

POLISH  
ACTS OF ATROCITY  
AGAINST  
THE GERMAN MINORITY  
IN POLAND

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Compiled by  
HANS SCHADEWALDT

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Compilation founded on Documentary Evidence and  
published for the German Foreign Office

Second Edition with Important Addenda

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# ATROCITIES AND ATROCITIES

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION OF "POLISH ACTS OF ATROCITY AGAINST THE GERMAN MINORITY IN POLAND."

The German Library of Information presents herewith a translation of numerous documents, published by authority of the German Foreign Office, on the systematic outrages perpetrated by Polish civilians and soldiers upon the German minority in Poland, in the first few days of the present war. Public opinion is properly skeptical of "atrocities." The world has grown not only distrustful but callous. We have learned to our sorrow that, with millions under arms, occasional individual brutalities are bound to occur in war-time. For these reasons public opinion wisely hesitates to ascribe sporadic atrocities to a deliberate government policy. Unfortunately such skepticism is not warranted in the present instance. There are atrocities and atrocities.

Every incident recited in the ensuing pages is authenticated in detail. This book is not a collection of vague rumors and hearsay, like the charges made recently against the Germans by Polish and Anglo-French propagandists. Nor is it a deliberate concoction, like the notorious Bryce Report<sup>1</sup> fabricated in the World War to stimulate recruiting and to create sympathy for the Allies. The Bryce Report, in the words of Professor H. C. Peterson,<sup>2</sup> "is one of the most extreme examples of the definition of Propaganda as 'assassination by word.'" "It was in itself," Professor Peterson goes on to say, "one of the worst atrocities of the war."

Unlike the appended documents, the Bryce Report was, in the opinion of competent historians, based largely upon second and third-hand information, rumors and opinions indiscriminately included, statements elicited or suggested by leading questions, incomplete versions of actual events, and barrack-room gossip. Yet it influenced world opinion profoundly. To this day the "crucified Canadian"—long disowned by the Canadian Government—and mutilated Belgian babies stalk through the imagination of humankind. Lord Ponsonby in his able study,<sup>3</sup> has traced the development of the most widely circulated lies. The armless Belgian babe, the crucified Canadian,<sup>4</sup> the

1. Report of the German Outrages Inquiry Committee, appointed in 1914 by the British Prime Minister.

2. "Propaganda for War—The Campaign Against American Neutrality, 1914-1917." (University of Oklahoma Press, 1939).

3. Arthur Ponsonby, "Falsehood in Wartime," 1928.

4. Letter on the crucified Canadian from the Canadian Department of National Defence, in "Spreading Germs of Hate" (page 311).



Corpse Factory for the extraction of fat, have been consigned to the limbo of discredited myths, accompanied by tearful confessions of British and French statesmen.<sup>1</sup>

Signor Nitti, Italian Prime Minister during the World War, and Mr. Lloyd George, carried on extensive investigations as to the truth of the horrible accusations made against the Germans, but "every case investigated proved to be a myth." Bryce himself toward the end of his days seems to have been conscious of having lent his honored name to a collection of falsifications. "A friend of the writer," reveals Dr. Harry Elmer Barnes,<sup>2</sup> "approached James Bryce about the Bryce Report some time before Mr. Bryce's death, but the latter refused to attempt any defense beyond the assertion that one must expect almost anything in war-time." "We may", explains Frederick Palmer,<sup>3</sup> "look back on Lord Bryce's signing of the atrocity report as a venerable statesman's 'bit', when, in the name of its beloved dead and wounded, every combatant nation realized that its future was to be signed and sealed by victory or defeat at arms." It would be an error, however, to regard the German Report on Polish Atrocities in a similar light.

The present Report should meet the requirements of the most painstaking investigator of current history. Rumor, hearsay, unverified statements are rigidly excluded. The evidence is gathered from legal proceedings. The reader is confronted by page after page of documents, sworn testimony, expert medical opinion, photographs. Instead of unverified gossip the student will find facts legally established by the courts, by Army Commissions, and by police investigations. Nor is the report merely the elaboration of an occasional misdeed by an hysterical murderer. It discloses the existence of a systematic campaign of destruction, carried on not only by armed civilians, but by responsible officials of the Polish Government.

The report is the result of an investigation of 5,437 murders of minority Germans in Poland. Since the publication of this report in Germany a few months ago, thousands of additional corpses of civilian members of the German minority have been identified in Gouvernement General Poland (that part of Poland now occupied by the German Government) alone. The last official figure for dead and missing is 58,000.<sup>4</sup>

The present volume utilizes, therefore, only a fraction of the material available. No attempt has been made to dramatize the testimony, eloquent in its stark simplicity. But, to repeat, in each instance chapter and verse are given. The names, the dates, and the locations

1. Excellent standard works on World War Propaganda are: H. D. Laswell: "Propaganda Technique in the World War," London and New York, 1927; J. D. Squires: "British Propaganda at Home and in the United States from 1914-1917," Cambridge, 1935.
2. "In Quest of Truth and Justice," 1929.
3. Frederick Palmer: "With My Own Eyes."
4. Third German Official Statement on Polish Atrocities, February 14, 1940.



involved are inscribed in the court records. The translator has occasionally given a more delicate rendition of a colloquial word or phrase, in deference to American susceptibilities. Here and there a paragraph or a sentence has been condensed, but there has been no change in the meaning, no tampering with facts.

The death notices reproduced in the pictorial section cannot be dismissed as "propaganda." Here, too, in every case the source and the date are given. Finally, there are pictures which speak for themselves. It has been insinuated that there is no proof that the mutilated bodies, etc., are Germans. The German authorities included no pictures without scrupulous investigation. The Medical Report with its gruesome recital of autopsies make the evidence unimpeachable. The editors present the case against Poland without concealment or distortion; they challenge investigation by impartial students.

Some pictures contained in the Medical Report are too shocking to be reproduced in a volume intended for general circulation. These have been published in a separate volume entitled: "Pictorial Report of Polish Atrocities." This volume is available, on application,<sup>1</sup> to Government Officials, librarians, medical men and historical students.

No attempt has been made to tone down the note of indignation in the German introduction. It would scarcely be human not to be moved and shocked by the spectacle of 58,000 murdered or mutilated victims of the Polish terror. Nor is it possible to forgive or forget that the "blank check" so hastily given to Poland by Mr. Chamberlain's Government and its failure to recommend the acceptance of Chancellor Hitler's generous terms were the signal for the slaughter of the German minority.<sup>2</sup>

It may be urged, in mitigation of certain offenses, that Polish resentment against German fellow-citizens was inevitable under the circumstances. Some men shouted "Heil Hitler"; some women, when subjected to a bodily examination, were shown to conceal swastikas in their bosoms. The tormented minority in general expressed joy at the sight of their German rescuers. All this, however, hardly justifies the systematic lynching of small children and women, as well as of men, by civilians in collusion with Government officials, police officers and soldiers. Moreover, these incidents show how completely the Poles failed to win the confidence or the respect of the Germans who had been apportioned to Poland, contrary to their wishes and, in some cases, contrary to the plebiscite.

The very fact that the German minority looked upon German soldiers as "liberators" speaks volumes for the failure of the synthetic Polish state, "made in Versailles." The Polish Overlords ruled not only the German but all other minorities, including the hapless

1. German Library of Information, 17 Battery Place, New York City.

2. Even the able British writer, Geoffrey T. Garrott, calls this "an extremely hasty and probably unwise decision." "What Has Happened to Europe?" 1940, p. 298.



Ukrainians, with an iron hand. Confiscation and intimidation, arson and murder, were the four pillars of the Polish State.

It is important to recall in this connection the manner in which the violation of Upper Silesia sowed the seeds of dissension that proved fatal to Poland. In its Fourth Official Statement of Polish atrocities,<sup>1</sup> the German Government recalls the bloody precedent for the massacres described in this volume and recites with a mass of incontrovertible evidence, the campaign against the Germans in Upper Silesia from 1919 to 1921.

During these post-war periods, as in 1939, the Western Powers did nothing to restrain the terror. On the contrary, they aided and abetted the terrorists. The residents of the rich industrial region were to determine their citizenship by plebiscite in conformity with the Versailles decision. But, from the end of 1918, Poland made every effort to intimidate the German population and to prevent them from registering their votes. Under the leadership of Korfanty, armed bands of insurgents roamed the countryside.

The first Polish "revolt" of August, 1919, was suppressed by German troops, but these were forced to withdraw by the Western Powers. By the beginning of 1920, Polish oppression and armed action reached a new height. An Inter-Allied Commission, with predominantly French troops, took over control of the plebiscite area. Poland appointed Korfanty as its plebiscite commissioner. Through agitation and terrorization he made himself, for all practical purposes, the ruler of Upper Silesia.

In August 1920, a second Polish "uprising" occurred. German villages were burnt to the ground; Germans were kidnapped, man-handled and murdered. Thousands of Germans registered protests with the Inter-Allied Commission and German officials, but in vain. The Germans were powerless. The French troops did not call a halt to the bloody reign of terror. Only the small Italian contingent came to the rescue and, as a consequence, lost a number of men.

The Inter-Allied Commission, composed primarily of British and French representatives, disarmed the German Security Patrols and created a strongly armed Polish "Citizens Guard". As a result, over 100,000 Upper Silesians were unable to vote, in the plebiscite of March, 1921, for remaining in the Reich. Despite this fact, an overwhelming majority of the population voted to stay with Germany.

Disappointed by this failure, Korfanty led a new armed attack on May 3, 1921. The Warsaw Government supported this revolt with regular soldiers. German volunteers freed two-thirds of the province. Because of the partisan behavior of the French and British members of the Allied Commission, the other third remained subject to the Polish terror. The French and British supported the Polish "insurgents."

<sup>1</sup> February 22, 1940.



In this last attack large numbers of German Silesians were murdered under atrocious circumstances. Tens of thousands lost their workshops and homes. In innumerable cases they were illegally arrested, mistreated, transported and robbed. Responsibility rests with the leading Polish circles who supported and planned Korfanty's reign of terror. All this was permitted despite the fact that many outstanding journalists, parliamentarians and leaders of the Western Powers protested. Even the London *Times*<sup>1</sup> was forced to admit that Korfanty and his supporters were destroying the very basis of the Versailles Treaty.

But the Governments of the Western Powers made no serious efforts to end Polish terrorism. After tolerating, even supporting, the Polish bands for two years, they turned over hundreds of thousands of Germans to Polish rule in defiance of the plebiscite. These Germans were yet to experience another bath of blood before they were finally freed from their Polish tormentors.

In September, 1939, the German Army finally brought release to the Germans in Poland; to the Poles it brought justice. No Pole guilty of any offense was punished, except in accordance with the principles which everywhere regulate martial and civil law. The former Polish Government sought refuge in flight, but many of the miscreants responsible for the abominations described in this volume, paid the penalty for their crime. In every case punishment followed only after punctilious observance of every legal requirement and painstaking investigation by duly authorized officials.

Exaggerated rumors of these penalties imposed by civil and military courts are the basis for the flood of propaganda against Germany by Polish refugees who did not witness the events they decry. Their tales of horror were eagerly snatched up, garnished and magnified in London and Paris by the same inventive minds to which the world is indebted for the armless Belgian infant and the crucified Canadian soldier. Germany cannot imperil the rule of law and order in the occupied territory by condoning countless wanton and vindictive deeds of violence. The heart-rending evidence accumulated in this volume could not be ignored by those charged with the administration of justice.

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1. May 10, 1921.