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## Mr. Lloyd George's Speech

The speech of Mr. Lloyd George in the British House of Commons on Tuesday last was one of the most important of his public life. It was a clear, comprehensive and much needed light on the troubled situation as respects Russia and Poland and the relations of the Allies — particularly Great Britain and France — towards those countries. We noticed some weeks ago how the big five — Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan and the United States — had gradually been reduced in the settlement of most European questions to the big two—Britain and France. The United States is practically out of the game, Japan is a looker on except where some far East problem arises, and Italy has too many troubles at home to allow her to pay constant attention to the affairs of other nations. So it has come about that England and France have now to play the great parts in world affairs.

Two natural currents of opinion were leading many of the British public to conclusions that were not warranted. Poland's desire for independence, Poland's protests against the partition of former times, Poland's discontent under her foreign rulers, had always won sympathy from the British people. When, as an outcome of the great war, Poland's independence was declared, the British rejoiced in that part of the situation. And when Poland began her war against Soviet Russia, most Englishmen were ready to believe that Poland was right. To Mr. Lloyd George fell the unpleasant duty of showing that Poland was wrong, that she had entered upon her war with Russia against the advice of the representatives of the Allies, and that in any peace negotiations that might now be held Poland must be prepared to suffer for her grave mistake, which would give the Russian Government the right to impose severe conditions on the offending nation. Poland's fault, Mr. Lloyd George pointed out, must bring punishment, but it was not a fault which would justify Russia in destroying Poland's independence. To bring about such a peace as would save Poland's independence was Britain's desire, but Britain could not expect Russia to give

up the advantage gained by Poland's error.

Britain's own relations with Soviet Russia made another question on which a clear light had to be thrown. Russia, under the Czars long regarded as the enemy of Britain, had joined hands with her against Germany. Then came the revolution in Russia, a repudiation of all obligations of the old Government, and the creation of forms of government repulsive to the British people. Britain wanted nothing to do with such systems. Suggestions of opening relations with the Russian authorities—the Bolschiviki—found small favor at first. When the proposed conference at Prinkipo was rejected by the Russians there were few Britons to regret the failure of the movement. Gradually, however, a more sympathetic feeling toward the Russian authorities became evident. Russia's Soviet Government could not be officially recognized, but Russian agents who desired to talk of trade with Great Britain were received in London. British labor began to show signs of sympathy with the Russian authorities. Was England trying to make war on Russia? At least England should let Russia alone. Neither by aid to Poland nor by any other war should Britain attack the so-called people's government at Moscow. This feeling grew rapidly, until the leaders of British labor deemed it well to make public their decision not to be participants in any such war, and to resort to a general strike if necessary to prevent such a war.

It was under such circumstances that Mr. Lloyd George had to speak on Tuesday last. His speech seems to have been accepted on all sides as a fair and just statement of the situation. Britain had no desire to make war on Russia. Let the Russians have a Soviet Government or any other form of government that they wanted. Let them have the advantage that they had won in their dealings with Poland. Let Poland pay for her error. But Russia must not be allowed to crush Poland. It was hoped that Soviet Russia, which was about to open negotiations with Poland at Minsk, would be fair to the new nation. But if Russia was not content with that, if Russia was determined to crush Poland again, France and England would not stand for such a policy. In that case—