

POLISH EASTERN BORDER CHANGES IN 1939–1945

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Eberhardt P. POLISH EASTERN BORDER CHANGES IN 1939–1945. *Annales Geographicae* 39(2), 2006.

Abstract. Paper deals with the history of changes of the shape of the Polish eastern border during World War II and the history of the political and diplomatic struggle to determine the post war shape of this border. Demographic, social and cultural losses and transformation relating to the shift of the border, and Poland's loss of large eastern territories (given up to the USSR) were evaluated here. It was acknowledged that the post war shift of the eastern border, together with the concomitant shift of the western one was a turning point in Poland's History. References 18. Figs. 2. In English, summary in Lithuanian.

Keywords: borders, Polish eastern border, international treaties, international conferences.

Received: 18 July 2006, accepted: 23 October 2006.

Introduction

The borders of the eastern part of the Second Republic were finally established by the Riga Treaty, signed on March 18, 1921, and ratified by the Sejm (Parliament) of the Republic of Poland on April 15, 1921.

The 1,412 km-long Polish-Soviet border extended from the mouth of Zbrucz River at Dnestr River in the South till Dwina River in the North, meeting the Polish-Latvian border.

The Polish-Soviet border, defined and demarcated on the spot, was recognized and never questioned by the Soviets till September 17, 1939.

By invading Poland on September 17, 1939 and incorporating its eastern part into their state, the Soviet troops not only violated the Riga Treaty, signed by both parties and recognized by the allied countries in the resolution by the conference of ambassadors of March 15, 1923, being the execution of article 87 of the Versailles Treaty, but also violated the three following, voluntary obligations:

- The pact of non-aggression between Poland and the USSR signed on July 25, 1932, and on May 5, 1934 extended till July 25, 1945.
- The obligation to renounce war in the Polish-Soviet relations, of 1929.
- The convention determining the definition of the aggressor, concluded in 1933 (Klochowicz, 1966).

1. The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and its Border Consequences

The Soviet invasion of Poland followed the pact of non-aggression between the German Reich and the USSR concluded in Moscow on August 23, 1939, and signed by Ribbentrop and Molotov (Białe plamy 1990, P 10–21).

The Pact was supplemented with a secret protocol which decided to erase Poland from the map of Europe.

The implementation of that protocol was to lead to termination of independence of five European countries. The USSR was taking Finland, Latvia, Estonia and the larger part of Poland, while Germany was gaining Lithuania and the remaining part of Poland.

Additionally, Germany recognized the right of the USSR to Bessarabia (presently Moldova).

In Poland, the line of demarcation extended along the San River to the Wisła (Vistula) river, along Vistula to the Bug-Narew river, and along the Narew River. Acting in a hurry, both parties made a mistake, and did not take into account the fact that Narew does not reach the East Prussian border, and therefore the boundary between Narew and the Border of the German Reich was not delimited exactly.

Molotov intervened at the German Embassy on the following day. As a result of that, German ambassador reported to Berlin on August 25, 1939 the following: "Molotov summoned me this evening and said that because of great hurry, in which the secret protocol was determined, there was an obscure passage in its text. The end of the first paragraph of item two should read as follows: "delimitation along the line of Pissa, Narew, Vistula and San rivers". Once the Pissa River was added in this supplement, the western border of the USSR (being within the Polish territory) was established with precision. As a result of the treaty of partition of August 23, 1939, the Soviet side of the new border included the entire provinces of Wilno (Vilnius), Nowogródek (Navagrudak), Polesie, Wołyń (Volyn'), Stanisławów (present Ivano-Frankivsk), Lublin, Białystok, the major part of the Lwów (Lviv) province, and all administrative districts of the Warsaw province, situated east of the Vistula river and south of Narew. Warsaw was to be divided. Its part situated on the left bank of the river was to fall to the Germans, while that on the right bank of the river – to the Soviets (Bregman, 1974).

As a result of military operations of both aggressors, the German and the Soviet army began to approach each other in the second half of September, although German troops moved farther eastward than it had been provided by the demarcation established on August 23, 1939. German troops surrounded Warsaw, seized Lublin, and approached Lwów, finally seized by the Soviets. Soviet troops conquered eastern Poland, took Grodno by storm, and crossed the Bug River in its middle run, seized Siedlce, and even approached Mińsk Mazowiecki.

At the same time, further negotiations began. Having summoned ambassador Schulenburg, Stalin and Molotov proposed a completely new demarcation line. The Soviet party was of opinion that leaving any, even mutilated Polish state, was aimless, and it made a new proposal to the Germans, concerning delimitation of both zones of influence. The Soviet party decided to give up the territory situated on the left bank of the Bug river, i.e. the entire province of Lublin, and some part of the Warsaw one, situated on the right bank of the Vistula River. The German party in return, was to give up claims concerning Lithuania in favour of the USSR. The Polish ethnic territory with ca. 4 million inhabitants was to be under German guardianship, while the entire Lithuania would be within the Soviet zone of influence.

The reasons for the Soviet proposal were complex. Had the border been on the Vistula River, it would have been very difficult then to incorporate part of central Poland (including part of Warsaw situated on the right bank of the river) to Ukraine or to Belarus. It would have also been difficult to establish some mutilated Poland with an odd border configuration, including Lublin and some part of Warsaw, but without Krakow, Kielce or Radom. The Polish issue might have resulted in a state of friction between Germany and the USSR. On the other hand, Stalin was anxious to get Lithuania.

The grabbing by the USSR of the Lithuanian State was a violation of all treaties concluded between the Lithuanian Republic and the USSR; including peace treaty of Dec. 12, 1920, the non-aggression pact signed in Sept. 22, 1926 and its extensions of May 6, 1931 and April 3, 1934. The illegal liquidation of the Lithuanian State had its geopolitical consequences for Poland. It meant that in the East Poland would border only with the USSR (Białe palmy, 1990).

A proposal of this kind was presented to Ribbentrop, when he arrived in Moscow on September 27, 1939. The negotiations on the border issue were complicated and lasted for the entire day on September 28, 1939. Ribbentrop's initial suggestion was that the border ran from Brześć (Brest) through Grodno to the Niemen (Neman) River, and then to the Latvian border.

He demanded additionally for the oil-field situated in the region of Drohobycz (Drohobyc) and Boryslaw (Borislaw), without any change of the border in its section lying within central Poland. Those proposals were rejected by the Russian party, and it was the Soviet proposal which was accepted. It provided for a border going through the middle of Poland, from the Carpathians in the South to East Prussia in the North. Polish territory of 388 thousand km² was divided in such a way that the USSR took almost 200 thousand km², and the German Reich almost 190 thousand km² (Łuczak, 1993).

In the south, in the upper San River, in the region of the Uzhock pass (Przełęcz Użocka), then along the San with Ustrzyki Górne on the German side, while enabling to leave a large meander of San with Bircza on the Soviet side. The river San flows further eastward to Przemyśl. Almost entire Przemyśl (except for its districts situated on the left bank of the river) remained under the Soviet occupation. Then San changes the direction of its course again; this enabled the USSR to occupy the region north of Radymno and Jarosław. In the region of Sieniawa, the border deviated from San to reach Belz (Belz) (running along a straight line) in the region of the mouth of Rzeczycza (Rečica) to Sołokija, then along that river to Bug in the region of Krystynopol (present Červonohrad). From there it went along Bug. Following the changes of direction of the course of Bug, the border ran southward till Brześć (Brest), changing the direction there, going first north-westward, and then westward. The border section situated on the Bug River reached as far as the village of Nur. The Soviet zone included Siemiatycze, Drohiczyn, Ciechanowiec. Beginning from Nur, the border diverted from Bug, and going along a straight line it reached Narew in the region of Ostrołęka. In that region, the border went between Zambrów, leaving it on the Soviet side, and Ostrów Maz., which was already on the German side. The border went further along Narew, to reach Pissa and running along that river it reached (north of Kolno) the former border between Poland and East Prussia. In order to grant Ribbentrop's request (he very much enjoyed hunting), the USSR gave up the province of Suwałki with Suwałki and Sejny to Germany. In this region, the border ran evenly with a parallel of latitude, next to Augustów, leaving it on the Soviet side.

When all details concerning the border were set, Germany and the USSR concluded an agreement on borders and friendship, signed by Ribbentrop and Molotov on September 28, 1939 (Pabóg-Malinowski, 1991).

The border, as established by the agreement, and running through the territory of Poland from the Carpathians in the region of the spring of the San river to the East Prussian border in the region of Kolno, is referred to in literary sources as the border of the IV partition of Poland. Later historic events determined that the border delimited by the dictate of both partitioning powers did not last for too long. It existed in fact only from September 28, 1939 until June 22, 1941, therefore for 21 months altogether. However, the mere fact of establishing the border was of great political importance, as during the war the Soviet authorities treated it as a justified and equitable western border of their empire. It also brought serious consequences to the Polish population. The fate of those under the Soviet occupation was different from that of those under the German one during the period that followed.

The border established between the USSR and the German Reich had no historic justification. It had never had an equivalent in the earlier history. There was also no ethnologic justification for it. With an exception of a section running along Bug, between Krystynopol (Červonohrad) and Brześć (Brest), which in some way divided the region with dense Polish settlements on the left bank of Bug from the dense network of Ukrainian settlements on the right bank of the river, it is difficult to find any ethnic reasons in other sections of the border. In its northern section, between Bug and the East Prussian border, the border line was dividing the purely Polish areas. The enclave surrounding Suwałki was another geographic abnormality, being isolated from the remaining part of the German occupation zone. On the other hand, the border was running along the Winding course of San in the South, leaving those parts of Sanok, Przemyśl and Jarosław, which were situated on the right bank of the river in the Soviet hands, and those on the left bank of the river in the German zone (Bregman, 1974).

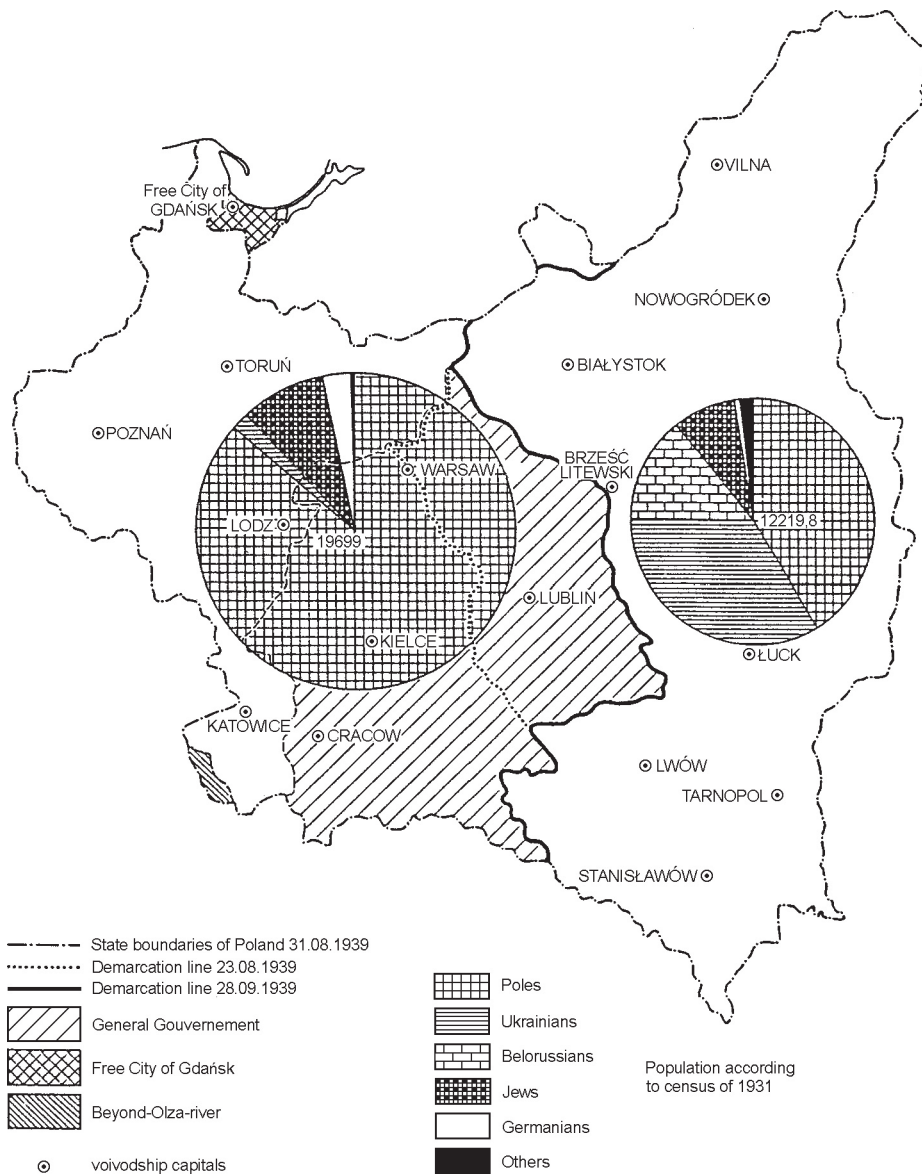


Fig. 1. Dismembering of Poland as a result of Ribbentrop-Molotov pact 1939
1 pav. Lenkijos suskaldymas dėl 1939 metais pasirašyto Ribentropo–Molotovo paktu

Neither the way the border was delimited was in accordance with the so called Curzon's line. The Soviet authorities tried to identify it with that line later, what was not true.

While comparing the demarcation line of September 28, 1939 with the Curzon's line (the so called A line), one can also notice significant discrepancies. It is only the middle section of the border, running along the middle Bug between Brześć and Hrubieszów, which is the same in both cases. The northern section was very much different in each case. The demarcation border was moved much westward. The Curzon's line reached the Niemen (Neman) river near Grodno, while the demarcation line passed along Pissa and Narew. The distance between Ostrołęka and Grodno is 150 km, and the border of partition was moved westward by 150 km, too. In the southern section, between Bug and the Carpathians, the demarcation line was moved significantly westward, as compared to the Curzon's line. The discrepancies ranged between 10 and 60 km.

As a result of the pact, regions situated eastward of the delimited border of partition, were within the Ukrainian and Belarusian Republics. On the other hand, the territory

situated west of the demarcation-line was directly incorporated in the German Reich, or included in the so called General Gouvernement, established later.

In accordance with the Soviet–German pact, despite Lithuania’s being neutral during the September campaign, the Lithuanian government was forced to accept the Soviet ultimatum, and having allowed an extraterritorial railway to Lipawa and having admitted a 30,000 Soviet army into its territory, it obtained the region of Wilno (Vilnius). It was of no great importance, as the entire Lithuania was incorporated in the USSR already in the following year.

The Soviet authorities had every confidence that their western border was stable and unalterable, and they did not anticipate any changes, not even its smallest corrections in future. On the other hand, they began large scale defence works along the border. It was being carried out even at the expense of fortifications on the border established by the Riga Treaty, what affected later the course of military operations during the first weeks of the Soviet–German war. Those works were of a purely deterring nature, however, and the USSR perceived the new border as that of friendship between the two befriended powers.

This was in accordance with the Soviet-German’ agreement of friendship, concluded on September 28, 1939, item 2 of which established the following: “both parties recognize the border between the interests of both states, as established in item 1, as the final one”.

Being in accordance with the German-Soviet pact, the USSR invaded Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. It began by concluding the so called agreements of friendship, and afterwards (June 20, 1940) the Soviet troops marched in the three mentioned Baltic States. The USSR tried to subordinate Finland on the turn of 1939. Because of a failure of Soviet military operations, however, the USSR was compelled to give up the idea to conquer Finland, although it acquired some territorial gains. On the other hand, the prestige of the USSR suffered significantly. The League of Nations condemned the act of aggression and removed the USSR from among its members. At the same time Romania was forced to give back Bessarabia and North Bukowina (Bukovyna) to the USSR. In this way, the jointly established zones of influence (with exception of Finland) were occupied by both parties. There was a distinct border between the zones of influence, clearly established by both parties and recognized. Its central section crossed the territory of Poland. Despite constant consultations, there began to occur clashes between both allied powers, however. Among other things, the German party expressed discontent because of the occupation of the Soviet army of North Bukowina (Bukovyna), which was not covered by territorial agreements.

The attitude of the Soviet authorities towards Poland and the Poles was unchanging during that entire period, and consistent with Molotov’s speech delivered during the meeting of the Supreme Council of the USSR of October 31, 1939. The following of what he said is well known: “a short blow aimed against Poland, delivered first by the German, then by the Soviet army, was enough to leave nothing of that monstrous bastard of the Treaty of Versailles” and further: “as everyone understands, there is no way former Poland could be restored. It is therefore absurd to continue this war under the slogan of the reconstruction of the former Polish state”.

It was evident from Molotov’s speech that there prevailed conviction about the permanence of the border status quo and about the final liquidation of the Polish statehood. The decision to exterminate Polish officers from the camps in Kozielsk (Kozelsk), Ostaszków (Ostaskov) and Starobielsk (Starobelsk) in March and April 1940 was a result of the assumption that the Polish issue was finally solved and new political elements relating to that issue had to be expected soon afterwards (Łuczak, 1993).

It is also proved by the reserve of the Soviet authorities towards Polish communists abiding in the USSR. Their efforts to establish some sort of organizational structures were postponed and treated with disregard.

The victory of the German Reich over France, and the very course of the French-German war stimulated a change of the situation in Europe. Stalin anticipated a long-lasting war, and the rapid defeat of France created a completely new situation in the Soviet-German relations. The pact of non-aggression Hitler had needed during the Polish-

German and the French-German wars lost its importance. On July 27, 1940, the German Army Headquarters ordered 12 divisions to move to the General Government from the West, including two tank divisions, as during the invasion of France in May 1940, there had been only 7 incomplete German divisions left on the Soviet border (Bregman, 1974).

The next fact affecting the Soviet-German relations was the so called Vienna arbitration. Romania, mutilated by the USSR and Hungary, obtained German guarantees on July 30, 1940. German troops marched to Romania.

By the end of 1940, a crisis occurred in the Soviet-German relations. Molotov arrived in Berlin in November 1940, invited by Ribbentrop. The issue of Moscow's eventual joining the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo axis was discussed, as well as a possibility of the USSR's engaging into war with the British Empire. Molotov temporized and did not accept that proposal. He presented specific postulates of the Soviet party instead, in relation to Finland, Romania and Bulgaria, and the Dardanelles. Both parties did not reach any agreement at that point. As a result of a total change of German military concepts, Hitler signed the directive to design the "Barbarossa" operation (December 18, 1940). The pact concluded on August 23, 1939 began to lose its importance. German troops began to take initial positions along the demarcation line of September 28, 1939. At the same time, Hitler began to create anti-Soviet coalition, with participation of Finland and Romania.

Stalin did not believe there would be a war, despite the signs of the coming conflict. Many facts confirm this, including the well known announcement by the TASS of June 13, 1941.

2. The Soviet-Polish Relations during the German-Soviet War

The German-Soviet war broke out on June 22, 1941. The German troops crossed the demarcation line, established on September 28, 1939, at its length, and it ceased to exist in practical terms. Within a dozen of days, the German troops invaded the entire Eastern Poland, occupied by the USSR since the invasion of September 1939.

The Soviet-German pact of August 23, 1939, and decisions established on September 28, 1939, which had made the partition of Poland possible, as well as the absorption of the three Baltic States by the USSR, lost grounds for further existence. The issue concerning the independence and the eastern border of Poland became an open question anew.

Hitler's invasion of the USSR was a very beneficial event for Great Britain, who immediately sided with the USSR. In relation to that, British Government exercised pressure on Sikorski, the Prime Minister of the Polish Government at that time, to normalize Polish-Soviet relations. Negotiations between the USSR ambassador in Great Britain, Majski, and Sikorski began, with active participation of English diplomats. The negotiations resulted in a Polish-Soviet agreement, signed by Sikorski and Majski on July 30, 1941, with Churchill and Eden being present, having not respected a proper procedure required by the Polish Constitution.

The most important item relating to the border issue went as follows: "The Government of the USSR approves that Soviet-German treaties of 1939, relating to territorial changes in Poland, have lost their validity". The agreement did not provide for a clear obligation on the part of the USSR to restore the status quo ante in relation to the borders. The agreement referred in further items to the establishment of diplomatic relations, to the mutual support to continue war against Germany, and to the establishment of a Polish Army in the USSR.

There was very little precision in the wording concerning the border issue, and immediately afterwards the issue was interpreted by both parties in different ways. Sikorski made the following statement in his speech to the Polish nation on the following day: "Present agreement... does not even admit a suggestion to question the borders existing before September 1939". On the other hand, the Moscow *Izvestia* of August 3, 1941 said that the issue concerning the Polish eastern border remained open, and that the Riga Treaty was not eternal, and that Polish eastern territories were Ukrainian and Belarusian but not Polish ones.

Sikorski realized that the wording of the agreement was not explicit in relation to the border issue, and asked Eden, the Foreign Secretary of Great Britain, to support in public the Polish position. British Foreign Office made the following statement in its official note: "His Majesty's Government does not recognize any territorial changes that have occurred in Poland since August 1939". At the same time Eden withdrew from guaranteeing Polish eastern border at the House of Commons. Answering one of the questions asked, he said: "the exchange of notes between the Polish and the British government does not involve any guarantees for the Polish border. Moreover, according to Churchill's declaration of September 5, 1940, the future Polish-Soviet border would be established by mutual agreement". The American Under- secretary of State, Sumner Welles made a similar statement, and he did not confirm Poland's right to its pre-war border.

The situation was unfavourable for Poland then. Sikorski's interpretation was that the consequence of the denunciation of treaties with Germany had to be a return to the border established in Riga in 1921. Denunciation of treaties with Germans did not have to involve returning to the border from August 1939. The mentioned lack of precision in the wording of the agreement in relation to the most important issue, i.e. Polish eastern border, caused a cabinet crisis of the Polish Government in London. Among those who renounced their posts were Sosnkowski (from the Ministry of Defence) and Zaleski (from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Both their resignation and opposition against Sikorski were fully justified. One may assume that a more favourable wording of the agreement could have been achieved. On the other hand, however, USSR would interpret for its own advantage even the most favourable text of the document.

A positive result of the agreement was amnesty for imprisoned and deported Poles. Formation of the Polish Army in the USSR began, based on the military agreement, concluded on August 14, 1941. General Anders became the Army Commander.

Problems connected with the Polish-Soviet border came out during Sikorski's visit to Moscow. During the first day of his visit (December 1, 1941) the Polish Embassy was informed that residents of eastern Poland, of Ukrainian, Belarusian and Jewish nationality 'would be regarded as Soviet citizens and be subject to conscription to the Soviet Army; only aboriginal Poles would be regarded as Polish citizens. The Soviet note explained the motives behind that decision, saying that: "the issue concerning the border between the USSR and Poland has not been agreed upon and will be subject of agreement in future". It was indirect evidence for a certain withdrawal by the Soviets from the idea of the border of September 28, 1939, but also for their non-acceptance of the border established by the Riga Treaty (I. Karski 1998, s. 325).

During negotiations with Sikorski, Stalin suggested that the issue of the post-war' boundary should be somehow agreed upon before the end of the war, and without intervention of the Western powers. He said to Sikorski: "We should establish between ourselves the line of our common border before the peace conference, as soon as the Polish Army joins in the military operations. Let us stop talking about it now. Do not worry, we shall not harm you".

The above statement makes it clear that Stalin was interested in settling the line of the border with Sikorski, and without interference of the Western powers. That was the best opportunity, which was never repeated afterwards. Unfortunately, Sikorski refused, arguing that he could not "accept, even theoretically, any suggestion that the border of the Polish State could be regarded as unstable". The conversation took place in December 1941, after the repulse of Germans from Moscow. Long winter was coming. Sikorski should have known that the USSR had already survived the most critical period. On the other hand, Stalin did realize that it was anticipated that the war would last yet for a long time, and therefore he was ready to make concessions. Stalin was ready to compromise in this contradictory issue. It would have been enough, if Sikorski had concluded an agreement with Stalin, stating that the territory of Poland would not be smaller than that of 1939,

or at least agreed on the issue of the attachment of the Eastern Little Poland (Wschodnia Małopolska) with Lwów (Lviv) to Poland. During later negotiations, it would have been an argument of some importance. Sikorski avoided any further, concrete conversation.

The attitude of the Soviets was becoming more and more confident and stiff since then. Ambassador Bogomolov sharply protested in his note of January 23, 1942 against questioning of the attachment of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to the USSR. The fact of mentioning Lithuania, which had no common border with the USSR in August 1939, was a clear confirmation of the attitude of the USSR towards the Polish eastern borderland. Having presented the note, the issue concerning the Baltic States was decided according to Soviet postulates. On April 26, 1942, British Government accepted the eastern border of the USSR in the region of the Baltic States and Romania. In this way the English approved changes of the border, resulting from the agreement between Molotov and Ribbentrop. It happened despite the fact that the British Government maintained during all the time between the wars diplomatic relations with Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. In this way, the end of their independence became the fact. Not mentioning the moral issue, the British diplomacy made a mistake, as it turned over without any discussion a territory USSR was very anxious to have, and for which it was ready to pay a high price in other controversial issues. It was also a menacing memento for Poland (Sprawa, 1965).

During 1942, the USSR more than once made it clear that it regarded the border of June 1941 as a legally binding one, not because of the agreement between Ribbentrop and Molotov, but as a result of a plebiscite carried out a month later, under supervision of the NKVD and the Soviet Army.

At the same time the USSR violently opposed the Polish-Czech agreement of January 23, 1942, providing for a confederation of the two countries. It was inconvenient from the point of view of imperial goals of the USSR, who intended to seize the Central Europe.

Being in Washington, D.C., on March 24, 1942, Sikorski tried to convince Roosevelt to defend the Polish eastern border. He obtained no more than a vague declaration that "the US Government does not abandon the principle that territorial issues should not be solved before the end of the war".

As far as declarations are concerned, the position of the British in relation to the Polish eastern border did not basically change for a while. In his answer to Raczyński, Eden wrote the following, among other things (April 17, 1942): "as far as Wilno and any other territory being within the Polish boundary on August 25, 1939 are concerned, His Majesty's Government has already assured the Polish Government, that it will not recognize any territorial change effected in Poland after August 1939, and it, is going to respect this assurance in every agreement that can be concluded with the Soviet Government".

The Polish-Soviet relations kept worsening. Serious divergences of opinions came out during the formation of the Polish Army in the USSR. Difficulties began in recruiting and forming new divisions of the Polish Army. Then, decisions were made to evacuate, at first in part, then the entire Polish Army to Persia. The issue concerning the evacuation, in which Great Britain and later also USSR were interested in, was rather a complex problem. Poland was losing a significant political trump card, in any case. One may assume that had that Army been fighting the Germans on the eastern front, it would have significantly influenced negotiations relating to the Polish eastern border.

By the end of 1942, the Polish Government included the issue concerning the Polish-Soviet border in the agenda once again. The Soviet reaction was already much more aggressive and hostile. Soviet Government informed the Polish authorities in the note sent to the Polish Embassy on January 16, 1943, that it deprived Poles abiding in the USSR of Polish citizenship. It reminded at the same time of the "sovereign rights of the USSR to the said territories", meaning those seized in 1939.

The National Council of the Polish Government could not agree with such an interpretation. On February 20, 1943 it made a statement that the "territorial integrity of

the Republic of Poland, within its boundaries of September 1, 1939, and its sovereignty are inviolable and indivisible". As time went by and the Soviet position was becoming stronger, Polish statements were playing a decreasingly less important role. Soviet declarations, on the other hand, were very firm and less conciliatory. In the TASS news agency statement of March 1, 1943, the Soviet authorities were already clearly relating to the Curzon's line, while declaring the following: "Polish Government does not want to recognize historic rights of the Ukrainian and Belarusian nations to unite in their own national states... in this way, the Polish Government declares itself for a partition of Ukrainian and Belarusian territory, and for a continuation to divide the Ukrainian and the Belarusian nation" (Sprawa 1965, s. 315).

Responding to the TASS statement, the Polish news agency, PAT, stated the following on March 5, 1943: "The Riga Treaty of 1921 and its decisions relating to the borders, approved in 1923 by the Conference of Ambassadors and by the United States, were not questioned by Russia till the moment when the USSR concluded agreements with the Third Reich to divide the Polish territory, and those agreements were annulled by the Polish-Soviet pact of July 30, 1941. The fact of relating to the German-Russian border line of that year needs no comment. During the military operations of 1919–1920, the so called Curzon's line was designed as an armistice line but not as a state border" (Sprawa 1965, P 338–339).

The relations between the Polish Government in exile and the USSR were inevitably coming to a breach. The direct pretext was a statement by Sikorski's government and their appeal to the International Red Cross in relation to the newly discovered graves of Polish officers murdered by the NKVD in Katyń in the spring of 1940. The Soviet Government, feeling offended to be suspected of that crime, unilaterally breached diplomatic relations with the Polish Government on April 25, 1943; imputing collaboration with Hitler to it, and saying that "Polish Government entered upon this hostile campaign in order to use the slanderous Nazi counterfeit, and to exercise pressure on the Soviet Government in order to force it to make territorial concessions at the expense of the interests of Soviet Ukraine, Soviet Belarus and Soviet Lithuania" (Pabóg-Malinowski, 1991).

Polish Government in London became isolated, and Polish problems worsened. Great Britain and the United States undertook mediation in order to avert the crisis in the Polish-Soviet relations. Stalin demanded for a reshuffle of Sikorski's Cabinet, and that the Polish Government recognized the "right to self-determination for the population of West Ukraine and West Belarus", i.e. approval to incorporate Polish eastern territories in the USSR.

International isolation of the Polish Government and the support Stalin obtained from Churchill and Roosevelt made Sikorski tend to make some eventual border concessions. He therefore considered a possibility to give up Polesie, Wołyń (Volyn') and some part of Podole to the Soviet Union, in exchange for territorial compensation at the expense of Germany. Because of that, he intended to go to Moscow and to talk directly to Stalin, but before he managed to do it, he died in a tragic accident on July 4, 1943. Mikołajczyk became the new Prime Minister of the Government in exile. Polish Government in exile in its new composition was of opinion that the border established by the Riga Treaty should be maintained.

During the preparations to the Moscow Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the three main powers (October 19-30, 1943), the British party tried to impose on Mikołajczyk's Government the necessity to recognize the Curzon's line as the Polish-Soviet border. Minister Eden was confronted, however, with a firm position of Mikołajczyk in relation to the Polish eastern border.

In connection with the preparations to the meeting of the Big Three in Tehran, the Polish Government sent a memorandum to Churchill and Roosevelt on November 16, 1943, with Polish desiderata, and rejecting possible alteration of the pre-war Polish-Soviet border. It had already no greater practical influence.

The decision concerning the eastern border of Poland was made during the conference in Tehran on December 1, 1943. Initially, the Soviet party proposed to make the border of June 22, 1941 the starting point. On this occasion Molotov pointed out that it was

the border line called the Curzon's line. The British questioned his opinion by showing the map with a difference marked between the Curzon's line, which had left the region of Białystok and the city of Przemyśl on the Polish side, and the line of June 22, 1941, according to which those territories were within the USSR. Molotov realized that he could not deceive the opposing party. Then Stalin marked off on the map the difference between both border lines and admitted that those were regions inhabited by Polish population. Another controversial issue was that of Lwów (Lviv). Eden reminded that Curzon's line had not been established for Galicia, and the question concerning Lwów (Lviv) was still open. Molotov read aloud the full text of Curzon's note to the Government of the Soviet Russia, where he mentioned two demarcation lines; one west and the other east of Lwów (Lviv). Controversy concerning the interpretation began. Eden was defending the interest of Poland. On the other hand, Churchill said to Molotov that he "will not make big fuss because of Lwów" (Sprawa 1965, s. 427-428).

The discussion ended with specific decisions made in relation to the Polish eastern border. It is worthwhile to quote some fragments of the conclusive discussion between Stalin and Churchill, because of the gravity of that decision.

Stalin: "It is being said that Ukrainian land should be given back to Ukraine, Belarusian to Belarus, i.e. there should exist the border of 1939, established by the Soviet Constitution, between ourselves and Poland". Having heard that, Churchill proposed the following motion: "It has been basically accepted that the focal point of the Polish state and nation should be situated between the so called Curzon's line and the Odra (Oder) river line, incorporating Eastern Prussia and the province of Opole (Oppeln) in Poland. Final delimitation of the borders requires, however, a thorough study and eventual re-settlement of the population in some areas". Stalin: "'The Russians have no non-freezing over ports on the Baltic Sea. Therefore they would need non-freezing over ports of Królewiec (Königsberg, Kaliningrad) and Kłajpeda (Klajpeda) together with an appropriate part of the territory of East Prussia. The more so as from the historic point of view these are Slav territories since time immemorial. In case the English agree for the transference of the mentioned above territory, we shall then give our consent to the wording proposed by Mr. Churchill".

In this way, the Polish eastern border was agreed upon. It was to be the Curzon's line. During a face-to-face discussion with Stalin, Churchill not only accepted the Curzon's line, but at the same time granted the northern East Prussia with Królewiec (Königsberg), and additionally Kłajpeda (Klajpeda) to the USSR. Poland was to lose not only its eastern part of the country, but was also to have a northern border with the USSR. All claims of the USSR concerning the Polish-Soviet border were satisfied. The only concession the USSR made was to agree for the Curzon's line instead of the demarcation line of June 1941. Talking of Curzon's line in general terms, the issue of Lwów (Lviv) was not mentioned in the final wording of the document, and the city could not be at the eastern -and at the western part of the border at the same time. There is no doubt that Stalin assumed that Lwów (Lviv) would be on the Soviet side. It provided, however, grounds to a different interpretation of the southern section of the Curzon's line (Sprawa 1965, s. 427-429).

Decisions made in Tehran were made secret and Polish Government was notified about them. The Government of Mikołajczyk was not aware that Polish eastern border was generally agreed upon without the Poles even knowing about it. Under the circumstances, Polish efforts, especially those to convince Roosevelt to support Poland to be able to maintain the border established by the Riga Treaty, had to be futile. Roosevelt's lip-language promises were misleading and made it difficult to run more realistic politics.

The eastern part of the Polish Republic was under German occupation from July 1941 till the first half of 1944. On January 3-4, 1944, the Soviet Army crossed the border established by the Riga Treaty in the region of Sarny, and because of that Polish Government published a declaration with the postulate to restore Polish administration in the eastern

part of Poland as quickly as possible. Responding to that, the TASS news agency made a declaration that "the Polish-Soviet border was established by the plebiscite carried out on broadly democratic terms in 1939". It was a clear reference to the demarcation line established by the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, without mentioning the very fact.

3. Final Arrangement of the New East Polish Border

Between August 18 and August 20, 1944, the Soviet Army crossed the Bug River. By doing that, it crossed both the Curzon's line and the demarcation line of September 28, 1939, in this section of the border. On July 22, 1944, the Polish Committee of the National Liberation (Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego – PKWN) was created in Moscow. It proclaimed a Manifesto, under the date of July 22, 1944. It said it was published in Chełm, the first town situated west of the Curzon's line. The new centre of power was appointed by Stalin's initiative. Among its members were activists of the National Home Council (Krajowa Rada Narodowa), the Union of Polish Patriots (Związek Patriotów Polskich) and the Central Office of the Polish Communists (Centralne Biuro Komunistów Polskich). The PKWN Manifesto expressed the position relating to the eastern border in the following way: "The National Home Council and the appointed by it Polish Committee of the National Liberation are of opinion that the regulation of the Polish-Soviet border should be done by mutual agreement. The eastern border should be a line of a friendly neighbourhood, and not a barrier between us and our neighbours, and it should, be regulated according to the following principle: The Polish land – for Poland, the Ukrainian, Belarusian and Lithuanian one – to the Soviet Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania".

This wording of very little precision was covering resignation of the former eastern territories of the Polish Republic. Vague rhetoric was meant for the Poles at home. It seemed evident while reading the text, that the border was not established yet. It was not true, as the Curzon's line was already accepted by the PKWN leadership. On the other hand, those events took place already after the Tehran Conference, when Stalin had obtained Churchill's and Roosevelt's consent for the Curzon's line. The formal agreement on the Curzon's line was signed in Moscow by the PKWN and the Soviet government on July 26, 1944 (P. Eberhardt 1992, s. 149-157).

Osóbka-Morawski has given the following account of the conversation with Stalin: "The conversation began in a very unpleasant way. Marshall Stalin entered into it with anger. 'What is the problem now? Is the region of Chełm to belong to them, or to us?' We entered into detailed discussion. The climate slowly began to calm. We began arguing, that people in Poland generally counted on the entire East Prussia. You do not need to cut off from it as much as it is provided by the draft document in order to separate Królewiec (Königsberg) for the USSR. Marshall Stalin approved of the change in this region. He then agreed to make the change at the expense of territories separated from Lithuania in the region of Suwałki and Augustów. Here and there concessions were made on the eastern line; some small items. We also indicated the railway junction at Chyrów (Chiriv), which remained on the Soviet side, by what two of our railways were cut in the middle. I cannot understand even now, why the Russians were so uncompromising in this point. Even President Bierut would be trying later to fight for Chyrów (Chiriv), to gain nothing and only to find himself personally in trouble because of that". Osóbka-Morawski wrote the following in a further passage: "When it seemed that the discussion about the border was coming to an end, I took the floor to talk about the promised amendments to the Curzon's line, in favour of Poland, arguing in the following way: the Polish nation is expecting some more serious amendment to the Curzon's line, and there are three amendments possible, with some more important undertone. I shall mention one of them, the most meagre one as it seems, and that is the forest of Białowieża (Puszcza Białowieska)".

In later passages of his argument, Osóbka-Morawski said, that thanks to his intervention, Stalin gave his consent to transfer to Poland one-half of the Forest of Białowieża.

The memoirs make it clear that the original Soviet plan significantly diverted from the Curzon's line, and it was to Poland's disadvantage. They show in addition, that the intimidated PKWN delegation had no courage to claim Lwów (Lviv) and the Oil Field. One should agree, however, that Stalin used his position of power and did not intend to compromise much more.

The second conference of the PKWN representatives on the border issue was held in Moscow on August 16, 1944. It brought no change in relation to the eastern issue, however.

The border agreed upon was not questioned or discussed by the Lublin government later. On the contrary, it was representatives of that government, who took the Soviet side during negotiations with the Polish Government of London, or with the Western powers.

One should not overestimate, however, agreements between the Lublin government and the USSR. The eastern border of Poland had been established during the Tehran Conference, and finally confirmed by the treaty of negotiations between the three powers in Jałta. The USSR knew that it would not maintain the border of September 28, 1939. The proof for that is Stalin's answer to Mikołajczyk's question during negotiations in Moscow on October 13, 1944: "Is the Curzon's line synonymous with the demarcation line established in 1939?" Stalin answered as follows: "No, by no means. Białystok, Łomża and Przemyśl are given to you, according to the Curzon's line" (T. Żenczykowski 1987, s. 177).

Final decisions concerning Polish eastern border were made during the meeting of Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt in Jałta. Curzon's line was agreed to be the basis for that border, but with Lwów (Lviv) on the Soviet side. The decision caused practically no controversy. Indeed, at one moment Roosevelt appealed to Stalin to consider the issue of the incorporation of Lwów (Lviv) to Poland. He did not treat it as a postulate, however, but only as a suggestion for consideration, and he made it clear that he would not enter into any polemics. He was of opinion that Lwów (Lviv) could be treated as compensation for Königsberg. The USSR did not agree with his suggestion, and Roosevelt did not raise the issue again. On the other hand, Churchill fully recognized the Soviet interpretation of the Curzon's line and made it clear that Lwów should be incorporated in the USSR. The following proposal in relation to the issue concerning the Polish eastern border was accepted: "it has been agreed that the Curzon's line should be the eastern border of Poland, with deviations in some regions, ranging between 5 and 8 km in Poland's favour".

The disclosure of those decisions was followed by a protest of the Polish Government in London, which made a statement on January 22, 1945, saying that "decisions made in Jałta were prepared and made without any participation, authorization, or even knowledge of the Polish Government, and the method used in Jałta is contradictory to the rules binding for the allies, and it means a renouncement of the Atlantic Charter, and violation of a right every nation has to stand in defence of its own interest, therefore decisions concerning Poland, and made in Jałta cannot be recognized by the Polish Government and cannot be binding for the Polish nation; separation from Poland of the eastern half of its territory will be regarded by the Polish nation as a new partition of Poland – executed by Poland's allies this time" (Sprawa, 1965).

The new Polish border was delimited precisely in 1945. It is well known to all, hence there is no need to present it in detail. It is only worthwhile to compare its course with the so called demarcation line, delimited as a result of the Ribbentrop–Molotov pact.

In relation to the demarcation line, existing from September 28, 1939 till June 22, 1941, visible changes in Poland's favour took place. In order to demonstrate those changes, below there are mentioned the regions situated within in the Soviet occupation zone, while the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact was binding. One can say, with some approximation, that the following regions (according to the administrative division of 1939) were returned to Poland: three districts of the Warsaw province (with the population of 323,000 in 1931) and

the province of Białystok, without two districts (of Grodno and Wołkowysk (Volkovysk) and the district of Suwałki, being under German occupation in 1939-1941 (with the population of 622,000 in 1931). In the southern part of the border, the district of Lubaczów was regained, a large part of that of Jarosław, that of Przemyśl with the city of Przemyśl, and that of Dobromil, as well as small parts of those of Sokal, Rawa Ruska (Rava Rus'ka) and Jaworów (Javoriv) from the province of Lwów.

The last section of the border delimited between the USSR and Poland was the northern one, dividing East Prussia. At the moment the border runs from the Bay of Gdansk (Zatoka Gdańska), dividing the Vistula Peninsula (Mierzeja Wiślana) and Bay (Zalew Wiślany), going further north of Braniewo, and reaching Wiżajny in the region of Suwałki, going along a straight line, cutting roads, railways and villages and towns, leaving Braniewo, Bartoszyce and Gołdap on the Polish side, and Św. Siekierka (present Mamonowo), Frydland (Friedland – present Pravdinsk) and Darkiejny (present Ozersk) on the Soviet side.

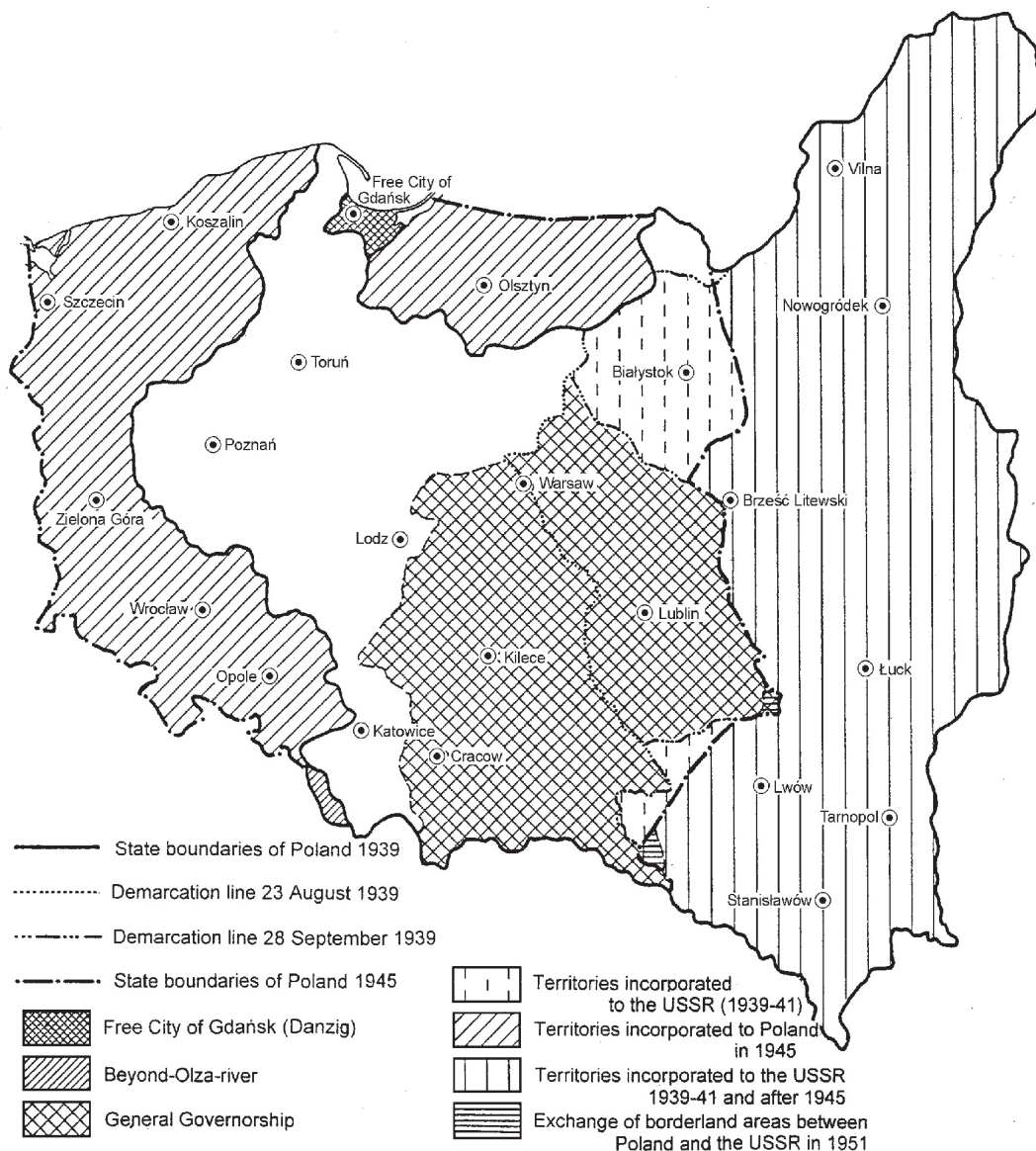


Fig. 2. Boundaries of conquered Poland 1939–1945 and boundaries change in 1950
2 pav. Okupuotos Lenkijos sienos 1939–1945 metais ir sienos pakeitimas 1950 metais

As a result of World War II, Poland lost its entire eastern part, of ca. 179,000 km². It was a territory larger than present Austria and Hungary put together (176,800 km²). Poland lost 45% of its territory.

The loss was enormous then. It happened despite of an unyielding attitude of the Polish Government in London, and despite univocal opinion of Polish society at home. It happened despite our being with the Allies from the very first tin the very last day of the war, and our being members of the winning coalition.

Stalin's postulates concerning Eastern Europe were accepted by Churchill and Roosevelt. One can add that it was true not only in relation to the eastern border of Poland. Königsberg was given up to Stalin without any objection, and no one claimed independence for Lithuania, Latvia or Estonia. During negotiations in Tehran and Jafta, Stalin held stronger position and was convinced of his power and of being right. He was also better prepared as far as the content of the negotiations is concerned. He was reaching his goals, being consistent, cunning, shrewd and often brutal. He was undoubtedly the greatest political individuality in that game. Churchill and Roosevelt usually yielded to his arguments. Standing on a weaker ground, they were often subject to illusions. A good example may be Churchill's attitude. He thought that a prompt agreement by the Poles for the Curzon's line would save Poland's independence, and would make it possible to establish a more independent and democratic government in' Poland. On the other hand, Stalin, who knew that his conquering Poland was in fact only a matter of time, focused his entire energy on making the West accept the eastern border of the USSR.

Any other, more advantageous delimitation of the eastern border became unrealistic, while taking into account the described attitude of the Western powers. Finally, a less advantageous variant "A" of the Curzon's line was approved as the eastern border of Poland. The main mistake committed by the Polish Government was to count on Western assistance, and to be waiting for Churchill's and Roosevelt's intervention in the matter. One should think that direct negotiations with Stalin and winning more advantageous decisions concerning the eastern border in exchange for some political concessions for the USSR and the communists, would have been a better solution. That scenario was feasible tin 1943. The issue concerning Polish eastern border was becoming more and more a foregone conclusion later.

Diplomatic struggle of Polish Government in London, and an unyielding attitude of Polish society, had positive influence on the course of the western border, even though they could not influence the delimitation of the eastern border. In order to neutralize strong Polish resistance and to make Polish Government give up the border established by the Riga Treaty, the three powers changed their attitude towards more and more favourable one in relation to Polish territorial claims in the west. While Stalin's strong position had unfavourable influence on the Polish eastern border, it decided in Potsdam about the delimitation of the western border on Odra (Oder) and Nysa Łużycka (Lausitzer Neisse).

Conclusions

The struggle for the eastern border was finally lost. Poland lost a territory, which had been its integral part for the previous 400 years (even 600 years in the case of Lwów [Lviv] and Podole [Podilia]). Even under partition, that territory was regarded by Polish society as Polish (the so called annexed territories). It included two large centres of culture, with well known universities (Lwów, Wilno). It is true that Poles made only 1/3 of the population of the lost territories, but they were the leading stratum of society, as far as national tradition, education and culture are concerned. One should point out, that the major part of the land and improvements was a Polish property, created as a result of the work of generations. Ukrainian and Belarussian population prevailed on large parts of those territories (e.g. Wołyń [Volyn'], Polesie [Polisia, Palesie], the Carpathians), but there

were also Polish ethnic regions (the regions of Grodno), as well as many cities and towns were of Polish character (Lwów, Wilno, Tarnopol, Brześć, Drohobycz, Borysław – present Lviv, Vilnius, Ternopil, Brest, Drohobyč, Boryslav).

Different attention demands problem of political affiliation of Vilnius to which Lithuania had historic rights.

Border changes caused great demographic and social repercussions. Pre-war Poland was a country of many nations, many confessions and cultures. Poles made only 69% of the population. Ukrainians, Belarussians, Jews, Germans and others lived together with them in the same country. World War II and border changes caused mass displacements and migration of the population. Over 2 million Poles left the eastern territories, handed over to the USSR. About 8 million Germans moved westward: A 3-million Jewish minority ceased to exist as a result of the extermination by the Nazis. Poland became a single nation country (97% of the population are Poles). This eradicated national conflicts, but emasculated the culture, which always develops the best in an environment of different national groups. Mutual contacts among people of different national groups, representing different cultures, confessions and languages, stimulate development of new values and ideas. The change of the borders has therefore caused not only territorial changes, but also demographic, economic and social ones. Simultaneous change of both eastern and western border became a turning point in the history of the Polish nation and state.

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Lenkijos rytinių sienų pokyčiai 1939–1945 metais

Santrauka

Straipsnio pradžioje autorius išvardija Lenkijos ir Tarybų Sąjungos sutartis, kurios buvo sulaužytos Tarybinei Armijai įžengus į Lenkiją 1939 metų rugsėjo 17 dieną. Kita straipsnio dalis paremta gerai žinoma A. Bregmano knyga (1974). Joje aprašomos 1939 metų rugpjūčio 23 dieną vykusios derybos Maskvoje tarp Vokietijos ir Tarybų Sąjungos delegacijų. Mokslinėje literatūroje šios derybos vadinamos Ribentropo–Molotovo paktu. Po šių derybų ir slaptųjų protokolų pasirašymo Centrinė ir Rytų Europa buvo padalytos į nacistinės Vokietijos ir stalininės Rusijos įtakos zonas. Lenkijos respublikos teritorija buvo padalyta išilgai Sano, Vyslos ir Narevo upių. Rytinėje šios linijos pusėje buvusios teritorijos buvo pripažintos Tarybų Sąjungos įtakos zona. 1939 metų rugsėjo 28 dieną Tarybų Sąjunga ir Vokietija pasirašė kitą paktą. Pagal jį teritorijos tarp Vyslos ir Bugo upių perėjo Vokietijai, o Lietuva buvo pripažinta Tarybų Sąjungos įtakos zona. Autorius detaliai analizuoja naują demarkacijos liniją. Trečioji straipsnio dalis skirta politinei situacijai po 1941 metų birželio 22 dienos. Pagrindinis dėmesys skiriamas deryboms tarp Lenkijos Vyriausybės emigracijoje, vadovaujamos ministro pirmininko generolo Władysława Sikorskio, ir Josifo Stalino, kurios nutrūko paaiškėjus Katynės genocido faktui. Nemažai dėmesio skirta didžiųjų supervalstybių (Tarybų Sąjungos, Didžiosios Britanijos ir JAV) vadovų susitikimams Teherane, Jaltoje ir Potsdame, kur galutinai pagal vadinamąją Kerzono liniją buvo nustatyta naujoji rytinė Lenkijos siena. Sienos delimitacijos klausimai buvo aptarti 1945 metų rugpjūčio 16 dieną Maskvoje susitikus naujai komunistinei Lenkijos Vyriausybei ir Tarybų Sąjungos vadovams. Paskutinėje straipsnio dalyje kalbama apie geopolitines ir demografines Rytų Lenkijos sienos pakeitimo pasekmes.