

HANDBOOKS PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE
HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE.—No. 43

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P O L A N D

GENERAL SKETCH OF HISTORY
1569—1815

LONDON:

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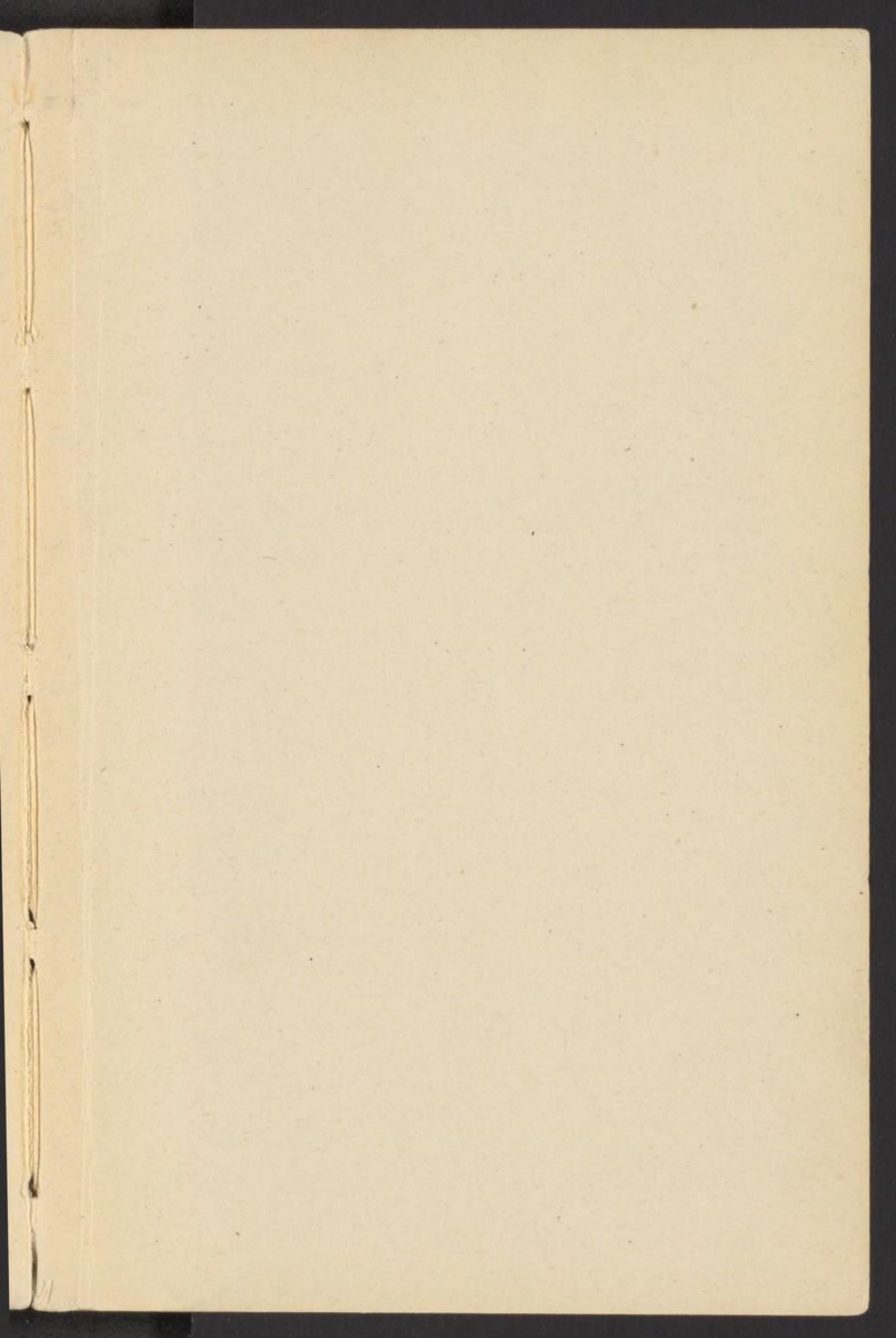
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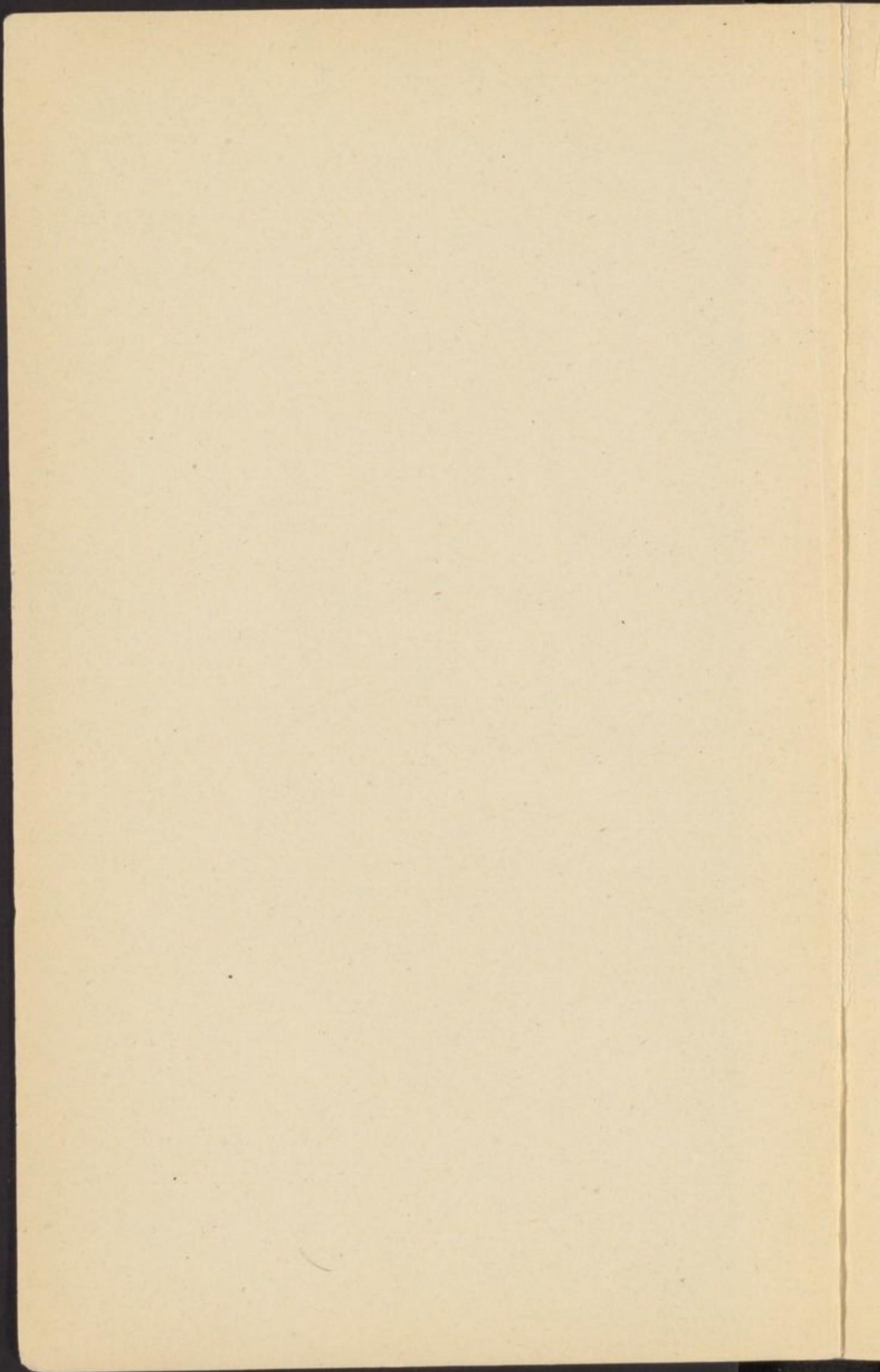


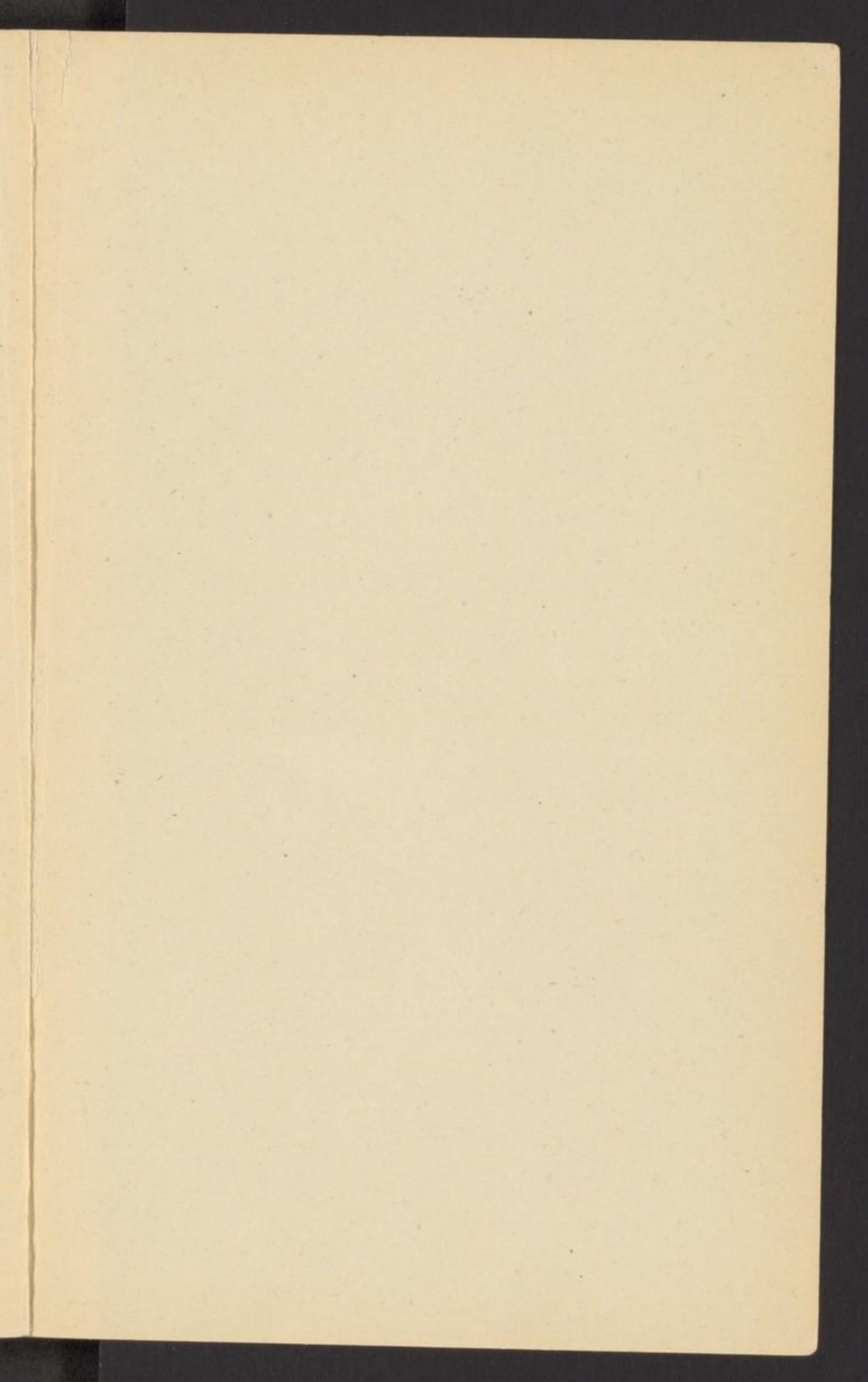


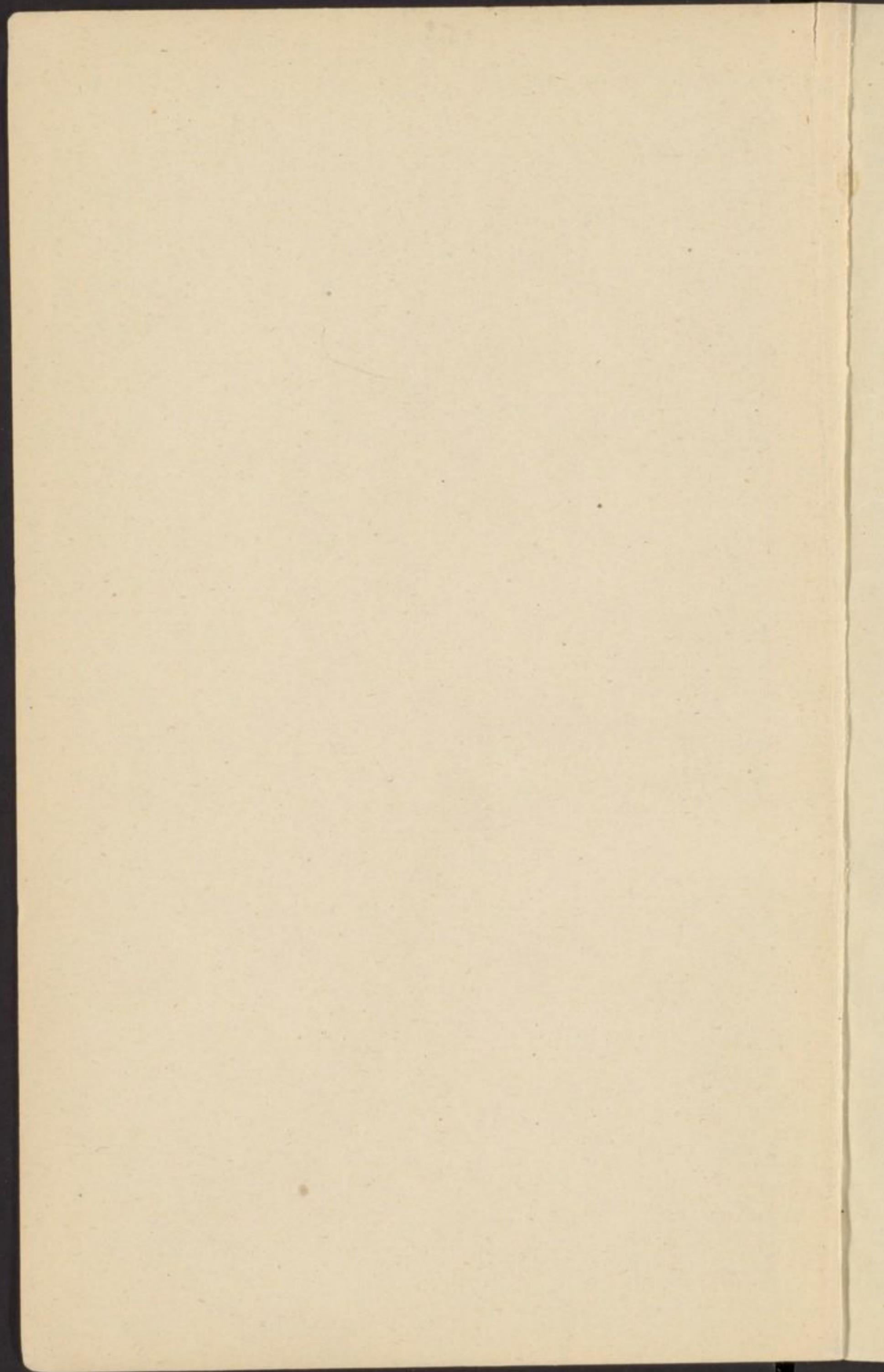
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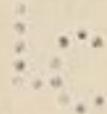
HANDBOOKS PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE
HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE ^{9th. 1307} FOREIGN OFFICE.—No. 43

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P O L A N D

GENERAL SKETCH OF HISTORY

1569—1815



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EDITORIAL NOTE

IN the spring of 1917 the Foreign Office, in connection with the preparation which they were making for the work of the Peace Conference, established a special section whose duty it should be to provide the British Delegates to the Peace Conference with information in the most convenient form—geographical, economic, historical, social, religious and political—respecting the different countries, districts, islands, &c., with which they might have to deal. In addition, volumes were prepared on certain general subjects, mostly of an historical nature, concerning which it appeared that a special study would be useful.

The historical information was compiled by trained writers on historical subjects, who (in most cases) gave their services without any remuneration. For the geographical sections valuable assistance was given by the Intelligence Division (Naval Staff) of the Admiralty; and for the economic sections, by the War Trade Intelligence Department, which had been established by the Foreign Office. Of the maps accompanying the series, some were prepared by the above-mentioned department of the Admiralty, but the bulk of them were the work of the Geographical Section of the General Staff (Military Intelligence Division) of the War Office.

Now that the Conference has nearly completed its task, the Foreign Office, in response to numerous enquiries and requests, has decided to issue the books for public use, believing that they will be useful to students of history, politics, economics and foreign affairs, to publicists generally and to business men and travellers. It is hardly necessary to say that some of the subjects dealt with in the series have not in fact come under discussion at the Peace Conference; but, as the books treating of them contain valuable information, it has been thought advisable to include them.

It must be understood that, although the series of volumes was prepared under the authority, and is now issued with the

EDITORIAL NOTE

sanction, of the Foreign Office, that Office is not to be regarded as guaranteeing the accuracy of every statement which they contain or as identifying itself with all the opinions expressed in the several volumes; the books were not prepared in the Foreign Office itself, but are in the nature of information provided for the Foreign Office and the British Delegation.

The books are now published, with a few exceptions, substantially as they were issued for the use of the Delegates. No attempt has been made to bring them up to date, for, in the first place, such a process would have entailed a great loss of time and a prohibitive expense; and, in the second, the political and other conditions of a great part of Europe and of the Nearer and Middle East are still unsettled and in such a state of flux that any attempt to describe them would have been incorrect or misleading. The books are therefore to be taken as describing, in general, *ante-bellum* conditions, though in a few cases, where it seemed specially desirable, the account has been brought down to a later date.

G. W. PROTHERO,

General Editor and formerly

Director of the Historical Section.

January 1920.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY	<i>facing</i> 1
POLISH BOUNDARIES IN THE 16TH CENTURY	1
PERIOD I (1569-1632) The Catholic Reaction	2
PERIOD II (1632-1668) The Cossack Wars	8
PERIOD III (1669-1772) Russian Ascendency to the first Partition of Poland	13
CAUSES OF DOWNFALL	17
PERIOD IV (1772-1815) The Partitions and the Settlement of 1815	20
FIRST PARTITION, 1772	20
POLISH INTERNAL REFORMS	21
SECOND PARTITION, 1793	23
POLISH RISING	24
THIRD PARTITION, 1795	25
EVENTS BETWEEN 1795 AND 1807	26
DUCHY OF WARSAW	27
CONGRESS OF VIENNA, 1814-15	28
AUTHORITIES	30
MAPS	30

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY

1569	Union of Lublin.
1573-75	Henry of Anjou.
1575-86	Stephen Batory.
1587-1632	Zygmunt III.
1596	Congress of Brest.
1629	Truce of Altmark.
1632-48	Wladyslaw IV.
1634	Treaty of Polanov.
1648-68	John Kasimir.
1649	Treaty of Zborów.
1654	Treaty of Pereyaslavl.
1660	Peace of Oliva.
1667	Treaty of Andruszowo.
1669-73	Michael Wisniowiecki.
1674-96	John Sobieski.
1683	Battle of Vienna.
1698-1733	Augustus II.
1709	Battle of Poltava.
1721	Peace of Nystad.
1734-63	Augustus III.
1764-95	Stanislaus Augustus.
1768	Bar confederacy.
1772	First Partition of Poland.
1793	Second Partition.
1795	Third Partition.
1807	Duchy of Warsaw created.
1814-15	Congress of Vienna.

POLISH BOUNDARIES IN THE 16TH CENTURY

THE POLAND of the 16th century was a very different country from that which we are accustomed to have in mind when questions of modern interest arise in connection with it. In those days it comprised at least four or five times as much territory as it does at present; and, when Lithuania was added to it by the Union of Lublin in 1569, the State found itself about doubled. The boundaries of those days were of course vague in the extreme, and Lithuania was largely a "geographical expression," which covered very much more ground than it was, strictly speaking, entitled to; but we may take it that in about 1560 the western boundary of Poland proper ran south-west from a point some 50 miles west of Danzig for about 200 miles towards the Oder; thence the frontier ran south-east and up again in a northerly direction, so as to include the whole of Galicia, Moldavia¹ and Podolia, the Ukraine nearly up to the Dnieper, Volhynia, West Polesia, modern Poland, Grodno, Kovno and Courland, leaving only about half of East Prussia (including Königsberg) to the Teutonic Knights. The Lithuania that was added included White Russia and nearly all the basins of the Dnieper and Dvina, whilst Livonia belonged equally to Poland and to Lithuania.

¹ A vassal State.

PERIOD I

1569—1632

THE CATHOLIC REACTION

INTRODUCTION

By the middle of the 16th century the Polish Constitution had practically assumed the form which lasted till the First Partition (1772). The chief power in the State had formerly been in the hands of the magnates and princes, but, though wealth still gave them great influence, it was now extended to the large body of petty nobles and land-owners called the *szlachta*. These nobles formed the army and Diets and controlled most of the administrative offices, which were tenable for life. The King was elective, and was Commander-in-Chief of the army, but he could not touch the life, liberty or property of the nobles. Occasionally a strong King was able to introduce for a time a form of centralized government. But at any manifestation of kingly power it was easy for the *szlachta* to conjure up the spectre of *absolutum dominium*; or else the King's policy was reversed by his successor, or by a sudden change in the endless dynastic wars brought about by the Polish system of elective monarchy. The King was helped to govern by a Senate and by a Diet of elected deputies. The Diet met irregularly and decisions had to be unanimous. Sometimes, when their object could not be obtained by means of the Diet, unions or "confederacies" were formed between nobles and magnates or the Diet and the King. Confederacies which failed were called rebellions (*rokosz*).

During most of the period under discussion the Roman Catholic Church wielded considerable power, and supported the King against the disruptive tendencies of the *szlachta*. Non-Roman Catholics were called Dissidents; they consisted chiefly of Protestants in the north and Russian Orthodox in the south-east. Polish intolerance towards the Dissidents, which increased towards the end of the period, played into the hands of the Prussians and Russians across the borders and was a cause contributory to the Partitions.

The towns were crippled by economic restrictions which, in the interest of the big land-owners, cut them off from connection with the country districts. They dwindled in population and importance, lost their right of representation, and fell under the control of Jews and other aliens. The peasants—comprising the mass of the population—were entirely under the jurisdiction of the lords of the manors; but, unlike Russian peasants, they could hold property and could not be sold; and the fact that during the 16th and 17th centuries peasants migrated to Poland from all parts of Europe tends to show that at that time they enjoyed a relatively superior position.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

From 1386 to 1569 there had been a personal union between Poland and Lithuania under the Jagiellon dynasty, for the purpose of defence against the Teutonic Knights. The defeat of the Teutonic Knights raised up a new enemy on the eastern frontiers of Poland, viz. Russia; and, in order to secure Poland and Lithuania against the latter, it was determined to transform the existing personal into a political union. Many things already pointed to this change. The religious tolerance shown by the Jagiellon kings was highly appreciated by the Lithuanians, and by the middle of the 16th century the administration and organization of Lithu-

ania were similar to those of Poland. The King and the *szlachta* supported, whilst the big land-owners opposed, a political union; but the most influential of the latter were finally won over, and at the Diet of Lublin in 1569 the union became law. It is essential to note that at the time it was really a voluntary union, and the opposition to it was largely subsequent and due to other causes, such as the later Polish treatment of the Russian Orthodox religion. Poland and Lithuania in this way became two halves of one State. While they had in common an elective King, a Senate of temporal and spiritual dignitaries, a Diet (which met at Warsaw), currency and the system of land tenure, each retained its separate administration, army and laws. The whole State was apparently an elective monarchy, but in reality a republic. Poland was known as the Crown (*Korona*), Lithuania as the Principality (*Kziestwo*). The approximate boundaries have been given above (p. 1).

The Union of Lublin (1569) was an experiment. For the time being, by joining forces, Poland and Lithuania certainly checked Russian aggression and a recurrence of German hostility in the Baltic. Even subsequently there were periods of considerable Polish expansion. But the cost of this development, involving the excessive dissipation of internal energy and resources, was ultimately fatal to Poland.

The reign of Henry of Anjou (1573–75) was too short to be of much importance. But two circumstances deserve notice. The choice of Henry was the first instance of the danger to the country involved by a system of election which was not confined to Poles. This danger was apparently realized by the Poles, but in countering it by the introduction of the *Pacta Conventa*, which the King had to sign at his election, they were involved in a second danger. The passing of the *Pacta Conventa*, instead of being a mere check on a

foreign King, was in the end the death-blow to all central authority, as it practically relieved the nation of its duty towards the King if he attacked the nobles.

Stephen Batory's reign (1575–86) was a fairly successful attempt to form a strong monarchy. In this he was supported by the Roman Catholic Church and the Jesuits and by the able Chancellor Zamoyski; and their united forces were able to check the growth of internal anarchy, e.g. the rebellion (*rokosz*) of the two magnates, the brothers Zborowski. At the same time, however, the King's prerogative was still further weakened by his surrender of the right of appeal to the King's court and transference of the election of judges to the nobles.

Like his predecessor, Zygmunt III (1587–1632) supported the Roman Catholic Reaction, not so much from bigotry as from the realization of the fact that the Church was the one power left which was capable of checking the disruptive tendencies of the Reformation and the disorderliness of the nobles. The same influence was probably responsible for the Congress of Brest (1596), which created the Uniat Church in Galicia and the Ukraine. A portion of the Orthodox clergy, followed by the nobles and most of the bishops, agreed to a union with the Church of Rome, submitting to the Pope and accepting the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, while retaining the use of the vernacular (Little Russian) in their services, and other local privileges¹. But the towns, many Orthodox priests and the mass of the peasants still remained Orthodox. In the long run this religious difference, added to those which were economic or political, was fatal to Polish influence.

Zygmunt at various times tried to reform the unworkable Polish constitution by substituting the decision of all matters by a plurality of votes instead of by a

¹ For a fuller account, cf. *Russian Poland* (No. 44), p. 56.

unanimity impossible to obtain. But the opposition of the magnates, backed by the *szlachta*, was too strong.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Stephen Batory's foreign policy had been directed towards the strengthening of the Polish power in the regions north of the Black Sea and on the Baltic; and for this purpose he depended upon the development of an efficient army with which to fight Turkey and the Tatars in the south, and Russia and Sweden in the north. Batory was the first to organize the irregular border troops in the Ukraine (called the Cossacks) into regiments of cavalry, thus creating a precedent which was later on to be adopted on a successful scale by Russia. He further increased his army by ennobling many of his soldiers and even peasants. His Baltic policy, however, was interrupted by a Russian invasion of Livonia. The Russians were defeated in 1582, and Poland recovered Livonia and gained the Duchy of Polotsk. Batory's reign was too short to be permanently beneficial.

At the accession of Zygmunt III the general political situation was favourable to Poland. Germany was submerged in the Thirty Years' War; Russia was torn with internal dissensions. Here was a chance for Poland to develop her control of the regions adjoining the Black Sea, restore her influence on the Baltic and make herself the chief power in Central Europe. The chance was lost, not from lack of a consistent policy on the part of Zygmunt, nor of brilliant generals (Zolkiewski, Chlodkiewicz and Koniiecpolski), but from continual disorders among the *szlachta* and the destructive powers of the magnates, who by their private raids often involved Poland in unnecessary wars. At the same time the dynastic struggles with Sweden, beginning with the election of Zygmunt's uncle as Charles IX, caused a

waste of resources which would have been invaluable elsewhere.

The first Swedish war had to be abandoned unfinished, in spite of a brilliant victory by Chlodkiewicz in 1605, owing to lack of financial support.

In Russia the chaos which followed the death of the so-called Tsar Demetrius allowed the Poles to intervene during the period 1606 to 1613. They took the fortress of Smolensk—a half-way house between Moscow and Warsaw, which could be used as a buttress against future Russian aggression—and at the invitation of the Boyars occupied Moscow. The Boyars were induced to accept Zygmunt's son Wladyslaw as Tsar. But the combination of Roman Catholic Poles and Russian Boyars united the Moscow townspeople, the Orthodox Church and the Cossacks, who together were strong enough to evict the Poles and elect their own Tsar Michael Romanov.

A war with Turkey followed; in which, though the Poles were not victorious, they did great service to Austria by blocking a Turkish invasion at a critical period in the Thirty Years' War. Peace was restored in 1621.

Meanwhile the second Swedish war had broken out. Charles IX's successor, Gustavus Adolphus, occupied Livonia in order to obtain the control of the Baltic Sea, and advanced into Poland as far as Thorn. By the intervention of France and England a six years' truce was arranged at Altmark in 1629, the terms of which allowed Sweden to keep her Livonian conquests and parts of the Baltic shore, controlling the principal trade-routes.

It should be noted that Zygmunt III in 1618 confirmed the right of the Brandenburg Electors to the succession in East Prussia. (See also *infra*, *Causes of Downfall*, p. 17.)

PERIOD II

1632—1668

THE COSSACK WARS

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Internally this period is characterized by a political tendency towards decentralization—the country being divided into a series of independent administrative units—by the growth of the power of the magnates and their systematic exploitation of the Ukraine, which involved Poland in the Cossack wars. The ambition of the magnates and the lawlessness of the *szlachta* paralysed the executive. Complete collapse was only prevented by the conservative influence of the Roman Catholics and especially of the Jesuits.

Wladyslaw IV (1632–48) saw that the only hope of Polish regeneration lay in increasing the power of the throne. This he hoped to do by means of a policy of concession at home and victory abroad. A victorious foreign policy might enable him to strengthen the Polish Constitution upon Swedish or English lines. Unfortunately his foreign successes merely roused the jealousy of the *szlachta*, and from 1635 onwards they devoted their efforts to thwarting every scheme of the King.

John Kasimir (1648–68) continued the policy of reform from the throne, but the only result was to increase the disorders among the nobles and play into the hands of short-sighted demagogues like Lubomirski, who was able to form a “confederacy”—at a time when unity was vital to Poland—with the mere object of securing

complete licence for the *szlachta*. Government became a farce, and John Kasimir resigned.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Soon after the accession of Michael Romanov to the throne of Moscow war broke out between Russia and Poland; it was brought to a triumphant conclusion by Wladyslaw at the Treaty of Polanov (1634), by which Poland obtained the provinces of Seversk, Czernigov, and Smolensk, and the surrender of all Russian claims to Esthonia, Livonia and Courland. At the same time Wladyslaw recovered parts of the Prussian provinces and the Baltic littoral from Sweden, and in the south came to terms with the Turks and Tatars over the perennial question of raiding by the Cossacks. The early years of this reign mark one of the highest points in the whole history of Polish foreign policy. Wladyslaw had schemes for founding a Polish navy; and the future of Polish influence in the Baltic seemed bright. Everything, however, was negatived by the jealousy of the *szlachta*, who by their policy of obstruction paralysed the army and the executive. The truth was that, apart from their insane dislike of discipline and their jealousy of their own privileges, the interests of most of the magnates, and also of large numbers of the *szlachta*, had come to be concentrated in the south and south-east of Poland. Their policy of peasant exploitation and religious persecution was causing widespread discontent in these regions. As a last resort, Wladyslaw hoped to turn this smouldering discontent to his own purpose by leading the peasants and Cossacks against the Tatars in the Crimea and against the Turks through Moldavia, but he died before the scheme could be matured.

Under his successor, John Kasimir, a series of Cossack wars raged over large parts of Poland. Roughly speaking, the Cossacks claimed four reforms: (1) religious

freedom, with the abolition of the Uniat Church; (2) autonomy of the western parts of the Ukraine; (3) increase of the number of registered Cossacks (i.e. Cossacks acting as regular cavalry), who were to rank as Polish *szlachta*; and (4) amelioration of the condition of the peasants. The wars tended to be a combination of peasant revolt against the magnates and a religious crusade; throughout they were conducted on the Cossack side by Chmielnicki, a Polish nobleman.

The first Cossack war broke out in 1648. A united army of Cossacks and Tatars, soon joined by thousands of peasants, invaded Poland. A general massacre of Ukraine gentry and Uniat and Roman Catholic priests ensued. Chmielnicki defeated the Poles near Pildawa but wasted valuable time in besieging various Polish forts.

The second Cossack war broke out in 1649, after the failure of John Kasimir's attempt to come to terms with the Cossacks at Pereyaslav. Poland was again saved by the strength of her isolated fortresses. A treaty was arranged at Zborów in 1649, by which Chmielnicki was recognized as *hetman* of the Dnieper Cossacks, whose registered numbers were raised to 40,000; a general amnesty was granted; and in future all officials in the Orthodox palatinates of the Ukraine were to be Orthodox gentry. For eighteen months Chmielnicki ruled the Ukraine from his headquarters at Chigirin.

In 1651 the third Cossack war began. John Kasimir won a brilliant victory at Beresteczko, but owing to a rising of the peasants in Poland was unable to exploit it fully. A new peace was settled at Biala Cerkiev in 1651, by which the registered Cossacks were reduced to 20,000, Kiev Province was to be the only self-governing Cossack area, and Orthodox and Uniats were to have the same rights.

These wars opened the eyes of the Poles to the serious-

ness of Cossack opposition. The Cossacks on the other hand perceived their inability to conquer Poland unaided, while the attention of Russia was drawn to the extreme internal weakness of Poland. The result was a *rapprochement* between the Cossacks and the Russians. By the Treaty of Pereyaslavl (1654)¹, the Ukraine became a part of the Russian Empire, the numbers of registered Cossacks were increased, and Cossacks received a measure of autonomy. From this, another war with Poland resulted, known as the fourth Cossack, or the Thirteen Years' War.

At this crisis Sweden, whose power in the Baltic had been considerably increased in 1648 by the Treaty of Westphalia, determined to consolidate it at the expense of Poland. Charles X invaded Poland from the north, while the Russians and Cossacks were invading it from the east and south-east. The Elector of Brandenburg entered West Prussia "to protect it." Polish resistance collapsed owing to the treachery of the nobles, who deserted to Charles in a body. John Kasimir had to fly from the country; and Poland for the first time ceased to exist as an independent nation. A Partition was only avoided by quarrels among the victors and by a sudden revulsion of religious enthusiasm and patriotism which swept over Poland. The great Polish general Czarniecki was able to recover most of the provinces taken by Sweden and, after the peace of Oliva (1660), by which Livonia was ceded to Sweden, was free to turn against the Russians. During the next four years Poland recovered most of the eastern provinces, which had been occupied by Russia. Internal dissensions, however,—in particular the revolt (*rokosz*) of Lubomirski—forced Poland to accept terms advantageous to Russia at the Treaty of Andruszowo (1667).

¹ This Treaty is sometimes referred to by Ukrainians or Little Russians as justifying their claims to autonomy.

Poland received back Vitebsk, Polotsk and Polish Livonia, but ceded Smolensk, Seversk, Czernigov and the east bank of the Dnieper. Kiev was to be occupied by the Russians for two years, and the Dnieper Cossacks to be under joint Russian and Polish control. Russia, however, never restored Kiev; and from this time onward Russian influence became paramount, first in the Ukraine and then in Poland itself.

PERIOD III

1669—1772

RUSSIAN ASCENDENCY TO THE
FIRST PARTITION OF POLAND

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

This period is characterized by the complete exhaustion of Poland resulting from the previous wars, by the selfish egoism of the ruling classes, by the prominent part played in Poland by the European system of diplomatic competition, together with the unscrupulous use of secret service funds introduced by Louis XIV, and by the paramount influence of Russia in Polish affairs, supported at critical moments by the cynical aggression of Frederick the Great. It is the period of the abuse of the *liberum veto* on the one hand, which was used to foster political anarchy in the interest of foreigners, and frantic religious intolerance on the other, which, as was the case with France and the Huguenots, deprived Poland at a critical period of an important part of her population. These tendencies together played directly into the hands of Russia with its centralized government and single religion.

The nation as a whole was unable to learn the lessons of previous failures. The election of Wisniowiecki (1669) was a protest against foreign control in Poland, but only a partial one, as Sobieski raised a rebellion in opposition and appealed for help to the French, just as at a later period (1792) rebels appealed to Catherine the Great. When Sobieski was himself elected King (1674), he proved equally unable to prevent internal

dissensions. He was the last king to attempt to secure a large permanent army with a view to Poland's playing a central part in the inevitable struggle between Prussia, Russia and Austria. But the jealousy and selfishness of the *szlachta*, supported by a section of the magnates, were insuperable obstacles, and the Polish army was actually reduced.

The election of Augustus II (1698) was the last which was even nominally free. Subsequent elections were held under control of foreign bayonets.

During the Great Northern War (1700–21), Swedes, Russians and Saxons lived on Poland and plundered it systematically. At the end of this period Poland was ruined materially and politically. Agriculture, commerce and industry came to a standstill, education was non-existent, cities were depopulated, and the position of the peasants became increasingly intolerable. After the defeat of the Swedes by the Russians at Poltava in 1709 Russia definitely intervened in Polish affairs, reduced the Polish army, and forced what was known as the First Dumb Diet to pass a series of laws unfavourable to the Poles. Augustus II, realizing the actual state of affairs, even himself proposed that Prussia and Russia should divide Poland between them.

On his death the Russian government appointed Augustus III king (1734). He was a mere nonentity; and during his reign Poland became the area of a clan struggle between two Parties—known as the National Party and the "Family." The "Family" was the name given to the Czartoryskis, who were pro-Russian, but at least had a policy of qualified internal reform. The National Party consisted of the Potocki and other wealthy Lithuanian and Ukrainian families, who had no constructive policy, but under the guise of patriotism showed the usual jealous tenacity of privileges and obstruction to all reform, typical of the Polish *szlachta*.

A last chance of creating Polish unity occurred at the election of Stanislaus Augustus in 1764. Europe was then exhausted by the Seven Years' War. But the "Family" and the National Party were unable to unite, and Frederick the Great was allowed time to recover and come to terms with the Russian Empress Catherine.

The "Family," in order to carry out their reforms, were more or less forced to invite Russian troops to occupy Poland (1768), and with their support succeeded for the moment in passing various salutary measures for the administration of justice, police and finance, and in limiting the absurd powers of some of the higher offices of State.

Genuine reforms were not, however, wanted by the Russians. The result was that the Russian minister Repnin deliberately introduced the question of giving all Dissidents full political and religious liberties. This, as Russia well knew, was impossible at the time; but it would be certain to raise prejudice against the Czartoryskis and all their reforms, and in that case Russia could intervene and restore the old regime of legalized disorder, which sooner or later must lead to partition. This was precisely what happened. A protest was made by the middle-class gentry against the pro-Russian policy of the Czartoryskis; and a "confederacy" was formed at Bar in 1768, which appealed for help to France, Austria and Turkey. Turkey alone went to war against Russia and was worsted. In consequence, Russian power was increased to such an extent that it seemed for a time as though Austria and Frederick the Great might have to combine against Russia. In 1770 Frederick surrounded the northern Polish provinces with a military cordon, nominally to keep out the cattle plague, whilst Austria had for some time been steadily encroaching on Galicia. On the suppression of the Bar confederacy, however, Frederick and the Empress

Catherine came to terms. Between February 6th and 17th, 1772, the First Partition of Poland was signed at St Petersburg, and in August Austria was admitted to a share of the spoil¹.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

During the first part of this period Poland was engaged in a series of wars, first with Turkey, then with Sweden and Russia. Although Sobieski won signal victories, and by the defeat of the Turks at Vienna in 1683 saved western Europe from a Mohammedan invasion, these only weakened Poland and exhausted the Ukraine. The Russo-Swedish war, which followed in 1700-21, completed the exhaustion of the country. Hence, during the latter half of the period, Poland was entirely under the control of the Russians, who deliberately prevented all Polish attempts at reformation. The obstacles to partition had practically ceased to exist; it simply depended on an agreement between Russia, Prussia and Austria.

¹ For details see below, p. 20.

CAUSES OF DOWNFALL

The downfall of Poland can be attributed to the following causes.

(1) The policy of Russia (see in particular pp. 13-16 *supra*) hindered Poland from setting her own house in order.

(2) The aggressive policy of Frederick the Great finally robbed Poland of her most vital provinces.

(3) With the exception of the Carpathian range in the south, and possibly the marshes on the east and north-east, Polish frontiers were strategically weak. The central position of Poland made the country liable to simultaneous attacks from different sides. Moreover, Poland was not content with her ethnological frontiers. The proper Polish sphere of expansion lay in the west and north, in the Polish spheres of Silesia, Pomerania and Prussia, facing the Baltic Sea. Instead of concentrating attention here, Poland committed the twofold mistake of weakening her hold upon this region by accepting, as far back as 1563, the Union of Brandenburg with East Prussia, which was bound to make for instability, and by forming the unfortunate Union of Lublin (with Lithuania) in 1569, which, in spite of certain advantages, forced her beyond her ethnological limits and committed her to a policy of expansion south and south-eastwards to the Black Sea. Henceforward Poland was distracted between interests in the Baltic and the Black Sea. The task was too big for her. She failed to assimilate Ruthenia and the Ukraine, or to populate them with sufficient Poles to withstand Russian pressure, while at the same time her colonizing efforts here tended to cause a serious decrease of

population in Poland, which had a disastrous effect upon the commercial and political history of the whole country. The Union of Lublin in fact hindered the centralization of Poland at the very time when neighbouring states were developing their armies and centralizing their governments.

(4) Society in Poland was badly balanced. In the country all power lay in the hands of the nobles, in the towns in the hands of the Jews.

The nobles were a personal caste, nobility consisting of privileges of birth apart from wealth or property. They were more independent and more numerous in Poland than anywhere else in Europe. In the seventeenth century, for example, they numbered 800,000 out of a population of some ten millions, i.e. 8 per cent. (as compared with 1 per cent. in France). They were divided into three categories: magnates, the middle or landed gentry, and the rank and file of the nobles, called *szlachta*. Power wavered from one group to another, but the nobles as a mass had little idea of governing and were consistent only in securing their own class-interests. It was an unfortunate accident that throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries there were remarkably few distinguished individuals to help the king and an orderly government. At the end of the period the great nobles on the Polish frontiers possessed an almost international position (see above, pp. 13-16) and by their financial and traditional control over the *szlachta* were able to interfere disastrously in Polish history.

Even in the earlier history of Poland the growth of a Third Estate was hampered by the thinness of the population, by German colonization in the north, by chronic wars and the national preference for agriculture. At the outset of the sixteenth century the country was becoming Polish again, but in the latter half of that period a

vital change was produced by an invasion of the Jews. Nowhere else in Europe were they given such complete autonomy. The result was that they soon ousted the native Poles and completely controlled the towns. By favouring the nobles they destroyed the equilibrium of power. There was no Third Estate, as in other countries, to preserve the balance between king and nobles. Moreover Jewish control of trade and commerce so prejudiced these pursuits in the eyes of the Polish upper classes that they became practically a Jewish monopoly, and there was thus created a wide gap between the upper and lower classes.

(5) Political principles were in advance of the times and were often antagonistic to the whole trend of contemporary theory and practice. Moreover they were not genuine principles. Poland's republican tendencies were purely nominal; in reality she was a turbulent oligarchy. And at the same time they were unsound, being based on the assumption that liberty and equality were correlatives. In practice Polish liberty meant licence.

PERIOD IV

1772—1815

FIRST PARTITION, 1772

The First Partition of Poland put into the form of a treaty between Russia, Prussia and Austria a state of affairs which practically had existed for some time. Since 1768 Russia had been in military occupation of more than half Poland. Austrian troops had long been penetrating Galicia. Frederick the Great had gradually extended his military cordons round the Polish districts in the north.

The size of the lots obtained by the three nations proved uneven. Russia gained a large part of White Russia, including the towns of Dvinsk, Polotsk, Vitebsk and Mohilev, with 1,600,000 inhabitants, the new frontier being formed by the Western Dvina and the Drut, a tributary of the Dnieper. Prussia obtained Polish or "Royal" Prussia with the exception of the towns of Danzig and Thorn, and the enclave of Warmia (Ermland), with 600,000 inhabitants. Austria gained the whole of Galicia, with the salt mines of Wieliczka and 2,600,000 inhabitants; this territory was annexed directly to the Austrian Crown under the names of the Kingdoms of Galicia and Lodomeria. Poland in fact lost nearly a fifth of her population and a fourth of her territory. The loss of White Russia was relatively unimportant, but the loss of Polish Prussia and Galicia was vital, as Poland lost by the one her only outlet to the Baltic, and by the other her only real natural frontier. Poland however was too exhausted to resist, and the Partition was ratified by the Diet and the King in 1773.

POLISH INTERNAL REFORMS

The loss of a fourth of their territory brought about a radical change in the policy and general outlook of the educated classes, the Church and the nobles. Though a minority were still in favour of the old anarchy, the majority were determined to introduce internal reforms. Hence during the period of 1773 to 1791 there was a noticeable economic and intellectual revival in Poland. Although Prussia blocked the Vistula by excessive dues, the development of the Black Sea littoral by Russia gave an outlet to Polish exports. Banks and new industries were started. Canals were built. Agriculture was improved, and many magnates confirmed their peasants in the possession of land and even freed them. French civilization made itself felt in Poland. Polish literature and language and Polish history were actively studied. Education—after the suppression of the order of the Jesuits—was for the first time in European history entrusted to a special Commission. The universities at Cracow and Vilna were revived, and secular schools sprang up, with the special object of inculcating the duties of good citizenship and patriotism. Science and art made progress.

But in all their attempts at political reformation the Poles were faced by the opposition of Russia, who could at the same time calculate on interested Prussian support. After the First Partition Russia imposed on Poland a Constitution still further weakening the King and strengthening the nobles, and guaranteed its maintenance. Hence it was practically impossible for the Poles to alter it until a new general political situation arose.

During the decade of 1780–90 there were great changes in the international position. Prussia under Frederick William II quarrelled with Russia and

Austria, and the last two countries became involved in a war with Turkey. In 1788 Frederick William II offered a definite alliance to Poland. For the moment Poland refused, but at the same time was encouraged to abrogate (January 1789) the Constitution which had been imposed on her by Russia. However, Russian and Austrian successes against Turkey induced Poland to accept a renewed Prussian offer and to conclude a defensive alliance in March 1790. But on the succession of Joseph II to the Austrian throne Austria retired from the Turkish war, and Prussia cynically ceased to value her alliance with Poland. The Poles, nevertheless, went on reforming their Government.

Although some political reforms had been passed by the Four Years' Diet (1780-84), such as a tax on the property of nobles and the abolition of the *liberum veto*, it was not until Russia was temporarily occupied that the larger question of the Constitution could be touched. A new Polish Constitution was promulgated on May 5, 1791. It won universal approval, except in Russia and among a small minority of reactionary Polish nobles. It restored the privileges of the King and increased his power, vested executive power in the King and six responsible ministers, confirmed the abolition of the *liberum veto*, increased the self-government of towns, giving them representation in the Diet, granted full religious liberty, and declared that after the death of Stanislaus Augustus the Polish crown should pass to the Elector of Saxony and become hereditary.

The success of the Constitution depended in the last resort on Russian acquiescence, but the policy of Russia continued to be deliberately aggressive. Though the Empress Catherine disapproved of the Revolution in France because of its destruction of royal power, she disapproved equally of the strengthening of royal power in Poland. In fact Russia was determined to crush

Poland. The opportunity was offered by the action of the Polish minority, who, led by Felix Potocki, Branicki, and others, formed a confederacy at Targovica early in 1792 and appealed to Russia for military support against the new Polish Constitution. Poland had no allies ready or willing to help her. Austria was for the moment involved in a new war with revolutionary France, and Prussia was bought off by Russian promises of a fresh share in Polish territory. Russia entered Poland with an army of 100,000, against which the Poles could only muster 45,000. King Stanislaus Augustus went over to the Russian side. Most of the ministers responsible for the 1791 Constitution fled the country. The Polish Commander in Chief, Prince Joseph Poniatowski, resigned his command. Russian troops occupied Warsaw and abolished the Constitution of 1791.

SECOND PARTITION, 1793

The secessionists who had formed the confederacy at Targovica now hoped that the old oligarchic, unworkable Constitution would simply be restored. Instead, Russia and Prussia came to an agreement, over the heads of the secessionists, for a second partition of Poland, in January 1793.

Prussia gained the cities of Danzig and Thorn and the whole of Great or West Poland up to a line running practically north and south some 25 miles west of Warsaw, territory which included the original kernel of Poland, i.e. the country lying between the Oder and the Vistula, containing the Polish cities of Gniezno (Gnesen), Poznan (Posen) and Czenstochowa.

Russia acquired half of Lithuania, a huge slice of country including the remaining part of White Russia, a large part of Black Russia (the country between the Pripet and the Niemen, west of the Berezina), and the

whole of Little Russia or the Ukraine west of the Dnieper. The southern boundary of this territory was the river Dniester, the eastern the rivers Dnieper, Drut and western Dvina; to the southeast, between the Dnieper and Dniester, the new territory marched with the new southern provinces of Russia (Novorossiia), and on the west the boundary was a more or less straight line running from Dvinsk in the north through Pinsk to Kamenets Podolski in Podolia in the south.

Poland was left with a third of her original territory, an area of some 95,000 square miles and a population of 3,500,000.

The First Partition had been justified to a certain extent by the existence of anarchy in Poland: the Second was brazen robbery of a helpless neighbour, which was at the moment for almost the first time in her history in possession of a stable form of Government and had made a notable advance towards national regeneration.

POLISH RISING

Difficulties arose over the ratification of the Partition Treaties by the Poles. The Russian Treaty was (under Russian threats) ratified by the Diet in August 1793. But the Prussian Treaty was a more serious matter to Poland. The Poles tried to make a special commercial Treaty with Prussia, avoiding a cession of territory. There was a great difference between the territories claimed by the Russians and by the Prussians. The former, however valuable economically to Poland, was in the first instance largely Russian. Polish civilization was mainly on the surface; underneath it was Russian or Lithuanian or Lett. But the latter was the cradle of the Polish race, and the Polish State as such could not survive its loss. However, Russian and Prussian troops forced the so-called Second Dumb Diet to sign the

Prussian Treaty in September 1793. In October 1793 the old unworkable Polish Constitution was restored.

Meanwhile various elements in Poland were preparing a final effort to free the country from foreign domination. The head of the movement was Kosciuszko. An insurrection was proclaimed at Cracow in March 1794 and war declared on Russia. This "people's rebellion" however was poorly supplied with money and material; and the army was small and badly armed. Preliminary success indeed enabled a Provisional Government to be set up at Warsaw, largely composed of the men who were responsible for the 1791 Constitution. But the Prussians took Cracow, and then joined the Russians in besieging Warsaw during the summer of 1794. A sympathetic rising in Great Poland and in Lithuania saved the situation for the moment; but the Russians and Prussians soon received reinforcements, and Austria suddenly declared war on Poland. Kosciuszko found himself threatened on three sides, by Prussians and Russians in the west, by Austrians in the south, and by another Russian army under Suvorov marching on Warsaw from the east. In October 1794 Kosciuszko was completely defeated, and in the following month Warsaw surrendered to Suvorov. Kosciuszko was imprisoned and the other Polish leaders exiled to Siberia.

THIRD PARTITION, 1795

On January 3, 1795, Russia and Austria, and on October 24, 1795, Russia and Prussia, settled the details of the Third Partition. Prussia obtained all the country lying between the Niemen and Vistula, including the capital, Warsaw. Russia gained territory which included Courland and the parts of Lithuania and Black Russia not included in the Second Partition. Austria gained a triangular piece of territory north of Galicia (including

Cracow), bounded on the north by the western Bug. The Niemen thus formed the boundary between Russia and Prussia, and the Bug that between Russia and Austria. The Third Partition finally destroyed the Polish State. But in so doing it recreated the national consciousness, which from henceforth attained a unity hitherto unknown, and has been the characteristic feature of subsequent Polish history, whether under Russian, Prussian or Austrian rule.

EVENTS BETWEEN 1795 AND 1807

Many of the most influential Poles left the country and took service abroad. In the long run they rendered invaluable service to Poland by focusing the attention of Western Europe, and particularly that of France, upon the Polish question and establishing a definite, if unrequited, claim upon the gratitude of foreigners (in the same way that Cavour did at a later date by means of the Italian participation in the Crimean War). The most far-sighted of the Poles saw that their best hope of recognition lay in France; and in 1797 Dombrowski raised the famous Polish legions which fought first for the French Republic in northern Italy and subsequently for Napoleon in various parts of Europe. Though their numbers dwindled, they created an imperishable tradition.

In Russian Poland a new political situation resulted from the accession of the Tsar Alexander I, who was a personal friend of Adam Czartoryski. A pro-Russian party arose in Poland, aiming at the unification of all Poland under Russian rule, which implied that Russia must abandon friendly relations with Prussia. Unfortunately the Tsar's increasing dislike of Napoleon, and the Polish connection with France, proved an insuperable obstacle. There followed the wars between Napoleon and the Third Coalition, of Austria, Prussia and

Russia, resulting in the battles of Austerlitz, December 2, 1805, Jena, October 14, 1806, and Friedland, June 14, 1807, which made Napoleon master of Europe. During the Friedland campaign Poland served as a useful base for Napoleon, and fresh Polish legions raised by Dombrowski gave the French valuable assistance. The result was that at the Treaty of Tilsit, July 1807, the Duchy of Warsaw was created—in effect a Fourth Partition, but one which at least allowed the existence of a truncated Poland.

DUCHY OF WARSAW

Napoleon permitted Prussia to keep her share of the First Partition, while losing all that she had gained by the Second and Third. Danzig became a Free City. Russia obtained Bialystok and Bielsk, or northern Podlesia. The Duchy (i.e. the new Poland) recovered Thorn, and was obliged to join the Continental System. The Saxon King Frederick Augustus became Duke. Though the new territory only included an area of 64,500 square miles with a population of 2,400,000, it implied a significant rebirth of Poland; and the guarantee of free navigation for the Poles on the Vistula to the Baltic was intended to secure to them the possibility of self-sufficiency.

Poland was now irrevocably tied to Napoleon and shared in the fluctuations of his fortunes. Under French control a new and more democratic Constitution, together with the *Code Napoléon*, was introduced. Serfdom was abolished, but a mistake was made in failing to provide the peasants with any land, an omission which led later to a large peasant exodus. Commerce, trade, and education revived, it is true; but the economic and general regeneration of the Duchy was checked by the war between Austria and Napoleon in 1809. During this war the Polish army conquered

Galicia; and, when Napoleon's victory at Wagram ended hostilities, Galicia should have been restored to the Duchy. Owing, however, to the usual Russian intervention, only Western Galicia as far as the San, with the Zamosc district and part of the Wieliczka salt mines, comprising some 33,000 square miles with 1,500,000 inhabitants, came back to the Polish State. Austria kept the rest of Galicia, and Russia was given the Circle of Tarnopol. Polish hopes were finally shattered in 1812 by the failure of Napoleon's campaign in Russia, after which the country became the base of Prussian operations against the French.

CONGRESS OF VIENNA, 1814-15

Owing to the influence of Russia, to Poland's loyalty to Napoleon, and to quarrels among the Allies, the Congress of Vienna sanctioned a new partition in 1814, which was finally completed in 1815. Poland was again divided between Prussia, Austria, and Russia, with the exception of Cracow, which became an independent Republic (annexed by Austria in 1846). Poznan and Gniezno with a population of 810,000 were left to Prussia. Austria retained Galicia (including Tarnopol) with 1,500,000 inhabitants. Lithuania and the Ruthenian palatinates remained incorporated in the Russian Empire. The remnant, called the Congress Kingdom, was constituted under the Russian Tsar.

Four-fifths of the Poland of 1772 thus came under Russian rule, the remaining fifth being almost equally divided between Austria and Prussia. The complete severance of the political bonds uniting the Polish people was mitigated on paper by various provisions, the two most noticeable points being that the inhabitants of the Poland of 1772 were guaranteed complete freedom in social and economic intercourse within the 1772 boundaries, and that transportation and naviga-

tion on all rivers and canals were to be unrestricted. In theory this meant that the Poles had the right of free navigation, *via* Danzig, to the Baltic Sea. In practice it would have necessitated the creation of a special Prussian tariff zone on both sides of the Vistula. The vital question of Polish access to the sea was balanced against very considerable, if not impossible, tariff difficulties on the side of Prussia. The same situation obtained on the Austrian and Russian boundaries of Poland. The interests of the stronger Powers prevailed, as was bound to happen, once Poland had been partitioned. Henceforth Polish political and economic life developed under three separate and often antagonistic systems.

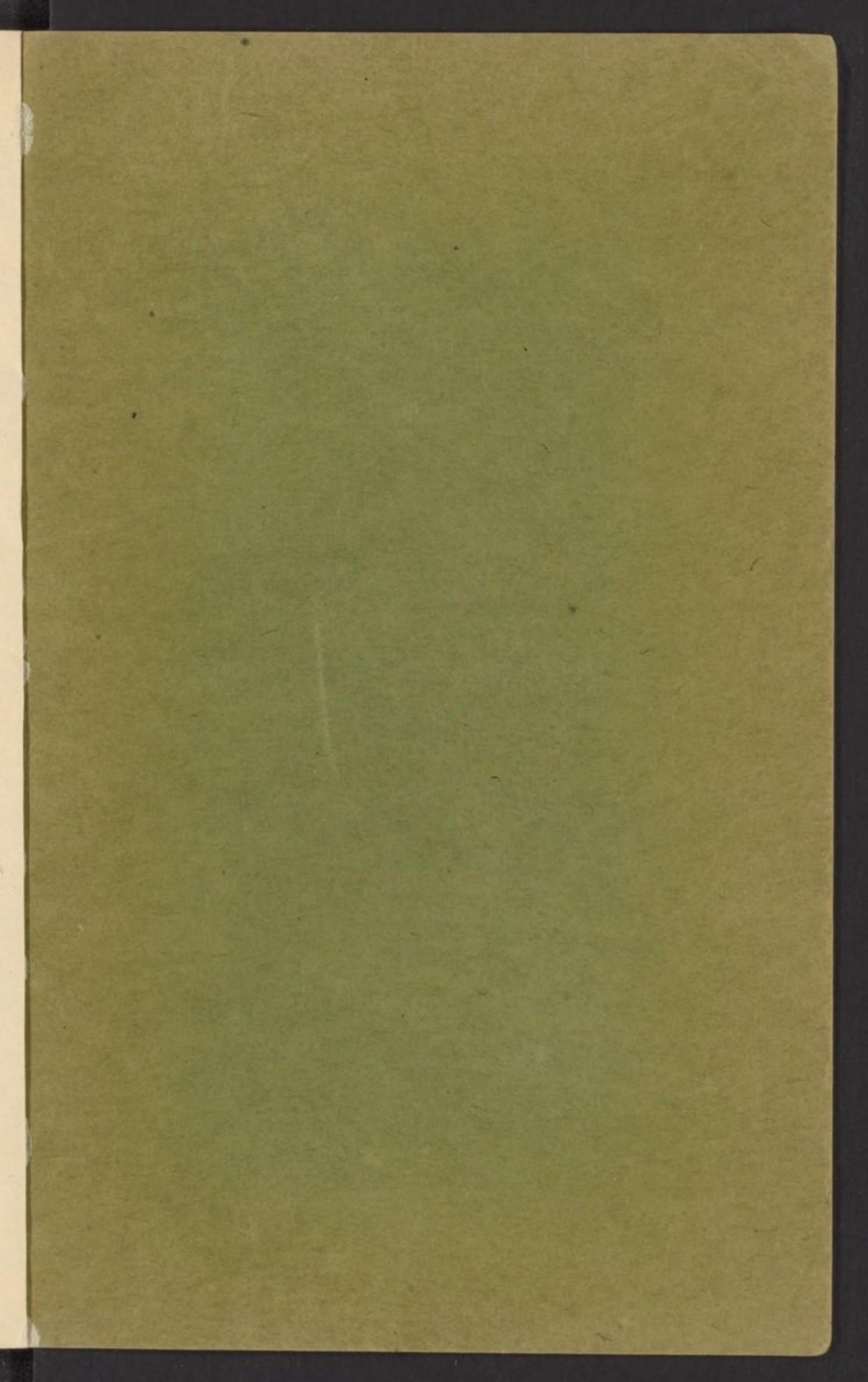
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MAPS

A special map showing the "Partitions of Poland" (G.S.G.S. No. 2888) has been issued by the War Office in collaboration with the Historical Section, F.O., Nov. 1918.

For ethnography, see the "Ethnographical Map of Central and S.E. Europe" (sheet "Poland") issued by the War Office (G.S.G.S. No. 3703 *a*) on the scale of 1:1,500,000; also the sketch map, with same title (G.S.G.S. No. 2824), issued by the War Office, 1916.



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