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## Lewis Namier, the Curzon Line, and the shaping of Poland's eastern frontier after World War I<sup>1</sup>

**Outline:** the purpose of this article is to clarify the role of Lewis Namier, a Foreign Office expert on Polish affairs, and his contribution to the drawing of the “Curzon Line” – the Polish-Ukrainian border in Eastern Galicia after World War I. Namier was of Polish-Jewish descent, and he has gone down in Polish historiography as a man of rabidly anti-Polish inclination; during the war and later at the Versailles Peace Conference, he consistently opposed Poland's expansion in eastern Europe, notably propagating the view that the whole of the territory known as Kresy – the Eastern Marchlands – should be severed from Poland. His concepts and activities were in tune with the general thrust of British policy towards Poland, though it seems that he was not the *eminence grise* in Lloyd George's cabinet in this question, but merely a convenient supplier of anti-Polish arguments. This analysis aims at proving that the great role attributed to Namier in Polish historiography is exaggerated and it was not he – as is commonly believed – who was the actual author of the Curzon Line, and it was not he who inserted it into the famous note sent from Spa to the Bolsheviks in July 1920.

**Keywords:** Polish eastern border, “Curzon line”, Paris Peace Conference, Eastern Galicia

The Polish state that was reborn after 123 years of subjugation had to square up to a myriad of problems in an environment of chaos in our part of the Continent. The Russian Revolution and its consequent civil war in Russia, the explosion of national separatist movements along the rim of the disintegrating empire, and the ensuing conflicts between a patchwork of national and ethnic groupings, presented no small challenge to the centres formulating Polish foreign policy. The universal tendency in those milieus was the aspiration to recover most of the lands of the

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<sup>1</sup> This article is an expanded version of a fragment of my master's thesis on “The history of the concept of the Curzon Line and the shaping of Poland's eastern border, 1918-1945” written under the supervision of Dr. Grzegorz Mazur and defended in 2010 at the Institute of Political Studies and International Relation of the Jagellonian University.

old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth or at least secure their stronger attachment to the Polish state<sup>2</sup>.

The whole issue was additionally complicated by the victorious great powers of the Entente which had their own concepts and plans of settlement in post-war East Central Europe. Unfortunately, their plans took negligible account of the wishes of the local inhabitants. The very sparse knowledge possessed by the representatives of the great powers on the realities and relations in the east-central part of the Old Continent was no barrier to their decision-making procedures; indeed, they did as they saw fit<sup>3</sup>. Western politicians also frequently exuded a vacillating and indecisive approach, changing more important decisions. One of the most important reasons for such behaviour was the rebirth of mutual antagonisms among members of the Entente which was especially visible in Anglo-French relations. We know what were the effects: a short-lived international order of some twenty years ending in the outbreak of another global conflict<sup>4</sup>.

The discords in the Entente camp in the West had grave impact on their attempts to resolve the problems attaching to all of the borders of the reborn Polish Republic. Although this issue has already been discussed and described in detail in historiography, new studies and facts continue to come forth which bring in train completely new findings and details<sup>5</sup>. This article aims at filling one such gap, and it concerns the person of Lewis Namier (1888-1960), a British Foreign Office expert during World War I and the Paris peace conference. He is a figure known to Polish historians dealing with this period, however, very little closer attention has been devoted

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2 The literature on the concepts of Józef Piłsudski and Roman Dmowski is voluminous. Of the more recent studies one should point to A. Nowak, *Polska i trzy Rosje. Studium polityki wschodniej Józefa Piłsudskiego (do kwietnia 1920 roku)*, Kraków 2001; A. Czubiński, *Walka Józefa Piłsudskiego o nowy kształt polityczny Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w latach 1918-1921*, Toruń 2002; *Mysł polityczna Romana Dmowskiego*, J. Engelgard ed., Warsaw 2009. See also the articles by A. Nowak: *Geopolityczne koncepcje Józefa Piłsudskiego* and P. Korys *Pomiędzy Rosją a Niemcami, czyli wizja geopolityczna Romana Dmowskiego* in: *Przekłete miejsce Europy? Dylematy polskiej geopolityki*, J. Kloczkowski ed., Kraków 2009.

3 The ignorance of the British prime minister David Lloyd George, a dilettanti in international affairs, has passed into legend. By way of example, one could mention his confusion of the Spanish province of Galicia with Eastern Galicia in *Kresy*, Poland's former eastern marchlands. See J. Pisuliński, *Nie tylko Petlura. Kwestia ukraińska w polskiej polityce zagranicznej 1918-1923*, Wrocław 2004, p. 75.

4 A full picture of the inter-war period has been reconstructed by Henryk Batowski in his classic study: *Między dwiema wojnami 1919-1939. Zarys historii dyplomatycznej*, Kraków 2001. An appendix to this (the second) edition, contains an updated bibliography covering the years 1985-2001 compiled by J. J. Bruski. See H. Batowski, *Między dwiema wojnami...*, pp. 507-527.

5 For more on this topic see J. Karski, *Wielkie mocarstwa wobec Polski 1919-1945. Od Wersalu do Jałty*, Warsaw 1998; M. Nowak-Kiełbikowa, *Polska - Wielka Brytania 1918-1923. Kształtowanie się stosunków politycznych*, Warsaw 1975; J. Kukułka, *Francja a Polska po traktacie Wersalskim (1919-1922)*, Warsaw 1970; M. Baumgart, *Wielka Brytania a odbudowa Polski 1914-1923*, Szczecin 1990; H. Batowski, *Zachód wobec granic Polski. Niektóre fakty mniej znane*, Łódź 1995; J. R. Wędrowski, *Stany Zjednoczone a odrodzenie Polski. Polityka Stanów Zjednoczonych wobec sprawy polskiej i Polski w latach 1916-1919*, Wrocław 1980; M. Leczyk, *Komitet Narodowy Polski a Ententa i Stany Zjednoczone 1917-1919*, Warsaw 1966.

to him so far, which is incomprehensible given the crucial influence Namier is said to have wielded in drawing up the main thrusts of British policy in relation to Poland. It is with his name that the British proposal of the Curzon Line as the border between Poland and Russia, taking away from Poland the whole of the Eastern Marchlands, is most frequently associated<sup>6</sup>. The shape of Poland's eastern border was finally determined by the outcome of the Polish-Bolshevik War of 1920 which made the British proposal a dead letter in its entirety. The problem lies in the fact that this idea was revived after the outbreak of World War II, notably during the Big Three conferences at Teheran and Yalta on the establishment of the post-war. To be sure, it gave rise to certain controversies among the Big Three negotiators, but this aspect extends beyond the purpose of this analysis<sup>7</sup>. The point at issue here is to find answers to two basic questions: what was the true role of Lewis Namier in shaping British foreign policy vis-a-vis Poland, and was he really the author of the Curzon Line? For it seems that neither his authority, nor his achievements were as great as is commonly assumed. However, before proceeding to the basic problem to be considered in this analysis, it seems that the general picture of the hero of the piece should be brought into focus.

## Lewis Namier's childhood and youth

Lewis Namier was born in 1888 in Wola Okrzejska (in today's Polish province of Lublin) as Ludwik Bernstein. At the time the area belonged to the Russian partition. Earlier, it was the family home of the Cieciszowski family, and that is where one of Poland's best known and popular novelists, Henryk Sienkiewicz, was born. The Bernsteins came from Vinitsa in Russian Ukraine. The first known member of this family was engaged in manufacturing cloth for the Russian army, at one point supplying 40% of its demand. With time, the Bernstein family began to assimilate with Polish culture and the main watershed in this process occurred during the January Uprising of 1863 in which Namier's grandfather, Jakub Chaim Bernstein, took part. Ludwik (Lewis) painted Józek's father in the darkest colours as an addicted gambler and spendthrift, which was to be the cause of financial problems for his household<sup>8</sup>.

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6 The detailed course of the Curzon Line (mentioning the more important towns it was to run past) was given in the note of 11 July 1920 was drafted in Spa, Belgium. This document shall be discussed further below.

7 For more on this see J. Tebinki, *Polityka brytyjska wobec problemu granicy polsko-radzieckiej 1939-1945*, Warsaw 1998, and P. Eberhardt, *Polska granica wschodnia 1939-1945*, Warsaw 1993; *idem*, *Jak kształtowała się wschodnia granica PRL*, "Zeszyty Historyczne" 1989 (Paris), vol. 90, pp. 3-34; J. Tebinka, *Sprawa polska w polityce Wielkiej Brytanii i Stanów Zjednoczonych (od Teheranu do Jałty)*, "Mazowieckie Studia Humanistyczne" 2004, no. 1-2, pp. 137-159.

8 A. Zięba, *Historyk jako produkt historii, czyli o tym, jak Ludwik Bernstein przekształcił się w Lewisa Namiera*, in *Historyk i historia. Studia dedykowane pamięci Mirosława Francicia*, A. Walaszek, K. Zamorski, eds. Kraków 2005, pp. 154-155; J. Namier, *Lewis Namier. A biography*, London 1971, pp. 8-9, 36-37.

The family moved successively to Kobyłówłok, Nowosiółki Skałackiej and Koszyłowice (in the Austrian partition), where it acquired an estate in the district of Zaleszczyki (895 hectares), seeking to root itself in the Polish land-owning class. At the same time, the Bernsteins were landowners in Popowce (400 hectares) and Biała (435 hectares). Such extensive domains enabled the young Ludwik to undertake studies abroad in the later period. As he claimed, he was raised as a Pole. Polish was spoken in his family home. His teachers were people tied with the Polish independence-orientated left who were still students at the time, among others Edmund Weissberg, Stanisław Kot and Marian Kukieł. It is also known that towards the end of the 19th century (1897 to be precise), they were officially registered as being of the Mosaic faith. They later converted to Roman Catholicism, but Ludwik refused baptism. It may have been then that the family changed its name to Niemirowski, though there is no certainty as to whether both issues were interlinked. For certain there were no earlier links between the Niemirowskis and the Bernsteins<sup>9</sup>.

Ludwik himself learnt of his Jewish descent at the age of nine, which apparently came to him as a shock. He later exploited this claiming that it was precisely this moment that constituted the beginning of his true national rebirth<sup>10</sup>. Living in Great Britain, he decidedly cut himself off from Polish culture and began to work for the Zionist movement. In turn, towards the end of his life, he converted to Anglicanism, a move for which he was criticised by the Jewish community<sup>11</sup>. There are those who claim that due to his conversion to Judaism he fell into conflict with his father which ended in the severance of family ties. This, however, does not seem to be entirely true, especially as Namier himself, in a letter addressed to Józef, expressed concern for the fate of his family while at the same time trying to persuade it to leave Poland, offering his services in this respect<sup>12</sup>. Julia Namier [his second wife – B.R.] main-

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9 A. Zięba, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-163,168. A different version is given by his second wife Julia in her biography of Lewis Namier. She wrote that it was impossible to establish the precise date of the change of name. She claimed, however, that the family had already been using the name Niemirowski earlier, and the surname Bernstein had been imposed by the Russians after the partitions at the end of the 18th century. Later, in various documents “vel Niemirowski” was added to the surname Bernstein. See J. Namier, *op. cit.*, p. 3. It should be noted, however, that in her book, Julia chiefly recounted what her husband told her and, as is known, this was produced in large measure by Namier himself. The spur to draft an autobiography came from the USA in the late 1950s where various stories were disseminated about him. As indicated by A. Zięba, Namier was to have dictated to his wife his biography from his birth to the end of World War I. The reason for this self-portrait was apparently the fear that future generations could give him a poor assessment of his activities in this period. See A. Zięba, *op. cit.*, p. 152. For this reason, all information taken from J. Namier’s book is bears the stamp of Lewis Namier’s subjectivity.

10 However, in truth, the aim was to assume a prominent position in the Zionist movement, and to conceal his ignorance of Jewish culture. See A. Zięba, *op. cit.*, p. 164. More on Namier’s association with the Zionist movement is available in N. Rose, *Lewis Namier and Zionism*, Oxford 1980. For a review of this book see J. Israel, *Brilliant Misfit*, “History Today”, May 1981, pp. 57-58.

11 A. Zięba, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

12 Direct terms of endearment in his letter to his father, such as “Kochany Ojcze” (Beloved Father) and “Twój L.” (Your L.) could be indicative of his good relations with his father. On the other

tained, on the other hand, that the final rupture in Lewis's ties with his father was caused most notably by Roman Dmowski. The direct reason was to have been his activity during World War I and the accusation levelled against Józef Niemirowski of spying for Vienna. In a press article of April 1918, allegedly inspired by the chairman of the Polish National Committee (Dmowski – B.R.), Lewis himself was also accused of treason<sup>13</sup>.

Namier's hostility to the Poles was also engendered by the anti-Semitism he encountered in Eastern Galicia. There are two conflicting versions on this topic. According to one account, the reason for his antipathy was a conversation of Polish landowners overheard by the young Ludwik during a train journey when they were said to have made fun of his father's descent<sup>14</sup>. The second version holds that Namier encountered the anti-Semitism of young nationalists while studying in Lviv. Those persons were to have reminded him – according to Julia Namier's account (presumably taken from the horse's mouth) – of the type later represented by the Nazis, and their behaviour and the ideas they espoused were the result of Dmowski's activities and those of other members of the national-democrat camp<sup>15</sup>. Most probably that was one of the reasons for Namier's implacable conflict with Dmowski in the question of rebuilding Poland after World War I.

After these unpleasant experiences, Ludwik decided to go and study abroad. Towards the end of 1906 he found himself in Lausanne where he was, among others, the student of Vilfred Pareto. Apparently it was here that he had his first serious encounter with the Zionist movement; henceforth, he was to identify with its ideology, and at the same time establishing closer cooperation with its activists there<sup>16</sup>. In Switzerland, however, he did not find a place for himself for long, and with the persuasion of his Anglophile cousin and professor Pareto, he decided to depart for England, where he arrived a year later. First he enrolled at the London School of Economics, and then Balliol College, Oxford. There his tutor was Paul Vinogradov, which allegedly did not remain without influence on his attitude to Poland. British society was to absorb him very rapidly. This process was so powerful that the years of study at Oxford removed the young Ludwik far from his Polish roots. At the same time, he himself took every passing opportunity to emphasise his attachment to Britain as a country and to British culture. Whilst at

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hand, these could have been empty words stemming from conventional polite forms of address. See J. Pisuliński, *Nieznany list brytyjskiego historyka*, "Zeszyty Historyczne" 2002 (Paris), vol. 141, pp. 225-232.

13 J. Namier, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-129.

14 A. Zięba, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

15 J. Namier, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61. She was also confirmed in this view by the emigre August Zaleski after Namier's death in 1960, who told her just how much Dmowski was hated. See *ibid.*, p. 129. This version is also relayed by A. Zięba, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

16 M. Kukiel, *Sir Lewis Namier*, "Teki Historyczne" 1960-1961 (London), vol. XI, p. 259. This version is at odds with Julia's version as quoted above. The assumption might be drawn (taking into account Lewis's later activities) that he changed his biography here, choosing a more amenable version for himself.

Balliol, he graduated in history, changed his citizenship to British and his name to Lewis Namier<sup>17</sup>.

Upon terminating his employment at the Foreign Office, he took up permanent residence in Great Britain where he worked briefly as an entrepreneur, and then as a lecturer in history at Oxford and Manchester University. He specialized in 18th century British history, and was the founder of a school of history dubbed “Namierism”<sup>18</sup>. He applied psychoanalytical methods in his research which provoked critical views of his work, of A. J. P. Taylor among others. In the British Isles he also encountered an prejudiced environment, on the one hand due to his Jewish descent, on the other due to his personal character traits – aggressiveness, egocentricity, and the wish to impose his complete intellectual dominance over others. He did not entirely find his feet in the Jewish world either. Suffice it to say that he never converted to the Mosaic faith officially. He also suffered terribly from neurosis and states of depression for which he was treated for many long years<sup>19</sup>.

## Namier’s activities and views during World War I and the Paris Peace Conference

The key period to understanding Namier’s posture and attitude to the Polish question is his time at the Foreign Office, as an expert on Poland and East Central Europe. Formally, he held this position from the end of March 1918 to 30 April 1920, but it is known that he cooperated with the FO at least from 1916<sup>20</sup>. With time, he was to achieve the position of the most competent specialist in this field, possessing extensive contacts in British government circles, and even access to the British prime minister David Lloyd George, by proxy of his personal secretary Philip Kerr. Namier’s significance was even greater than the authority of his formal superior in the Political Intelligence Department – Esme Howard, who was regarded as more propitiously inclined towards Poland<sup>21</sup>. Anna Cieniała however, points out that this does not mean that he played the role of an *eminence grise* in the Polish question, and the clout which he had with British politicians was motivated by the con-

17 J. Pajewski, *Wokół sprawy polskiej. Paryż – Lozanna – Londyn 1914-1918*, Poznań 1970, p. 209. According to Toynbee, it was that change of name that was to symbolise Namier’s change of national belonging. See M. Kukieł, *op. cit.*, pp. 259-260.

18 M. Kukieł, *op. cit.*, p. 260. Linda Colley, in her book *Lewis Namier*, has analysed his scholarly bequest. London 1989.

19 A. Zięba, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-152, 167, 171-174.

20 A. Cieniała, *Polityka brytyjska wobec odrodzenia Polski*, “Zeszyty Historyczne” 1969 (Paris), vol. 16, p. 77. Namier served in the British army earlier, however, his poor eyesight was the cause of his release from service. It could be, however, that the reason for his departure from the army was the interest the Foreign Office took in him. At any rate, he was to have promised himself that he would continue to serve his country with no lesser effort and ingenuity than frontline soldiers. See J. Namier, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-121

21 Among other Foreign Office experts who were close in their thinking to Namier, was James Headlam-Morley. See A. Nowak, *Polska i trzy Rosje...*, p. 143.



vergence of his views with the concepts formulated earlier by government circles in London, as well as the traditional views of the British Empire on the question of the political balance in East Central Europe<sup>22</sup>.

Namier's main object of attack throughout his entire period of work at the Foreign Office was the Polish territorial programme formulated by Roman Dmowski<sup>23</sup>. However, it seems that the problem for Namier was also the personage himself and the political option the chief of the KNP represented, particularly as the conflict between both these gentlemen intensified and was not free of malice. On the part of Dmowski it was for example, as mentioned earlier, the accusations levelled against Lewis and his father regarding espionage activities for Austro-Hungary, inspiring press attacks against "that petty Galician Yid" (as Dmowski wrote about Namier)<sup>24</sup> and ending with spiteful jokes spread about in British governing circles<sup>25</sup>. Namier repaid in kind, decidedly seeking to discredit Dmowski and the whole Polish National Committee.

The first clash between the two occurred at the beginning of 1916 in connection with the conference of Polish activists in Lausanne. Witold Czartoryski, a member of the Austrian House of Lords, participated in these deliberations. Exploiting this fact, Namier cast a false accusation against Dmowski asserting that along with his collaborators, he wanted to change sides and go over to the Central Powers. In the end, the matter was resolved to Dmowski's satisfaction, with the help of Arthur Nicolson, thwarting Namier's lies with the Foreign Office chief, Edward Grey. After this incident, the KNP chairman sensed that the British were somewhat embarrassed by the misunderstanding to which he fell victim, and were hence more helpful to him. But efforts to remove Namier from his post proved unsuccessful<sup>26</sup>. Explaining himself subsequently to a high ranking Foreign Office official, he was to have said that his activities had absolutely nothing of a personal character in them, and were not aimed at the head of the KNP<sup>27</sup>. Namier was not entirely sincere here, especially

22 A. Cienciała, *op. cit.*, p. 78. Namier's role as the supplier of information and arguments against Poland is also stressed elsewhere by A. Cienciała and T. Komarnicki in *From Versailles to Locarno. Keys to Polish Foreign Policy 1919-1925*, Lawrence-Kansas 1984, pp. 155-156.

23 This programme is discussed by Lech Wyszczelski in his book *Polska w Wersalu*, Toruń 2008, pp. 50-62. For the texts of the Polish notes in Paris concerning the western border (28 February 1919) and the eastern border (3 March 1919), see *Powstanie II Rzeczypospolitej. Wybór dokumentów 1866-1925*, H. Janowska, T. Jędruszczak, eds., Warsaw 1984, nos. 251 and 252, pp. 481-488.

24 R. Dmowski, *Polityka polska i odbudowanie państwa*, vol. 1, Warsaw 1988, p. 266. Dmowski frequently complained about the strong influence of Jews in Lloyd George's milieu. See T. Piszczkowski, *Anglia a Polska 1914-1939 w świetle dokumentów brytyjskich*, London 1975, p. 49.

25 In one such joke, Dmowski accused "the twins" – Bernstein (Namier) and Bronstein (Trotsky) of being the chief causes of the problems of East Central Europe. See H. Bułhak, *Za co Dmowskiemu należy się pomnik?*, "Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej" 2007, no. 8-9, p. 116. This attack was conceivably facilitated by Namier's positive public pronouncement regarding Trotsky. See J. Pajewski, *op. cit.*, p. 211 [fn. 70].

26 R. Dmowski, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 264-266; T. Piszczkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

27 J. Namier, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-126.

that he concentrated a considerable proportion of his attention on undermining Dmowski's authority in the West. The apogee of these activities was the disclosure of a secret document the KNP chief sent to Poland in May 1917 which contained descriptions of the relations prevailing among the various Entente members together with broad character sketches of various politicians engaged in resolving the Polish question. From the moment that this document was disclosed (in May 1918), relations of the KNP with western governments and politicians that were previously propitiously inclined towards the Polish question, took something of a nosedive<sup>28</sup>. Namier's tactic consisted of suggesting that the Polish National Committee was deprived of any greater influence in Polish society and it merely drew its strength from the support it enjoyed from the Entente powers. This argument was propounded with particular intensity towards the end of the war and during the peace conference<sup>29</sup>.

In parallel with the conflict he pursued with Dmowski, Namier devoted much time and effort to creating an unfavourable atmosphere towards Poland in British public opinion and governing circles. He did so both through a cascade of memoranda and analyses written for the needs of the Foreign Office, and through his wide ranging activities as a publicist. His articles were printed in several periodicals, but one of his texts found its way into the February 1918 edition of the periodical "The New Europe", just after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed. It was here that he extensively laid out his views on the Polish question and the post-war arrangement of East Central Europe. He asserted that in signing a treaty with Ukraine, it unequivocally showed that Poland was merely and exclusively a pawn in the international game, irrespectively of the concepts proclaimed by the politicians of that country regarding the establishment of a powerful Polish state which would replace Russia in the post-war order. In Namier's opinion, the weakening of the Russian empire in the east would lead to Poland finding herself under the tutelage of her western neighbour. Hence, in his final conclusion, he asserted that Poland must "move in either the Russian or the German orbit"<sup>30</sup>. In his article of April in turn, he accused the Poles of imperialism and harming Ukrainian interests, which was supposed to have been at loggerheads with the ideals of the Entente. In response to this article, Dmowski, by proxy of the pen of Robert Ussher, accused Namier and his father of treason. It was only in face of the warning of the possibility that the funds given to the Poles could be cut off, that the KNP leader stopped his attacks<sup>31</sup>.

However, more on Namier's views could be deduced from his analyses produced for Foreign Office needs. Already in May 1917, he produced a memorandum which reflected the arguments that he also employed in the later period. Opting for tearing off the lands of the ancient Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from the reviving

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28 T. Piszczkowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-53.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 50.

30 Quoted after J. Pajewski, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

31 J. Namier, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-129.



Polish state, he wrote that the population there prefers any type of government as long as it is not Polish. In Namier's opinion, the only Poles in the Eastern Marchlands were the great landowners who wanted to recover their old estates together with the ethnically alien population that lived there. These interests were said to have been supported by the "imperialistic" Polish government. Namier, to be sure, pointed out that the Russian Revolution which recognised the rights of nations to self-determination, together with the possibility of agrarian reform that it adumbrated, would for certain tie Little Russians and White Russians (Ukrainians and Belarusians according to his nomenclature) with the future Russian state. He deemed both these groups their separate and distinctive national identities, and branded them as nothing more than branches of one nation in the east – the Russians<sup>32</sup>. This posture Namier adopted, of holding fast to the concept of "one Russia", characterised him throughout his period of work at the Foreign Office. At the same time, he vehemently denied that he had any sympathy for the Ukrainian population<sup>33</sup>.

Traces of his studies are also visible in the period between the end of the war and the commencement of the Paris Peace Conference, when the British authorities worked on their official position. Namier was still active in this field of interest at the beginning of November 1918 when, immediately after the outbreak of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict in Eastern Galicia, he wrote a note in which he accused Poland of imperialism, simultaneously suggesting that Warsaw should be 'ordered' to reach understanding with the Ukrainian authorities as quickly as possible. It was this note that inspired the British note of 8 November 1918 to Władysław Sobański (the KNP representative in London)<sup>34</sup>. At the same time, Namier suggested that Great Britain was in a position to dictate terms to Poland since the government in Warsaw had no support in the nation and owed its existence exclusively to the support of the Entente powers<sup>35</sup>.

In turn, in his memoranda of 9 December 1918 and 7 January 1919, he also laid out his views on the topic of the eastern border of the reborn Polish Republic. In his conception, it was to be based on two rivers – the Bug and the San. In the first of these studies he spoke of building a "compact and strong" Poland – by which he meant "ethnographic" Poland, close in shape to the former short-lived Congress Kingdom (as devised by Napoleon). In connection with this, he postulated the need to divide the territory in the east in such a way that that which was indisputably Polish should belong to Poland, and that which absolutely should not be incorporated by Poland. The territories subject to dispute should be decided, as far as pos-

32 A. Cienciała, *op. cit.*, p. 77; T. Piszczkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

33 J. Pisuliński, *Nieznany list...*, p. 232.

34 A. Cienciała, *op. cit.*, p. 76. M. Nowak-Kiełbikowa disagreed with this view when she wrote that it was the views expressed by Balfour in October 1918 that formed the basis of the note of 8 November. See M. Nowak-Kiełbikowa, *Polska – Wielka Brytania w latach 1918-1923. Kształtowanie się stosunków politycznych*, Warsaw 1975, p. 61. In all probability, both documents had an influence on this note because they followed the British policy line that was already evident during the war.

35 T. Piszczkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

sible, by commission or plebiscite. The proposed border line was to run from the old frontier point between the Kingdom of Poland and East Prussia, and further down in the north-east, from Suwałki to Grodno, then southwards along the river Bug down to the point of contact between the old Austro-Hungarian and Russian borderlands, and from there, along the river San “up to the old Galicia-Hungarian border.” The possible incorporation of Przemyśl in Poland was to depend on the will of local population<sup>36</sup>. It was also desirable to exclude the greatest possible minority group from the new Poland since the excessively variegated population structure of the country – argued Namier – would inevitably lead the Polish state once again to catastrophe, as was the case towards the end of the 18th century<sup>37</sup>. In reality, the Polish population figures in the Eastern Marchlands came to over four million encompassing, apart from landowners, numerous distributed masses of peasants in the villages and educated middle class people residing in towns<sup>38</sup>. Hence the argument about a just ethnographic separation along the rivers Bug and San was fundamentally false, but this did not stop government circles in the West, particularly in London, recognising them as obligatory in the name of their own idiosyncratically understood interests. Unfortunately, this view found acceptance in western countries in the long-term perspective and became one of the underlying assumptions on which the Curzon Line was to arise<sup>39</sup>.

In the Eastern Galicia question, Namier initially did not have a precisely defined view. He proposed joining it to Ukraine and by the same token incorporating it into Russia or giving those territories to Czechoslovakia. With this, it should be stressed that the eastern part of East Galicia, apart from a brief period in 1914-1915 was never part of Russia, while the idea of giving it to Czechoslovakia, a state that had made its first appearance in history after World War I and whose diverse constituents never had a shared history with Eastern Galicia other than as distinctive and separate parts of the Austro-Hungarian empire, was simply crass. As is known, Namier was a committed Czechophile and friend of Edward Benes, and it is also recognised that due to his activities, British diplomacy looked with a more tender eye on Prague than Warsaw<sup>40</sup>. At this time in the Foreign Office, there was still no consensus in this area because military circles were pushing for the territories of Eastern Galicia to be apportioned to Poland as the only possible safeguard against

36 He considered the eastern part of the province of Chelm to be Russian and hence joined to Russia. See *ibid.*, p. 78.

37 *Ibid.*, pp. 73-75.

38 According to Piotr Eberhardt's calculations, based on the census of 1931, taking into account the birthrate to 1 September 1939, the Eastern Marchlands had a population of 13.7 million of whom the 5.4 million Poles made up the biggest national grouping. Thus, there were 8.3 million non-Poles composed of 4.7 million Ukrainians, nearly 2 million Belarusians, and about 300,000 miscellaneous nationalities, mainly Germans, Czechs (chyba raczej Słowaków), Tartars, and Russians who numbered not much more than 100,000. See P. Eberhardt, *Polska granica wschodnia...*, pp. 48-50.

39 O. Halecki, *Mit linii Curzona*, in Oskar Halecki, *Historyk – Szermierz Wolności*, edited by J. Cisek, Warsaw 2009, pp. 245-246.

40 A. Cienciala, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79.

the Bolshevik Revolution spilling over onto that territory as well. The opponent of this option was the Foreign Office chief at the time, Arthur J. Balfour, who was in favour of leaving the whole of Galicia in the hands of Russia that was to come. In this author's opinion, Namier, still uncertain at that moment certainly as to what the British government's decision would be, did not want to unequivocally support any option, but at the same time he did everything to ensure that these lands should not come under Polish administrative control<sup>41</sup>. Upon presenting London's official position, he had no doubts as to which version he should support. He could have been against giving Eastern Galicia to Poland due to his general aversion towards that country, but he could well have equally been informed by his own observations of Russophile tendencies of the population there. He decided that the non-Poles there wanted to belong to Russia<sup>42</sup>. Later on, he also formulated the suggestion that Eastern Galicia should be entrusted to the supervision of a commissioner appointed by the League of Nations<sup>43</sup>. In this context, Namier's assertions that he had no pro-Ukrainian sympathies<sup>44</sup> seem somewhat insincere. On the one hand, this could stem from his implacable hatred of Poland and preferring in this instance support for the Ukrainians in their two-sided conflict, especially after 25 June 1919 when the Polish side's right to stretch its military occupation to cover the whole of Eastern Galicia up to the river Zbrucz was sanctioned. Namier's activities here went in the direction of ensuring autonomy for the Ukrainians in its widest possible scope, counteracting Polish colonization initiatives, and setting the shortest possible timeframe for the territory's administration by the Polish authorities. He did not change these views even upon receiving news of his family home being burned down by Ukrainian nationalists. He emphasised that they had behaved calmly for a very long time counting on the right to govern Eastern Galicia being transferred to them by the great powers<sup>45</sup>.

The way in which Namier presented the inter-ethnic relations in the old south-eastern marchlands was also controversial. In his December memorandum, he quoted Austro-Hungarian statistics of 1910 and questioned the figure of two million Poles inhabiting these territories distinguishing in this group 600,000 Jews who spoke Polish, 500,000 Roman Catholics "who speak Ruthenian, not Polish" and 200,000 Greek Catholics who were 'deviously' classified as Poles. By the same token, he reduced the number of Poles to 600-700,000. He presented the situation in the same tendentious way in the Polish-Russian borderlands, deciding for himself that there

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41 M. Nowak-Kiełbikowa, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61.

42 Namier allegedly shared the view of Polish nationalists that there is no such nation as that of Ukrainians and their lands should be ceded to Russia. See A. Zięba, *op. cit.*, pp. 169-170.

43 T. Hunczak, *Sir Lewis Namier and the struggle for Eastern Galicia, 1918-1920*, "Harvard Ukrainian Studies" 1977, vol. 1, p. 205.

44 That is what he wrote in his already quoted letter to his father. See J. Pisuliński, *Nieznany list...*, p. 232.

45 He put forward this type of argument for the first time even before he learnt that his family survived these attacks. See T. Hunczak, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-210. Cf. J. Namier, *op. cit.*, pp. 143-146.

were no areas of compact Polish settlement and in his arguments he took Russian statistics on nationalities which sought to diminish the proportion of the Polish population. Hence the two biggest Polish enclaves to the east of the ethnographic line – Lviv and Wilno – in his view, should also be joined to Russia with only cultural autonomy being guaranteed for the ‘alien’ population living there<sup>46</sup>.

The position and argument outlined above, as exemplified by Namier, were characteristic of his whole period of work at the Foreign Office from the end of World War I. Undoubtedly they supplied British policy makers with numerous arguments of an “ethnographic” and political nature, but I would agree with Anna Cieniała that they should not be associated with attributing to Namier a significant role in shaping British foreign policy as regards the Polish-Russian and Polish-Ukrainian borders. He was merely the supplier of numerous arguments in combating Polish claims at the peace conference<sup>47</sup>.

## Work on mapping out the Polish-Russian border at the Paris Peace Conference

The Polish Affairs Commission under the chairmanship of Jules Cambon, known colloquially as Cambon’s commission, that was to deal with this border issue, was appointed on 12 February 1919. It was composed of representatives of all of the western powers, many of whom were unfavourably inclined to Polish claims in the East<sup>48</sup>. It was an obvious thing that they tried to press home the concepts formulated by the governing circles of their own countries, above all, by pressurising the somewhat more pro-Polish Cambon. French policy was subject in the greatest degree to fluctuation, due to the changing political and military situation in the distant parts of eastern Europe. Hence, at moments when possibilities of restoring the tsarist Russia seemed to arise, with the successes scored on the fronts of the civil war by the counterrevolutionary “white” generals, or in moments of threat to their interests in Alsace-Lorraine and the Saar basin – Paris would abandon the Polish question regarding the Polish-Russian borderland and concentrate its attention on matters of more immediate relevance to itself<sup>49</sup>.

To speed up work, the so-called Le Rond sub-commission was set up by the Polish Affairs Commission. The effect of its deliberations was the project regard-

46 T. Piszczkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 78-79.

47 A. Cieniała, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

48 Apart from the representatives of the English-speaking world, the Italian delegate Delia Torretta was also against Poland’s expansion in the east. In the past, he had been Italian ambassador to Russia, and he became spokesman for Russian interests at the peace conference. At a sitting of Le Rond’s sub-committee in March 1919, he expressed the opinion that Poland’s eastern frontier should correspond to the one drawn at the Congress of Vienna with the exclusion of the provinces of Chełm and Suwałki whose status, as ethnically diverse areas should be considered separately. See A. Juzwenko, *Stosunek „białej” Rosji do odradzającego się państwa polskiego i jego granic*, “Kwartalnik Historyczny” 1973, R. LXXX, no. 1, pp. 628-629.

49 T. Piszczkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 97; L. Wyszczelski, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

ing the temporary Polish-Russian border, as announced on 14 April 1919. It did not speak of Eastern Galicia where the Polish-Ukrainian conflict simmered on uninterruptedly. The sub-commission's report proved to be exceptionally unfavourable to Poland. It proposed to base Poland's eastern border on the river Bug, thereby cutting off the cities of Grodno and Brest-Litovsk as well, which, according to the somewhat earlier formulated solutions, were to have found themselves within Poland's borders. They also took account of the claims of the representatives of the "Whites" at the peace conference in relation to the province of Chełm, though formally the "Whites" did not participate in the deliberations, nor did they officially stand on a par with delegates from other countries<sup>50</sup>. This sheds a good deal of light on their true significance in Paris and the great power attitudes to tsarist Russia. The Cambon Commission then submitted its proposals to the Supreme Council at the end of April 1919, however, up to the end of the peace conference, the issue was treated as marginal. With that, it was suggested that the final decision should be deferred until some Russian government was constituted<sup>51</sup>. The whole issue was to return to the agenda only on 8 December 1919 when the Supreme Council ratified the proposed line running from Grodno in the north, along the river Bug down to Sokal in the south, west of which Poland had the right to build the foundations of its state administration. At the same time, it came with the clear rider that the rights of our country to the lands east of this line – let's remember, this line was only drawn down to Chełm; Warsaw's claims to that area were left for future negotiation<sup>52</sup>. The line of 8 December 1919 was not to be the Polish-Russian political border as was considered in the West<sup>53</sup>. At that time, Poland controlled territories far to the east of the river Bug what, in fact, was severely criticised by Namier who considered the Polish government to be incompetent and corrupt; he simultaneously cautioned against giving help to a state which was supporting the Bolshevik regime in Russia<sup>54</sup>. It was thus a clear allusion to the arrest of the offensive against the Bolsheviks by Piłsudski and the commencement of negotiations in Mikaszewicze<sup>55</sup>.

The task of working out any sort of compromise on the issue of Eastern Galicia by the great powers was made considerably more difficult by the Polish-Ukrainian war that was in progress there. The attempts of successive allied missions arriving there to achieve some form of ceasefire ended in fiasco<sup>56</sup>. In submitting his report

50 The proposed ceasefire line only reached Chełm. See T. Piszczkowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-117.

51 L. Wyszczelski, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-115.

52 For the full text of the declaration see: *Powstanie II Rzeczypospolitej. Wybór dokumentów...*, no. 267, pp. 532-534.

53 O. Halecki, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

54 T. Piszczkowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-142.

55 A. Nowak, *Polska i trzy Rosje...*, pp. 378-397.

56 Gen. Josepha Barthelemy's mission constituted an exception in that he managed to induce both sides to sign a truce. However, it was very quickly violated by the Ukrainian side. See J. Pisuliński, *Nie tylko Petlura...*, pp. 101-113; P. Żurawski vel Grajewski, *Sprawa ukraińska na konferencji pokojowej*

after one such mission, gen. Joseph Barthelemy, who was generally propitiously inclined towards the Poles, was attacked by the British prime minister Lloyd George, who opposed creating any *faits accomplis* whatsoever in the east by the Polish side. The Supreme Council decided to continue its efforts in bringing about a ceasefire between the warring sides and working out a scheme for dividing the eastern part of Galicia<sup>57</sup>. It might be added that a significant part of the western power rivalry in Eastern Galicia was fuelled by the issue of the oilfields in that area, where French enterprises had gained a dominant position before the war. This was not to the taste of the British who, through taking these lands away from Poland and incorporating them into Russia, wanted to force the government in Paris to restore diplomatic relations with Russia irrespective of who assumed power in the Kremlin<sup>58</sup>.

The indecisiveness of the great powers on a global scale was reflected in the work of the Cambon Commission. This forum had formulated and submitted as many as five variants regarding the status and division of Eastern Galicia in June 1919. In general, they were unfavourable to Poland since the only eventuality that was considered was that these lands could notionally be attached to Poland by way of federation or by mandate for a set period after which a plebiscite was to be held. On the same day, 17 June, two concepts of dividing the disputed area were selected for further consideration. One was Line A which ran to the west of Lviv and the Boryslav oil basin and approximated to the ethnic division of Eastern Galicia. It was according to this proposal that the later extension of the "Curzon Line" was drawn on the southern segment. The alternative was Line B, which left Lviv and the oil basin on the Polish side<sup>59</sup>. However, almost immediately it was decided to put the entire disputed territory up to the river Zbrucz under Polish military occupation due to the Bolshevik threat and the possibility of the Russian and Hungarian revolutions joining forces. Simultaneously, work was commenced on the statute for Eastern Galicia which was not only to ensure wide ranging autonomy for its non-Polish inhabitants, but also – which the British strenuously sought – it was to be binding for as short a period of time as possible after which a plebiscite was to be held<sup>60</sup>. The great powers also drew their legitimacy to decide on these territories from the peace treaty with Austria according to which Austria transferred all of its sovereign rights to the lands lying beyond its post-war borders to the Entente powers, hence to Eastern Galicia as well<sup>61</sup>.

w Paryżu w roku 1919, Warszawa 1995, pp. 22-25; M. Klimecki, *Alianckie misje we Lwowie (listopad 1918 – luty 1919)*, "Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej" 1996, vol. XXXI, pp. 35-50.

57 P. Żurawski vel Grajewski, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-27; T. Piszczkowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-110.

58 Z. Zaks, *Walka dyplomatyczna o naftę wschodniogalicyską 1918-1923*, in: *Z dziejów stosunków polsko-radzieckich. Studia i materiały*, vol. 4, ed. by T. Cieślak, Warsaw 1969, pp. 37-60.

59 See H. Batowski, *Linia Curzona a była Galicja Wschodnia*, in *idem.*, *Z polityki międzynarodowej XX wieku. Wybór studiów z lat 1930-1975*, Kraków 1979, pp. 188-189 for a detailed description of the dividing line and territories in dispute.

60 T. Piszczkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

61 *Powstanie II Rzeczypospolitej. Wybór dokumentów...*, no. 263, p. 517.



Finally, on 21 November 1919, the award of a Polish mandate to administer Eastern Galicia for a period of 25 years was declared; this mandate was to be exercised under the control of the League of Nations and it came with guarantees of liberties for the Ukrainian population<sup>62</sup>. In face of further defeats suffered by the White armies and the fear of the revolution bursting its banks and flooding the whole of Europe via the Balkans, this decision was revised by suspending the execution of the mandate which meant the restoration of the military occupation and recognition of Poland's right to the whole of the eastern part of Galicia up to the river Zbrucz for an indefinite period<sup>63</sup>. The whole issue was to return to the international forum because of the note of 11 July 1920 and the southern segment of the Curzon Line that was written into it which was strikingly similar to the Line A proposal of June 1919.

To the end of 1919 no other decisions or changes were made in this matter. As we know, in the next year, Piłsudski undertook an attempt to achieve a decisive resolution in the east beginning with an offensive in Ukraine at the end of April. However, the Bolsheviks proved better prepared and more able of coping with the situation than expected; they retreated east and allowed the Poles to take vast territories almost without a fight. And in the next phase of the war, events were to run unfavourably for Poland. Upon preparing a counteroffensive, the Red Army began to push Polish forces ever deeper westwards, and by the beginning of August, the Bolsheviks stood at the gates of Warsaw<sup>64</sup>.

The Poles, aware of their difficult situation, decided on undertaking negotiations with representatives of the great powers who were then in conference at Spa. Lloyd George seized the opportunity to impose humiliating conditions on Poland which were accepted by the Polish prime minister, Władysław Grabski, on 10 July 1920. By the terms of the agreement that was reached, Poland was required to withdraw her forces back to the line of 8 December 1919, return Wilno to Lithuania, submit her disputes with other neighbours (Danzig and Teschen) to the decisions of the great powers, and to call an international conference in which representatives of Eastern Galicia would also participate. As to the division of the latter territory, it was merely agreed that Polish and Bolshevik forces would stop at the line existing on the day armistice was declared with both sides moving back 10 kilometres from it. At the same time, Poland was refused armed support. The French, on the other hand, assumed a wait-and-see stance leaving the matter of mediation between the Poles and the Bolsheviks entirely in British hands<sup>65</sup>.

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62 M. Nowak-Kielbikowa, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-155; P. Żurawski vel Grajewski, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-42.

63 *Powstanie II Rzeczypospolitej. Wybór dokumentów...*, no. 269, p. 535.

64 For more on the Polish – Ukrainian alliance of April 1920 and its origins see S. Szajdak, *Polsko-ukraiński sojusz polityczno-wojskowy w 1920 roku*, Warsaw 2005; *Polska i Ukraina – sojusz 1920 roku i jego następstwa*, Z. Karpus, W. Rezmer, E. Wiszka eds., Toruń 1997.

65 For the text of the agreement with Grabski of 10 July 1920 see *Powstanie II Rzeczypospolitej. Wybór dokumentów...*, no. 288, pp. 561-562. Regarding the postures of France and Great Britain see M. Nowak-Kielbikowa, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-215.

Next day, the Soviet side was sent a note from Spa proposing an armistice. The French refused to sign it and it is not known whether the note was signed by Curzon himself, or whether it was only dispatched in his name. In its description of the proposed ceasefire line, this document radically diverged from the conditions presented to and accepted by Grabski.

## The problem of the course and authorship of the Curzon Line

Up to today, this question arouses the greatest controversies both among professional historians and amateur specialists in this subject area. The problem, primarily, is the course of the line along the Eastern Galician segment which was strikingly similar to Line A of 1919. What's more important, this proposal was not shown by the British to prime minister Grabski before its dispatch. In signing the somewhat punitive condition imposed by London, Grabski did not agree to cut off the eastern part of Galicia from Poland. However, as it turned out the next day, that is in the note sent to the Soviets on 11 July 1920, a passage was inserted "to the east of Rawa Ruska, to the east of Przemyśl to the Carpathians"<sup>66</sup> which meant cutting off Lviv and the oilfields from Poland; the Polish side knew nothing of this and certainly it did not express any sort of agreement to it. Let us take a closer look at this problem.

The note was sent from Spa in Belgium where the representatives of the powers gathered to discuss German reparations after the war. The intermediary in transmitting the message to Moscow was a man called Leslie, the British envoy to Estonia. The only other individuals informed about this dispatch were the British envoy to Warsaw Horace Rumbold, the secretary of the treasury Bonar Law and lord Hardinge in London. The telegram, numbered no. 38, gave the place and date of its dispatch as "Spa, July 11, 1920". And the comment on the copy of the note sent to London said: Following sent to Reveal to-day, for Chicherin, Moscow"<sup>67</sup>. This is confirmed by the officially published documents<sup>68</sup>. That is why the version cited in the book of Stanisław Żochowski, speaking of two notes, one sent from Spa, the other from the Foreign Office in London is strange and finds no confirmation anywhere else<sup>69</sup>.

The authorship of the Curzon Line is most often ascribed to Lewis Namier. Certainty in this matter was expressed by Tadeusz Piszczkowski, who, in a commentary to Namier's memorandum of the turn of 1918/1919 concerning the mapping

66 The full course of the ceasefire line inserted into the note of 11 July 1920 was as follows: (running north to south) Grodno Grodno – Wałówka – Niemirów – Brzest Litovsk – Dorohusk – Ustług, to the east of Hrubieszów, through Kryłów and further to the west of Rawa Ruska, and to the east of Przemyśl to the Carpathians. See *Powstanie II Rzeczypospolitej...*, no. 289, p. 562.

67 T. Piszczkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

68 *Powstanie II Rzeczypospolitej. Wybór dokumentów...*, no. 289, pp. 562-563.

69 S. Żochowski, *Brytyjska polityka wobec Polski 1916-1948*, London 1979, p. 44. Żochowski was most probably referring to the copy of the note sent to London.

out of the Polish border in the east, wrote: "...it was therefore the future Curzon Line"<sup>70</sup>. He thus at least ascribes to him the conceptual authorship of this proposal. The opinion that the author of the segment of the Curzon Line in Eastern Galicia was Namier, was also expressed by Tomasz Wituch<sup>71</sup>. Similar assumptions were put forward, among others, by Henryk Batowski<sup>72</sup> and Aleksander Wasilewski<sup>73</sup>. The problem is that Namier was no longer a Foreign Office worker by then, since he completed his term of duty, as mentioned earlier, on 30 April 1920<sup>74</sup>. The formal decision regarding his resignation was to have taken effect on 1 May 1920, however, as he wrote to his friend, he decided to depart earlier for Oxford where he was given a lectureship. He finally left London on 23 April<sup>75</sup>. On the basis of these facts (and Namier's antipathy towards the FO, about which more further below) it may be asserted that Namier was not in Spa in July 1920 and for certain did not insert the addition to Curzon's note<sup>76</sup>. There is no full list of advisors whom Lloyd George took with himself to Belgium. It is known that together with him there were Lord Curzon, Philip Kerr, Harold Nicolson, Edward Hallet Carr, Eyre Crowe, Headlam-Morley "and several others"<sup>77</sup>. Nicolson, in his study on British diplomacy after World War I, gives the general information that in his conversation with Grabski on 10 July, Curzon expressed the opinion that the Poles had abused their position in the east regarding Ukrainian and Russian territories, and recommended that they withdraw westwards to the *legitimate frontier*. To the question where did it run, he replied that it ran through Grodno to Białystok, Brest-Litovsk, Przemyśl down to the Carpathians. According to this opinion, the Polish side was informed on the course of the ceasefire line in Eastern Galicia which later found itself in the proposal sent to the Soviets. [!] <sup>78</sup> On the other hand, the question

70 T. Piszczkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

71 That opinion was expressed in a footnote to his book, as earlier referred to above; see R. Dmowski, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 174.

72 Batowski expressed the opinion that "there is a great likelihood that the Curzon Line was the work of the then Foreign Office expert L. B. Namiera (who was Polish by birth)". See H. Batowski, *Między dwiema wojnami...*, p. 407.

73 A. Wasilewski, *Granica lorda Curzona. Polska granica wschodnia od Wersalu do Schengen (traktaty, umowy, przejścia graniczne, podróży, wizy)*, Toruń 2003, p. 10 [fn. 4]. Wasilewski cites H. Nicolson's, *Curzon: the last phase. A study in post-war diplomacy*, London 1934. The problem is that the page reference in this work that he quotes has no information on the subject. See H. Nicolson, *op. cit.*, p. 204. It might be worth adding that Namier is not mentioned in this book at all.

74 A. Cienciała, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

75 J. Namier, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

76 The last person to repeat the version that Namier was a Foreign Office worker at the time is seemingly Norman Davies in *Powstanie '44*, Kraków 2006, p. 201. He also adds that apparently Namier boasted years later that he was the author of the Curzon Line. See *ibid.* This type of opinion is frequently to be found in the Internet, but it is decidedly untrue and often written from the vantage point of a thesis adopted in advance. This also applies to the most popular Internet portals not to mention other offerings produced with a clear ideological slant.

77 T. Piszczkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

78 H. Nicolson, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

occurs whether Nicolson did not intentionally conceal the later change in the note, or did he really not know about it. If we take the second option, it would suggest that there were very few people – a most exclusive circle of people in the know – who were authorized to edit and send the note out of all those staying in Spa. It is also out of the question that the internal contradiction in the note was the result of some error by a British official. This version was quoted by Tytus Komarnicki, who quoted the opinion of Witold Sworakowski<sup>79</sup>. This is however denied by the conduct of prime minister Lloyd George in the first days after the note was sent. He recommended the agreement of 10 July and the note should be kept secret for as long as possible, imposing particular discretion concerning the Soviet reply of 11 July. Without a shadow of doubt it may be assumed that Lloyd George knew about the changes made, and probably inserted them himself or together with his personal secretary Philip Kerr<sup>80</sup>. At any rate the opinion was formulated that the Curzon Line should really be called the ‘Kerr Line’<sup>81</sup>. The role of this secretary in this matter (and in the whole of British policy towards Poland) is emphasized by Andrzej Nowak<sup>82</sup>, Tomasz Wituch<sup>83</sup> and Maria Nowak-Kielbikowa<sup>84</sup>. It may be assumed that – without differing in their opinions as to the “just” division in Eastern Galicia – both gentlemen agreed among themselves to insert the altered formulation into the note. This at once gave rise to a contradiction in the text because the introduction of the reference to the ceasefire line in Eastern Galicia left the clause on stopping the forces on the line that was achieved on the day of the armistice without the part speaking of pulling the opposing forces back by ten kilometres either side of the line<sup>85</sup>. It was therefore an obvious oversight. Namier, who spoke Polish and English, surely would not have made such a mistake. Thus, it had to have been one of the British politicians.

Tadeusz Piszczkowski points to the fact that the author of the addition had to be someone acquainted with the geography of Poland, and above all Eastern Galicia. He also quotes the opinion of Tytus Komarnicki that inserting this addition into the note could have been done “by someone ill-willed in Curzon’s entourage, who abused his trust.”<sup>86</sup> The first suggestion seems very much on target, in the end Namier did come from Galicia and that is where his family also lived. He must have known

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79 T. Komarnicki, *Rebirth of the Polish Republic. A study in the diplomatic history of Europe, 1914-1920*, London 1957, p. 612.

80 The factual head of the Foreign Office, Lord Curzon, was pushed away from work on the note. See M. Nowak-Kielbikowa, *op. cit.*, pp. 202, 215-218.

81 Such an opinion was expressed by R. H. Ullman. See J. Tebinka, *Polityka brytyjska wobec problemu...*, p. 20 [fn. 40].

82 A. Nowak, *Porozumienie imperiów: jego beneficjenci i ofiary. O tzw. nocy Curzona z 11 lipca 1920 r. i jej (możliwych) konsekwencjach*, in *idem, Ofiary, imperia i historycy. Studium przypadków (od XVIII do XXI wieku)*, Kraków 2009, pp. 116-117.

83 R. Dmowski, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 61-62.

84 M. Nowak-Kielbikowa, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

85 *Ibid.*, p. 218.

86 T. Piszczkowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-159.

those areas. But he was not the author of the extension of the line in Eastern Galicia. Returning to the earlier quoted memoranda, it can clearly be seen that Namier postulated in them giving Eastern Galicia either to Russia or Czechoslovakia. Not being at that moment certain which option would prevail, he did not want to push a version that was at odds with the official line of the British government. This could be evidenced if only by the fragment of his letter to his father, as quoted several times, in which he underlined his role as an English official and referred to England as “his country”<sup>87</sup>.

Thus the British prime minister, Lloyd George, was the architect, the “conceptual author” of the proposed border line in the east which subsequently was called after the British foreign secretary at the time Lord Curzon<sup>88</sup>. But he was completely ignorant of the geography of Eastern Europe. The views of Namier were of course in line with the British position; the British position assumed the need to build an “ethnographic” Poland, and Namier’s views could have also been coloured both by his bad experiences as a youth in Galicia and in his attachment to his new fatherland and the wish to fulfil his duties as a British official diligently. It seems justified to merely recognise that it was Namier (while still working for the FO) who drew out on the map the border for Poland which was in line with the wishes of British politicians, both along its northern segment and its addition in Eastern Galicia: „(...) to the north of Rawa Ruska, to the east of Przemyśl down to the Carpathians”. Therefore, he could only have been the “author-contractor”. Namier was needed by the British only because he was well-acquainted with the territories of East Central Europe and in that context he could have been the supplier of many arguments and much information against Poland. Should he have propounded different opinions, he would have been marginalized, because British policy was steered personally by Lloyd George who took no notice of anyone when undertaking decisions. About how little Namier counted for the British is also seen in the fact that his name was not put on the honours’ list of the politicians and officials of the British Empire who worked on establishing the peace as published in “The Times” on 31 March 1920. His friends, like James Headlam-Morley and William Tyrrell, were on the list. That only intensified his ire which was expressed by his criticism of the temporariness of the solutions in the east of Europe and the apparent motive for tendering his resignation<sup>89</sup>.

The aim of sending the note according to the views prevailing in the government circles of Great Britain, as briefly quoted here, seems comprehensible. It was

87 J. Pisuliński, *Nieznany list...*, pp. 230-231.

88 The name „Curzon Line” appeared in the subject literature for the first time in Robert Lord’s article published in the American periodical “Foreign Affairs” in June 1923. See J. R. Hooker, *Lord Curzon and the “Curzon Line”*, “The Journal of Modern History” 1958, vol. 30, no. 2, p. 138.

89 J. Namier, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-148. The author of this text has not encountered this information in any Polish study so far. It is understandable that for certain reasons they might not be entirely objective though they do tell us a great deal about Namier himself. It seems that in dictating this sentence to his wife, he must have still been embittered by his treatment at the hands of his Foreign Office superiors years later.

the expression of the consistency of British politicians who repeatedly, as from the end of 1918 and for the next few years, gave clearly to understand that they did not recognize the incorporation of the Eastern Marchlands into Poland. In London the policy of the balance of power on the European continent, preferably in its 1815 edition when only several countries existed in East Central Europe, still held sway. The common German-Russian border was favourable for Great Britain since it held both those powers mutually in check; this drew their attention away from Britain's overseas possessions and allowed for her continued undisturbed exploitation of her colonial resources. Hence Poland, if it was to exist at all, had to be a small country so as not to disturb the balance in the rivalry of these two European powers. In any case, the lands to the east of the river Elbe were never really of any closer interest to British politicians who concentrated above all on securing the southern coast of the English Channel. Even the League of Nations that was set up after World War I could not change these principles<sup>90</sup>.

The second motive in the conduct of the British prime minister related to the economic problems of the empire after the war and above all the disappearance of a huge market in a country consumed by civil war. Through his concessions, Lloyd George wanted to cajole the Bolsheviks into resuming the trade negotiations that had been in progress with interruptions since spring 1920. However he underestimated the ideological factor in communism and the Bolshevik aim to instigate world revolution. He even asserted that "this issue (the invasion of Poland) has nothing to do with communism"<sup>91</sup>. Curzon himself had written still back in 1918 that Lloyd George "is a bit of a Bolshevik himself"<sup>92</sup>.

Moscow was taken aback by such a broad range of concessions proposed in the Curzon note, particularly in respect of Eastern Galicia. In assessing these proposals of 11 July, Chicherin suggested not incorporating this territory into the Soviet state because it could evoke negative repercussions on the part of London with regard to Leonid Krasin, the Soviet delegate conducting trade negotiations in London. Here he drew attention above all to the oilfields of the Boryslav basin which were in his view supposedly the focus of London's attention<sup>93</sup>. That means that the Politburo completely disregarded the possibility of Great Britain truly preferring to give Russia areas rich in natural mineral resources. Yet another episode ties in with the line contained in the note of 11 July 1920. There is an anecdote about the day on which the course of the armistice line was discussed. Everybody was working extremely intensively and lunchtime was approaching but still no one knew how the line should be marked out on the map. Thus Curzon brought the map on which the ceasefire line was drawn in red and this was hurriedly endorsed. Hence the Curzon Line was also called 'the Lunch Line'. E.H. Carr's secretary recounting this story to a Polish

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90 A. Cienciala, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90

91 A. Nowak, *Porozumienie imperiów...*, p. 141.

92 S. Żochowski, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

93 A. Nowak, *Porozumienie imperiów...*, p. 120.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs official asserted that that's the way British diplomacy dealt with international affairs. To be sure, this account is at odds with the facts, but it sheds a good deal of light on the conduct of British politicians and experts on Polish affairs and the whole of East Central Europe<sup>94</sup>.

## Conclusion

In the end, due to the Polish victory in the Battle of Warsaw and the repulsion of the Bolsheviks far to the east, the Curzon Line completely lost its significance. Again there was an avalanche of accusations regarding Warsaw's imperialism and of its taking no notice of the opinions of the great powers. The Poles reached agreement with the Soviets independently whereby the new frontier was established on the strength of the Treaty of Riga of March 1921. The Curzon Line completely disappeared from the international agenda for almost twenty years. Just after the outbreak of World War II, the British retrieved it from their archives and the idea of turning over the Eastern Marchlands to the Soviet Union again began to gain numerous supporters<sup>95</sup>.

This time too, the question of the course of the Curzon Line gave rise to considerable controversy. At the Teheran Conference of November-December 1943, the representatives of the Big Three devoted much time to discussing Poland, notably the Polish-Soviet frontier issue. The then British foreign secretary Anthony Eden tried to convince Stalin that the course of the Curzon Line in Eastern Galicia had never been finally resolved. The Soviets, however, brandishing the note of 11 July 1920, marked the places it mentioned on the map and it turned out that the eastern part of Galicia was on the Soviet side of the border. Eden tried to draw attention to the imprecision in the note speaking of stopping the armies of both sides on the line achieved on the day armistice was declared, but the whole matter collapsed in face of the position of British prime minister Winston Churchill who declared that he would not raise lament on account of Lviv<sup>96</sup>. Up to the end of the war the representatives of the great powers henceforth held fast to this proposal irrespective of certain initiatives put forward by expert circles of the states of the western coalition<sup>97</sup>. Accepting the Curzon Line as the basis for Poland's eastern border was finally determined by the resolutions of the Yalta Conference of February 1945<sup>98</sup>.

However, let's return to the central issue of this analysis, that of the activities of Lewis Namier. It is clear that in the course of the war and the peace conference,

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94 A. Wasilewski, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-11.

95 J. Tebinka, *Polityka brytyjska wobec problemu...*, pp. 76-90.

96 P. Eberhardt, *Polska granica wschodnia...*, pp. 110-111.

97 For more details, see J. Tebinka, *Brytyjskie memoranda w 1944 r. w sprawie zmian linii Curzona*, "Dzieje Najnowsze" 1997, no. 1, pp. 149-166. The texts of both memorandums were appended to the article.

98 J. Tebinka, *Polityka brytyjska wobec problemu...*, p. 396; *Teheran – Jalta – Poczdam. Dokumenty z konferencji szefów rządów trzech wielkich mocarstw*, with an introduction and edited by W T. Kowalski, Warsaw 1972, pp. 206-208.

he tried to serve his new country to the utmost, producing an inordinate quantity of memoranda, studies, notes and popular commentaries on a variety of topics, in which he consistently expressed himself against Polish claims. His arguments did resonate in the governing circles of the British Empire – in the end who could know better the relations that obtained in those lands if not a person who came from the Polish-Russian borderlands. However, one should question the belief that the influence of Namier was as far-reaching as is quite often assumed in Polish historiography. In fact, he himself remarked that the Poles were building a false picture of him when he wrote to his father: “it is simply humorous how they have concocted such a legend about me”<sup>99</sup>. In truth, he was only the supplier of convenient arguments of an ethnographic and political character. The extent to which the British took no account of him as a person was proved by Namier himself when he left the Foreign Office offended at the off-handed attitude to his commitment to the British side.

The interpretation that speaks of him as the author of the Curzon Line is therefore false. The most tenable view would seem to be that all that Namier’s only part in this story was that of an individual who drew this line on a map. Later, taking this proposal, the British ineptly changed the text of the note sent to Moscow which reflected their wish to censure the wayward conduct of the Poles in their part of eastern Europe and their attempts at implementing their own political conceptions. With certainty, no one at this time could have guessed just how great a role this document was to play again in the next global conflict.

#### Lewis Namier, the problem of “Curzon line” and establishing of Polish eastern border after World War I

The article discusses the work of Lewis Namier (1888-1960) and his participation in establishing the Polish Eastern border after World War I. Lewis Namier, who was born as Ludwik Bernstein, became a British subject after emigration from Russian Poland and started working for Foreign Office. He was considered to be one of the biggest enemies of newly independent Poland and its claims for the lands in the East of Europe, manipulating facts and giving arguments to the British government against the Polish delegation to Versailles Peace Conference. His name is also connected with the project of the so-called “Curzon line” – the line of armistice between Poland and Bolshevik Russia in the war of 1920. According to the author, Namier did not change this proposition by detaching the city of Lviv and the lands around it from Poland, although this opinion is widespread in the Polish historiography. In the article author is also referring to the other theories of the authorship of the line of July 11th 1920 and its naming, because the name “Curzon line” seems to be problematic, in spite of the fact that it has entered into the Polish historiography.

*Translated by Antoni Bohdanowicz*

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<sup>99</sup> J. Pisuliński, *Nieznany list...*, p. 231.