

ADAM  
PRAGIER

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# POLISH PEACE AIMS

By

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## INTRODUCTION

Peace aims, or the picture of the world which the warring States would like to see, are of two kinds. On the one hand are the aims of those countries which have long made war an instrument of national policy; on the other, those of the countries taken by surprise by it. The peace aims of aggressor States are formulated before hostilities begin, and this formulation is one of the important elements in their general preparations. While the war is in progress its clearly-realized aims arouse the national effort and encourage the people to endure. But for a State which has not prepared for offence, war usually comes as both a political and a military surprise. Such a State has from the beginning only one aim, the successful defence and the preservation, or restoration, of the political *status quo*. It is only during the course of the war, and not infrequently comparatively late in it, that the victim of aggression formulates its own, fresh and positive, aims, under the influence of the changes brought about by the war (changes which were not obvious at once) and in the steadily growing conviction that these changes are already too fundamental to leave any hope of a return to the conditions of the past.

Poland never regarded war as an instrument of its national policy. Situated as it was in a very exposed section of Europe, it contented itself with preparing—insufficiently, as afterwards appeared—for defence. It based its safety in the East on the Treaty of Riga of March 18, 1921, and in the West on the agreement with Germany of January 26, 1934. Neither of these two diplomatic instruments was questioned by any of the three powers which concluded them until they were virtually torn to pieces by the aggression of the German armies on September 1 and of the Soviet armies on September 17, 1939. To North and South Poland was adjoined by small States, too weak to secure their own defence unaided, yet too quarrelsome and distrustful to collaborate successfully in either the political or the military field for the defence of the whole threatened Central European zone. The efforts of France to convert the dream of collective security throughout the Continent into reality were doomed to failure, and at the end of twenty years' armistice between two world wars the much more modest French attempt to arrange an "Eastern Locarno" likewise came to nothing. Poland accord-

ingly remained completely isolated at the moment of the outbreak of war. The British guarantee of August 25, 1939, was of paramount importance only in so far, as it was a pledge for the future and a promise of a new ordering of European relations after the war. Throughout the Polish campaign the guarantee could never become a practical factor in military events.

In Poland the Government was well aware of the weakness resulting from the country's geographical situation, and the consequent political dangers, and efforts were made to escape from isolation ; but they were insufficient and unsuccessful. Poland was not powerful enough in Europe successfully to undertake single-handed the task of organizing collective security, even only in the central-eastern zone, where France had failed. Indeed the possibility of anything effective being done in this direction was small, owing to the attitude of Great Britain, which long kept Russia isolated from European affairs. This attitude was based on a false conception of the requirements of the Balance of Power by certain British circles, as well as on the hope that the Third Reich would constitute a sufficient protection against the social influence of Soviet Russia. The Agreement of 1934 with Germany, unfavourably viewed though it was from the beginning by the majority of Polish opinion was intended by the government which signed it to be a palliative measure, serving to gain time until the general position of political affairs should improve.

Although it seems strange, it is incontrovertible that Poland did not reckon upon an early outbreak of war. The public did not realize the nearness of the danger, nor did the political or military authorities believe in it. For some years they had become accustomed to the unstable equilibrium on which the security of Poland was based, and closed their eyes to the arrival of such changes in Germany as threatened a speedy end to it. Poland was neither militarily nor politically prepared. (It was soon to appear that the Western-European countries were in much the same state.)

Nevertheless, when the war actually broke out, Poland brought to it that determination to fight for its existence which it had always shown, no matter how great the emergency. This determination required no period of previous preparation, nor was it weakened by a bad system of government. It had always been present in the whole mass of the Polish nation through all the changes and chances of fortune, and it was still there. In this second world war it at once gave fixed and final definition to Poland's attitude : an attitude which was both active and uncompromising. Poland wishes to

exist after the war as an independent State, preserving the integrity of its territory and assuring its existence for the future. This desire is so deeply implanted in the Polish nation, and so clearly expresses the eternal reality of its aspirations, that it cannot be regarded as an item of any particular political programme. It is a fact, like that of the existence of the Polish nation.

The course of the present war, the establishment of the political fronts, and the manifestation of the tendencies which will prevail in the post-war world, all have their effect upon Poland's war aim. It is not enough now to say that Poland was taken unawares, both politically and militarily, by the war, and that it desires to return to the *status quo ante*. In the days before it was attacked Poland was a component of a political structure, which has ceased to exist and can never be restored. Accordingly, its will to exist must now find expression in the attempt so to shape the world that its future may be assured under the new, post-war conditions. Poland is, accordingly, interested not only in the questions which directly concern it, but also, no less, in the formulation of the general principles which are to govern the future life of nations. Reconstructing its own foundations after the war, it will desire to strengthen them by serious collaboration with the other nations of the world. It must visualize its own place in the post-war world against the background of world-structure as a whole.

Bearing in mind the situation of Poland in the centre of Europe between Germany and Russia, and the particular character of that central-eastern zone to which it belongs, we must approach the study of the country's war aims by the discussion of the four following problems : (1) the attitude of Poland to Germany ; (2) the attitude of Poland to the U.S.S.R. ; (3) the future organization of the Central-Eastern European zone ; and (4) the general organization of world-relations, political and economic. Such discussion is the aim of the present treatise.