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM	101
4. POLITICAL PARTIES TO-DAY	107
5. THE STRUGGLE TO MAINTAIN THE PILSUDSKI SYSTEM	112

CONTENTS

v	<i>The Economic Dilemma</i>	123
	1. EUROPE'S DISTRESS	123
	2. POLAND'S RESOURCES AND FINANCIAL POLICY	126
	3. THE NEW RECOVERY PROGRAMME	139
	4. OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVESTMENT	145
	5. FOREIGN TRADE DIFFICULTIES	148
	NOTE. THE LABOUR FUND	153
vi	<i>State Capitalism</i>	155
	1. GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP	155
	2. PROFIT AND LOSS OF STATE ENTERPRISE	162
	3. THE CARTEL SYSTEM	169
vii	<i>The Agricultural Question</i>	187
	1. AGRICULTURAL PRICE POLICIES	189
	2. THE LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY	197
	3. AGRARIAN REFORM	198
	4. THE MARSHES OF POLESIE	211
viii	<i>Emigration versus Colonies</i>	215
ix	<i>The Minorities: The Germans</i>	231
	1. THE MINORITIES TREATY	233
	2. THE GERMAN MINORITY	238
	3. THE MINORITIES DECLARATION OF NOVEMBER 1937	242
x	<i>The Minorities: The Ukrainians</i>	246
	1. A DISINHERITED PEOPLE	246
	2. THE COSSACK TRADITION	249
	3. THE UKRAINE AND THE BALANCE OF POWER	255
	4. GERMAN AND POLISH DESIGNS	258

CONTENTS

5. POLISH POLICY	265
6. AUTONOMY OR COLLABORATION?	273
XI <i>The Minorities: The Jewish Question</i>	278
1. THE JEWISH TRADITION	278
2. THE RISE OF ANTI-SEMITISM	282
3. THE ECONOMIC BOYCOTT AND THE 'NUMERUS CLAUSUS'	288
4. CAUSES OF ANTI-SEMITISM	296
5. POLISH MISGIVINGS AS TO ANTI-SEMITISM	301
6. A NEW MINORITY POLICY?	306
XII <i>Foreign Policy</i>	308
1. THE POLICY OF BALANCE	309
2. POLAND AND RUSSIA	311
3. POLAND AND GERMANY	317
4. POLAND AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA	323
5. POLAND AFTER MUNICH	333
6. POLAND AND THE UNITED STATES	340
NOTE. POLISH-AMERICAN TRADE POSSIBILITIES	344
INDEX	349

PREFACE

WHEN I visited Poland in the early summer of 1938, I intended to write only a report – to be published by the Foreign Policy Association – on the problems confronting that country. But these problems proved so complex, and so fascinating, that I decided to write a book. My decision was affected by the fact that, so far as I know, no other volume has yet appeared which endeavours to survey and analyse the problems of modern Poland in a sympathetic but scientific spirit.

As a country which in fifteen years will have as large a population as France, Poland is important in itself. Its rise as one of the great powers of Europe during the later Middle Ages, its partition and disappearance in the eighteenth century, and its resurrection at the end of the World War constitute one of the most romantic chapters of history. But this history is still unfinished. Germany's growing power in Europe has once more made Poland's future uncertain.

Although public opinion in the Western democracies is inclined to hold Poland responsible for its plight, this judgment is too severe. Poland is confronted by two fundamental problems, the solution of which depends not on Poland alone, but on the international situation as a whole. These problems are security against foreign aggression and security against internal want. Entering the world of commercial rivalry only at the close of the World War, Poland finds itself barred from many foreign markets. It has the most rapidly increasing population in Europe, yet lacks the

PREFACE

resources to provide a decent living on the basis of self-sufficiency. To-day at least a quarter of its people are living close to starvation. If Poland could export enough of its agricultural and industrial products to industrialize the country, if it could borrow abroad, if it could continue to send out as many emigrants as before the World War, its economic problem might be solved. But because of economic nationalism, the world economy on which the solution of such problems depends has almost disappeared. Poland cannot adequately develop its export trade; it cannot find foreign loans; its emigrants are no longer welcome in foreign countries. As a result of causes largely beyond its own control, Poland can no longer rely on a collective peace system for defence against aggression; neither can it rely on a world economy to meet its fundamental economic needs. It is consequently forced more and more to live on a basis of autarchy, while internal maladjustments become intensified.

In other countries economic nationalism of this sort has led to fierce anti-Semitism, countless refugees, political dictatorship, and a terrifying imperialistic psychology. These symptoms have appeared from time to time in Poland, but in a far less acute form. It would be inaccurate to regard Poland as a Fascist state; it has not succumbed to the totalitarianism of either Germany or Italy. Although it has adopted a number of measures indirectly injuring the Jew, Poland so far has refrained from enactment of the Nuremberg laws, or the *numerus clausus* legislation of Hungary, despite the fact that it has the largest Jewish population in Europe. Through lack of wisdom the Western democracies contributed to the overthrow of the German Republic and the rise of Hitler. The analogy is not complete, yet to-day a false appraisal of the Polish situation on the part of the Western powers may have almost equally disastrous results. If the great democracies show a proper understanding of the serious problems confronting Poland and make some

PREFACE

effort to co-operate in meeting them, Poland may remain outside the totalitarian camp, and thus help to maintain the equilibrium of forces in Europe, which is important if Western civilization is to be saved. To those interested in the profound social and political changes now sweeping the world, and to those seeking to appreciate the realities of international life, an understanding of Poland is important. This volume is, in short, a case study in present world distress.

My obligations in the preparation of this book are numerous. The Polish authorities extended to me every courtesy and assistance. The American Ambassador, the Honourable Anthony J. Drexel Biddle, and his colleagues were equally helpful. My wife, Frances Dwight Buell, who accompanied me on the trip, was of invaluable assistance in the collection of material and the preparation of notes.

Various chapters of the manuscript have been read by numerous critics, both Polish and non-Polish. I do not mention them here, not only because they are so numerous but because I do not wish to involve the responsibility of any of these readers, even indirectly, in the views advanced in this volume. I must, however, express a special debt of gratitude to Dr. Simon Segal, who for the past seven months has worked diligently in translating Polish material, checking facts, filling out chapters, and generally assisting in the preparation of the volume. I also wish to thank Vera Michele Dean, Helen Terry, and Ona K. D. Ringwood of the Foreign Policy Association for editorial assistance.

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INDEX

- Activists, 69
 Act of 1815, 64
 Act of Lublin, 38
 Aeroplanes, government ownership of, 158
 Agrarian conferences, 196
 Agrarian reform, 115; capital needed, 205; criticisms, 206; national defence and, 207; status of, 205
 Agricultural crisis, 187; exports 149; prices, 126, 129, 187, 189; production, 189; yield, 125, 199, 200
 Agriculture, 30, 125, 146, 188
 Albert, Margrave of Brandenburg, 41
 Alcohol monopoly, 164, 191
 Alexander I, 63
 Allenstein, 76
 Anglo-American trade agreement, 126
Anschluss, 245, 314
 Anti-Dumping Act of 1921, 346
 Anti-Semitic discriminations, 282; student riots, 111
 Anti-Semitism, 26, 156; causes of, 296; economic effects of, 304; history of, 282
 Aristocracy, 156
 Armament industry, government ownership of, 158
 Army, 49, 120, 138; expenditures, 32
 Article XVI, 312, 320
 'Aryan' paragraph, 289
 Assimilation of minorities, 267, 270, 271, 272
 Augustus II, 52
 Austria, 51, 72, 149; and Poles, 67; and Ukrainians, 257
 Autarchy, 229; advocacy of, 184
 'Authoritarian democracy', 104
 Autonomy, Ukrainian, 269, 270; law of 1922, 264
 Bacon, 135, 149; Export Corporation, 198; factories, 198
 Balance of payments, 141, 148; and dumping, 177; frozen, 150
 Balance of power, 50
 Baltic, 23, 127, 308, 313; barons, 17, 19; *bloc*, 313, 332; countries, 18
 Bank of Poland, 129, 134, 138, 158; reserves, 151
 Bartel, Casimir, 95
 Barter agreements, 151
 'Battle of Frontiers', 85, 90
 Beck, Joseph, Colonel, 97, 100, 218, 219, 222, 237, 312, 320, 328, 331, 335, 337
 Benes, Eduard, 310
 Beust, Count, 68
 Bilateralism, 151, 332
 Birth-control, 33
 Bismarck, 69, 78
 'Black list', American, 346
 Bobrzynski, 257
 Bohumin, 329, 332
 Boleslas the Pious, 279
 Bolshevik Revolution, 23, 128
 Boundaries of 1772, 75
 Bourgeois class, 33; *see also* Middle class
 Boycott of Jews, 283, 287
 Brest-Litovsk: imprisonment, 97, 109; pogrom, 294
 Brittany, 147
 Brüning, 318
 Budget, 32, 103, 129; deficit, 133
 Budzynski, 116
 'Bund', 119, 287
 Bureaucracy, 179, 182
 Cameroons, Polish interest in, 226
 Camp of National Unity, 107, 114, 119, 183, 287, 294; and Jews, 295

INDEX

- Capital: foreign, 131, 133, 141, 149;
 internal, 148; market, 126, colonial
 question and, 228
 Captivity, Period of, 63, 71, 88
 Carol, King, 331
 Carpathian Mountains, 127, 308
 Carpatho-Ukraine, 330, 332
 Cartel, 193; dissolution of, 171; Court,
 171; law of March 28, 1933, 170;
 system, 169; results of system, 177
 Casimir IV, 41, 47
 Casimir the Great, 37, 250; and Jews,
 279
 Catherine II, 51, 54, 56, 62, 237, 254
 Catholic Church, 24, 33, 65, 121, 203,
 266; and anti-Semitism, 288
 Catholicism, 24, 70, 250
 Cellulose, 142
 Censorship, 107
 Census of 1931, 231
 Central Industrial District, 140, 160
 'Centrolew', 97, 98
 Cereals, 189
 'Certain Frontiers' treaty, 79
 Chadbourne plan, 175
 Chamberlain, Neville, 334, 337, 338
 Charles XII, 51, 254
 Cheap-money policy, 183
 Chemical industry, 131; government
 ownership of, 158
 Chopin, 27
 Cities and Jews, 299
 Civil service, 34
 Civil war, 120
 Clearing arrangements, 136, 139
 Clemenceau, 234
 Coal, 128, 129, 135, 142, 149, 170;
 agreements, 177; cartel, 175; Con-
 vention, 175; exports of, 175; gov-
 ernment ownership of, 158; indus-
 try and British miners' strike, 176
 Coalition of peasants and Socialists,
 120
 'Collective security' abandoned, 320
 Colonels' group, 100, 102, 113, 120
 Colonial: empires, 124; movement in
 Poland, 225; policy and Ukraine,
 267
 Commerce, 303
 Commercial aviation, government
 ownership of, 158
 Communism, 16, 23, 30, 83, 312, 324,
 327
 Communist party, 106
 Concentration government, demand
 for, 116
 Concession system, 182
 'Confederation', 48, 56; of Radom,
 53; of Targowica, 57, 58
 Conference of Ambassadors, 79; and
 Eastern Galicia, 264
 Congo, 219
 'Congress of the Four Countries', 280
 Congress of Vienna, 63
 Congress Poland, 63, 69, 71, 72, 156,
 282
 Conrad, 27
 Conrad of Masovia, 39
 Constitution, 34, 90; and minorities'
 rights, 234; and Polish parties, 90;
 of 1791, 102; of 1921, 92, 93, 102;
 of April 23, 1935, 101
 Constitutional law of August 2, 1926,
 96
 Co-operative movement, 210; among
 the Ukrainians, 232, 266; and
 Jewish traders, 300
 Copernicus, 27
 Corporations, 131
 'Corridor', 76, 136, 237, 311, 318,
 337
 Cossacks, 42, 249, 252
 Countervailing duties, 346
 Counties, regime of, 105
Coup d'état of 1926, 93 ff., 99
 Covenant, League of Nations, *see*
 League Covenant
 Cracow, 27; school of historians, 49
 Credits: foreign, 131; frozen, 136; in-
 termediate, 131; to farmers, 191;
 to state enterprises, 164
 Culture, Ukrainian, 247
 Curie, Marie, 28
 Curzon Line, 78, 82, 314
 Czartoryskis, 46, 53
Czas, 115, 333
 Czechoslovakia, 19, 149, 244, 277,
 312, 319, 336, 339; Polish hostility
 to, 321; and Soviet War, 324
 D'Abernon, Lord, 82, 83, 324
 Daniel, 250, 254
 Danzig, 40, 54, 159, 308, 317, 320,
 335, 336, 338; history of, 41; status
 of, 76

INDEX

- Daszynski, Ignacy, 97, 109
- Debt: agreement with the U.S., 340;
burden, 130; conversion of, 139;
foreign, 141; foreign, default of, 139;
internal, 131, 141; moratorium,
190; public, 132; United States
war, 141; war, 130
- Deflation, 132, 172, 194; policy, 133,
138, 144
- Delbos, 222, 321
- Democracies: and Poland, 337, 339;
and Polish economic dilemma, 230
- Democratic Club, 110
- Denikin, General, 263, 275
- Denmark, 197, 213
- Depression of 1929, 187
- Devaluation, 134, 141, 175
- Dewey, Charles S., 129, 166
- Diet: of agrarian Europe, 125; of
workers, 145
- Dillon loan, 130
- Dmowski, Roman, 69, 74, 90, 110,
261, 283; Pilsudski's foe, 111
- Doctors, 303
- Drang nach Osten*, 16
- Droshkies, 181
- Drought (1937), 191
- Duch, 164
- Dumping, 152, 170; exports, 173; of
coal, 176
- Dwarfish holdings, 201, 211
- Dyboski, Roman, 61
- Eastern Galicia, 79, 80, 85, 90, 105,
128, 267, 273, 275, 310; conquest of,
42
- Eastern Pact of 1934, 312
- East Prussia, 77, 312
- Eichhorn, 259
- 'Eighteenth Decisive Battle of the
World', 83
- Elbe, 39
- Elections: freedom of, 120; municipal
(1938), 119; of 1930, 97, 98; of
1935, 101, 112, 117; of 1938, 118
- Electoral law of July 1935, 100, 118;
and German minority, 244; and
local self-governing bodies, 118
- Electrical industry, 131; power, 141
- 'Elite' system, 102
- Emigrant remittances, 133, 217
- Emigration, 215, 342 f.; cost of, 302;
Jewish, 299, 302; non-racial bases
of, 222; policy, defects of, 222;
population increase and, 223; to
Palestine, 222
- 'Encirclement', 338
- Endeks, 110, 111, 119, and see
National Democrats
- Engineers, 303
- Étatisme*, 156, 157, and see State capit-
alism; and Jews, 292
- Europe: agrarian policies of, 125;
past power, 123; population in-
crease, 123
- Evert, 167
- Évian Refugee Conference, 221
- Exchange control, 134, 139
- Experimental stations, 197
- Export credit, 153
- Export-Import Bank credit, 342
- Export industries, 134; premiums,
191; subsidies, 137, 153; surplus,
134
- Exports, 130; and domestic produc-
tion, 183; destination of, 134; farm,
189
- Farm: income, 188; workers, 300
- Fascism, 111, 341; prospects in
Poland, 121, 185
- Federative system, 60
- Feudalism, 156
- 'Fiat', 180
- Flax, 189
- Foreign exchange, 127
- Foreign trade, 148 ff.; by years, 151;
destination of, 150; improved
methods of, 152
- Forests, 127; government ownership
of, 157
- Four-Power Pact, 326, 328
- Fourteen Points, 74
- France, 15, 20, 126; abandons
Poland, 60; alliance with Poland,
310, 321; and Poland, 51; and
Polish claims, 75; and Polish colonial
demands, 227; and Ukraine, 255;
anti-Soviet policy, 81
- Francis Joseph, 68
- Frederick the Great, 51
- Frederick William II, 57
- Free Exchange, 151

INDEX

- Freedom of speech, 106
 Free Loan Kassas, 306
 French loan (1936), 321
 French Revolution, 50, 55
 Frontiers, 27; lack of natural, 308; of
 1772, 79, 84; revised in 1938, 329
- Gafencu, 336
 Galicia, 37, 68, 72, *and see* Eastern
 Galicia; autonomy under Austria,
 68
Gazeta Polska, 100
 Gdynia, 35, 88, 140, 159, 191, 226,
 292, 308
 Gdynia-Upper Silesia railroad, 159,
 179
 General Motors, 182
 Gentry, 33, 43, 49, 71, 102
 Geography of Poland, 127
 German: Baltic policy, 80; 'coloniza-
 tion', 20, 22; expansion, 334;
 minority, 238 ff.; minority disputes,
 236
 Germans, 280; colonists, 51; versus
 Slavs, 16 ff.
 Germany, 15, 16, 19, 126, 149, 151,
 155; ambitions of, 15; and Russia,
 17, 25; and Ukraine, 246, 257, 258;
 population of, 15
 'Ghetto benches', 290
 Gogol, 247
 Gold coverage, 132, 138, 140, 151
 Gorecki, Roman, 87
 Government: expenditure, 32; or-
 ganization, 90; ownership, 155 ff.,
 157, 186; service, 313
 Grabski, Stanislaw, 166
 Grabski, Wladyslaw, 102, 208; and
 Jewish agreement, 285
 Graft, 34
 Grain elevators, 146, 191
 'Grand design', 44
 Grazinski, 105
 Great Britain, 15, 20, 126, 135, 327,
 337, 339, 347
 Grunewald, 40
 Grzesinski, 72
- Haller, General, 72, 91, 110, 262
 Ham, exports to the U.S., 345
 Hartman, Eduard, 256
- Henlein, 19
 Hereditary Farm Law, 211
 Hetman, 251
 Highways, 146
 History of Poland, 37
 Hitler, Adolf, 15, 16, 62, 333, 334,
 335, 336; and Ukraine, 274
 Hlond, Cardinal, 288
 Hofmann, Josef, 27
 Hog exports, 197
 Holowko, Tadeusz, 267
 Hoover moratorium, 134, 340
 Hrushevsky, 248, 251
 Hull trade programme, 152, 345, 347
 Hungary, common frontier with, 271,
 334, 336
- Immigrants to the U.S., 344
 Imperative Mandate, 48, 56
 Incomes of Poles, 147
 Industrialization, 127, 144, 148, 152;
 and Migration Fund proposed, 343
 Industrial production, 142, 143, 144
 Infant mortality, 145
 Inflation, 88, 128
 Intellectuals, 34
 Interest rates, 190
 International: cartels, *see* Cartels;
 Labour Office and immigration,
 220, 222; loans, 124; planning, 224,
 Public Works Committee, Polish
 proposal, 227
 Inter-racial friction, 305
 Investment, opportunities for, 145
 Iron, 128, 149; government owner-
 ship of, 158
 Italian culture, 38
 Italy, 152, 335
- 'Jacobinism', 58
 Jadwiga, 37, 250
 Jagellon monarchy, 38, 45, 48, 316,
 323
 Japan, 26, 152; and Poland, 316, 328
 Jaworski, 70
 Jelenski, Jan, 282
 Jesuit influence, 53, 55
 Jewish: Colonization Association,
 305; community law (1927), 286;
 political parties, 287; schools, 234

INDEX

- Jews, 19, 110, 112, 119, 144; accused of disloyalty, 284; and assimilation, 296; criticisms of, 298; discriminations against, 292; emigration of, 218, 229; expelled from Germany, 295, 332; history of, 278; in commerce, 298; losing ground, 299; natural increase, 223; population, 278; population decline, 299; standard of living, 300
- Johnson Act, 343
- Joint Distribution Committee, 305
- Kahals, 280
- Kaschav, privilege of, 47
- Kemmerer, E. W., 129; commission, 130
- Khazars, 278
- Khmielnicky, 252
- Kiel canal, 324
- Kiev, 81; kingdom, 249; trials, 248
- Koc, Adam, Colonel, 114, 115
- Kolchak, 262
- Komarnicki, 218, 320
- Konarski, Stanislas, 53, 55
- Konowalec, Colonel, 266
- Korfanty, Stanislaw, 77
- Koscalkowski, 112; government, 132; intensification of agrarian reform, 204
- Kosciuszko, Joseph, 27, 61, 85, 340
- Kot, Professor, 108
- Kotlyarevsky, 247
- Krueger, 179
- Krzyzanowski, General, 340
- Krzyzanowski, Professor, 167
- Kulczycki, 291
- Kwiatkowski, Engenjusz, 113, 116, 161, 229, 281
- Labour: Fund, 153; party, 110; productivity, 130
- Land: distribution, 201; legislation, 202; 'servitudes', 202; tenure, 201
- Language laws of 1924, and Jews, 285
- Latvia, immigration to, 217
- Lead, 142
- League Covenant, 62, 312, 320, 321
- League of democracies, 60
- League of Nations, 196, 211; and Danzig, 75; Council and Lithuania, 268; Polish policy at, 309; *and see* League Covenant
- Legal profession and Jews, 293
- Liberia, 219
- Liberum veto, 48, 56
- Linen textiles, 153
- List, 155
- Lithuania, 18, 37, 40, 43, 80, 85, 250, 311, 313, 334; union with Poland, 250
- Lithuanian ultimatum, 315
- Lithuanians, 43, 70
- 'Little Constitution', 91
- Little Entente, 335
- Little Russians, *see* Ukrainians
- Livestock, 189, 197
- Lloyd George, 35, 323, 340
- Loan: foreign, 148; French, 150; match monopoly, 132
- Locarno agreement, 311
- Lodz, 65, 106, 119
- Lord, Robert H., 39, 46, 59
- Louis XIV, 51, 255
- Louis of Anjou, 47
- Louis of Hungary, 37
- Lublin, Act of, 38
- Ludendorff, 18
- Lwow, 106, 248; seized by Ukrainians, 260
- Machinery, 149
- Madagascar, 218
- Magdeburg Law, 281
- Malnutrition, 145
- Mandates Commission and Poland, 219
- Manning, Clarence A., 249
- Marienwerder, 76
- Maritime and Colonial League, 225
- Masaryk, 323, 324
- Match monopoly, 179
- Mazeppa, 254
- Mazurians, 42, 76
- Meat, 126
- Mein Kampf*, 17, 19, 21, 25
- Memel, 313
- Merchant marine, government ownership of, 158
- Metal industry, government ownership of, 158

INDEX

- Michalowicz, Professor, 110, 290
 Mickiewicz, Adam, 27, 71, 85
 Middle class, 35, 45, 144, 156, 280
 Mieszko, 23
 Migration, 124, 126, 127; and capital, 221; conference on (March 1938), 220; fifth-century, 39; international bank, 221; Jewish, 288; loan, 222
 Military strength, 24, 308
 Mineral wealth, 128
 Mining, 131
 Minorities, 28, 44, 186, 207; balance of power, 231
 Minorities Treaty of 1919, 233 ff., 287; and Jews, 284; denunciation of, 237; Poland's protest against, 234
 Minority: laws of 1924, 234; rights, 84; schools, 235, 285; schools, bilingual, 270
 Monetary policy, 129, 155
 Monopolies, 179
 Moraczewski, 90, 109, 157
 Morgenthau, Henry, Sr., report, 284
 Moscicki, Ignacy, President, 95, 97, 100, 112
 Mosdorf, Jan, 184
 Most-favoured-nation treatment, 135, 137, 347
 Motor cars, 146; government ownership of, 158
 Motorization policy, 180
 Moutet, Marius, 218
 Munich agreement, 15, 126, 271, 273, 328, 330, 333
 Munition factories, 168; and Soviet-Polish war, 83
 Mussolini, 331

 Napoleon III, 68
Naprawa, 115
 Nara party 111, 119, 267, *and see* National Radical party
 Narutowicz, Gabriel, assassination of, 93
 National Defence Fund, 140
 National Democratic party, 69, 72, 91, 96, 98, 110, 111, 156, 283, *and see* *Endeks*
 National Economic Bank, 158
 National income, 32, 167
 National Radical party, 111, 184, *and see* Nara party
 Natural resources, 127
 Nazis, 40, 338
 New Hampshire and Polish independence, 340
 Nicholas, Grand Duke, 71
 Non-party government *bloc*, 96, 101
 'Normalization' policy, 268
Numerus clausus: and Jews, 290, 292; and Ukrainians, 269
 Nuremberg legislation, 304

 Oats, 189
 Oder, 39
 Oil, 128; refineries, government ownership of, 158
 'Old Ruthenes', 257
 Opposition parties, division of, 119
 O.R.T., 305
 Orthodox: Church, 53, 250, 251, 265; churches, destruction of, 270; Jews, 287; Russians, 54; subjects, 52
 Ottawa pacts, 135
 Over-population, 208; and Russia, 317
Ozon, 119, *and see* Camp of National Unity

 'Pacification' policy, 268
 Pact of Paris, 318
 Paderewski, Jan Ignacy, 27, 74, 75, 110, 234
 Palestine, 280, 286, 299; question, 218
 Pan-Germanism, 17
 Pan-Slavic union, 65
 Pan-Slavism, 16, 68, 69, 312, 323
 Paper, 142
 Parliament, powers of, 104
 Parties, attempted abolition of, 100
 Partition: first, 54, second, 58; third, 61; treaty of Poland, 54
 Partitions, 160, 312, 333; and Jews, 281
 Passivists, 69, 71
 Patriotism, 36
 Peace Conference, 340; and Polish claims, 71; and Ukrainian question, 260

INDEX

- Peasant: attitude towards land, 199; diet, 31; income, 188; party, 93, 98, 108; population, 123; strike, 107, 115
- Peasants, 64, 69, 70, 88, 115, 116, 147, 185, 210; emancipation of, 56; emigration of, 223; government understanding with, 121; poverty of, 30; purchasing power of, 125; standard of living of, 187; under old regime, 46
- Peter the Great, 51, 52, 254
- Petlura, 82, 263
- Petruszewycz, 263
- Piasecki, Boleslaw, 112, 115
- Piast dynasty, 37, 279
- Pichon, 20
- Pieracki, 268
- Pilsudski, Joseph, 74, 85, 92, 122, 186, 261, 323; achievements of, 99; breaks with Socialists, 96; death of, 99; elected President, 95; federal ideas of, 86, 263, 272, 277; Germany and, 62, 318; Jews and, 286; overthrows government, 91; returns to private life, 93; Russia and, 91; Socialist leader, 69, 109; understanding with conservatives, 204; war with Russia and, 80, 81; World War and, 72
- Poland, 19, 40; alliance with Prussia, 55; area of, 27; civil war in, 26; division between Germany and Austria, 72; geography of, 28; and Hungary, 250; imperialism of, 85; Kingdom of 1916, 72; Little Entente and, 310, 326; mediaeval, 45; overpopulation of, 23; partitions of, 24, 49 ff.; population of, 27; royal republic, 48, 62; Slavic unity and, 27
- Poles abroad, 215
- Polesie, 127, 251; marshes, 211 ff., 308
- Polish: army, 308; birth-rate, 23; citizenship law, 333; culture, 43, 65; culture and non-Poles, 44, 70, 85; imperialism, 277; insurrection of 1863, 256; kingdom, pre-eighteenth-century, 48; minority in Germany, 244; National Committee, 74; Parliament, 90
- Polish-Czech agreement (1925), 326
- Polish-German: minorities declaration (1937), 242; non-aggression treaty of 1934, 242, 269, 319; tariff war, 319; trade agreement, 332
- Polish-Lithuanian agreement, 334
- Polish-Rumanian alliance, 321
- Polish-Soviet: non-aggression pact of 1932, 269, 312; trade agreement, 342; war, 226, 310
- Polish-U.S.: trade, 341 f.; trade agreement, 345 ff.
- Political parties, 107 ff.
- Polityka*, 272
- 'Polonization', 119, 296, 298, 302
- Poltava, 254
- Poniatowski, 204
- Poniatowski, Stanislas, last king of Poland, 53
- Population: agrarian countries, 123; density, 29; increase, 29, 127, 143, 148, 223, 229; of Europe, 15
- 'Positivist' school, 282
- Post Office Savings Bank, 158
- Potatoes, 188
- Potocki, Andrew, Count, 257
- Potockis, 46, 57
- Poverty, 34
- Prefect (*starosta*), 105
- Preferential treatment, 196
- President: powers of, 92; powers in the 1935 Constitution, 102
- Price-fixing policy, 195
- Prices, 136; agricultural, 148; cartel, 132; farm, 132; farm and industrial compared, 194; monopolies, 165
- Primate of Poland, 297
- Private enterprise, 144; stagnation of, 168
- Private investment, 143
- Promethean movement: and Russia, 316; and Ukrainians, 272, 276
- Proportional representation, 91
- Protectionism, 125, 155
- Provincial autonomy, 104
- Prussia, 50; and Polish partitions, 52
- Prussian expansion ambitions, 78
- Prussianization, 65, 76
- Public investment, 144; programme, 161, 166
- Public works, 143, 146, 153
- Pulaski, Count, 340
- Purchasing power, 125, 127, 138, 194, 212

INDEX

- Quota system, 137
- Rada, 251
- Radziwill, Prince, 226
- Radziwills, 46
- Railroads, government ownership of, 157
- Railways, 146; rates, 132; Polish State, 180
- Rapallo, Treaty of, 25, 312, 318
- Rataj, 108
- Raw cotton, 149
- Raw materials, 25, 124, 128, 144, 149; Committee, Polish position, 224, 227; 'domestic raw materials programme', 138; problem, 224
- Reason of state, 50
- Reconstruction of Poland, 86 ff., 128
- Recovery decrees (1936), 139; measures, results of, 141; programme, 139
- Refrigerating plants, 146
- Retraining of Jews, 306
- Reymont, Wladyslaw, 27
- Rhineland, 311, 321
- Roman culture, 24
- Rose, Adam, 220
- Rosenberg, Alfred, 21
- Rubinstein, Anton, 27
- Ruhr, 312
- Rumanian alliance with Poland, 310, 336
- Russia, 127, 155; army of, 341; Czech pact with, 341; Germany and, 5, 339; guarantee of Polish independence, 53, 57; imperialism of, 256; Poland and, 73; Polish policy and, 311; Polish protectorate and, 59; Teschen and, 328; trade with Poland, 317; Tsarist, 155; Ukraine and, 256
- Russification, 65
- Ruthenes, 68, *and see* Ukrainians
- 'Ruthenian Truth', 249
- Ruthenians, 249, *and see* Ukrainians
- Rydz-Smigly, 93, 100, 113, 117, 321; 'second citizen', 113, 120
- Rye, 135, 151, 189; fixed prices of, 194; Polish-German agreement, 192
- Salt mines, government ownership of, 158
- Sanctions, 309
- Sattler, Dr., 66
- 'Saurer', 180
- Saxony, 56
- Scandinavian markets, 176
- Schacht, Hjalmar, 21
- Sejm, 90, 94
- Self-sufficiency, 144, 156
- Senate, 91
- Sewerage system, 147
- Seyda, 310
- Shehitah law, 293
- Shevchenko, 248
- Siegfried line, 311
- Sienkiewicz, Henryk, 27
- Sigismund I, 38
- Sigismund II, 38
- Silesia-Gdynia Railroad, 132
- Skirmunt, 310
- Skladkowski, General, 113, 119; and boycott, 288; and minorities, 306
- Skoropadsky, 259
- Skrzynski, Count, 285, 311
- Skwarczynski, General, 115
- Slavic unity, 23
- Slavs, 15; classification of, 23, 247; race, 86
- Slawek, Colonel, 97, 100, 101, 117
- Slovakian question, 310
- Slovak independence, 330
- Slowo*, 107
- Smuts, General, 323
- Sobieski, John, 42
- Social: cleavage, 89; legislation, 152, 178; structure, 33
- Socialism, 157
- Socialist party, 94, 96, 108, 119
- 'Song about Igor's Regiment', 249
- Soviet Russia, 24, 62, 91, 144, 237; Polish declaration of November 1938, 334; Ukrainian policy of, 248, 275; war with Poland, 80
- Soviet Ukraine, 81, 273
- Spaak, 313
- Spa Conference, 82, 263
- Spain, 120
- Sportspalast speech of Hitler, 334
- Stabilization plan of 1927, 129
- Stalin, 26
- Standard of living, 33
- State banks, 158
- State capitalism, 155; causes of, 156; and international situation, 168, 183

INDEX

- 'State concern', 157
 State enterprises: capital of, 162; investigation commission of, 169
 State: forests, 163; investment plan, 140; land banks, 158; monopolies, 158, 164; succession and colonies, 226
 Statute: of Nihil Novi, 47; of Nieszawa, 47
 Steel, 142, 149
 Stephen Batory, 38
 Street-cars, 147
 Stresemann, 318
 Strikes, 138
 Sub-Carpatho-Ukraine, effect in Poland, 271
 Sudetenland, 19, 322, 330
 Sugar, 126, 146; beets, 170, 174; cartel, 174; consumption tax on, 174, 175; exports, 190
 Suwalki, 314
 Sweden, 155
 Szeptycki, Count, 255
- Tanganyika, Polish demand for, 226
 Tannenberg, battle of, 40
 Tariff, 190; policy, 137, 170; war with Germany, 134, 137
 Tatars, 37, 42, 249, 250
 Taxes in Poland, 147, 166, 167, 168, 183; exemption from, 142
 Telephones, 146
 Tennenbaum, Henryk, 164
 Teschen, 82, 310, 325; Polish ultimatum, 328; value of, 330
 Teutonic Knights, 16, 21, 23, 39, 62
 Textile industry, 298
 Thugutt, Stanislaw, 94
 Timber, 135, 189
 Titulescu, 321
 Tobacco monopoly, 164; and Jews, 292
 Totalitarian state, 101, 301, *and see* Fascism; in Poland, 99; trend, 116
 Trade Agreement, Act, 342; Polish-British (1935), 135, 181; Polish-French (1937), 135; Polish-German (1935, 1937), 135; Polish-German (November 1938), 195, 214
 Trade agreements, 134
 Trade balance, 130, 138, 150
 Trade barriers, 127, 133
- Trapczynski, 90
 Treaty: of Androszowo, 44; of Brest-Litovsk, 18, 79, 259; of Nystadt, 51; of Pereiaslav, 253, 258; of Riga, 84, 232, 238, 263, 265; of Saint-Germain, 79; of Thorn, 41; of Trianon, 330; of Versailles, 19, 76, 78; of Versailles and coal industry, 175; of Westphalia, 50; of Zboriz, 252
 Treitschke, 16, 17
 Tukhachevsky, 82
 Turkey, 49
- Ukraine, 18, 23, 322; grievances, 269; independence of, 84; language, 254; literature, 247; military organization, 266; movement, 113; university, 269, 273, 276
 Ukrainians, 17, 70, 81, 232, 246 ff.; and agrarian reform, 207; division of, 248; numbers, 265, political parties, 266
 U.N.D.O., 266, 269, 270
 Unemployment, 132, 142, 143; agencies, 153; insurance, 154
 Uniat Church, 43, 70, 232, 254, 265, 270
 Union of Young Poland, 115
 United States, 126, 127, 130, 149, 340 ff.; and Polish imperialism, 83; Polish trade with, 153, 344
 Universities and Jews, 291
 University: of Lwow, 268; of Warsaw, 64
 Upper Silesia, 35, 77, 128, 149, 317; autonomy of, 104; Convention of May 15, 1922, 78, 238, 243; demobilization law in, 178; Germans in, 240; plebiscite, 77
 Uprising: of 1830, 64; of 1863, 64
- Van Zeeland report, 225
 Vasa dynasty, 44
 Vatican, 270
 Veterinary inspection, 197
 Vienna award, 331
 Vilna, 34, 79, 80, 82, 84, 313, 314; seized, 83
 Vistula, 39, 51, 127; battle of, 83
 Volhynia, 147, 200, 251, 265, 280

INDEX

- Wages, 31, 89, 124
Warsaw, 106
Wasserpölnisch, 77
Water-power, 146
Waterways, 146, 160
Wawelberg Engineering School, 291
Wenda, Colonel, 295
Weygand, General, 83
Wheat, 126
White Russia, 250; independence of, 84
White Russian Christian Democratic party, 232
White Russians, 70, 232
Wielopolski, Alexander, Count, 63
Wilson, Woodrow, 74; 340
Witos, Wincenty, 91, 93, 94, 97, 108
Wojciechowski, Stanislaw, 93
Wood, 149
Workers, 138; diet, 145; income of, 144; number of, 130
World: economy, 178; depression, 157; recovery, 224; trade, 121
World War and Poland, 71
Wunderrabi, 296
Yiddish, 285, 296
'Zarzewie', 204
Zeligowski, General, 83, 314
Zinc, 142
Zionists, 287, 305
Zloty, depreciation of, 129

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