

POLAND IN THE HOUSE OF
COMMONS

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During the debate in the House of Commons on the Prime Minister's statement on February 22, 1944, many speakers referred to Mr. Churchill's words on Poland.

In this important debate Poland was but one of many problems discussed. To provide, in convenient form, for students of international relations the references to Poland during the two days' debate, we reprint below excerpts from Hansard, the official British Report of Parliamentary Debates, February 22nd and 23rd, 1944.

Contents.

THE PRIME MINISTER, (Mr. Churchill)	1	COL. SIR A. LAMBERT WARD	9
MR. ARTHUR GREENWOOD	2	MR. PICKTHORN	10
COMMANDER SIR ARCHIBALD SOUTHBY	3	MR. GALLACHER	12
SIR PERCY HARRIS	4	MAJOR VYVYAN ADAMS	14
FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT TEELING	5	DR. HADEN GUEST	15
MR. TINKER	5	SIR EDWARD GRIGG	16
CAPTAIN ALAN GRAHAM	6	MR. G. STRAUSS	18
MR. MCGOVERN	8	MR. HORE-BELISHA	21
		THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS (Mr. Eden)	22

The Prime Minister (Mr. Churchill)

. . . I took occasion to raise personally with Marshal Stalin the question of the future of Poland. I pointed out that it was in fulfilment of our guarantee to Poland that Great Britain declared war upon Nazi Germany and that we had never weakened in our resolve, even in the period when we were all alone, and that the fate of the Polish nation holds a prime place in the thoughts and policies of His Majesty's Government and of the British Parliament. It was with great pleasure that I heard from Marshal Stalin that he, too, was resolved upon the creation and maintenance of a strong integral independent Poland as one of the leading Powers in Europe. He has several times repeated these declarations in public and I am convinced that they represent the settled policy of the Soviet Union.

Here I may remind the House that we ourselves have never in the past guaranteed, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, any particular frontier line to Poland. We did not approve of the Polish occupation of Vilna in 1920. The British view in 1919 stands expressed in the so-called Curzon line which attempted to deal, at any rate partially, with the problem. I have always held the opinion that all questions of territorial settlement and re-adjustment should stand over until the end of the war and that the victorious Powers should then arrive at formal and final agreements governing the articulation of Europe as a whole. That is still the wish of His Majesty's Government. However, the advance of the Russian armies into Polish regions in which the Polish underground army is active makes it indispensable that some kind of friendly working agreement should be arrived at to govern the war-time conditions and to enable all anti-Hitlerite forces to work together with the greatest advantage against the common foe.

During the last few weeks the Foreign Secretary and I together have laboured with the Polish Government in London with the object of establishing a working arrangement upon which the Fighting Forces can act, and upon which, I trust, an increasing structure of goodwill and comradeship may be built between Russians and Poles. I have an intense sympathy with the Poles, that heroic race whose national spirit centuries of misfortune cannot quench, but I also have sympathy with the Russian standpoint. Twice in our lifetime Russia has been violently assaulted by Germany. Many millions of Russians have been slain and vast tracts of Russian soil devastated as a result of repeated German aggression. Russia has the right of reassurance against future attacks from the West, and we are going all the way with her to see that she gets it, not only by the might of her arms but by the approval and assent of the United Nations. The liberation of Poland may presently be achieved by the Russian armies after these armies have suffered millions of casualties in breaking the Germany military machine. I cannot feel that the Russian demand for a reassurance about her Western frontiers goes beyond the limits of what is reasonable or just. Marshal Stalin and I also spoke and agreed upon the need for Poland to obtain compensation at the expense of Germany both in the North and in the West.

Mr. Arthur Greenwood

Wakefield (Labor)

. . . . It is difficult to deal with the problem of Poland. The tribute which my right hon. Friend has paid to the Polish people is well-deserved, and it is clear that, leaving aside territorial frontiers—and I agree with my right hon. Friend that this is not the moment to settle them with any finality—there must be for ever a beacon of freedom, which we call Poland, in the East of Europe. There is anxiety in certain quarters but I never belittle statements that are made by the Allied nations. It will be part of my task to see that those undertakings are fulfilled, and as my right hon. Friend and the President of the United States and Marshal Stalin have, severally and individually, made quite emphatic statements about a free and independent Poland in the future, we must see that that undertaking, freely offered by all three of them,

is subsequently fulfilled. One does not want to disturb difficult discussions that are going on today, but if my right hon. Friend and the Foreign Secretary, can succeed in allaying the lurking fears of the Poles with regard to the future, I think they will have deserved well of the House and of the British people and also of the Polish people themselves. . . .

Commander Sir Archibald Southby

Epsom (Conservative)

. . . Nobody can shut his eyes to the very general perturbation which exists in this country at the present time on the subject of Soviet-Polish relations. The question goes much farther than just a matter between those Governments alone. It affects the Balkans and the Baltic States and our relationship with the United States of America. While it is true as the Prime Minister said that we should be guarded in what we say it would be dangerous were it to go out that people in this country were not greatly concerned as to the future of Poland. We went to war in order that Polish territory might be preserved, so far as we could, from invasion. I think that discussions regarding delicate international matters are not best served by blazoning in the newspapers of the day all the details of those discussions as they go along. But whatever view we may take about the discussions between Russia and Poland I think we have to face the future in a spirit of realism. Indeed, there is no other spirit which makes the slightest appeal to our great and valued Ally, Soviet Russia. The fact remains, however, that we gave Poland a definite and categorical pledge regarding her frontiers. [AN HON. MEMBER: "No."] My hon. Friend says "No," but may I remind the House that on July 30th, 1941, the Soviet and Polish Governments concluded an agreement by which the Soviet, specifically and categorically, admitted that the Soviet-German Treaty of 1939 concerning territorial changes in Poland had lost its force.

On the same day that that agreement was signed the Foreign Secretary handed a note to the late General Sikorski as representing the Polish Government which contained these words:

"I desire also to assure you that His Majesty's Government does not recognise any territorial changes made in Poland since August, 1939."

General Sikorski's answer dotted the i's and crossed the t's. The Polish Government expressed their satisfaction

"with the declaration of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to the effect that it does not recognise any territorial changes made in Poland since August, 1939."

There is no ambiguity about that. There is the pledge. The Prime Minister has in the past expressed himself—quite rightly, in my opinion—very strongly on the subject of Poland, which has been referred to by one Russian statesman as "the ugly offspring of the Versailles Treaty." This is what the Prime Minister said in this House on 13th April, 1939 (1933—*Ed.*, *P.I.C.*), after the Polish frontiers had been restored:

"I rejoice that Poland has been reconstituted. I trust she will live long to enjoy the freedom of the lands which belong to her, a freedom which was gained by the swords of the victorious Allies."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 13th April, 1933; col. 2789, Vol. 276.]

There is nothing very ambiguous about that. But what of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia? What is to be the future of Finland? These are grave and very weighty matters. What is our action going to be if Poland stands by the letter of our bonds to her? What is the right hon. Gentleman's action going to be, since he signed that bond? We went to war to prevent the dismemberment of Poland by force. Dismemberment by agreement might conceivably absolve us from our pledge.

I have said that we live in an age of realism. Russia naturally has very definite views as regards her frontiers, and, if the rectification of frontiers can guarantee peace in Europe, in God's name let us rectify them. But the rectification must take place by agreement and not by force. I do not think that we can do other than say that, as far as Poland is concerned, we must agree to the Curzon line provided that concessions are made in other directions which would recompense Poland for territories that she will have lost in the East. I am more than a little anxious about our foreign policy. Was the foreign policy enunciated by the Foreign Secretary at Moscow in all respects the same as the foreign policy agreed upon between the Prime Minister and Marshall Stalin at Teheran? If relations there were so cordial, then why did Soviet Russia administer such a slap in the face to us and to the United States when we sought to help in solving the Polish difficulty, because after all we are deeply concerned in the affairs of Poland. Above all, why did the Soviet Government permit the publication in the *Pravda* of the statement on the subject of alleged peace pour-parlers between Germany and ourselves? It is not impossible for skilful diplomacy to resolve questions of friction and difference where the causes are determinable, but the inexplicable in foreign affairs is fraught with very grave danger—and Russian foreign policy since the Teheran meeting has in some respects seemed to the British public very inexplicable. . . .

Sir Percy Harris

Bethnal Green South-West (Liberal)

. . . Like the hon. and gallant Gentleman the Member for Epsom (Sir A. Southby), I sometimes doubt whether there is complete unity of aims and objects in our international relations with the other Powers. What can be done had been shown by the organisation of U.N.R.R.A. That has brought all the nations concerned together in order to restore economic security for Europe when the war is over. But in other problems we are not speaking with the same voice. The hon. and gallant Gentleman referred to newspaper articles in Russia on Poland. This problem has been dealt with in this country from different points of view, but I think the Prime Minister's statement of today was immensely reassuring, for it shows a knowledge and understanding of the Polish point of view. I thought that he dealt with the Greek and Yugoslav

problems with skill and wisdom. If he had not made that statement I was prepared to be critical, but I thought that the Prime Minister appreciated the situation and was ready to face up to our great obligation to the Polish people. . . .

Flight-Lieutenant Teeling

Brighton (Conservative)

. . . I believe that I am right in saying that had we not gone to war in order to defend the rights of Poland in 1939 the Government could not have stood very much longer. That might very well be remembered today, in discussing the present problems in regard to Poland.

I believe that people in this country are earnestly watching to see what we are going to do in regard to our own foreign policy. There are people who are nervous, on the one side, that we may be doing too much what Russia asks us, and some people, on the other hand, who think that we are doing too much what the United States asks. If we want to have real enthusiasm and unity in the country, we shall have it only if we can show that we have our own old foreign policy ideals. I am certain that the country as a whole is more keenly interested in foreign affairs than hon. Members may possibly realise. . . .

Mr. Tinker

Leigh (Labor)

. . . In conclusion, I would refer to a difficult problem, that concerning Poland and Russia. We went to war for Poland. We had a Treaty with them, and I remember the historic day 2nd September when the then Government were urged and forced to enter this conflict. That was because Poland had been overrun. On the other side there is Russia. I have as great an admiration as anyone can have for what Russia has done. I hope and trust that Russia and Poland will realize that in this great struggle they cannot be at variance with each other. Surely there should be some method by which they can come to an agreement. I want both sides to have fair play and I do not want any outside interference if it can be avoided, because it would be a terrible thing for us if we had to take sides in this matter. Poland we honour for her more than four years' struggle. Russia we honour also for the valiant and brilliant work she has done. Is there no means by which these two peoples can get together and reach a solution of their problem? It is too big for me to say at the moment what should be done, but I want a message to go out to these two peoples that this country stands by them and trusts that they will come to some agreement. If one can foresee that, as I think we can, the termination of the conflict between them will be welcomed by all the world. . . .

Captain Alan Graham

Chester, Wirral (Conservative)

. . . Honourable soldiers and sailors respect legitimate authority, and it is not from ideology but from a sense of principle that they do so. The legitimate national Governments of Poland, Greece and Yugoslavia have sacrificed everything but honour to their loyalty to us and to our ideals of freedom for European men and nations.

What rewards do we offer these peoples and Governments for their sacrifice of everything, for loyalty to us and to our ideals? To the Government and people of Poland we offer the loss of two of their most historic cities, Vilno and Lwow, and the sacrifice of one-third of their national territory, if we insist upon the so-called Curzon Line as their Eastern frontier. To the Government and people of Greece, we offer uncertainty as to what punishment, if any, will befall their implacable and most cruel foes, the Bulgars, and internal anarchy, because we do not, as it seems, firmly support the Greek national Government and the one focus point of Greek national unity and stability, which is the monarchy. To the Government and people of Yugoslavia — and I understand the difficulties there — we not only offer, but encourage — it is against our will, but we do encourage it—civil war, by supporting and helping one who, if he does resist the authority of the Germans and to our advantage, equally resists that of his own legitimate Government, commander-in-chief and sovereign, who are our loyal allies. Further, and perhaps even more disturbing to a British public used to freedom and free expression of opinion and to a regard for truth, no matter how it may conflict with previously held ideologies, a large section of the British Press heaps abuse on all these Governments who have sacrificed everything for us, while their own Press is muzzled, and the patriotic achievements of their underground and other fighters is kept out of our Press and our radio. British public opinion is thereby deceived as to the nature of our friends.

Mr. Gallacher: The hon. and gallant Member is interested in the Polish government?

Captain Graham: I am interested in many Governments, including our own, to which I have been loyal. . . .

In my experience, the Russians despise more than anything else weakness and vagueness, and the one thing they admire more than anything else is clarity and firmness. After all, the basis of true friendship, between men and between nations, is mutual respect, and if Russia sees us not being true to our other allies, how can she expect that we shall be true to her in the future? We must earn her respect as well, and not merely through our military achievements. It is not fair on the Russians to give them the impression that we have no clear policy in Europe. How can they shape their policy to harmonise with ours, unless we make it very clear and very firm? They cannot believe, any more than this House can believe, that Britain, after standing up for freedom and civilisation against Germany, will now abdicate in favor of European anarchy, and turn the other cheek to civil war between her friends.

Of course, we must have friendship with Russia, but, as I said, for friendship there must be mutual respect. It would be false friendship, either for Russia or for Poland, to allow Russia to think that Europe, and the world ultimately, will tolerate a fourth partition of Poland. Most of Europe's subsequent troubles flowed from the three Partitions of Poland in the eighteenth century. The Curzon Line closely corresponds to the Russian line of the Third Partition of 1795. If Britain and the United States are consenting parties to yet another Partition, they will be the first to suffer from it hereafter, in the same way that France, Sweden, Austria and Turkey ultimately suffered from the last three Partitions of Poland.

Russian desires in regard to Poland are threefold: they are natural desires and they are desires which, with good faith and not too much interference, but enough to see that fair play ensues, can be met. What are they? The first one is the co-operation of the Polish Underground Movement with the Russian forces as they enter and move through Poland. This has already been ensured by the commands given by the Polish Government and the Polish Commander-in-Chief General Sosnkowski to the Polish Underground Movement. These orders are certain of execution, because there is complete and absolute harmony between the Polish Underground Movement and the Polish Government in London. No other authority is, or can be, recognised by the genuine National Polish Underground Movement than the genuine National Polish Government in London.

The second desire of Russia, which, I think, sometimes escapes the consciousness of many people in this country, largely from our concentration on the geography of other parts of the world, is to be relieved from a certain—and it sounds odd to say it in connection with Russia—fear. Russia is, of course, a state made up of many nationalities indeed, and she does fear the attraction of that part of the White Ruthenians and Ukrainians who are on the Polish side of the Polish-Russian border for those Ruthenians and Ukrainians who remain on the other side of the border as it was left by the Treaty of Riga. She fears that these parts of these two peoples would act as Piedmont did in the case of United Italy—as centripetal nuclei for an independent White Ruthenian or Ukrainian state independent of Russia. It is a natural fear, because the idea of Ukrainian nationality was deliberately fostered, first by the old Austro-Hungarian monarchy, and secondly by Germany, precisely in order to weaken Russia. Of that problem the Poles are perfectly well aware, and have no wish in the slightest to use Ukrainian nationalism as a weapon with which to weaken Russia. They wish to be rid of all their racial problems. It was precisely so as not to have relations between themselves and Russia embittered that, at the Treaty of Riga, they deliberately refused territory as far as 100 miles to the east of the Riga Treaty line, which was then offered to them by Lenin, Tchicherin and Trotsky. This was refused for the very good reason, as was stated to me by M. Grabski, who was the Polish chief plenipotentiary for the territorial settlement at that Treaty, because the Polish Government in those days, which was not such a Liberal Government as the Polish Government today, did not wish to have within its borders people who, through their racial sympathies, would prove to be poor Polish citizens. The Polish Government today would be very ready for an exchange of those Ruthenians or Ukrainians, who may wish to cross the border into Russia, by a transfer of population by which

they would receive back inside Poland the Polish people who may be left alive of those who are still being retained in Soviet Russia.

The third desire of Russia in regard to Poland is natural again—the loyal co-operation of the Polish Government and people in peace as well as in war. The Poles have proved that co-operation in war at the price of a greater martyrdom than any other nation in Europe. They still go on. The Battle of Britain was mentioned just now. It is probable that, but for the Poles in the Battle of Britain, the result of the battle might have gone differently. The proportion of German planes shot down by them was higher, in fact, than those shot down by our own pilots. I ask the House whether it does not agree that loyal co-operation between the Polish Government and people on the one hand, and the Russian Government and people on the other hand is not more likely to be achieved by fair treatment of Poles today, by a recognition by Russia of the united national, democratic and independent Polish Government in London as the only possible Polish Government, and by a Government of Poland after the war elected without any pressure from any outside nation but solely according to the entirely freely expressed wishes of the Polish people themselves. It would be criminal folly to suggest that, without forcing upon our Polish Ally the necessity to amputate more and more of his own body, any renewal of the relations or alliance between these two Slav nations is impossible. Let us, therefore, take whatever aid we can from any Allies against the Germans, but not such aid as can only be given by the sacrificing of our loyal Allies, because that is a sacrifice of our own honor, and then, when the day of reckoning comes to us, as sooner or later it surely must, we shall not then ourselves have or deserve a single friend in the world. . . .

Mr. McGovern

Glasgow, Shettleston (Independent Labor Party)

. . . If we cast our minds back to 1939, and remember the high-sounding and lofty phrases in which we announced in this House our reasons for going to war, we see they have all been shed today, and that the moral and idealistic aspect has been scrapped, as very often happens as the war goes on. The Prime Minister has talked in the most contemptuous and evasive manner about pledges given to the various nations in 1939. Indeed, it was advanced at that time as one of the great reasons for our going to war, that if we did not then make a stand for justice and human rights, we would have no sympathisers when our own turn would come; no friends and no mourners to wail over our fate. . . .

. . . When does aggression cease to be aggression? Is it aggression only when perpetrated by Hitler and the Nazi party, or does it cease to be aggression when it is perpetrated by Stalin and the Bolshevik party? That is a question to which this nation will have to provide an answer before very long. Events are moving rapidly, and the transformation that is taking place on the Continent and in the Balkans will be so complete that we shall require that declaration in an honest statesmanlike manner and not in the evasive way adopted by the Prime Minister today. Let us get this straight. From the way

that various countries are being condemned today, one would think that they had provoked the war. Finland and Poland are surely defenders against aggression, no matter what we think about their governments. I have no time for the Polish Government. Many tricks have been learnt by the Polish ruling class, but that is beside the point at the moment. The question is to bring one's mind back to the time when Stalin and Hitler had a pact, which was termed a pact of non-aggression but which actually became a partnership in crime and resulted in the raiding and raping of the nations on the borderline. Where does this country stand in relation to Estonia, Latvia, Finland, Poland, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Rumania?

The partnership was dissolved in 1941 because one of the partners got all he could out of the partnership and feared that the position was going to be reversed at a very early date. He proceeded to transfer his allegiance to see what he could get out of the other partnership which he made in 1941. Russia, from the point of view of the war, became an Ally of those who were heart and soul in this bloody struggle. To the people of London and various other cities, it ended the bombing nightmare, and therefore, superficially, the people of this country welcomed Russia not for what Russia stood, but because of the fact that she took the weight off this country in many respects. Let us accept that. That meant to say that this country was prepared to enter into a partnership that was going to play the self-same game in a cunning form. I see in the papers today that they have to set up a National Council, as a Government of Poland. Anybody who knows of the happenings on the borders of Russia and in other countries, or of the Communist party in relation to other parties, knows the old game. We know that, in Fife, they marched unemployed men to the mines to induce other miners to strike. We know what they mean by all these committees to ensure that democracy shall operate freely. I have heard people say that nothing could be fairer. Russia would offer independence. Yes, it would be an independent Poland, but it would be a linking up of Poland by means of a Government subservient to the Soviet State and would be extending the power of Soviet Russia. The same is happening, we are told, also in Finland. One of the proposed terms is a certain line of demarcation, with a government friendly towards the Soviet Union. We know what that means. Another nominated state will be set up in Finland. Before you know where you are, the whole of the States, as the Armies roll forward, will be incorporated into the Soviet Union. . . .

. . . We went to war ostensibly for the Polish Corridor. Now we see not only the corridor but the drawing-room, the dining-room, the bedrooms, the whole of the castle is going, but going from another direction, and we have not got a Prime Minister who can get up at that Box and state honestly that his illness at Teheran was not only a physical illness but the political illness of a man who knows that he is being driven remorselessly along a road on which he cannot stop. . . .

Colonel Sir A. Lambert Ward

Kingston-upon-Hull, North West (Conservative)

. . . My hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Wirrall (Captain Graham) made an extremely interesting speech. I am afraid that my views

on the subject he dealt with with such learned exposition will seem crude and cowardly. But I am too old to fight, and it is cowardice on behalf of the young men who are doing all the fighting. My attitude is that I am not sufficiently altruistic to fight both Germany and Russia on behalf of Poland.

Mr. Pickthorn

Cambridge University (Conservative)

. . . This is a war, and wars are activities between States, and M. Stalin has told us that war remains war and aggression remains aggression. What was the cause of this war? The cause of this war was the infringement of Polish frontiers. It is a very common argument that it was a mere occasion, not the real cause, but that seems to me to be perfect nonsense. It is quite true, I have no doubt at all, there was going to be near the middle of the 20th century, or before it, another great European war, but not necessarily this war, beginning in 1939; this war is really the war which arose in a definite way and time and it is of the essence of this war that that was the way in which it arose. The "New Zealand Herald" put it on the 11th January:

"The war began through a certain British pledge to Poland. Habitually, such pledges have been kept."

I ask the House to consider the word "habitually"; it seems to me to be extremely well chosen.

I do not think that it is of great value now—if I may say so with respect to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—to argue exactly or legalistically what the pledges meant. I have them here. The words seem to me to be fairly clear, but really I see no great point in arguing now exactly what the pledge meant, or what words like 'guarantee,' "territorial integrity," "sovereignty," "independence" meant or mean. I do not think we need really worry about those words at the moment. But I can throw some light upon them from our Allies—and I will not tell hon. Members which one of our Allies said this:

"Any affiliation of a small or weak nation to a bigger and stronger State, without the former's consent and wish to be declared unequivocally, clearly and on its own accord," or "if this nation is not accorded the right to decide the form of its existence, as a State without any pressure, through free vote, while the Armed Forces of the affiliating State or any stronger State are removed completely, then such affiliation is an annexation, is foreign rule, and a crime."

I wonder if any Member can tell me where that comes from? It is the resolution of the second all-Russian Congress of 18th November, 1917.

I do not want to go by my own light into the question of what is annexation or what is not, but I wish to fortify myself from definitions of one or other of our great Allies at each turning point of my argument, and I do not think anyone can find anything to object to in that. But I do not think

really that much in the way of legalistic argument about what our contract was, or in relation to whom, is of much use to us now. Nor anything else except the answer to this common-sense question at the end of the day, however long that may be—and I have always thought it was going to be long. I would not dare yet to think that we were half-way through this common-sense question. Shall we be clearly seen to have done for each State on our side everything possible, everything which was not strictly and materially impossible? And especially for each State to which the war came because of its reliance upon our promises and upon our general principles of conduct. If by such fidelity we retain the reliance of Europe, then everything may be won back, even after never-mind-what defeats we may have had to go through. If we lose that reliance, then I believe that everything may be lost, even after victory; and we shall be half lost if we once begin arguing about legal interpretations of our promises, or if once begin doubting that we must do for fidelity everything that possible can be done—using those words with extreme strictness.

The House will bear with another quotation:

“Formerly, the principle self-determination of nations was usually misinterpreted. It was frequently narrowed down to mere cultural self-government. As a consequence, the idea of self-determination stood in danger of becoming transformed from an instrument to combat annexations into an instrument for justifying them.”

This comes from a book which is curiously unread. There is no copy in the House of Commons Library, although it seems to be the most important of all books at the moment for politicians, more important, even, than “Mein Kampf” was in 1938. It is a book called “Leninism,” and the author was Mr. Stalin. In it he was protesting against the idea of self-determination being transformed from an instrument to combat annexations into an instrument for justifying them. Believing in the importance of these principles, believing that the old European principles of decent relations between self-subsistent States and the old British principles of freedom are much older than democracy and that with them we can have the support of Europe and of our Allies, I very much welcomed the answer to a question my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary gave us the other day about our maintaining the principles which the Prime Minister had announced in 1940, which he himself announced in 1941, and which were contained in the Atlantic Charter.

But I must say that I am a little puzzled about the Atlantic Charter now. I never thought it was very much of a Charter—a disrespectful thing to say—and I always thought its name was slightly silly. But really I do not quite understand where it is now. You would have thought that it was fairly obvious our side was going to suffer annexations, and apparently it does not apply to the other side. I am a little baffled not about what it meant but about what they meant us to think it meant. There was one promise of this sort which my right hon. Friend did not recall to us in answer to the Parliamentary Question some two or three weeks ago. This was from another Minister, and perhaps the House will not mind me reminding them of this one; the Minister belonged to the party opposite. He said:

“I am proud of the fact that I was our spokesman when the Anglo-Polish Treaty was concluded. I spoke at that time—I was speaking then

for the Labor Party in opposition in Parliament—and said, ‘We have opposed many of the acts of foreign policy—it was the time of Chamberlain—now, though already late, we applaud the fact that you have cemented the alliances with Poland, made many years ago, in the whole range of collective security, with the Polish signature.’ We give full support to the Anglo-Polish alliance. In conclusion, I am a friend of your country, I love Poland, I admire Poland and I admire the future that you are going to build up.”

That was the President of the Board of Trade. (*Laughter.*) I am sorry, in a way, to be amusing because I was not setting out to be amusing. . . .

. . . The Prime Minister said that he hoped he would be pressed no further. One cannot press much further because one might do harm, but my right hon. Friend said one or two things which I think were illogical. He said he was still in favor of what has hitherto always been our principle and the principle of international law since I don’t know when, perhaps the 15th century—that annexation, territorial changes should all wait for the end of hostilities. But he then went on to say that anything in Poland east of the Curzon line ought to go and that it was a pity that Vilno had ever been Polish territory and so on. I think we should be awful idiots in the House if we got on to where the line should be drawn: but I thought I found a want of logic in that passage in my right hon. Friend’s speech. . . .

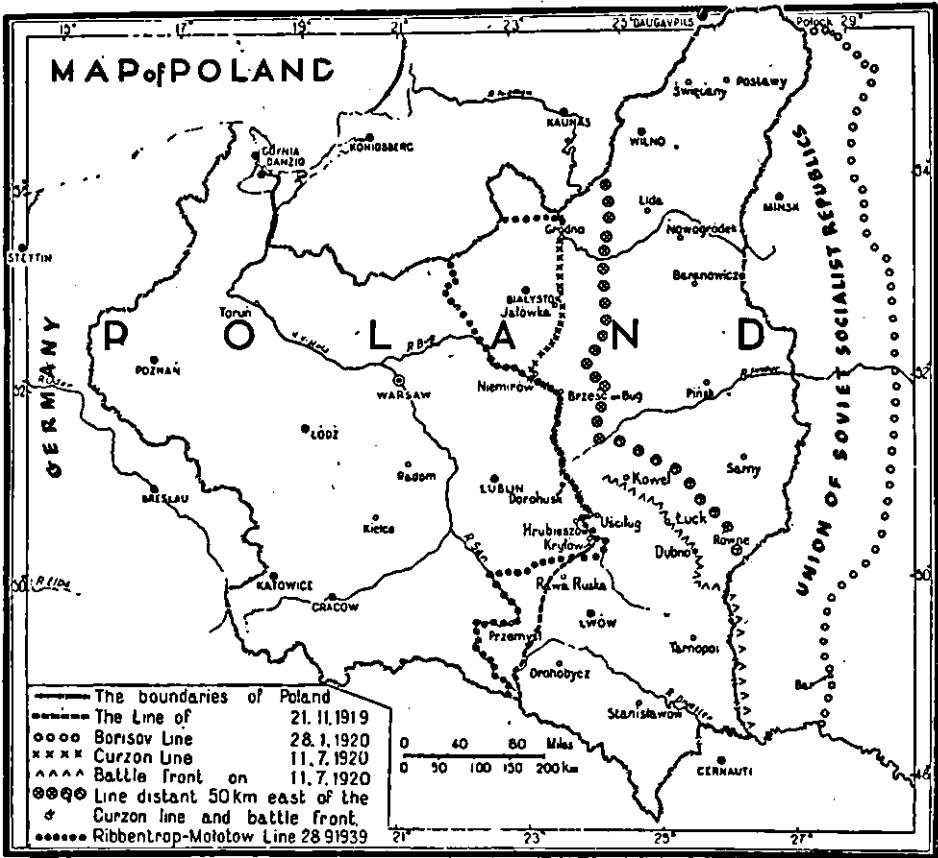
Mr. Gallacher

Fife, West (Communist)

Co-operation can only be built on a basis of confidence, and the thing that has been lacking in this country has been confidence in the Soviet Union. Was the hon. Member trying to create that confidence, so that we could get a basis of co-operation? He said that he was not criticizing the Soviet Union, but he gave quotations in a manner which said, “I am giving you a quotation to show you that in years gone by these people were honest.” The implication of that is that they are not honest now and that is what he was trying to convey. The hon. Member and others in this House, one of whom has spoken today, are in the closest possible association with the pro-Fascist type of Poles.

Mr. Pickthorn: The Pole I knew best was the leader of the Socialist Jewish Party in Poland.

Mr. Gallacher: I was with the hon. Member at Cambridge when the Finnish situation was on and the man he had with him was a Finnish Social Democrat and a lower blackguard I have never met. That’s the sort of company he keeps. The hon. Member for Wirral (Captain Alan Graham) talked about the difficult situation in Europe. He pointed out that the Lithuanians were against the Poles, the Poles against the Czechs, and the Czechs against the Austrians. I interjected, What about Russian foreign policy? In Russia there are innumerable diverse races, of all colors and religions. Some of



1. *The Boundaries of Poland.* The Polish-Russian frontier has been established by the Peace Treaty of Riga on March 18th, 1921. This frontier has been recognised by Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan, in a decision of the Ambassadors' Conference in Paris on March 15th, 1923. It has also been recognised by the United States on 5th April, 1923.

2. *The Line of November 21st, 1919.* The demarcation line of the Commission on Polish Affairs in connection with the proposed status of autonomous Eastern Galicia as a kind of Polish mandate under the League of Nations for a term of 25 years.

3. *The Borisov Line:* The Polish-Russian armistice line proposed by Lenin, Chicherin and Trotsky on January 28th, 1920.

4. *The Curzon Line:* Provisional line of December 8th, 1919, within which the Supreme Council authorised the Polish Government to organise immediately a regular administration. The declaration concluded that the rights which Poland may establish to territories situated east of the above-mentioned line are expressly reserved. This line was accepted by the Supreme Council in Spa on July 10th, 1920. The Russian Armies had to withdraw 50 km. to the east of this line.

5. *Battlefront on July 11th, 1920:* Southern extension of the Curzon Line.

For the convenience of readers we are printing above a map of Poland showing the "lines" put forward after the Great War in connection with the so-called Curzon Line.

them 20 years ago were a backward illiterate tribal people. Now they are in the forefront of education and culture and there is no question about the fact that they are all united. It is not a question of some dictatorship preventing them from expressing themselves, because they are expressing themselves not only culturally but in the closest possible unity in defence of the great Soviet land. The other night when we had a so-called Brains Trust at the Central Hall, someone asked "Has Poland to be thrown to the wolves?" I answered that I was prepared to trust the Soviet people and the Soviet Government to assist the Polish people to get rid of the wolves which had ravaged the land for centuries. There was not in Europe a more poverty-stricken and illiterate peasantry than the Polish peasantry.

Mr Wragg. (Belper) : Were they any worse than the Russian peasantry?

Mr. Gallacher: Even worse than the Russian peasants were under the Czars. There was not in Europe such a miserable, poverty-stricken illiterate people as Polish people.

Captain Graham: It is all the more strange, therefore, that that nation should have remained so completely united throughout history and that it is proving so difficult to find even enough Communists in that country to form a bogus Polish Government. In fact, they have to be brought from the United States and one or two from here.

Mr. Gallacher: You have to understand that long before there was Fascism in Germany there was Fascism in Poland and the Communists were exterminated.

Captain Graham: Will the hon. Gentleman explain what he means by "Fascism"? I have heard of it in Italy but not in any other country.

Mr. Gallacher: Under Pilsudski there was no question about the Fascist character of Poland, and there is no question of what happened to the Communists there. They were massacred.

Captain Graham: They were never massacred.

Mr. Gallacher: Read what happened to the Communists and to the progressive workers in Poland, and how the Fascists encouraged tame Social Democrats. Anybody who understands the mentality of the Members who interjected will realize that only Poles of a Fascist type would fit in with their opinions.

Major Vyvyan Adams

Leeds, West (Conservative)

. . . I wish to refer to what the Prime Minister said today about Poland. We are often apt to forget, or not to remember sufficiently tenaciously, that the occasion of this war was the German aggression against that country. Personally, I do not regret any forgetfulness there may be about that, although I personally am likely to remember, because if my memory is accurate,

it was Mr. Chamberlain who announced the British guarantee to Poland—but not to existing Polish frontiers—in answer to a question by myself in April, 1939. We have heard today on several occasions, and I underline this without any reservation, that no people have suffered more degrading cruelty than the Poles, and in particular the Jewish element in Poland. Their short, violent and tragic resistance will never be forgotten by other free peoples. To such Polish nationals as succeeded in making their escape to this country, we have been as hospitable and considerate as we could have hoped to be. That applies to both sexes of our population. We shall welcome the opportunity of their return in triumph to a land of their own. The hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Tinker) used a phrase which I deprecate. He said, "We went to war for Poland," and by the time the hon. Member for Shettleston (Mr. McGovern) had spoken our cause had shrunk to the Polish Corridor. But it is not only for Poland we are fighting. We are not fighting only for France or for any other single nation. We are not fighting only for the British Commonwealth of Nations. Certainly we are not fighting only for democracy. We are fighting for the freedom of the spirit of mankind. We are fighting to prevent Germany ever again being able to jeopardize that freedom. We ought by every conceivable means in our power to strengthen the powers of resistance everywhere.

Our Russian ally is entitled to the security of her frontiers. I do not think that modern Russia—I have said this almost *ad nauseam* on many occasions before the war and during the war—has any great territorial ambitions. What, however, she does desire, and, I think, legitimately, is the certainty of a margin of physical safety between her centres of government and the places which bred and fostered the evils of Nazism. This is no revolutionary doctrine: it is merely restating what the Prime Minister said today. I hope that no pedantic insistence on the former frontiers of Poland will be allowed to disturb the good will which should subsist between Russia and the Western Powers. If, as I hope may happen—as, in fact, has happened already—Russia, wishes her frontier to be further West than the line of 1939, let us not forget that there are areas of the German Reich which should certainly not be allowed to stay under any German sovereignty which may be permitted to survive. I see no geographical reason, and certainly no political reason, why East Prussia should be allowed to continue as a territory exclusively reserved for German inhabitants. Why should not that territory go to Poland, and the German population of East Prussia be sent somewhere else? It is quite wrong, it is pure sentimentality, to say that populations cannot be shifted from point to point. Germany knows perfectly well that they can be shifted. . . .

Dr. Haden Guest

Islington (Labor)

. . . I do not want to enter upon the very difficult terrain of Poland but I was very glad to hear the hon. and gallant Member for Epsom (Sir A. Southby), after making a very vigorous defence of the proposals on behalf of the Polish people, saying that he thought they ought to accept the Curzon

Line. I hope they will; I think it is a very admirable arrangement. . . .

Let me again remind the House, as I reminded them before, that there has been no meeting of the representatives of the United Nations as a whole since the end of 1941. There has been set up the organisation of U.N.R.R.A., the organization arising out of the Hot Springs Conference on food. There have been other valuable organizations of a subordinate character formed to act in the international field, but the main body, the Council of the United Nations, has not met since the end of 1941. It is to that Council that these very difficult matters of foreign policy—the relations between the Soviet Union and Poland, the relations between the different and conflicting elements inside the different countries, the direction of the underground movement and so on. It is on those matters that this Council ought to say wise and helpful words.

Mr. Stokes: May I interrupt my hon. Friend for a moment. When he speaks of the United Nation Government does he include amongst those the rather bogus emigré Governments here in this country, because they do not really represent the people.

Dr. Guest: I do not suppose for a moment that all the Governments are of equal status, but I take my stand on the perfectly simple proposition that if you are associated with, and fighting as the Ally of, any Government you have to take the government as it exists at the time. That may be thought to be in direct contradiction to what I have just been saying about helping on the democratic side; it is not. But until you have a Government of your own liking, a Government of a democratic kind, you must use and work with the Government you have. That is the answer to my hon. Friend, although he may not like it. . . .

Sir Edward Grigg

Altrincham (Conservative)

. . . Does the House remember—this is a very recent issue—that we guaranteed Czechoslovakia after the Munich surrender? What use was that to Czechoslovakia? We proceeded to guarantee Poland and Rumania. What was the use of that to Poland and Rumania? High principles, certainly; but a “stumer” cheque all the same. Let us bear that in mind as we proceed into a still more difficult era.

I remember a debate in this House in July, 1939. The only possibility of our honoring engagements we made in that spring was for us to come to terms with another great military Power in the East of Europe. Russia offered us a military alliance. The House debated that subject in July, 1939. I remember the Prime Minister getting up in his place in our old Chamber, and arguing strongly and eloquently, as he can, for the acceptance of that offer. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary also made a speech in the same terms in that Debate. How did we come not to accept the offer? I think for two reasons. First, we were perplexed and embarrassed by the difficulties made by the States neighboring on Russia. The other thing was

the suspicion of Russia, which could not be overcome. I remember an hon. Friend of mine—whom I shall not name—getting up and saying that the offer was a trap, set for us by Russia, which we should at all costs avoid. Looking back at what has happened since, I wonder whether it would not have been wise to be more realistic and to avoid making engagements which we had no prospect whatever of honoring.

The Prime Minister and many Members have spoken about Poland. I agree that Poland in this matter is the test case. Like, I am sure, all other Members, I feel that we cannot pay too high a tribute to Polish endurance and heroism in this struggle. The Poles have done magnificently in the underground resistance movement in Poland—I do not believe there has been a single Polish Quisling—and they have done magnificently fighting by our side elsewhere. There is nothing that could be said that would be too high praise for the gallant Polish people. But the Polish people, like another great people nearer home, have one great fault, an inveterate historical memory. Their history is a terrible history; all the same, I think it would be wise for them to remember at the present time that history is many-sided; that every nation has its own version, and is quite convinced that that version is the only right one. It has been said that you can prove anything from statistics: you can also prove almost anything, if you set about it, from history. We, who have some experience of difficult international questions, inside these islands and inside the Empire, have shown a wise capacity for forgetting. Take our relations with Scotland. Two hundred years ago, at the time of “the ’45,” our relations with Scotland and our treatment of Scotland were nothing of which we had reason to be proud, but we have managed to forget them. [HON. MEMBERS: “Scotland has not.”] Scotland is one of the small countries with an inveterate memory. The English people have been more tolerant and more ready to forget, not only the harm which they have done to other peoples, which is easy to forget, but also the harm which other people have done to them. The same is true of Canada; the same is true of South Africa. We have been wise in forgetting these things, and in cultivating friendly relations.

We have, just across the Irish Sea, another nation with an inveterate historical memory. I do not think anybody can say that that nation stands higher in the world at present because of its insistence on those memories. From all this, I should say that Eire and Poland are both a proof that too clear, too vivid, too intense a memory for historical events is fatal to its possessors. That is a thing to be borne in mind at the present moment, especially in regard to this matter of frontiers. I am not going to talk about frontiers in detail, because, in many cases I do not regard frontiers as the main issue. History will prove almost anything in regard to frontiers, as in everything else, and on this matter, if you are going to get a suitable settlement compromise between people who really want to get on together, that is essentially the course we have to pursue in many parts of the world.

On frontiers, I would most warmly endorse what was said by the Prime Minister, who spoke words of wisdom. What matters is not frontiers; what matters to us is a question of principle. It is the independence of Poland. That is what we guaranteed. By independence, I mean a country being strong, conducting its own affairs, choosing its own form of Government, able to

look to the future with security, and based on really strong foundations, which Poland has never yet been in all its history. There is no question whatever that it is our duty to make perfectly plain to the Russian Government where we stand on this principle—the independence of Poland and the independence of all small countries who have been, and wish to be again, nationally independent. I cannot believe that in this matter we are really fundamentally divided from Marshal Stalin. It is remarkable that in the papers today there is published a message of his to the Red Army, in which he used these words—important and remarkable words at the present moment:

“It is this community of fundamental interests which leads to the cementing of the fighting alliance between the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, Britain and the United States of America.”

What is the most fundamental interest that, in fact, unites us? Surely it must be to work on the same principles in regard to the independence and status of the smaller nations. The most fertile cause of trouble between great Powers is the way they behave to smaller Powers. All history shows that. There is no interest uniting us and Russia more fundamentally than that of arriving at common principles on this question of the treatment of the weaker Powers. . . .

Mr. G. Strauss
Lambeth North (Labor)

. . . The other matter I want to deal with is the statement of the Prime Minister concerning the difficulties which have arisen between Poland and Russia. I do not want to say anything of the contributions to the war of these two countries or of our admiration of their people. That is not my purpose. I want to comment upon the two declarations made by the Prime Minister. One was that Russia needed reassurance against future attack by a readjustment of her frontiers. The second was that Poland should be compensated by having some part of German territory in the north and the west. There may be excellent reasons for readjustment of this or the other boundary, and excellent ethnographic reasons. In this case there is such a reason. To suggest, however, that the alteration of boundaries can possibly create any reassurance to any country against further aggression is extraordinarily dangerous. To start with, it is nonsense.

Never in history has any boundary, however strategically favorable it may be, prevented a country from being attacked if another country wanted to attack it, and that is less likely today than ever since the aeroplane has come to play such a major part in war. Therefore, it is ridiculous to suggest that we should alter any boundaries in any part of Europe on strategical grounds so as to prevent further outbreak of German or other aggression. . . .

. . . The statement by the Prime Minister that East Prussia is to become part of Poland is a very important new declaration of policy. May I read what the right hon. Gentleman said, referring to his conversation with Mr. Stalin:

"I also spoke and agreed upon the need for Poland to obtain compensation at the expense of Germany on the North and in the West."
—[OFFICIAL REPORT, February 22nd, p. 44, col 698, Vol. 497.]

The Prime Minister agreed that a part of Germany—I assume that he meant East Prussia—should go to Poland. This is an important matter of principle, and it is a proposal with which I entirely disagree. I would like to know whether he was speaking for a United Government in this matter, whether the Labor leaders in the Government agree to this proposal, and whether it may be assumed that the Labor movement is committed by it. It has never been before the House and never agreed among my colleagues that Germany is to be cut up after the war. The proposal is wrong for a variety of reasons. It is not likely to lead to any settlement of European affairs but will lead, if carried out, to a grave weakening of European affairs. Moreover, it will be a piece of gross and stupid injustice. Let us consider the situation of East Prussia. By all tests it is a German territory inhabited by German people. By tests which have been made 97 per cent. of the people speak German.

Mr. Bull: All Poles speak German.

Mr. Strauss: German is the native language of 97 per cent. of the people. Of the plebiscites made by the League of Nations after the last war, one showed that 92 per cent. and another that 98 per cent. of the people of that country wanted to remain with Germany. It will not be denied that by history and culture the area is German. I have no sympathy for a moment, and nobody in the House will have, with the Prussian landlords who have dominated that country for far too long. By their behavior and outlook they have been the major enemies of European peace for a long time, and I want to see them uprooted and driven out. To suggest, however, that these German people, 2,500,000 of them, should be taken over by Poland, and that that will lead to any betterment in the European situation, or to permanent settlement, seems to me to be quite wrong in justice and to be bound to lead to the opposite result.

Mr. Boothby: This is an important matter and I would like to ask the hon. Gentleman one question. Does he regard Bismarck's Empire as sacrosanct, and does he want the future of Europe to be constructed on the basis of Bismarck's Empire?

Mr. Strauss: I do not think anything of the sort. I do not consider any boundary sacrosanct. I am prepared to change any boundary which can be shown to be dangerous from the ethnographic, historic and cultural points of view, but to change a boundary as the result of some quite outside reason affecting Poland because another bit of Poland is going somewhere else, and to do that for purely military reasons, is a change to which I am wholly opposed. . . .

. . . It does not seem difficult, if the United Nations are agreed and determined, to prevent another outbreak of war from Germany. It is, partly, a very simple technical problem. One has to deprive Germany of certain raw materials, and prevent any aeroplanes, military or civil, from being built in Germany, and the training of any German air crews. If you take those simple

technical precautions and are prepared to see them carried out, it is quite possible to prevent Germany from attacking another country. If there is determination by the United Nations to do that, then there will be no war, but if there is no agreement among the United Nations on this matter, you can readjust your frontiers how you like, and there will be war again. It may be asked whether Poland is not to be compensated for the loss of territory which may go to Russia for very good reasons, by being allowed to take under her domination some German territory.

Mr. Pickthorn (Cambridge University): May I interrupt the hon. Member for one second, honestly not attempting to be unfriendly, but because I am not quite sure that I am following his argument? I did gather a few minutes ago that the one reason for redrawing a frontier which was always wrong, was the strategic reason but that you could have an ethnographic reason. I understand now that the redrawing of frontiers on the Russian side may be right. Is that for strategic reasons, or for what sort of reasons?

Mr. Ivor Thomas (Keighley): The latest form of the proposal includes a suggestion that Koenigsberg should be in the Soviet Union. Does my hon. Friend's suggestion apply to that proposal also?

Mr. Strauss: Certainly. I am not an expert on these matters and I would not like to give a decisive answer, but there appears to be ethnographic grounds for accepting something like the Curzon line.

Mr. Pickthorn: Are we not getting rather dangerously near to racialism? How do we distinguish between racialism and ethnography?

Mr. Strauss: I would most strongly oppose the transfer of Koenigsberg, which is a wholly German city, and a stronghold of Social Democracy, by the way, any other country, unless the people of Koenigsberg were willing to do so. To insist upon it for strategic grounds would be wholly wrong.

I am sorry that I have been so long over my speech, but I have been interrupted very much. I only want to make one more point. What is fair compensation to the people of Poland, for being deprived of some of their previous territory? What the people of Poland want is prosperity. They want employment and peace and to be able to live a decent life.

Mr. Pickthorn: They want to be Poles, as the English people want to be English.

Mr. Strauss: The Polish Government may want something different, but it seems to me that ample compensation for the people of Poland would be to see to it that they got all the materials needed by them, in the way of machinery for their agriculture and industries, fertilisers, and electrical development facilities, to build up a prosperous economy. Poland has been poor and restless in the past, largely for lack of those things, and for lack of credit and other facilities which would enable her to build up a prosperous economy. Provide those facilities for Poland and make Poland a prosperous country. Insist, if you like, that the Germans supply that machinery and materials, and I do not think that Poland will have any grievance whatever. In fact, she would be a far happier country than she has ever been before. . . .

Mr. Hore-Belisha

Plymouth-Devonport (Independent)

. . . It has been stated in Moscow that the Soviet Union intend to exert in peace-time on world affairs an influence corresponding to the investment which they have made in war. Who can complain of that? It is, however, an expansionist policy. There is a policy towards neighbors. My hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham (Sir E. Grigg), in his most interesting and suggestive speech, stated that the policy of Russia towards her neighbors had been defined in some speeches from which I think he read extracts. I am going to look at the facts because the Russians know what they are doing, and they are quite candid about it. Some of Russia's neighbors have been incorporated in Russia already. The other neighbors are to enjoy independence, but the crucial question is, what does independence mean in this context. That is the crucial question. Independence can be enjoyed on three precisely defined conditions. The first is, that these independent nations do not group themselves together in such a way as to form what is called a *cordon sanitaire*. The second condition is that their frontiers correspond with the requirements of Russia's strategic security. The third is that they have Governments which are well-disposed towards Russia.

There is no concealment; that is the policy of Russia towards her neighbors. The illustration of it is now being afforded in the case of Poland. It was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham that we went to war to preserve the independence of Poland. I do not think we went to war for any such reason. We went to war to substantiate the principle of negotiation. We were not adhesive to any particular Polish frontier. Was that frontier to be revised by the free consent of the peoples concerned or was the solution to be imposed by force? That was the issue. I take it that my right hon. Friend's opportune restatement that His Majesty's Government will not consent to any territorial adjustments, except by way of a freely negotiated settlement with the peoples concerned, still holds, and must hold. I think my right hon. Friend showed wisdom and courage in restating that proposition.

Mr. Riley (Dewsbury): Who restated it?

Mr. Hore-Belisha: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, the other day. I hope what we heard yesterday about the Curzon line is not to be taken as prejudicing in advance that freely negotiated settlement. It would, indeed, be paradoxical and unjust if, having assisted Poland to protect her western frontier from a slight revision, we were to press her contrary to her own intentions and the powers of her Government to sacrifice one-third of her country in the east. I quite agree—and I think the House must agree—that it is desirable that a working accommodation should be reached between these two countries. I have no doubt that under the experienced and impartial handling of my right hon. Friend the conditions will be created in which such an accommodation can be reached. But what I want to assure myself of is this: that we stand where we have always stood in this matter—in favor of the principle of negotiation. If that principle is sacrificed in any particular then there is no assurance that the new world will be any better than the old. I only pause to make that observation because I think hon.

Members should speak their minds on this question in order that there may be no mistake about what British public opinion might be.

There is the wider Russian foreign policy. There is the constitutional revision. Whatever the internal implications—

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Eden): I hope my right hon. Friend will allow me to interrupt so that there shall not be any misunderstanding. He was not implying, I am sure, in what he said, and in his remarks about what I said—by which, of course, I stand—that His Majesty's Government themselves would not be entitled to have an opinion, and express that opinion to their Allies.

Mr. Hore-Belisha: I have no desire to suggest that His Majesty's Government should not have an opinion. I want to assure myself on the statement that during the war no territorial rearrangements will be recognized unless they are freely negotiated.

Mr. Stokes: From behind the scenes?

Mr. Hore-Belisha: The Polish Government are in a difficult position. Being an emigré Government, they suffer from certain inhibitions which might not govern other Governments.

Mr. Mack: Is the right hon. Gentleman suggesting that the present Polish emigré Government rightfully represents the people of Poland?

Mr. Hore-Belisha: I suggest that they do in the sense that other emigré Government represent their people, as, for instance, Dr. Benes' Government's representative of Czechoslovakia.

Mr. Stokes: They are not.

Mr. Hore-Belisha: Well, they are the only Government with whom it is possible to deal. A treaty was made with the Polish Government, not only by ourselves but by the Russians. I feel satisfied with what my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary says if he reiterates that declaration. I have confidence in the impartiality of his judgment and I wish that the Poles also shall have that confidence. Therefore, I hope that the reference to the Curzon Line is not to be taken as prejudging that case. If it is to be so taken, then the good offices are, in some sense, compromised.

Before I leave this question of Poland may I say—because I think it is one's duty at this juncture to say what one thinks in these matters—that there is a proposal to compensate Poland for an adjustment of her boundaries on the east in favor of Russia by a gain of territory at the expense of Germany on the west. None of us in this House can have any tender feelings towards Germany, nor can anybody be so narrow as to hold the opinion that frontiers can never be adjusted. Of course they can be adjusted. I only want to enter this *caveat*. If it is proposed to resort to the uprooting of a great bulk of the German population and its transference somewhere else, then I think there is a risk that you will create another *irridenta* in Europe. . . .

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Eden)

. . . Let me say one word about Poland, and it will only be one word, because the House will understand that the Prime Minister's words which he used yesterday were very carefully chosen, that we are still in negotiation, the outcome of which all of us have very much at heart, and I may only too easily say something which might make our task harder than it is. The right hon. Gentleman the Prime Minister said:

“Marshal Stalin and I also spoke and agreed on the need for Poland to obtain compensation at the expense of Germany both in the North and in the West.”—[OFFICIAL REPORT, February 22nd; col. 698, Vol. 497.]

The hon. Member for North Lambeth said that he did not take exception to that because of the action which he conjured up of a possible large transference of German territory to Poland and so on. I am not going into that at this time, and quite obviously, whatever is done or is agreed, if agreement is reached and when it is reached, it will come before the House, but I do want to put this consideration before the House. The hon. Gentleman was speaking as though the position in that part of Europe could bear some parallel to the position at the outbreak of the war. It bears hardly any. An enormous and horrible transformation has taken place, for instance, over the whole of what was formerly Western Poland. Germany has removed populations wholesale from vast tracts of territory, millions of people, and in many cases they are now dead. The position is, as the Prime Minister said yesterday, and, I ought to add, said with the knowledge and approval of his colleagues, that he and Stalin spoke and agreed upon the need for Poland to obtain compensation at the expense of Germany in the North and West. That represents the position of His Majesty's Government. . . .