

PUBLIC OPINION

POLISH SETTLEMENT: A WHITE RUSSIAN'S VIEWS

Sir,—I am replying to "Traditional Mind," not in defence of "The Advocate," which does not need it. It seems that "Traditional Mind" errs sincerely, and I don't doubt many people regard the Yalta decisions with the same mis-givings.

The Yalta agreement was not a compromise; it was the first serious step to uphold the Atlantic Charter in letter and spirit. That Russian and Ukrainian people were under Polish domination for 20 years doesn't mean that they have to be tied to Poland for ever—that is, if the Atlantic Charter means anything.

My right to speak on the question is this. I am a White Russian (a term which has no political meaning, only historical and ethnic). I lived in that country which is now under dispute until 25 years of age, and I have been in almost every corner of White Russia, or, as it is now often called in the vernacular, Bielorussia. I have not been in that part of the disputed country which formerly belonged to Austria, but lived close enough to be interested in it, and I know it at least more than any Australian.

Following the Tartar invasion of Russia in the 13th century White Russia was left outside Tartar influence. She was not strong enough to hold her own, and eventually fell completely under Polish rule in 1569. It is easy to imagine what happened in the age of religious intolerance, when militant Roman Catholics found themselves masters of "heretics" professing Greek orthodox religion. One of the results was that by the time White Russia came under Russian rule through the partition of Poland, not an acre of land in the country belonged to a White Russian. All was the property of Polish nobles, and White Russian people were their serfs, or, more correctly, slaves. Serfs were liberated by the Czar in 1860. But they were given so little land they could make their miserable living only by combining work on their own land with that on estates of big landlords. Czars held too much respect for "sacred private property," as they often phrased it, to take land from Polish landlords and give it to White Russian people as rightful owners.

So it continued right up to the present war: Polish landlords owned the land and White Russians were the workers. Moreover, Polish landlords hardly ever lived in the country. Very few would occasionally have a peep at the source of their enormous incomes, and hurry back to Paris. Many were born, lived long lives, and died

abroad without ever visiting their estates. White Russian people were working on their landlords' estates for 3d. to 6d. a day, from sunrise to sunset.

If you travel without visiting towns you may travel from one end of the country to the other, and never met any people but White Russian peasants. Many were converted in the past to the R.C. religion, but the majority held fast to their Greek Orthodox "heresy." All speak the same White Russian language. There are some villages with Polish peasant population towards Poland, and, in the Vilna district, here and there, a few isolated Polish working farmers—"szlachta." Towns populated mostly with Jews. There are only a few Poles in small towns, but the bigger the town the more Poles, and the biggest, Vilna, had a Polish majority.

All I have said of White Russia applies also to the other part of the disputed territory, which, after the partition of Poland, was allotted to Austria and known as Galicia. Landowners are Polish nobles, and the landless population Ukrainians, who call themselves Russins—that is, Russians. The similarity to White Russia covers even details, as the only place where Poles are in the majority is their capital, Lvov.

What happened to Poland after the last war ought to be known to everyone who takes enough interest in the subject as to write about it to the papers. In any case I give an outline. The founder of the modern Polish State was General Pilsudski. He hoped for German victory, and was so sure of it that he was fighting with his Polish volunteers on the German side against the Allies. But the Allies, after the German defeat, were so anxious to build a barrier against Bolshevism that they overlooked this disagreeable detail and took Pilsudski under their protection. Yet they did not give him a free hand. The leading spirit of the Allies was the English Foreign Minister, Lord Curzon. If he hated anything it was Soviet Russia. But he was an Englishman to the core; his English sense of fair play prevailed, and after an honest investigation he drew a fairly correct ethnic line between Poland and Russia, known since as the Curzon Line, and which was approved by the Allied Council.

But General Pilsudski was not to be ordered. He thought Russia by that time was not much more than a corpse

ordered. He thought Russia by that time was not much more than a corpse, and attacked Russia without declaring war. He advanced as far as Kiev, which he sacked; then was badly beaten and Russians chased him right to Warsaw. Alarmed, France sent military help to Poland, and the Russians were defeated. The Soviet Government was forced to accept the frontier line which existed up till the present war. In such a way two million White Russians and six million Ukrainians were torn from their respective republics within the Soviet Union and incorporated in the Polish State.

It seems to me the abovementioned facts are quite sufficient to justify Russia in her claim for disputed territories, but I don't believe the Soviet Union would be so insistent if there were no other more serious consideration. These are ill-treatment of White Russians and Ukrainians by the Polish rulers. Here is what Lord Curzon said: "Poland was restored. But instead of a fine-spirited and generous people emerging from 120 years of subjugation, and justifying the sympathy and hopes of liberalism throughout the world, there appeared an aggressive, vindictive and pitiless dictatorship, which set itself at once to the zestful persecution of the unfortunate ethnic minorities (one-third of the population) caught in the net of its all too ample boundaries. In the treatment of Ukrainians and Ruthenians" (German name for White Russians) "involved in the liberation Poland equalled any of the atrocities which had been the burden

of her song during the years of her martyrdom."

Some atrocities committed by Polish rulers against Russians and Ukrainians are simply incredible. The milder ones include gaoling parents for teaching at home their children in their own tongue, and conversion by force of people into the R.C. religion and registering them as Poles for census purposes. If "Traditional Mind" takes such an interest in Poland, he ought to remember the incident when, at the League of Nations Assembly, a question was raised about persecution of ethnic minorities in Poland. Polish delegates demonstratively walked out. That ended the inquiry. It was not Japan and Italy that first flouted the League of Nations. They learned it from Poland, and knew they could do it with impunity. The first time Poland flouted the League was when it seized Vilna and district from another member of the League, Lithuania, and refused to give it up, in defiance of a League order.

After reading what I have written of Poland, one might ask a question: "Are Polish people really as bad as that?" Well, I have never said a word of Polish people;

Polish people really as bad as that? Well, I have never said a word of Polish people; I am talking of Polish rulers. That makes the difference. Polish people never had a chance. Pilsudski promulgated a fine democratic constitution in 1921, but it was never wholeheartedly put into practice. After breaking it almost every day Pilsudski in 1927 (if I remember the correct date) frankly abolished it, and promulgated another constitution, this time Fascist, which has been in operation ever since. In this constitution, among other dictatorial clauses, the president of the republic has a right to appoint his successor. That point has been an important bearing on the legality of the Polish Government in London. When Hitler attacked Poland the Polish president fled to Switzerland and claimed his Swiss nationality. He was reassured that his nationality was never withdrawn. Then he appointed his successor, who at present is a head of the Polish Government in London. And so it happens that a foreigner was ruling a Poland and a foreigner appointed the present Polish Government in London. It is only fair to ask: Is it not too cheeky of the Government to question the legality of the Polish Government in Lublin? It seems Churchill and Roosevelt could not have gone far wrong in renouncing a Government which really never was a Government.

Finally it occurs to me: Every Australian knows something about a referendum and its meaning. Why don't Russia and Poland settle their territorial dispute by referendum? That is the fairest way to solve the problem. Yet neither Russian nor Polish Governments ever suggested it. Why. I profess my ignorance.—S. SUTCHKOFF (Edith Creek).

PIGEON'S FLIGHT.

Sir.—Re the letter in "The Advocate" regarding a pigeon's remarkable flight "Pigeon Fancier" asks for some other flyers' views on the matter. Well, a youngster five weeks old is hardly fit to fly around the loft, let alone undertake such a long journey as mentioned. I, like "Pigeon Fancier," think this bird must surely have been a lot older.—JACK GRIFFIN (Queenstown).

Sir.—I, like "Pigeon Fancier," am of opinion that the pigeon that was reported to have flown from Hobart to Ulverstone was considerably older than five weeks. I have read books and numerous articles written by some of the greatest authorities in the world on pigeon racing and breeding, especially on long-distance flying, and have no recollection of reading of such a remarkable performance by a bird five weeks old. Most of them recommend starting birds on their first distance

weeks old. Most of them recommend starting birds on their first distance tosses at approximately seven months. I have bred and raced birds with success, and my experience is that young birds at five weeks have only just left their nests and are still being fed by their parents, and seldom (if ever) have taken to the air. In my opinion a bird of five weeks, if it had the intelligence, would not have the physical ability to fly over 100 miles. — AN OTHER FANCIER.

TOBACCO RATIONS

Sir,—Being a returned serviceman with 2½ years' service in the Middle East, I was more than disgusted, after reading Mr. E. V. Knight's statement made at Burnie branch of the Fathers' Association, at the amount of tobacco or cigarettes issued to P's.O.W. — 10 cigarettes or 6 ozs. tobacco per fortnight, as against the ration for returned servicemen. My issue should be 8 ozs. tobacco per month, but for some unaccountable reason, on presenting myself to my local store for tobacco I was informed that my monthly ration ending approximately 20th March, was cut down to 5 ozs.

What I should like to know is why should P's.O.W. be treated better than returned servicemen, and why should returned servicemen's rations be cut by over 35 per cent.

In fairness to all returned servicemen I think that at least they should be put on an equal footing with prisoners of war.—C. A. IVORY, (Ulverstone).

POLISH CORRIDOR

Sir,—There is one hopeful thing about a power politician; if enough people keep hammering an idea into his head he at last comes to believe it.

Take the Polish Corridor question for instance. Round about 1936 one Adolf Shickelgrueber — alias Adolf Hitler — tried to show people that, in his opinion, the Polish corridor was an anomaly which would have to be rectified. Nobody, especially the Poles, appeared to agree with him at the time. In fact, so much did British politicians, from Chamberlain to Duff Cooper and Churchill, disagree, that they threw down the glove to Hitler on the very issue of Polish territorial integrity. However, one Yossef Djugashville — alias Joseph Stalin — saw Hitler's point and, in collaboration, they redrew the map of Poland, being much vilified by Downing street for doing so.

Unfortunately everything then went

Unfortunately everything then went wrong for a while. Hitler drew yet another map of Poland; Downing street found itself in the same boat as Stalin; empires rocked on their foundations, millions suffered and died, but it all came right in the end. Mr. Eden and Mr. Churchill are now convinced that the Polish corridor is, after all, a completely unworkable proposition and the map of Poland must once again be redrawn in order to ensure a lasting settlement of the Mad Continent —SOME HOPER.

GOVERNMENT HOMES AT DEVONPORT

Sir,—It is now clear that what I understood to be the case is correct—that the difference between the Devonport Council and the Agricultural Bank over the Gunn street drainage is a matter of some £16/7/6. Warden Ingledew explains in his letter that he reported to the council that "the bank's offer to bear one half of the cost of £32/15/ is unreasonable and cannot be entertained." Why the council should have endorsed this report is hard to understand. Why cannot the offer be entertained? What principle is at stake? When the bank's 10 homes are rated there will probably be some £100 a year of new revenue for the council. Refusal to agree to the compromise offered may hold up other buildings by the bank.—PROPERTY OWNER (Devonport).

GREECE.

Sir,—Re J. R. Bound's statement ("Advocate," 26/2/45) that Mr. Grant and myself continue to vilify the democratic movement in Greece. Neither Mr. Grant nor myself would associate such atrocities as were committed against women and children in Greece by E.A.M. and E.L.A.S. with democracy. Civil war is one of the most revolting acts men ever conceived. Associate it with oligarchy or autarchy if you like, but not with democracy.

With regard to J. R. Bound's challenge concerning Mr. Churchill having used Marshal Stalin's authority for saying E.L.A.S. was a Trotskyite organisation, evidently he knows more than we do about such matters. In the last paragraph of his two letters appearing 3/2/45 are these sentences: "Mr. Churchill's remarks about Trotskyites are on a par with his remarks "Mr. Churchill's remarks about Trotskyites are so named because they follow the same line as Trotsky and his followers did in Russia. They pose as leaders of the working class, even as Communists. They are adept at the

Communists. They are adept at the misrepresentation of events. Their role is disruption and provocation. No doubt they were present in Greece." Other-

wise E.A.M. and E.L.A.S would have followed close on the heels of the evacuating Huns, at the same time welcoming any assistance the Allies were prepared to give in order to prevent German reinforcements reaching the Russian front. I daresay they did pose as Fascists during the German occupation, as J. R. Bound stated.—E. S. MARTIN (Lake Margaret).

POLAND

Sir,—E. S. Martin, in crossing swords with "Traditional Mind" ("Advocate," 3/3/45) has given me at least something to think about. His summary of the formation of Poland's frontiers from 1917 to 1920 makes it plain that Poland has no ground for disclaiming Yalta and demanding the return to her 1939 frontiers. Now, I am sure that if Mr. Martin knows so clearly all this Polish history in little Tasmania, Downing Street must have been equally familiar with it in September, 1939. Why, then, did those very responsible authorities lay all emphasis on the fact—note it well—that the British Empire stood for peace or war on the very issue of Polish "territorial integrity?" Am I to believe that "Polish territorial integrity" was deliberately made an issue, as was the Sarajevo incident and the "scrap of paper" in 1914? And why, knowing the facts, did Downing Street so violently oppose the Russian partition of Poland in 1940?

Because I am of the generation which fights a global war began a mere 20 years after the "war to end war" I have a right to know the true answers to these vital questions. I am deeply grateful to Mr. Martin for his facts and for the spotlight he has thrown on the matter.—INQUIRING MIND.

A GARDEN PEST

Sir,—There seems to be a plague of earwigs in at least some parts of the North-West Coast. Cabbages, lettuce, dahlias, roses, the foliage of beans and loganberries, etc., are all infested with the pests, which do a lot of damage to fruits, vegetables and flowers. I've used traps and boiling water, but the earwigs increase in thousands. It's disheartening. I've even found them in our beds! And they can give a nasty puncture with their tails.

tails.

Ballarat, in Victoria, has also suffered from a plague of earwigs, and last week declared war on them. All residents were supplied with a certain effective preparation, and Friday, March 2, was the day appointed for the poison to be scattered around gardens and fences. It would be to the advantage of the North-West Coast to follow the example of Ballarat and make a determined combined effort to exterminate this destructive pest. I'm sure Ballarat would be only too happy to supply information. — EXTERMINATE EARWIGS.

FREE ENTERPRISE VERSUS GOVERNMENT CO-ORDINATION.

Sir,—I will content myself with pointing out a few of the most obvious inconsistencies appearing in Mr. B. Horton's two letters of February 27. One is devoted to the support of apparently unlimited freedom of private enterprise; in another he trusts that "order and obedience" will be imposed upon strikers. His work is all that an industrialist has to sell; surely, then, according to Mr. Horton's reasoning he should be at liberty to sell or withhold it as he pleases. On the face of it, it would seem that certain workers are taking undue advantage of war conditions, but has capital never taken advantage of unemployment conditions to impose starvation wages upon the workers?

Again, Mr. Horton tells us that a co-operative movement which would embrace every need of mankind, from the cradle to the grave (not much scope for private enterprise here) would establish a better world, where want would be unknown, the barriers between nations would be broken down by the exchange of raw materials, and wars and industrial strife would be abolished. Exactly, but in order to be effective this movement must be on a State-wide basis; moreover, it would have to be subject to regulation, as there would always be some who would try to get more than their share for themselves. The truth is that the establishment of a new order will always be fraught with much difficulty. Being new, it will have to advance at the beginning by a process of trial and error. Every error will be seized upon by those whose interests lie in the preservation of the status quo, and enlarged out of all proportion to its significance. That magic word "freedom" will be worked overtime, and unless the electorate has a clear idea of what it wants, and a determination to secure it, it will be in grave danger of being sidetracked by irrelevant details to its ultimate destruction. We cannot judge Government co-ordination under war conditions. In the first place, there is abnormality everywhere, and the Government

mality everywhere, and the Government has small scope for the choice of its servants, a fact which is probably not overlooked by the more inefficient. The best of plans must fail unless adequately administered.

Mr. Horton himself provides an example of confusing the issue when he says, "As an instance of Labor's encouragement of the development of the inventive faculty of its citizens, we saw where the inventor of the Owen gun was awarded £8000, and was then taxed to the tune of £6000." Laws cannot be made to suit every individual case. Wars cannot be waged for nothing, nor the huge interest burden separable from the present system, paid, except by someone. It is presumed by the Taxation Department that those in the £800 a year group are unable to shoulder the burden. Under normal conditions quite a passable existence would be possible with a yearly income of £1500.—THE VOICE OF REFORM.

Sir.—According to B. Horton ("Advocate," 27/2/45), the Federal Government, trade unions, Laborites, Communists and Socialism are all detrimental to human progress, and daily and incessant strikes are making the name of Australia a by-word amongst the Allies.

As regards Socialism, I think the part played by the Socialist country, Soviet Russia and the Socialist Red Army in the present struggle against Fascism should convince Mr. Horton that Socialism is the answer to economic ills so common to capitalist society. Industrial disputes which Mr. Horton is so fond of writing about, are not alien to some of the other Allies; in fact, the only Allied nation free from industrial disputes is the Soviet Union.

Mr. Horton pretends to be very concerned about soldier preference, and wonders what the old comrades of the last war have to say on the possibility of preference in employment being limited to seven years. As space will not allow me to deal with details of the farce of soldier preference, I will attempt to give Mr. Horton satisfaction on one point by quoting from a statement by Arthur Olive, of the First A.I.F. Speaking of soldier preference Mr. Olive said: "As a Digger who saw how 'preference' worked after the last war, I would suggest to the Diggers of this war that they back the Labor movement's demands for guaranteed work and suitable work; and for a full living wage until that work is found. Preference can set father against son, worker against soldier, even soldier against soldier. The Labor movement wants unity, not divi-

unity against soldier. The Labor movement wants unity, not division; decent employment for all, not a scramble for jobs; a full and nutritious board at home, not Mr. Menzies' ration dumps and watered cocoa; the Labor movement wants homes for all and the total elimination of night shelters and unemployed camps."—FORWARD.