

SOVIET-POLISH RELATIONS 1919-1939

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ABSTRACT

The theme of Soviet-Polish relations in the period 1919-1939 is one of the important topics in modern European history because of the great influence of these two countries on most of the historical events of the inter-war period in Europe. The variables of the First World War 1914-1918 imposed a new reality that European powers didn't become familiar with during the 19th century, between the collapse of important empires on the one hand and a change in the balance of power on the other, and because of this the nature of international relations differed in the light of the outcome of the decisions of the Reconciliation Conference, and the Soviet-Polish relations had shaped one of their most important aspects, as they were marked by specific limitations in which the two sides intentionally harnessed their rapprochement in a way that suits their conditions after the war on the one hand, and had taken into account their national interests on the other hand. The Soviets needed to obtain allies to secure the extension of Bolshevism ideas and secure their strategic presence on the European continent, while the Poles needed to secure their young state and guarantee their independence and retain their gains after the war, so rapprochement was a fait accompli with the variables brought about by international relations during the interwar period, and here lies the importance of studying the Soviet-Polish relations and their impact on the international stage during that era, and thus in the outbreak of the Second World War.

Key word: Relation- Russian – polish- party

INTRODUCTION

The roots of Russian-Polish relations are due to the political developments that Europe has experienced during its Renaissance and until the modern era, as Poland, by virtue of its geographical position, remained a victim of the international conflict between the major powers, especially Russia and Prussia.⁽¹⁾

This country was home to a homogeneous mix of Poles and non-Polish; Russians, Czechs and Germans, who were treated like slaves, but the composition of society was divided between nobles and peasants, so it was not much different from the demographics of most of the monarchies in Europe at the time.⁽²⁾

It was an electoral property. Anna Ivanovna,⁽³⁾ empress of Russia, managed to bring it under her control after death of its king in August 1733, to become Poland not only in the orbit of Russian politics, but also in the circle of conflict between the European

powers during that period, and it had been divided more than once to satisfy the aspirations of these forces, therefore it was divided after The Seven Years' War, in 1772 between Prussia, Russia and Austria, that Russia could take over the largest part, while the second segmentation happened in 1793 between Prussia and Russia on the largest part, and the third segmentation was in 1795 that tore Poland and erased it from the political map during the nineteenth century to become an whole part of the Russian Empire.⁽⁴⁾

These political changes left a clear imprint on the reality between the two sides through the establishment of social and economic relations between the two peoples. On the social level, we find that the Russian language was widely used, which extended to all levels of education, so Poles who have completed their Preliminary studies in their country didn't find it difficult to enroll in Russian universities, either in Moscow or in Petersburg. This increased

communication in the social and intellectual life between the two sides, as socialist thought quickly spread among the Polish students, who remained in contact with their leaders, even after their return to their country. Perhaps this was the beginning of the emergence of socialist thought in Poland.⁽⁵⁾

On the economic front, it is noted that the Russian Empire had important economic relations with Poland, whose roots go back to the time of Peter the Great. While the Polish markets were an extension of the Russian markets, which were under Russian control, the latter found Poland a gateway of its country towards Europe, not to mention the importance of the industrial sector such as distilleries, glass, and foundries, which were exported via Poland to Europe through its two sea lanes, Riga and Königsberg.⁽⁶⁾

At the end of the 19th century, Polish industrial production increased markedly, with Russia and Europe produce about 99 percent, while Poland's output rose from 15 percent to 196 percent after 1885, and it became increasingly dangerous for Russian industrial growth, which it coincided with the growth of German economic power.⁽⁷⁾

Accordingly, voices calling for the need to remove customs barriers or unify customs duties between the two sides⁽⁸⁾ and form an integrated economic unit by securing commercial bonds between them increased, as the annual production of Polish factories recorded about one million rubles, and the two thirds of that production was consumed by the Russian market, which added another reason to the growth of socialism in Poland.⁽⁹⁾

On the other hand, the political changes in Tsarist Russia in 1905 contributed to the growth of the Socialist Movement,⁽¹⁰⁾ whose repercussions extended to most parts of the empire, including Poland, and this was clearly embodied when the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), established by Jozef Pilsudski,⁽¹¹⁾ and the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL), which had a relative role in forming labor unions with the aim of improving working conditions and raising wage levels, most of their demands were short-term, as they didn't call for the formation of national unions, especially since they were dependent on Polish-speaking Catholics.⁽¹²⁾

The events, accompanying the revolution of 1905, left a bitter reality of the economic situation that seemed to be turbulent for the agricultural movement in the Rural areas, to turn those unions into centers for political activities calling for socialism and the National Democratic Movement, while the Polish People's Party remained conservative, as a Galician party, and so the Jewish Front - the Bund, remained conservative on its

strength among the Jewish workers in parallel with the Polish Socialist Party, if not competing with him at other times. These tendencies gave a golden opportunity to initiate a revolt against Tsarism.⁽¹³⁾

Others preferred to work with the dispersed socialists throughout the ramshackle empire for the sake of a general and comprehensive revolution, so that the last party gathering proceeded to the right-wing Polish Socialist Party (PPS), which as soon as announced its program in 1908 with calling for Polish autonomy, instead of independence and stressing the need to focus on Federal effectiveness, while Pilsudski worked to form a combat organization that includes paramilitary forces of the Polish Socialist Party and was tasked with targeting Russian and Polish officials cooperating with them, in addition to robbing trains to provide the necessary funds for them to buy guns and explosives. Although those operations were described as (terrorist), they were the only way to achieve the goals that they were seeking, to develop the political tendencies of the Poles to establish the Polish Socialist Party in 1918, which resulted from the combination of the Social Democratic Party with the right wing of the Polish Socialist Party, who backed away from its national demands and goals to reach autonomy.⁽¹⁴⁾

WAR OUTBREAK AND ITS IMPACT ON THE POLITICAL REALITY OF THE BOTH COUNTRIES

The First World War 1914-1918 consequences formed important variables that occurred in the warring countries, but the percentage of those variables were different from one country to another according to their economic potential, population, resources and natural abilities. The Russian Empire's defeats, which suffered by during the war, contributed to the outbreak of the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, which removed the Tsarist regime and entered the country in a new stage, the young government had to pay a heavy price to get out of the war with minimal human casualties, and they held with the Germans, yesterday's allies, Brest-Litovsk Treaty on March 3, 1918.⁽¹⁵⁾ Among its most important clauses were the Bolshevik government's abdication of Poland and leaving it as an independent state, however, the issue of preserving the latter's independence was extremely difficult. So the investigator in the historical events of this country finds it as a victim of the Russian Empire, not for a short time in previous centuries.⁽¹⁶⁾

The peace didn't last long, as the Bolshevik government soon entered into a struggle with the bourgeois and Russian monarchy forces, who were

pushed away by the Revolution events and not convinced of the legitimacy of the workers and peasants' control of the country's abilities on the one hand, and the question of the spread of the Principles of the Socialist Revolution has sounded the alarm bells of the European capitalist powers, those who weren't willing to lose the money they had previously lent to the Tsarist government, in addition to their desire to invest Russian Riches on the other hand.⁽¹⁷⁾

Therefore, they were quick to adopt ways to eliminate this young country in its infancy, either by supporting the pro-war Russian bourgeois parties or by occupying Russian territory to deprive the Russians and Germans of the use of the munitions they had sent to Murmansk and Arkangel, which led to the outbreak of the civil war in Russia.⁽¹⁸⁾ The results have had a major impact on economic, political and even social developments on the country, as the Bolsheviks have drafted epics of heroism and reflected a model of resilience and defiance, and their results gave a positive impetus to the young government. Foreign intervention has contributed to the people's rallying around their government, having found the desired hope that they will be removed from the injustice and tsarist tyranny, and the bourgeoisie and their collaborators in Russia did not have enough faith in their ability to regain their Tsarist property.⁽¹⁹⁾

The Bolshevik government was not convinced of the regional losses suffered by the war, they didn't recognize Bessarabia's accession to Romania and demanded its return because of its strategic location on the Black Sea, which led to strained relations between the two countries, but didn't reach the level of armed conflict.⁽²⁰⁾ However, this didn't apply to Poland, where the settlement of her country's eastern border was considered the most difficult problem and created problems in the multinational region between Poland and Russia, where the Poles clashed with the Bolsheviks⁽²¹⁾ when their forces moved to fill the vacuum created in obert-ost within a small town in Belarus called BerezaKartuska. Pilsudski soon seized Vilna, which was the focus of control of Lithuania and Belarus, because Lithuanian nationalism was anti-Polish, not to mention the deterioration of relations between the two sides due to the Polish-backed military coup attempt aimed at supporting them in Kaunds, the situation in Belarus was worse, because of the spreading of famine and antagonism to the Polish landowners was stronger than anti-Soviet nationalism, and Pilsudski's failure to win the satisfaction of the Allies, led by Britain, in his plans to the east because of his hostility to the white movement. In his view, if it

wins the civil war, undivided Russia will be the end for the Poles to achieve independence.⁽²²⁾

However, the Poles were looking to obtain some compensations from the major powers, particularly Britain,⁽²³⁾ and to recognize them after the demarcation of its borders with Germany, Lithuania and Czechoslovakia, while leaving the issue of the demarcation of its border with Russia to a special sub-committee set up in Warszawa, which has had great difficulties in making its decision because of the close social relations of both peoples on the one hand and because of the differences of opinions of both parties on the other, the Soviets were ready to make sacrifices to ensure peace and thus entered the spring of 1919, despite the opposition of the Polish Communists, in discussions with the Polish government that led to official talks in July, where the Soviet side of the talks represented prominent Polish communist Julian Marchlowski,⁽²⁴⁾ who expressed his willingness to make the utmost compromise to achieve consensus because he believed that any border settlement would lead to a global revolution.⁽²⁵⁾

The negotiations tumbled, leading to Pilsudski's continued progress towards Minsk, as he issued on August 8 of the same year to the inhabitants of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania promising to defend them and defend their nationality and national customs, and only Ukraine remained, as the Poles were besieged with them in eastern Galicia until they were able to seize it completely in July, however, the seizure of Kiev by the white movement at the end of August, which was not sympathetic to the Poles in exchange for the Bolsheviks who were ready to Get peace and to give up their lands in the eastern borders, and they began talks with the Poles in a small city called Mikashevichy in Belarus despite the prevailing argument over the possibility of collapse, nevertheless, the Soviets were seeking to earn time, as Lenin soon expressed his expansionist desire, but Pilsudski's obstinacy and his unwillingness to reach any settlement relying on allied support on the one hand and the collapse of the Soviet power on the other hand, disrupted the effectiveness of the negotiations between the two parties and the collapse of Mikashevichy's negotiations and the collapse of the Jan Paderewski's government and the formation of a new cabinet that was more flexible than its predecessor, headed by Leopold Skulski.⁽²⁶⁾

This gave the Allies the ability to act, as the Supreme Council of Allies issued a statement explaining its desire to create a strong Poland at a time when the British opposed support for Polish expansion plans based on their policy of maintaining the European

balance and prevented from contravention it, as its position was about its willingness to support the Poles in exchange for the latter abandoning its expansionist ambitions. Towards the eastern border,⁽²⁷⁾ this was embodied in their proposal in December 1919 to draw the so-called Curzon Line to become the eastern border of the territory approved by the Council in favor of the new Polish government can impose its administrative authority on it, as it defined the line that runs between the Carpathians west of Riasoska to the east of Przemyśl and the granting of Poland the Białystok region, not the northern part of the Suwałki inhabited by Lithuanians, and George Curzon, the British Foreign Secretary, asked the Soviet government to stop its forces at this line and start peace negotiations.⁽²⁸⁾

Poland didn't satisfy with that decision because it didn't take into account the Polish territories that the Tsardom had already taken from it since the first division in 1872, and soon entered into an armed clash with the Bolshevik government to recover its territory, taking advantage of the critical situation that is passing through the latter and its preoccupation with its internal affairs, and indeed the Polish troops advanced to include the territories that deprived of it by the committee, but the glory of victory didn't last long, as the Bolsheviks, after eliminating the Civil Revolution, were able to turn to the Poles and inflicted a crushing defeat on them, and were able to recover those territories in August 1920, the Russians didn't stop at the Curzon Line, but they entered the Polish territory and reached the outskirts of Warsaw, and the Russian refusal to mediate in Europe to prevent clash contributed to giving the Europeans the opportunity to weaken the Bolshevik government, so they rushed to supply the Poles with weapons, ammunition and military experts, which enabled them to withstand Russian attacks and stop them twenty kilometers from the capital, Warsaw, and then deported them beyond the Curzon line.⁽²⁹⁾

The European intervention brought about a change in the balance of power, which forced the Bolshevik government to accept the status quo and accept the ceasefire and enter into peace negotiations that ended with the conclusion of the treaty of Riga, which was signed on March 18, 1921, according to which the Bolshevik government recognized Poland's right to annex part of the disputed territories, that the Poles got with the support of the Allies.⁽³⁰⁾

It should be noted that the Poles managed, under the St. Germain, Treaty with the new Austrian government, to obtain the provinces that belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire and which had become

outside the borders of the Empire, as it ceded them in favor of the Polish government on the twenty-eighth of May 1919.⁽³¹⁾

The Conference of Ambassadors held in Paris to determine the line drawn between the two countries, according to the session that Poland attended with them on the eighteenth of November 1922 with Lithuania, where the northern administrative line meets the borders of East Prussia (this point is known to East Prussia, Poland and Lithuania) and south to the southeast to Berzniki-Kopicowo Road, which is about two kilometers to the southeast and determines its territory in Puńsk towards Gaładuś Lake from the northern part of Żegary, and from the other side the second line with Lithuania extends from the Podkamień suburbs and leaves for Poland the Babruysk site, which runs along the railway from Grodno-Wilno, delineated the boundaries of the Polish government, was signed on the fifteenth of March 1923.⁽³²⁾

BALTIC BLOC

Because of Poland's geographical location, historical legacy and the nature of their relations with their neighbors, they sought to secure their political presence by creating an international bloc that would secure their existence against the Soviets, seeking to support the formation of the Baltic bloc, which clearly reflected in the 1921 Helsinki Conference talks in Finland. The Polish Foreign Minister suggested forming a bloc directed against Moscow by gathering the largest number of allies to stand against the Russian threat, and indeed they were able to form the Baltic bloc with Finland, Estonia and Latvia, and they tried to annex Romania, and discussions between those parties were proceeding in strict secrecy, both on the side diplomatic or military. Latvia and Estonia approved to form it, except for Finland, because of the Bolshevik penetration of its lands, its foreign minister refused to join the bloc and withdrew from it in 1923.⁽³³⁾

Although several conferences of the bloc were held during the years 1923 and 1924 in the presence of the foreign ministers of the member states, the case of the continued effectiveness of the orientations of its members was questionable, as Latvian Foreign Minister Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics announced on the eve of the last Baltic Bloc conference on January 16, 1925 in Helsinki, his country's unwillingness to direct these blocs to hostility with any country. Thus, the Latvian side tried to clarify that the issue of rapprochement with Poland doesn't necessarily mean hostility with Russia, Finland or others. Likewise, Lithuania's position didn't

allow its economic and even military capabilities to support the Poles at the expense of the Soviets, which prompted them to adopt the principle of standing on the fence in the event of Poland being subjected to any external aggression, especially Russia. Despite Polish support and economic inducements to the members of the Bloc, but it was just talk that the latter could not provide any economic benefit, but the Finns, who were closer to their Scandinavian surroundings than the Poles, showed no interest in Polish support.⁽³⁴⁾

As for the Polish side, despite their initial optimism about the directions of that bloc, they were then convinced that the bloc could not achieve the goal for which it was founded, because the small bloc cannot stand up to a major country like Russia, which Bolshevism has taken effective political and economic steps in it, the small bloc, according to their point of view, is capable of facing a small country like Hungary and not a big country like Russia, and this may have caused a gradual withdrawal from this bloc.⁽³⁵⁾

On the other hand, the Soviets didn't overlook those contacts, as they expressed their opposition to this bloc and promised it a hostile alliance for them, so in 1925 they stopped their trade through Estonian lands and transferred them to Latvian lands, which confused the economic situation in them, especially since it lasted for several months, which prompted its foreign policy minister - Pusta to submit his resignation, especially since the economic interests between the Estonian and Latvian parties were not positive, as the attempts to unify the tariff between the two parties failed throughout 1921-1922.⁽³⁶⁾

Accordingly, the Polish conviction was strengthened that it would stand alone in front of the Soviets. Therefore, its foreign minister, Alexander Skrzinski,⁽³⁷⁾ announced his country's desire to make a settlement with the Soviets as an alternative to holding blocs against them, and the latter criticized his successor's policy towards strengthening the Baltic bloc, and he considered that its parties were not willing to stand in the face of the Soviets, and by this, the Baltic bloc collapsed without achieving its goal of restricting the Soviet tendencies towards them or securing their front, at the very least, against the political and economic growth of the Soviets, which coincided with the arrival of Joseph Stalin⁽³⁸⁾ at the head of power in Russia.⁽³⁹⁾

SOVIET-POLISH RAPPROCHEMENT

The Bolshevik government was convinced that the European powers would not leave it in peace in light of the increasing demands for the money, that they gave to Tsarist State and their fear of the issue of the extension of socialist ideas to their countries, within the so-called (quarantine), so the Russians looked towards Eastern Europe, as they sought to move towards Poland because of their historical relations on the one hand, and the attempt to revive their relations with the Germans after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk by convening the Treaty of Rapallo on the other hand.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Perhaps the Russians were willing to secure relations with the Germans and bring about rapprochement with the Poles to ensure a positive atmosphere with territories which was belonged to them in past centuries, thus adopting a dual foreign policy whose first and last goal was to preserve Russian interests and gather as many friends as possible.⁽⁴¹⁾

It is worth mentioning, the Soviets retreated into their country as part of socialism in one country, coinciding within the positivity of the Polish side.⁽⁴²⁾

Seven years after the end of World War I and four years after the end of the Polish war, contacts have taken place between the Polish and Soviet sides, as the Poles needed to build their state on the one hand, particularly after the severe economic crisis caused by the scarcity of agricultural crops in 1924, which led them to take a loan with a value of thirty-five million dollars, to secure their access to food as a solution to the crisis with severe economic constraints due to the loss of confidence in the Polish economy caused by the collapse of its currency, known as Zloty, due to the Polish-German customs tariff war, not to mention the state of depression Commercial and industrial and secure their borders from the German ambitions on the other hand, while the Soviets wanted to find other passages away from the Tsarist allies of Russia. Trade between the two sides began to rise in March 1925, followed by the granting of trade facilities related to shipping and transportation, and a Polish delegation visited Moscow in June to agree on the formation of a joint binary body to lay the foundations for resolving the frontier problem between the two sides and set its date in August.⁽⁴³⁾

We can identify the volume of trade between the two sides through the following table:⁽⁴⁴⁾

Table showing the volume of Soviet-Polish trade

Soviet Union	Poland	1924	1928	1930	1932	1934	1936	1938
	Imports	0.3	1.2	2.0	2.2	2.2	1.6	0.8

	Exports	0.9	1.5	5.3	2.7	2.6	0.6	0.1
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It is noted that the above table shows the volume of exchange in numbers, and although they seemed simple numbers, they were rising with the nature of rapprochement between the two sides during the interwar period, as the Soviet Union constituted a market of increasing importance to the Poles and specifically for Polish exports during the years 1930, 1933 and 1934.

An atmosphere of friendship and optimism dominated between the two sides that was clearly embodied during the visit of Georgy Vasilyevich Chicherin⁽⁴⁵⁾ to Poland between the twenty-sixth and the thirty of September in the same year, and his stay in Warsaw for four days before the Locarno Conference,⁽⁴⁶⁾ where Chicherin met with Count Aleksander Skrzyński and other Polish officials and discussed with them a proposal to convene a Soviet non-aggression pact between the two sides, and the relations between the two parties were relatively close and were reflected on the visit of a delegation of Polish parliamentarians to the Soviet Union in early 1926.⁽⁴⁷⁾

One cannot deny, that the treaty of Locarno were considered a public threat to the Soviets, so the latter sought to adopt a positive policy to gather the largest number of allies, especially Poland,⁽⁴⁸⁾ but the internal situation in Poland had cast a shadow on the rapprochement between the two sides, which soon materialized by the occurrence of the May Coup, led by Piłsudski in Poland, as the streets saw gunfire and rolled the tanks in their main cities. The Polish people were wishful to make a modification. Rumour, one of the journalists who visited Poland during those events, wrote that the British Minister in Warsaw, Sir W. Max Miller, played a major role in influencing the course of the revolution in providing advices and consultations, and was even aware of all its developments.⁽⁴⁹⁾

The question that arises here is: Why is the British government interested in the developments in Poland?

Britain had a major role in Poland's equity at the reconciliation conference, but the British tried to curb the Polish ambitions to ensure a balance of powers, besides the Russian-Polish rapprochement aroused the rage of Britain on the one hand, and tried to compete with France in the Polish markets on the other hand, and perhaps that was a reason British support for Piłsudski to strike the Russians without paying attention to the desire of the Polish politicians to adopt the settlement as a way to improve relations with the Russians.⁽⁵⁰⁾

Moreover, the Soviets sought to adopt a positive policy with the League of Nations and take advantage of its mechanisms. Although they refused to join the Geneva Disarmament Conference in 1926, due to the deterioration of the Soviet relations with Switzerland after the assassination of the Soviet delegate Vatslav Vorovsky in 1923, they informed the League of Nations in 1927 of their desire to participate in the disarmament talks, which was represented in the statement of its Prime Minister Zekov, stressing his country's desire to implement the conference's decisions, but the peaceful efforts of the Soviets were not positively welcomed by the capitalist powers, Britain and the United States of America, as the latter proposed securing world peace through the new concept with its guarantee, and actually, the Kellogg–Briand Pact (Pact of Paris) was signed in Paris on August 27, 1927 calling for the final abandonment of the war, Russia was not invited to it, and was not invited to ratification of the General Pact.⁽⁵¹⁾

In the same vein, the Russians worked hard to bring together the largest number of eastern European allies to get rid of the specter of isolation and this was embodied in the treaty concluded by the Russians with Estonia - Poland - Romania on the ninth of February 1929, in which those parties pledged to oppose war and guarantee international peace. This would be a response to the Pact of Paris, which came into force in 1928.⁽⁵²⁾

The global economic crisis of October 1929⁽⁵³⁾, created a severe conflict between international powers to adopt effective individual ways out of them on the one hand, and to reduce their economic losses at the lowest costs on the other hand, and because the Russians were seeking, since the stability of the political situation and the end of the civil war, they sought to build their economic abilities away from the influence of European powers, where they managed to withstand the winds of crisis due to the nature of the economic system that enjoyed self-sufficiency, not to mention the five-year plans adopted by the Soviets to build their economic and political abilities.⁽⁵⁴⁾

However, Russia had to secure its external presence, especially after it faced a threat, whether by the Japanese in Manchuria or the Nazi Germans, and they strengthened their relations with Poland, which culminated in a non-aggression treaty with them on July 25, 1932, as the German threats to both sides convinced them to the necessity of working towards securing peace between them according to the peaceful

basis approved by the peace treaty on March 18, 1921, to regulate the mutual relations between the two sides for the peaceful settlement of international disputes agreement constitutes a natural development of what has been concluded between the two sides in the past in a manner consistent with the treaty.

The paragraphs of this treaty were the following:⁽⁵⁵⁾

- If one of the signatory parties to the agreement is attacked by a third country or a group of countries, then the other country pledges not to provide assistance directly or indirectly to the aggressor country throughout the period of the conflict and if one of the two countries takes hostile action against a third country, the other country will be free to leave the treaty.
- Both countries pledge not to be a party to any treaty hostile to the other party.
- The commitments mentioned in the articles first and second will not limit the international obligations of any of the signatory parties to the treaty before it enters into force as long as the treaty in question does not contain any hostile content.
- Both parties pledge to ensure stability, and to adopt peaceful and diplomatic approaches to resolving disputes and differences between them.
- The treaty would ratify as soon as possible and the ratification is exchanged in Warsaw, within 30 days between Poland and the Soviet Union.
- The duration of the agreement is three years, and if it is not rejected by the signatory parties after the lapse of six months from the date of the expiry of the period, it will be renewed automatically for another two years.

Accordingly, the agreed parties pledged to accept relations with other parties and the agreement soon entered into force in the report dated June 24, 1933, under which it was ratified under international laws.⁽⁵⁶⁾ On the other hand, the Soviets, and in order to secure their external relations with their neighbors and away from the control of the West, signed a joint pledge that included the representatives of Poland, Afghanistan, Estonia, Latvia, Iran, Romania and Turkey on the third of July of the same year,⁽⁵⁷⁾ and Poland's Foreign Minister Józef Beck⁽⁵⁸⁾ made clear his point in a media statement to the representative of Iskra news agency that it represents an important political and moral achievement in the system of regional eastern alliances, and that these efforts together will be more effective

than if they were individual, and the geographical scope of the Convention has also given it the strategic and political importance. It also constitutes a logical hierarchy for the series of diplomatic and political relations between it and the Soviet Union, which is clearly embodied in the Beck's statement, which he believed, that this agreement is consistent with the Non-aggression treaty and the Reconciliation Agreement in a way that makes it a source of satisfaction and acceptance by Poland.⁽⁵⁹⁾

The Russians were convinced of the need to maintain their positive relationship with Poland, even after the latter signed a treaty with Nazi Germany in January 1934, especially with the increasing of anti-communist voices.⁽⁶⁰⁾ Perhaps the desire of the Russians was matched by the aspirations of the Poles to ensure the friendship of the Soviets on the one hand and to achieve a kind of balance between the Soviets and the Germans on the other. This rapprochement was clearly reflected in Maxim Litvinov's ⁽⁶¹⁾ expression, at a reception in Moscow in honor of Beck on February 14, 1934, about his pleasure and welcome to the person of Beck in the name of the Soviet Union and his name, and that the issue of his visit to Moscow is of great importance to the Soviet Union as it represents the first visit by an official from the neighboring Polish government.⁽⁶²⁾

Litvinov expressed his happiness at the positive progress of the mutual relations between the Soviet Union and Poland, as well as the developments resulting from those relations and their role in laying the foundations for peace between them, as clearly reflected in the non-aggression treaty. This will be an effective contribution to the lasting global peace, not to mention the positive developments of the mutual cultural ties between the two countries that took place during the Beck administration of Poland's foreign relations. Also, his country attaches importance to securing good-neighborly and friendly relations with neighboring Poland, the Republic of Poland, because they are convinced of their peacekeeping policy in light of the positive response from Poland, and it is in a growing understanding and continuing in light of the international problems, which are confusing peace between the two parties, as Litvinov stressed his country's conviction to strengthen friendship with a prominent representative of Polish foreign policy, in addition to the need to exchange views in solving the problems concerning the governments of the two countries, which will lead to the development of relations in various aspects and enhance cooperation between the two countries.⁽⁶³⁾

Meanwhile, Beck expressed his happiness for the positive atmosphere between the two sides through the cultural rapprochement, which was the result of the ties of friendship and understanding between the two peoples, and that the process of exchanging artistic and cultural values and concepts will reflect positively on both sides, which was clearly reflected in the sincere feelings of the Soviet government when receiving Polish artists who visited the Soviet Union, especially since the Poles were keen to follow developments in the course of cultural life in the Soviet Union, which it was in the interest of both countries, and the Soviet-Polish relations seemed more stronger, and during that period, both countries appeared more committed to the other side, and this was clearly reflected when the Soviets offered their sympathy to the Poles over the tragic incident of Captain Lewonewski by offering their consolation to the Polish air force by General Nikolai Ruzsk, who had a distinguished reputation in Poland, which was reflected in strengthening relations between the two sides.⁽⁶⁴⁾

A meeting took place between the Soviet Foreign Minister and his Polish counterpart in Moscow, which lasted for three days, in which the two sides reviewed the international situation and its impact on the stability of peace between the two sides. The exchange of views between Beck and Litvinov resulted in a set of proposals aimed at resolving the outstanding problems between them, and emphasizing the strengthening and development of their relations on the one hand and ensuring peace in the eastern part of Europe on the other.⁽⁶⁵⁾

Accordingly, on May 5, 1934, the two sides renewed the Non-Aggression Pact, which was held on July 25, 1932 until December 31, 1945, and came in the preamble to renewal, "we are eager to develop relations between two sides, in order to maintain stable and calm relations of overlapping relations in Eastern Europe".

Upon reviewing the document, we find that it touched on the provisions of Article Seven of the Non-Aggression Pact signed on the twenty-fifth of July 1932 between the Republic of Poland and the Republics of the Soviet Union, and the Contracting Parties decided to keep it in force until the thirty-first of December 1945. The agreement was written in Russian and Polish languages, and the protocol for the renewal of the Non-Aggression Pact between the two countries was signed in 1932, and the Treaty of Riga was the basis on which peaceful relations between the two parties were built.⁽⁶⁶⁾

The Soviet Union's entry into the League of Nations in September 1934 didn't affect the course of Soviet-Polish relations, as clearly reflected in the Soviet

government's declaration that relations between the two countries would continue under their agreements, including the Non-Aggression Pact.⁽⁶⁷⁾

However, international events began to move rapidly with the anti-Nazi sentiments and the extent of Poland's influence in the policy of the axes created by Hitler, with the Polish Foreign Ministry expressing its open rejection of being a party to the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis because it has peaceful relations with the Soviet Union, as well as its opposition to the formation of an anti-Soviet bloc.⁽⁶⁸⁾

In return, the Soviets didn't want to lose the Polish paper, as in 1938 Joseph Stalin liquidated his Eastern European communist enemies with a massive purge of the party in Poland and accused them of making mistakes (Trotskyists and Luxembourianists), killing Vera Kostrzava (Pseudonym WeraKostrzewa), Julian Lenskiteszczenski, and Adolf Warski, while the rest were subjected to exile and extermination in Russian prisons.⁽⁶⁹⁾

Stalin's move was perhaps intended to silence voices opposed to rapprochement, secure a positive atmosphere between the two sides on the one hand, and ensure loyalty to the Soviets in Eastern Europe on the other.

The Polish side seemed more committed to its strong neighbor in light of the increasing Nazi pressures on the one hand, and the spread of the policy of appeasement on the other, which coincided with the intentions of the Soviet side to move to win the Poles. A series of talks took place between Maxim Litvinov and WacławGrzybowski,⁽⁷⁰⁾ Poland's ambassador to Moscow. It emphasized the solidarity of relations between the two countries and to the fullest extent under the agreements between the two sides, including the 1932 Non-Aggression Pact, renewed in 1934 for an additional period ending in 1945, which would be sufficient to ensure peaceful relations between the two countries.⁽⁷¹⁾

Both parties were prepared to make efforts to secure trade relations and resolve outstanding issues between them, particularly the border issue. The negotiations were held on February 19, 1939 between Poland and the Soviet Union, which resulted in the signing of a number of agreements to activate economic relations between the two countries through the trade agreement, which included sales and payments, signed by the Polish ambassador in Moscow as head of the Trade Delegation and signed by A. J. Mikoyan, Commissioner of Foreign Trade (Minister of Trade) of the Soviet Union.⁽⁷²⁾

This commercial agreement was considered as a

first between Poland and the Soviet Union based on the most favored nation principle, and the agreement included several points related to commercial sales and maritime transport, as this agreement with regard to trade turnover provides for a considerable extension of trading operations between the two countries. The main materials that the Soviet Union exported to Poland were: cotton, food, manganese ore, asbestos, and graphite. In return, Poland exported to the Soviet Union coal, iron manufactures, zinc, sheet zinc and textiles, as well as textile machinery, tanned leather, and viscose (rayon). The financial payments were determined by the payment agencies in both countries.⁽⁷³⁾

The Russians didn't want to lose the Poles, as reflected in the talk of Vladimir Petrovich Potemkin⁽⁷⁴⁾ during his visit to Warsaw, stressing his country's support for the Poles, and in the event of a Polish-German military conflict, the Soviet Union would stay on neutrality.⁽⁷⁵⁾

In view of European international developments and the clarification of Nazi ambitions in Poland, Vyacheslav Molotov⁽⁷⁶⁾ confirmed before the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union on the thirty-first of May 1939, that it is possible to note the development taking place in our relationship with Poland. Moreover, the trade agreement signed in March with Poland contributed to the high value of commercial sales between the two sides, thus stressing the need for Soviet foreign policy to play a strong and supportive role in the peaceful orientation and within the front against any future aggression. But political reality soon began to impose itself.⁽⁷⁷⁾

There was no doubt that the Soviets were plotting an intrigue with the Nazi Germans, as the Soviet government reaffirmed its support for the Poles when Soviet Ambassador Nikołaĵ Szaronov⁽⁷⁸⁾ presented his credentials on June 2, 1939 as his country's ambassador to the Polish government, stressing that when he met with officials, he affirmed his government's assurance of the full achievement of the trade agreement, stressing the willingness of both sides to ensure the exchange of goods at affordable prices.⁽⁷⁹⁾

The Soviets didn't disclose their secret negotiations with the Germans, but they continued to cheat the Poles about their interest in the feasibility of the trade agreement between the two countries. In a conversation between the Soviet ambassador in Warsaw and Deputy Foreign Minister Count Jan Szembek⁽⁸⁰⁾ on June 14, 1939, it was touched upon the visit of Vladimir Petrovich Potemkin, the Soviet official to strengthen the bonds of friendship between the two countries, and in the same context, the Russian ambassador denied on

July 8 of the same year the spread of rumors about conducting trade negotiations between the Soviets and the Germans.⁽⁸¹⁾

The duality of Soviet politics between securing their relations with the Poles on the one hand and their rapprochement with the Germans on the other, was to ensure their political presence and strategic role on the European continent, so their secret discussions with the Germans blew up their arguments to secure their presence from the Nazis, and it reflected in a non-aggression pact with the Germans on August 22, 1939.⁽⁸²⁾

That alliance caused a major rift in Soviet-Polish relations, particularly Poland, but the Soviets tried to reassure them when they were informed of the possibility of providing assistance in the form of primary and military materials, as they didn't need an alliance or even a military agreement with Poland to provide assistance or to secure the requirements of the latter military, thus reducing the size of their alliance with the Germans,⁽⁸³⁾ and this was clearly reflected in the interpretation of Marshal Kliment Voroshilov,⁽⁸⁴⁾ citing the relationship of the United States of America with Japan, although it was not an alliance with them, but it was providing them with primary and military materials, regardless of whether Japan is at war with China.⁽⁸⁵⁾

The Soviet-Polish relations didn't stop even after the Nazi invasion of Poland on the first of September, as Beck on the second of September, informed his country's ambassador in London that Voroshilov had confirmed the continued flow of Russian goods to Poland.⁽⁸⁶⁾

The situation quickly changed when the Soviets informed the Poles on September 8 of the same year that relations between the two sides had been strained by British and French interventions, saying they wanted to stay out of the international conflict to reduce pressure on the one hand and ensure the continuation of trade negotiations between the two sides. But those Soviet statements were nothing more than an attempt to silence them, and to make gains at the expense of their Polish neighbor at the same time. The facts are emerging on the ground and the German-Soviet alliance is at odds with the promises the Soviets made to the Polish government. This was clearly reflected when the Soviets used a clear manipulation of the language, telling the Poles that they could be equipped with civilian rather than military raw materials or in relation to military transport, because they were in conflict with the terms of their alliance with the Germans, so they could no longer fulfill their commitments. When the

Polish ambassador tried to ascertain the extent to which the Soviets wanted to help them in accordance with their earlier promises, the Soviet side repeated the question of changing the situation and that the Soviet Union must first and foremost take care of its security first and foremost.⁽⁸⁷⁾

The Polish political scene witnessed rapid developments, as the Soviet ambassador left Warsaw for his country on September 11, 1939 on the pretext of his inability to communicate with Moscow and promising the Polish government to return two days or a week at most, with the possibility of obtaining Soviet medical supplies. To further deceitful, the Soviet ambassador promised the Poles some efforts to disrupt German's progress towards Warsaw.⁽⁸⁸⁾

The agreements the Poles made with the Soviets were coming to an end, especially after the German-Soviet alliance came into force. As Potemkin summoned Polish Ambassador Grzybowski in Moscow on September 17 of the same year at 3 a.m., and handed him a note signed by Molotov, in which he wrote: "The Soviet government has ordered its troops to cross the Polish border."⁽⁸⁹⁾

Potemkin attempted to explain the contents of the Soviet memo to the Polish ambassador by noting that the German-Polish war revealed the extent of the internal bankruptcy of the Polish state, which within a short period lost most of their industrial lands, its cultural centers, and the government collapsed. Warsaw is no longer the capital of Poland as life has disappeared, so the Russian government considers that the agreements signed between it and Poland are no longer effective, because the latter has become an arena for conflict, which will pose a major threat to the Soviet Union, which is no longer able to maintain a position of neutrality against these military changes. Accordingly, the Soviet government directed the High Command of the Red Army to give orders for the forces to cross the border to protect the life and property of the population in western Ukraine and western Belarus.⁽⁹⁰⁾

The Polish ambassador described the situation as a quite shock to him, who rejected it altogether and in detail, and in return, he submitted an objection to that behavior, which he considered it an outright attack against his country and asked for his passport for the purpose of withdrawing and leaving Moscow.⁽⁹¹⁾ This memo was the last link that the Russians shattered with Poland, and with their smartness, the Russians succeeded in playing the Polish card to secure their old ambitions in those lands.

Poland didn't have much time after the door was closed by the Soviets, as it rushed to seek the help of

European powers and sent two notes informing the British and French sides of the developments of the Soviet position,⁽⁹²⁾ but it was too late, as the German and Soviet sides signed an agreement on September 28, 1939 under the pretension of restoring peace in the region, and the price of which was the collapse of the Polish state, Poland again lost its independence at the hands of Russia.⁽⁹³⁾ And the charters of convergence and friendship between the two sides had torn apart, which they both adhered to during the interwar period, and the concept of an allied neighbor went with the wind.

CONCLUSION

- The Soviet - Polish relations were not new, but they were rooted deep in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and covered all social, economic, and even cultural aspects.
- The Soviet-Polish relations formed an important axis in light of the variables that have resulted from the First World War firstly, and the Peace Conference secondly.
- After attaining independence, according to the decisions of the Conciliation Conference, the Poles wished to take revenge on the Russians and destroy them, but it soon ran into the rejection of the Allies, led by Britain, on the one hand, and the growth of socialism in their country on the other.
- The variables of the First World War imposed a new reality on Poland that was associated with its geographical location, and found itself between a modern socialist state, Russia, and another that was humiliated by the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles at the Conciliation Conference, Germany, that required it to accept that reality wisely and objectively.
- Some Polish politicians believed in the principle of balance to stay on the safehold, so they tried to hold the stick from the middle to secure their fronts, and to ensure that their gains are preserved by allied support.
- The Soviets were intent on strengthening their relations with their regional neighbors, especially the Poles, to create a gap in the policy of quarantine that the allies ruled over them, and to banish the specter of international isolation to ensure the survival and extension of communist thought.
- The treaties between the Soviet Union and Poland showed images of their rapprochement,

whether by a Non-Aggression Treaty or in a trade agreement, which the Poles welcomed and the Soviets relied on for their foreign policy moves, but it didn't have strategic depth, and it collapsed with subsequent international challenges, and it was like fake shields.

- The Nazi threat to both sides contributed to the duality of the foreign policy of both parties,

especially the Soviets. When the Nazis revealed their true intents, the Soviets sought to forge friendship with them without indifference to their relations with the Poles, and the German-Soviet Non-Aggression alliance quickly fired a mercy bullet at Polish-Soviet relations, which destroyed by the ambitions of Nazism and Communism.

FOOTNOTES AND RESOURCES

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- 8- Wolf Schierbrand, op. cit., p. 10.
- 9- GregorAlexinsky, op. cit., p. 184.
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- 34- Louis Fischer, op. cit., p. 518.
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- 37- Alexander Skrzinski: A Polish politician, born in 1882, who entered the Diplomatic corps in 1906, represented his country in Bucharest in 1922, served as Polish Foreign Minister from 1922-1925, then, became Prime Minister between 1925-1926. He died in 1931. For further details, see: The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 10, op. cit., p. 868.
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- 61- Maxim Litvinov: A Bolshevik Jew, born in 1876, worked in the Diplomatic corps who had a role in the events of the Russian-French rapprochement. In 1930, he became Commissioner of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union (Minister of Foreign Affairs). He died in 1951. For further details, see: The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 7, op. cit., p. 407.
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- 74- Vladimir PetrovichPotemkine: Soviet politician born in 1874, studied history at the Moscow University. He entered the Diplomatic corps in 1922, represented his country in more than one place in Greece 1929-1932, Italy 1932-1934 and France 1943-1937, after which he held the position of Deputy Foreign Affairs of the USSR in 1939. He died in 1946. For further details, see the web:

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- 79- O.D.P. - G.P.S.R., Speech made by Sharonov on presenting his Credentials to the President of the Polish Republic, Warsaw, June 2, 1939, No. 165, p. 184.
- 80- Count Jan Szembek: Polish diplomat, born in 1881, graduated from the University of Vienna, worked in the Austrian office in Bosnia 1905-1908. He became an ambassador of his country after gaining independence in Budapest 1921-1924, Brussels in 1925 and Bucharest 1927 until 1932. He was close to Józef Beck, who took over as Deputy Foreign Minister; he left Poland on September 17, 1939. He died in 1945. For further details, see the web: <https://enacademic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/9074654>
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- 84- Kliment Voroshilov: a Russian military born in 1881, he joined the Russian Socialist Labor Party in 1905, and became a member of the Ukrainian Council and People's Commissar for Internal Affairs in 1917. He was a commander of the Southern Front during the Polish-Soviet War. He was a supporter of Joseph Stalin and one of his associates in the Cleansing War and became defense minister in 1934, died in 1969. For further details, see: The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 12, op. cit., p. 432.
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- 89- O.D.P. - G.P.S.R., Grzybowski to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Moscow, September 17, 1939, No. 174, p. 189.
- 90- O.D.P. - G.P.S.R., Text of the Russian Note communicated by Potemkin to Grzybowski, September 17, 1939, 3. am., No. 175, p. 189.
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