

# A Grave Injury to the League of Nations

## The Polish Attack on Russia

By an English Correspondent

THE campaign of the Poles against Russia is a bitter disappointment not only to English Liberals, but to all Englishmen who believe in the League of Nations. A month or two ago it seemed likely that the way would at last be opened for the revival of Eastern Europe and for a great campaign against the typhus and destitution which are ravaging the greater part of it. Koltchak had disappeared, Denikin was a refugee, Esthonia had made peace, Rumania and Lithuania were quietly negotiating, and the Bolsheviks themselves were holding out to Poland, as it was put by a well-informed observer on the spot, "every conceivable bribe" to come to terms. At the same time Mr. Lloyd George had advised Poland to make peace.

It was known, on the other hand, that France was now, as always, averse to Poland making peace with the Bolsheviks. Poland is the keystone of the new French diplomacy. We are all of us for a free and independent Poland consisting of people who are genuinely Polish by race. But the new Poland, many people say, could not stand alone; she would require to be supported and upheld against possible enemies, however pacific might be her conduct toward her neighbors. Very well, we reply, let an independent and pacific Poland have the full support of an active and functioning League of Nations against all aggressors. But that is not the French view. The French—I speak of the directors of foreign and military policy—have no faith in sentimentalism (as they think it) about the League of Nations. They look on Poland as a pawn in the French game. The old Russia, which used to be the counterpoise to Germany in the east, has gone and a doubtful, even hostile, Russia has risen in its place. France hates the new Russia and fears the new Germany. She aims at the creation of a great and powerful Poland which will help her other client states (like Rumania) to form a ring around Germany and which will be hostile to Bolshevik Russia as long as Russia remains Bolshevik. In the French view Poland may serve to do what Denikin, Koltchak and the Allies have failed to do—overthrow the Bolshevik régime. Polish ambition—the Poles were ever ambitious with a capacity that never equalled their ambition—falls in neatly with French policy. So there is the explanation of the new Russo-Polish war. Mainly it springs from Polish megalomania and French diplomacy. And the greater issues—the peace and restoration of Europe, the establishment of the new order of things that we understood by the name of the League of Nations—these may go hang for all that the Polish landlords and the French militarists care.

Not that the responsibility rests wholly upon France among the great Allied Powers of Europe. British munitions also are being used by the Poles against Russia and more are still to go if the British dockers will consent to ship them, which is now extremely unlikely. Mr. Bonar Law has attempted very unsuccessfully to defend this gift of war supplies to Poland. He says that on the one hand the British Government told Poland some time ago that she must decide the question of peace or war herself and that if she went to war England would take no responsibility for the results. At the same time he says that England promised a consignment of munitions to Poland last October because at that time Poland was menaced by a Bolshevik offensive and that it is not England's fault if Poland used the munitions for attack. Unfortunately, the facts are against Mr. Law, for in October last, Denikin and Judenitch were at the height of their successes; it had never seemed so likely as it did then that the Bolsheviks were about to be overthrown and never certainly since the revolution of November, 1917, had the Poles been so secure from attack. We wonder here whether once more we are in the presence of the old division in the counsels of the British Government—Mr. Lloyd George for peace with and in Russia and other forces working quietly but persistently to support any and every campaign against Bolshevik Russia by whomsoever waged.

What are the bare facts about this Polish war and its inevitable results? When the Poles launched their attack they were already 200 miles deep in Russian territory—200 miles, that is to say, east of the lines where true Polish nationality comes to an end. Roughly speaking, this advance brought them up to the eastern frontiers of the old Polish Empire of 1772 and there is a party in Poland which now demands that that frontier should be restored—in other words, that a population of 30,000,000 people, mainly non-Polish, should be added to geographical Poland, as it stood at the close of the war. There are other Poles who say that Poland does not desire to annex these vast areas of Russia in defiance of the wishes of the inhabitants but would invite the inhabitants to "determine" themselves by plebiscite. Others, again, declare that Poland desires to set up a series of buffer states between herself and Russia and to take them—Lithuania for example—under her "protection."

The various Russian nationalities, however, detest the Poles, having no cheerful memories of Polish misgovernment and oppression in the days before the partitions of Poland and there is not in fact the slightest doubt that the Poles are pursuing a policy, in one form or another, of spoliation. How absurd is their claim either to annex or to "protect" the Russian territories which they have seized may be judged from the figures which were compiled in 1911 to show the nationality of the various sections of the population. The following are the nine territories principally concerned and the figures are percentages:

Territory	Population Jan. 1, 1909	Russians	Poles	Jews	Others
Kovno	1,611,931	9.6	3.6	16.2	70.6
Vilno	1,815,215	57.2	15.3	13.9	13.6
Grodno	1,762,398	76.7	4.7	17.8	0.8
Vitebsk	1,728,623	67.0	3.4	11.6	18.0
Minsk	2,360,707	81.4	4.3	13.9	0.4
Mogilev	2,133,852	85.0	2.7	12.0	0.3
Volynsk	3,367,300	75.0	6.8	13.9	4.3
Kiev	4,429,542	83.7	2.9	12.7	0.7
Podolsk	3,394,654	85.6	2.0	12.2	0.2

In all these territories the Poles have 4.67 per cent against 73.2 per cent Russians. They have, therefore, no claim on the ground of nationality to annex or "protect" or occupy and no one in fact pretends that the inhabitants would tolerate Polish sovereignty or suzerainty one moment after they were able to throw it off. In all the many provinces of old Russia which the Poles have seized there is only one—Kholm—to which by right of nationality they have a title, for there they have 66.1 per cent of the inhabitants. Their campaign is, therefore, imperialism of the most naked kind and it is all the worse because there is nothing whatever in the history and character of the Poles to make one believe that even if they possessed this vast territory they could administer it efficiently, hold it together, benefit its inhabitants or protect them against external aggression. The Poles have always been an ambitious and a conquering race but never a race of statesmen and administrators. If they do nothing else they will succeed in uniting the whole of old Russia against them on the east. Germany they already have against them on the west. What incredible folly and madness for a young state to whom almost all the world wishes well! Does Poland suppose that in the days to come she will be able to stand alone against a hostile Russia and Germany—she with her few millions against their many scores of millions? Or does she fondly think that the Allies—France, England and Italy—will bring armies to her support when the consequences of her own folly come upon her? No one knows, but the phrase which is used here widely—the Polish "madness"—is a sober and accurate description of her policy.

This war ought never to have been allowed. Poland is in no position to resist the advice and recommendations of the Allied Powers in Europe—France, England and Italy. She is almost bankrupt and racked by destitution and disease. She can only wage war with foreign support and assistance. It was the clear duty of the Allies, if they learned that Poland meant to attack Russia, to bring the moderating influence of the League of Nations to bear and prevent war. For what other purpose does the League exist than this and what better opportunity has there been since the signing of the Covenant for applying it to its true purpose? Poland is herself a signatory of the League Covenant. Lord Curzon has declared that the League could not be invoked because Russia is not a member of it—an astonishing utterance from the British Foreign Secretary, since the Covenant specifically contemplated cases in which one or the other of the parties involved would not be members of the League. Contrast the Polish war with the words of Article XI of the League Covenant:

"Any war or threat of war, whether immediately affecting any members of the League or not, is hereby declared a matter of concern to the whole League, and the League shall take any action that may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations. In case any such emergency should arise the secretary shall, on the request of any member of the League, forthwith summon a meeting of the Council."

In other words, "any member" of the League might have had the Council summoned to consider what should be done to prevent a war which aggravates and prolongs the agony of Central and Eastern Europe and which threatens grave consequences for the future. For if the Poles crush the Bolsheviks, what follows? No possible Russia—least of all a White Imperial Russia—will tolerate the rape of the vast territories which will fall into Polish hands. There indeed would be the seeds of an "inevitable" war. But if the Bolsheviks defeated the Poles, then no one can say what will become of the whole Polish settlement as laid down in the Treaty of Versailles.

All this might have been foreseen, and ought to have been foreseen, yet none of the Allied Powers sought the assistance of the League of Nations. It is unquestionably a severe blow to the prestige and dignity of the League. That France should have ignored the League is not surprising, for France desired and approves the Polish war. But with the British Government, or with part of it, the case is otherwise. Mr. George certainly on the whole desires peace with Russia and disapproved quite recently the idea of a Polish war. Why, then, did he not invoke the League? Because he, like all the European statesmen, is not prepared to make the League an active, responsible, functioning body. He prefers to act through the Supreme Council, not the League. In other words, he prefers to dictate the course of Europe through a small council composed of himself, M. Millerand and Signor Nitti, and sometimes himself and M. Millerand alone. It is useless to deceive ourselves. The League of Nations is needed as urgently as ever. There is all-important work which it ought to do or could do. The case of Poland proves it. If Poland were a sincere member of the League, if France and England had been loyally determined to use the League in order to prevent a fresh and most horrible and dangerous war, great tracts of Eastern Europe would not now be condemned to a further term of want and misery, with more wars looming in the future. But there is no loyalty to the League about many of our European statesmen and public opinion is too much occupied with wages and prices and rents and house shortages to bring the statesmen to account.

The prospect for the League of Nations is gloomy in the extreme because our most highly placed men in Europe are not loyal to it in spirit and in truth, are not prepared to surrender to it any jot or tittle of the personal authority which they wield as dictators in their little secret councils. That is the root of the trouble. And yet one ought not to despair. In England we have firm and ardent adherents of the League in the Labor party and Lord Robert Cecil.

My view may be unpopular with many people in America but I shall continue to assert that there will be no true or sufficiently powerful League of Nations until the United States comes in with its idealism, detachment and (last, but far from least) material power. If the retort be made that this Polish war and the conduct of France and England in respect of it do not encourage the United States to join the League, I should reply that had the United States been already an active member of the League, this Polish war would never have taken place, that a League without the United States is just a farce, that the United States more than any Power is responsible for the idea and the realization of the League, that it must come in some time and that from the standpoint of humanity I would have it come in now and at once, when it can do most good.

### Primitive Mexican Bake Ovens



BAKING bread in New England and baking bread among the native Mexicans of our southwestern states are quite different propositions. In the yard of almost every Mexican dwelling there is an oval-shaped mud oven like those in the illustration, which is used by the native women for baking their *tortillas* and sometimes even light bread as we know it. *Tortillas* (pronounced, tor-teel-yahs) are flat, pancake looking portions of unleavened and unshortened wheat bread, baked without grease, either in an oven like these or on the top of a stove. Though very palatable, in many cases they are hard to digest except in the time-hardened stomach of the native *peon*.

The Mexican housewife never uses a rolling-pin or board. She is so skilled that she can roll out even, round *tortillas* by throwing them from one hand to the other.

The oven is heated by building a large fire inside it and closing the lower opening, leaving only a small draft. After the sun-dried mud gets hot enough to hold the heat needed for baking, the fire is removed, the oven mopped out, the raw dough inserted, openings closed and the baking proceeds with as good results as an electric range. The Mexicans and Indians are alone in the use of these ovens.