

Maciej Krotofil / Dorota Michaluk (Hg.)

Nationen und Grenzen

Bildung neuer Staaten in Ost- und Mitteleuropa
nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg





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Vorwort

Seit dem Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts schritt die Modernisierung der Gesellschaft in Europa in Richtung Demokratisierung und Nationalisierung immer größerer Gesellschaftsschichten. Die Nationalisierungsprozesse bewirkten eine um die Idee der Nation zentrierte Integration und letztendlich Ausrufung von Losungen, mit denen der Aufbau eigener Staaten propagiert wurde, was in Ost- und Mitteleuropa in die Zeit des Ersten Weltkrieges fiel. Die Emanzipierung der Nationen in diesen Regionen Europas war das Resultat der Schwächung dreier multinationaler Monarchien: Russlands, Österreich-Ungarns und Deutschlands, die durch den Krieg und revolutionäre Umwälzungen erschüttert wurden. Die Nationaleliten begannen einen diplomatischen, und in vielen Fällen auch einen bewaffneten Kampf, um die Macht zu übernehmen und auf dem Gebiet der ehemaligen Imperien unabhängige Staaten – vorwiegend demokratische Republiken – zu bilden.

Infolge der Februarrevolution des Jahres 1917 kam es in Russland zur Abdankung des Zaren Nikolaus II. Romanow und es bildeten sich zwei Zentren politischer Macht heraus: der von Sozialrevolutionären und Sozialdemokraten dominierte Petersburger Rat der Arbeiter- und Soldatendelegierten und die Provisorische Regierung, die auf Initiative der Verfassungsdemokraten und Sozialrevolutionäre berufen wurde. Die Radikalisierung der sozialen Haltungen führte zunächst zur Beschränkung der Rolle der Verfassungsdemokraten und zum entschiedenen Anstieg der Popularität der Sozialrevolutionäre. Nach dem Rücktritt der Regierung des Fürsten Georgi Lwow, eines Verfassungsdemokraten, trat der Sozialrevolutionär Alexander Kerenski an die Spitze der Provisorischen Regierung. Auf der linken Seite des politischen Spektrums entfalteten jedoch die Sozialdemokraten der bolschewistischen Strömung eine aktive Tätigkeit und verbreiteten die Idee einer unverzüglichen Weltrevolution, des Kommunismus und der Abschaffung des Privateigentums zugunsten des Staates. Sie strebten rücksichtslos danach, die Macht zu übernehmen und nicht nur die rechten und zentristischen Kräfte zu eliminieren, sondern auch den Platz der Sozialrevolutionäre zu besetzen. Ihr populistisches Programm und das Streben

nach Schließung eines separatistischen Friedens mit den Zentralstaaten gewannen Anhänger im russischen Heer. Die in den sogenannten Aprilthesen des bolschewistischen Anführers Wladimir Lenin enthaltenen Losungen („die ganze Macht in die Hände der Sowjets“, „Krieg den Palästen, Frieden den Hütten“) waren Aufrufe zum Bürgerkrieg. Er begann mit dem bolschewistischen Umsturz am 7. November 1917, der Russland vom Weg demokratischer Veränderungen in Richtung Autoritarismus herunterstieß. Die generelle Auseinandersetzung mit den Sozialrevolutionären begann mit der bewaffneten Zerstreuung der ersten Sitzung der Russischen Konstituierenden Versammlung, die die Zeit der Doppelmacht beenden und die wichtigsten Systemgrundsätze beschließen sollte. Nach den demokratischen Wahlen, die von der Provisorischen Regierung am 25. November 1917 (schon nach dem bolschewistischen Umsturz) durchgeführt wurden, dominierten in der Konstituierenden Regierung Sozialrevolutionäre und Menschewisten (ein Flügel der russischen Sozialdemokratie, der sich für ein langsames Tempo ökonomischer Veränderungen aussprach und zu dieser Zeit mehr Anhänger als die Bolschewisten hatte).

Die inneren Wandlungen, die auf dem Gebiet des Imperiums erfolgten, beeinflussten auch das Leben nichtrussischer Nationen und die Formierung des politischen und sozialen Bewusstseins ihrer Eliten, die – obwohl sie Interesse am sozialistischen Programm hatten – auch die Möglichkeit einer größeren nationalen Verselbstständigung erblickten. Die zu den Folgen der Februarrevolution gehörenden Prozesse wie Demokratisierung des öffentlichen Lebens und Milderung der Kriegsverschärfungen erlaubten es, Losungen der kulturellen und später der politischen Autonomie zu formulieren. Ein nächster Schritt war das Postulat der Gründung eigener Staaten in Form von demokratischen Republiken, die durch einen föderativen Knoten mit Russland verbunden sein sollten. Jedoch der Zusammenbruch der Regierung, die Versuche der Machtübernahme seitens der Bolschewisten und das Chaos, in dem der Staat versank, veranlassten die Mehrheit der neu entstandenen Regierungen, die Bande zu Russland zu zerreißen. Der Erfolg solcher Maßnahmen hing in großem Maße von der Erlangung der Unterstützung auf internationaler Bühne, von effizienten Operationen eigener Militärformationen sowie von der Position der Nachbarn und ihren Territorialansprüchen ab. Am 6. Dezember 1917 proklamierte das Königreich Finnland (1919 in eine Republik umgewandelt) seine Unabhängigkeit, 1918 folgten die Ukrainische Volksrepublik (am 22. Januar), die Litauische Republik (am 16. Februar), die Volksrepublik Kuba (am 16. Februar), die Republik Estland (24. Februar), die Belarussische Volksrepublik (am 25. März), die nordkaukasische Bergrepublik (am 11. Mai), die Demokratische Republik Georgien (am 26. Mai), die Demokratische Republik Armenien (am 28. Mai) und die Demokratische Republik Aserbaidschan (am 28. Mai). Seit dem Ausbruch des Krieges bildeten sich, zunächst ohne Verbindung zueinander, Unabhängigkeitszentren auf pol-

nischen Gebieten, die sich in drei Staaten: Russland, Österreich-Ungarn und Deutschland befanden. Am 5. November 1916 proklamierten die Kaiser Deutschlands und Österreich-Ungarns die Entstehung des polnischen Staates auf den von Russland zurückeroberten Gebieten, es wurde auch der Regentschaftsrat gegründet. Im November 1918 erhielt Józef Piłsudski aus seinen Händen die Zivil- und Militärmacht und nahm den Titel des Staatshaupts (*Naczelnik Państwa*) an. Der 11. November 1918, das symbolische Ende des Ersten Weltkriegs, wurde später zum Existenzbeginn der Zweiten Polnischen Republik erklärt.

Weder russische Monarchisten noch die sich im politischen Lager der Weißen gruppierenden Demokraten hatten Interesse an der Entstehung neuer Staaten. Die Regierungen aller sich neu bildenden Staaten, von der Ostsee angefangen bis hin zum Kaukasus, mussten sich mit Sowjetrußland auseinandersetzen, das danach strebte, die Gebiete, die zur früheren russischen Monarchie gehört hatten, und sogar jene, die weit jenseits deren Grenzen lagen, unter seinen Einfluss zu bringen. Nur Litauen, Lettland, Estland, Finnland und Polen gelang es, die staatliche Souveränität zu bewahren. Die Antwort Sowjetrußlands auf die demokratischen Nationalrepubliken erfolgte stets nach demselben Schema – Bildung sowjetischer Republiken, die sich unter seinem strengen Patronat befanden, und Berufung von fügsamen Regierungen, die von vertrauenswürdigen Bolschewisten besetzt waren. Nur einen geringen Anteil hatten daran bodenständige Sozialdemokraten und Kommunisten, denen meistens nur die Bildungs- und Kulturreisorte zufielen. Die Sowjetrepubliken spielten die Rolle von Quasi-Staaten und realisierten voll und ganz das politische und ideologische Projekt Sowjetrußlands. 1922 bildeten sie auf Grundlage des Föderationsprinzips die Union der Sozialistischen Sowjetrepubliken (UdSSR). Einige Jahre später endete die von oben gesteuerte Nationalisierungspolitik (*Korenisazija*) in diesen Republiken mit brutalen Repressionen, und es begann die Periode der Russifizierung.

Die militärischen Niederlagen, die Österreich-Ungarn gegen Ende des Ersten Weltkriegs erlitt, beschleunigten den Zerfall der multinationalen Habsburgermonarchie. Das Manifest Kaiser Karls I. vom 16. Oktober 1918 „An meine getreuen österreichischen Völker“, in dem der Kaiser die Entstehung eines Bundesstaates ankündigte, kam zu spät. Die die Monarchie bewohnenden Nationen strebten nach Selbstständigkeit: Im Oktober 1918 verkündeten die Tschechen in Prag die Entstehung der Tschechoslowakischen Republik, in Galizien konstituierte sich die Polnische Liquidationskommission mit dem Ziel, die österreichische Verwaltung auf diesem Gebiet zu aufzuheben und die polnische einzuführen. Am 29. Oktober wurde in Zagreb die Trennung der von den Südslawen bewohnten Gebiete von der Monarchie und die Bildung eines gemeinsamen Staates mit Serbien, das bereits seit 1878 unabhängig war, verkündet. Auf diese Weise entstand der Staat der Serben, Kroaten und Slowenen. Auf das Manifest

des Kaisers antworteten zunächst die galizischen Ukrainer positiv. Mitte Oktober konstituierte sich in Lwiw der Ukrainische Nationalrat, der die Entstehung der Westukrainischen Volksrepublik als eines Bundesstaates in den Grenzen Österreich-Ungarns und am 1. November 1918 die Unabhängigkeit verkündete. Einige Monate später, am 22. Januar 1919 kam es in Kiew zur Unterzeichnung eines eher symbolischen als realen Vereinigungsaktes zwischen der Westukrainischen und der Ukrainischen Volksrepublik. Ende Oktober 1918 beschlossen über 200 deutschsprachige Abgeordnete des österreichischen Parlaments die Entstehung des österreichischen Staates und am 12. November wurde die Republik Deutschösterreich ausgerufen. Der Zerfall der Habsburgermonarchie wurde durch die Verkündung der Gründung der Ungarischen Volksrepublik am 16. November 1918 besiegelt. Sie überdauerte nur einige Monate. Im März 1919 wurde die ebenso kurzlebige Ungarische Räterepublik, und ein Jahr später das Königreich Ungarn proklamiert, mit dem bis zum Ausbruch des Zweiten Weltkriegs die Stabilisierung der Staatsmacht zurückkehrte.

Der verlorene Krieg verursachte wesentliche soziale und politische Wandlungen auch auf dem Gebiet Deutschlands. Anfang November 1918 löste der Kieler Matrosenaufstand die Novemberrevolution aus, die zur Abdankung des Kaisers Wilhelm II. und Entstehung einer Republik führte, die in die Historiographie als „Weimarer Republik“ einging. Ähnlich wie Russland und Österreich-Ungarn verzeichnete auch Deutschland am Ende des Krieges territoriale Verluste zugunsten seiner Nachbarn – Frankreichs und Polens.

Nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg und den Veränderungen, die im Verlauf einiger Revolutionen erfolgt waren, erfuhr die politische Karte Europas im Verhältnis zu der Zeit vor August 1914 eine vollständige Umgestaltung.¹ Gemeißelt wurde sie nicht nur als Resultat diplomatischer Strategien und Volksabstimmungen, sondern auch mit Waffentaten, denn die territorialen Ansprüche der Regierungen der sich neu bildenden Staaten kreuzten sich mehrfach und führten zu Konflikten. Das neue Kräfteverhältnis wurde in Europa durch den Versailler Vertrag, die den Ersten Weltkrieg beendenden bilateralen Verträge und den Vertrag von Riga bestimmt. Das letztgenannte Abkommen war eine Folge des polnisch-bolschewistischen Krieges, der von Anfang Januar 1919 bis zum Herbst 1920, bis zur Unterzeichnung des später am 18. März 1921 in Riga bestätigten Präliminärvertrags, geführt wurde. Der zwischen Polen, Sowjetrussland und der mit Sowjetrussland eng verbundenen Ukrainischen Sowjetrepublik ausgehandelte Vertrag betraf den Verlauf der Grenze zwischen diesen Staaten. Polen brach das im April 1920 mit der Ukrainischen Volksrepublik geschlossene Bündnis und erkannte die Existenz der Ukrainischen und der Belarussischen Sowjetrepublik an. Vor der Konferenz von Riga wurden bilaterale Verträge geschlossen, die sich

1 Siehe Abb. 1 und 2 am Ende des Vorworts.

auf die Abgrenzung zwischen Sowjetrussland und den einzelnen baltischen Staaten bezogen.

Die Konferenz von Riga und die diesen Akt bestätigende Botschafterkonferenz im Jahr 1923 zerstörten endgültig die Hoffnungen der belarussischen und ukrainischen Eliten auf Erlangung staatlicher Selbstständigkeit. Ihre Wohngebiete gehörten nun zu Polen und den Sowjetrepubliken – der Ukrainischen und Belarussischen. Beinahe alle ukrainischen und belarussischen Parteien setzten sich die Vereinigung der sogenannten ethnischen Gebiete zum Ziel. Die Besetzung von Vilnius durch die Polen und das Ergebnis der Rigaer Konferenz bewirkten auch eine Annäherung zwischen der Regierung der Litauischen Republik und der Regierung der Belarussischen Volksrepublik (die in Kaunas Zuflucht fand). Sie gingen ein Bündnis ein, das gegen Polen und Sowjetrussland gerichtet war, und veranlassten viele Sabotageaktivitäten im Grenzland zwischen Polen und der Belarussischen Sozialistischen Sowjetrepublik. Nachdem die polnischen Truppen die Stadt Vilnius und die sich zu diesem Zeitpunkt unter der Verwaltung der litauischen Regierung befindende Region Vilnius besetzt hatten, entstand der Mittellitauen genannte Quasi-Staat, der sich jedoch als ein ephemeres Gebilde erwies. 1922 wurde er abgeschafft und sein Gebiet in den polnischen Staat inkorporiert. Die Besetzung von Vilnius wurde zum Konfliktherd zwischen Polen und Litauen und verhinderte die Anknüpfung diplomatischer Beziehungen zwischen diesen Ländern (bis ins Jahr 1938 hinein). Die Rigaer Konferenz beendete den polnisch-bolschewistischen Krieg und erlaubte den Aufbau einer polnischen Verwaltung in den polnischen Ostgebieten. Sie ermöglichte auch einigen hunderttausend Flüchtlingen verschiedener Nationalitäten die Rückkehr aus Russland.

Ziel des veröffentlichten Forschungsbandes *Nationen und Grenzen. Bildung neuer Staaten im Ost- und Mitteleuropa nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg* ist es, die Entstehungsprozesse neuer Staatlichkeiten in Ost- und Zentraleuropa vorzustellen, die in sehr schwierigen, durch politische und soziale Wandlungen geprägten Bedingungen verliefen. Für die Analyse wurden einige Fälle gewählt: Polen, Litauen, Lettland, die Ukraine und Belarus. Der Schlüssel zu dieser Auswahl war die Entstehung neuer Staatlichkeiten nicht nur auf dem Gebiet der ehemaligen Imperien Russland, Deutschland und Österreich-Ungarn, sondern auch auf dem Territorium, das bis zu den Teilungen im 18. Jahrhundert die Republik Beider Nationen (*Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów*) bildete. Die Basis für das Nationalbewusstsein der Litauer, der Letten in Lettgallen, der Ukrainer und Belarussen wurde nicht nur in Opposition zur russischen Kultur herausgebildet, dafür war es auch erforderlich, sich der polnischen Kultur zu widersetzen. Die nächste Etappe des Nationalisierungsprozesses, die auf den Bestrebungen beruhte, eigene Staaten zu bilden und ihre Grenzen unter Bezugnahme auf ethnische und historische Kriterien zu bestimmen, enthüllte viele Ebenen für

Konflikte, kurzfristige Bündnisse und den diplomatischen Kampf auf der internationalen Bühne. Die polnischen politischen Eliten sahen sich also der Notwendigkeit gegenüber, nicht nur um die Grenzen und die territoriale Konsolidierung des Staates zu kämpfen, sondern auch ihr Verhältnis zu den Nationen zu klären, die einst zusammen mit den Polen in einem Staat gelebt hatten und nun den Weg der Emanzipation betraten. In Bezug auf diese Frage entwickelten sich zwei widerstreitende Tendenzen – die eine zielte auf Zusammenarbeit und Bildung einer Föderation unter der Hegemonie Polens ab (polnische Sozialisten), die zweite dagegen darauf, Nationaltendenzen zu ignorieren und unmittelbare Verhandlungen mit Russland zu führen, was sich aus den Programmgrundsätzen der rechten polnischen Nationaldemokratie ergab. Der Aufbau der Strukturen neuer Staaten hing auch von der Kraft und Hartnäckigkeit Sowjetrusslands ab, das sich nicht nur die innere Transformation des eigenen Staates und die Rückkehr auf die Vorkriegsterritorien zum Ziel setzte, sondern sich auch bemühte, die Ideologie des Internationalismus und Kommunismus in den Westen Europas zu tragen. Dieser Vormarsch wurde u. a. durch Unabhängigkeitsbestrebungen nationaler Eliten verhindert.

Der vorliegende Aufsatzband macht es sich zur Aufgabe, die Ergebnisse der Forschungstätigkeit der Geschichtswissenschaftler vom Institut für Geschichte und Archivkunde der Nikolaus-Kopernikus-Universität in Toruń und den Forschungszentren im Ausland vorzustellen, die den Bereich politischer und nationalitätsbezogener Wandlungen sowie der Entstehung neuer Staatlichkeiten auf dem Gebiet Ost- und Zentraleuropas in den Jahren 1917–1921 betreffen. Das Thema ist von herausragender Bedeutung für das Verständnis gegenseitiger Beziehungen zwischen den Staaten im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert und der politischen Situation in dieser Region Europas. Den Kreis polnischer Historiker repräsentieren: Dr. Ilona Zaleska, deren Forschungsschwerpunkt der polnische politische Gedanke des 19. und des Anfangs des 20. Jahrhunderts ist; Univ.-Prof. Dr. Krzysztof Kania, der sich mit der Geschichte der Diplomatie Polens und der polnisch-britischen Verhältnisse beschäftigt; Univ.-Prof. Dr. Jarosław Centek, ein Spezialist für Militärgeschichte des Ersten Weltkriegs, Univ.-Prof. Dr. Dorota Michaluk, die nationalitätsbezogene und politische Wandlungen in Osteuropa, insbesondere in Belarus in der 1. Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts untersucht, sowie Univ.-Prof. Dr. Maciej Krotofil, ein Experte in Fragen der politischen und militärischen Geschichte der Ukraine im 20. Jahrhundert. Am Projekt nahmen teil: Prof. Dr. Ihor Sribnyak von der Borys-Hrintschenko-Universität Kiew, der die Geschichte der „ukrainischen Revolution“ der Jahre 1917–1923 und die ukrainische politische und militärische Emigration in der Zwischenkriegszeit untersucht; Dr. Maksym Potapenko von der Staatlichen Mykola-Gogol-Universität Nischyn, ein Kenner der Geschichte der polnisch-ukrainischen Verhältnisse und der Problemstellungen, die die polnische Minderheit in der Dnepr-Ukraine in

den Jahren 1917–1918 betreffen; Dr. Kęstutis Kilinskas von der Universität Vilnius, ein Forscher der litauischen Militärgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts und der Formierung der Staatsstrukturen der Litauischen Republik nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg; Dr. Tomas Balkelis vom Institut für Geschichte Litauens, dessen Forschungsschwerpunkte die Geschichte der Emigration aus Litauen im 20. Jahrhundert und die zur Entstehung der modernen litauischen Staatlichkeit im 20. Jahrhundert führenden Prozesse bilden; Dr. Tomasz Błaszczak von der Vytautas-Magnus-Universität in Kaunas, der sich mit der Geschichte der nationalen Minderheiten in Litauen beschäftigt; Prof. Dr. Ēriks Jēkabsons von der Universität Lettlands – ein Experte im Bereich der politischen und militärischen Geschichte des Lettland des 20. Jahrhundert – und Dr. Evgeniya Nazarova von der Russischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, die die politische Geschichte Lettlands im 20. Jahrhundert untersucht.

Wir hoffen, dass die in diesem Band dargestellten Problemfelder auf das Interesse der Leserinnen und Leser stoßen und es ihnen erlauben, diejenigen Prozesse besser kennenzulernen, die nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg zur Formierung der neuen politischen Karte Ost- und Zentraleuropas beigetragen haben. Wir glauben ferner, dass die einzelnen Kapitel, die von Geschichtswissenschaftlern verfasst worden sind, die die dargestellten Phänomene bereits seit vielen Jahren untersuchen, es ermöglichen, viele komplizierte Geschichtsaspekte zu verstehen, die in gewissem Maße bis heute Einfluss auf Vorstellungen und Handlungsweisen in diesem Teil des europäischen Kontinents haben. Obwohl nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg ein neues Kräfteverhältnis mit der UdSSR als Hegemon etabliert wurde, brachte der Zerfall dieses Imperiums in den Jahren 1987–1991 die immer noch vorhandenen, starken Tendenzen zur Bildung unabhängiger Staaten ans Tageslicht. Die heutige Position dieser Staaten wurde bis zu einem gewissen Grad auch durch die aus der Zwischenkriegszeit bewahrte Staatstradition bedingt.

Der vorliegende Studienband betrifft ein europäisches Gebiet, das im Laufe des letzten Jahrhunderts mehrere Verschiebungen der Staatsgrenzen erfuhr. Dies hatte die Herausbildung verschiedener Schreibweisen der geographischen Namen zur Folge, die von den Autorinnen und Autoren je nach ihrem Herkunftsland in einer abweichenden Form gebraucht werden. Um diesem Phänomen gerecht zu werden, entschieden wir uns, die Ortsnamen im Einklang mit den aktuellen Staatsgrenzen zu verwenden und gelegentlich auch andere Namensvarianten in Klammern zu vermerken. Bedenken der Herausgeber weckte auch die Wiedergabe mancher Personennamen. Auch in diesem Fall haben wir uns darum bemüht, die originale Schreibung zu berücksichtigen (nur bei einigen Personen wurden mehrere Notationsvarianten angegeben). Das kyrillische Alphabet ersetzten wir bei Personen aus dem russischen und ukrainischen Kulturraum durch die englischsprachige Transkription. Eine Ausnahme bilden be-

larussische Namen, die wir im Einklang mit dem belarussischen lateinischen Alphabet wiedergeben. Dies ist insofern berechtigt, weil diese Schriftart bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg parallel zur kyrillischen für die Aufzeichnung der belarussischen Sprache verwendet wurde.

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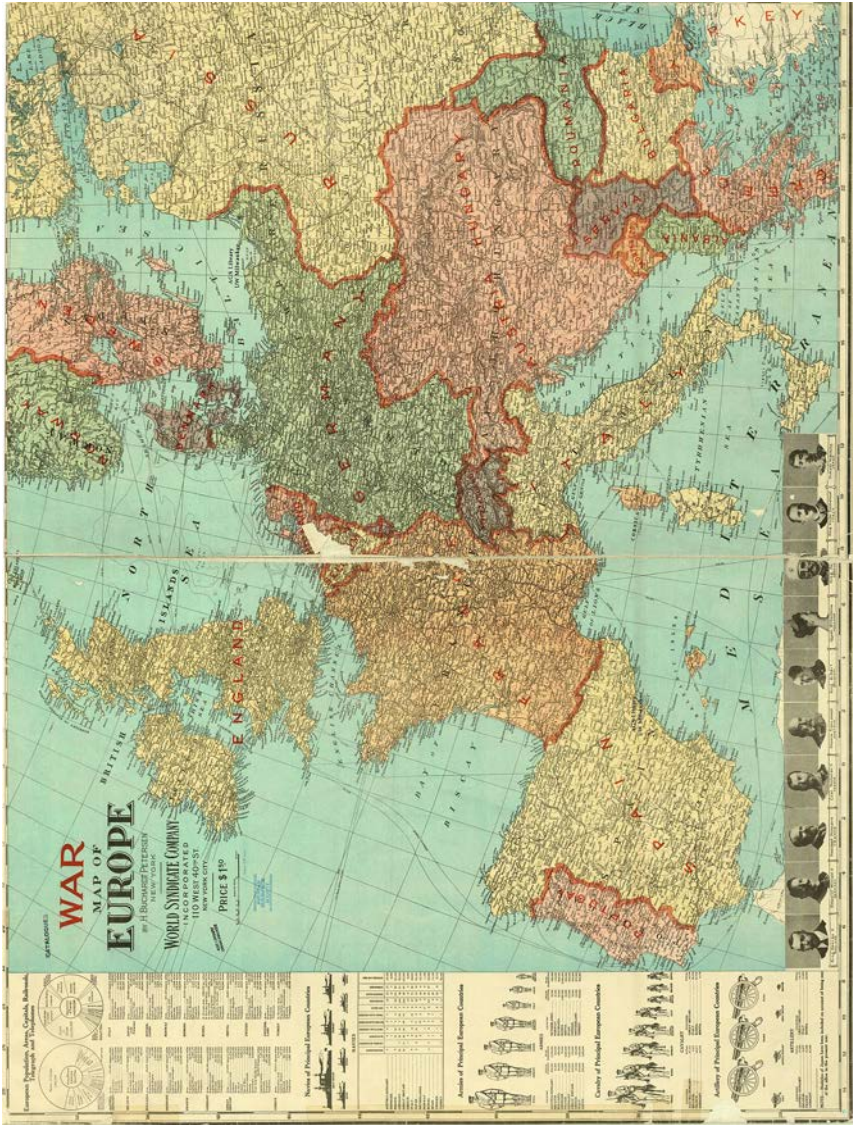


Abb. 1. War map of Europe [Kriegskarte von Europa] von H. Buchardt Petersen, 1914, A. R. Ohman Map Co., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries.



Abb. 2. Bacon's standard map of Europe [Bacon's Standard-Karte von Europa], 1923, von Weber Costello Co., Library of Congress, Geography & Map Division, No. g5700.ct001973.

Federation or Incorporation? Polish Political Parties Towards the Conception of the Shape of the Eastern Border in the Period Before the Outbreak of World War I

Abstract

The projections of the eastern border of the future Polish state were determined by the tradition of the pre-partition Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (*Rzeczpospolita*). In the political programmes of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the idea of regaining independence coexisted with the idea to restore the state within the pre-partition borders. The progress of nation-building processes among the peoples living in the eastern territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth gave rise to the need for a programme of compromise as regards the eastern border. It seemed that the federation programme, which was characteristic of socialist circles, would be such a compromise. For the political right-wing, represented by the national democrats, the ethnic factor became increasingly significant in addition to historical traditions. In the course of World War I, the conception of incorporation was adopted as the eastern territorial programme in this environment. With many differences that divided both positions, they were united by the desire to incorporate the so-called eastern borderlands within the borders of the future Polish state.

Keywords: federation; incorporation; Polish political parties; eastern border; “Taken Lands”

Introduction

Throughout the 19th century, the question of Poland’s independence was positioned at the centre of political discourse. The issue of the territorial scope of the future Polish state was a significant component of the debates held at that time. Particular importance was attached to the question of the affinity of the eastern lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth taken over by Russia (the so-called “Taken Lands”),¹ which were part of the Russian partition. The reality of

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1 The coinage of the term “Taken Lands” dates back to the time of the Duchy of Warsaw when it became popularised after the Congress of Vienna. It entered the language of the Polish

the partition (the policy of Russification aimed at eradicating Polishness from these territories) and the nation-building processes emerging among the Lithuanians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians living in this area affected the projections of the eastern border prevalent in Polish political circles. Over time, two visions characteristic of the major political orientations crystallized. The socialists advocated a federation programme, whereas the national camp, represented by the National Democratic Party (*Narodowa Demokracja*, also known as *Endecja*), preferred a solution characterised by incorporationism (annexationism), which ultimately prevailed.

The Conception of the Eastern Border in Polish Political Thought Until 1864

The post-partition era saw the consolidation of the myth of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth within its former borders.² In the programmes of various political orientations, both leftist and rightist, the borders of the future independent Poland were anticipated to be no different than during the pre-partition times. The year 1772, i.e., the first partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, was an important point of reference in the views on the territorial extent of the Polish state in the policy and ideological papers of the era.³ Strongly rooted in the Polish awareness, the idea of rebuilding the country within the pre-partition borders could already be seen in the Duchy of Warsaw era, but it became fully consolidated after the fall of the November Uprising.⁴ It was present in speeches, proclamations and programmes formulated by the political environment of the Great Emigration,⁵ such as the Parisian ideological declaration

19th-century journalism thanks to Maurycy Mochnacki. The lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and of Ruthenia were also often mentioned. In the 19th century, the Russian official nomenclature for these territories used the term western borderlands (*zapadnye okrainy*) with a division into: Northwestern Krai (Lithuania, Belarus), Southwestern Krai (Kyiv Land), also referred to as Little Russia. In the 20th century, the terms Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine were used, with the reservation that Lithuania had a twofold meaning – ethnic Lithuania and historical Lithuania and Belarus, i.e. the former lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania after 1569. The term “Borderlands” / “Eastern Borderlands” also circulated. Strongly ideological, it suggested peripherality and expressed the Poles’ claims to these territories, which were unacceptable to the peoples and the subsequent states that were forming there. See Chwalba 2001, pp. 202–203; Beauvois 1994, p. 94; Wapiński 1994 (1), pp. 42, 44.

2 Cf. Wapiński 1994 (2), pp. 77–92.

3 The need to rebuild Poland within its pre-partition borders was also put forward by 19th-century Polish geographers. In the early 20th century, however, ethnicity began to play an increasingly important role in their findings, see Eberhardt 2004, pp. 37–73.

4 Wapiński 1994 (2), pp. 82–84. See also Getka-Kenig 2017, pp. 183–205.

5 Kalemka 1997, pp. 63–65.

(*To the Polish Warriors* of 25 December 1831) of the Polish National Committee led by Joachim Lelewel, which was concluded with a sentence: “Poland of the Jagiellonian era, independent, free – or doomed to eternal demise. These are the words we live by!”⁶ In the policy papers of the most important organisation of the emigration left-wing, the Polish Democratic Society (*Towarzystwo Demokratyczne Polskie*), issued a few years later (*Great Manifesto*, 4 December 1836), the territory of Poland was imagined to extend “from the Oder and the Carpathian Mountains as far as the Dnieper and the Dvina, from the Baltic to the Black Sea.”⁷ The validity of this territorial programme, which encompassed “Lithuania” and “Ruthenia”,⁸ was confirmed by Ludwik Mierosławski, a member of the party’s governing body, in a speech delivered during the celebrations organized in exile to mark the fifteenth anniversary of the outbreak of the November Uprising (1830). He stated that “ideally, Poland will be restored within the borders of 1772, because this is the amount of space and air that the country needs in order for its existence to be consolidated and protected against all threats and incidents [...]”.⁹ The idea of the *Rzeczpospolita* within the pre-partition borders was also close to the circles of prince Adam Czartoryski, who was a representative of the emigrational right-wing. In his speech given on the same occasion, Czartoryski emphasized the shared interests of Poles and the inhabitants of the eastern lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. These were epitomised by the Russian oppression and a desire for freedom. Czartoryski called for mutual respect and solidarity:

So let us respect their rituals, their customs, their native speech, which is so similar to ours. [...] The Ruthenians, like the Lithuanians, are our brothers and one people, oppressed by a foreign yoke alike; there are no differences here, there is one cause – there should be one brotherhood and one whole-hearted striving for the liberation of

6 “Polska Jagiellonów, niepodległa, wolna – lub wieczna śmierć. Oto jest hasło nasze!” [all translations of quotations by Tomasz Leszczuk], Łukaszewicz / Lewandowski 1961, p. 10.

7 “[...] od Odry i Karpat aż poza Dniepr i Dźwinę, od Bałtyckiego do Czarnego Morza”, Juchnowski / Kalicki 1999, p. 146.

8 “Lithuania” in historical meaning, “Ruthenia” meant Ukraine. In the 19th century, the term “Ruthenians” was in common use to refer to the Ukrainian population in Galicia. The term “Ukrainian” was not used willingly as it was attributed to the participants of the national movement. The term “Ukraine” instead of “Ruthenia”, “Ukrainians” instead of “Ruthenians” and the term “Ukrainian nation” were introduced and popularized at the turn of the 20th century by Mykhailo Hrushevsky, historian and politician, one of the most prominent representatives of the Ukrainian elite who played a key role in building the Ukrainian national idea and the historical identity of the Ukrainian people. He argued for the separateness of the Ukrainian people in opposition to the Russians, see Lysiak-Rudnytsky 1987, pp. 97–98, 137, 338, 340, 381–382.

9 “[...] ideałem jest dla nas Polska w granicach 1772 roku, bo tyle potrzeba temu państwu przestrzeni i powietrza, ażeby był jego ugruntowany i zaręczony został wobec wszelkich zagrożeń i przypadków [...]”, Łukaszewicz / Lewandowski 1961, p. 540.

all. For centuries, we have been intermingling [...], history has united these families into one people; [...] shared suffering, shared interests, and one hope for freedom in concerted heroism should unite us now more closely than ever.¹⁰

It is worth noting that the quoted statement referred to thinking in terms of one nation, despite the noticeable differences between the Poles and the inhabitants of the Russian partition with regard to religion, language, and customs. Therefore, one can talk about another myth that is equally well established in the consciousness of representatives of different political options – the myth of a unified and indivisible Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.¹¹

The unity of the nation and emphasising the shared goals of Poland, Lithuania, and Ruthenia as part of a joint struggle for liberation were also expressed in the documents from the period of the January Uprising. They were referred to in the proclamations of the National Government, which presented a vision of the future *Rzeczpospolita* as a federation consisting of three equal components: the Crown, Lithuania, and Ruthenia.¹² Similar overtones can be found in the journalism of the post-war emigration. The emigration celebrations of the 300th anniversary of the Union of Lublin in 1869 provided an opportunity to promote this idea. The main organ of the democratic Union of Polish Emigration (*Zjednoczenie Emigracji Polskiej*), *Niepodległość*, published an article entitled *Polska-Litwa-Ruś* [*Poland-Lithuania-Ruthenia*], which said:

Let us not be frightened by the borders between the language of Ruthenia and the language of Kraków, between the language of Lithuania and the language of Masuria; let us not be disturbed by the differences of speech, faith, customs, and descent, which have grown lavishly on the Polish soil: these are but varied and, through their diversity, harmonious overtones and colours of one great Spirit of the Polish Nation, unfurling from sea to sea, from the Carpathians beyond the Dvina.¹³

10 “Szanujemy więc ich obrządki, ich obyczaje, ich mowę oryginalną, tak zbliżoną do naszej. [...] Rusini, jak i Litwini, są naszymi braćmi i jednym narodem, równie jęczą pod obcym jarzmem; nie ma tu różności, wspólna jest sprawa, jedno powinno być bratnie czucie i jedna całymi siłami dążność, oswobodzenia zarówno wszystkich. Nasze dzieje od wieków, zmieszały nas [...], połączyły te rody w jeden lud; [...] wspólne cierpienia, wspólny interes i jedna nadzieja wolności w zgodnym bohaterstwie powinny łączyć nas teraz ściślej jak kiedykolwiek.” *Mowy xięcia Adama Czartoryskiego* 1847, pp. 93–94.

11 Eberhardt 2015, p. 10.

12 Biblioteka Narodowa: sig. DŹS IA 4f Cim: *Manifest Rządu*; *ibid.*: *Do braci Litwinów*; *ibid.*: *Do ludu Polski, Litwy i Rusi*. See also Boruta 2002, pp. 30–33.

13 “Niech nas nie lękają granice mowy ruskiej z mową krakowską, mowy litewskiej z mową mazurską; niech nas nie niepokoją bujnie na polskiej ziemi narosłe różnice języka, wiary obyczajów, pochodzenia: są to tylko rozmaite i przez różnaitość zgodne, tony i barwy jednego, od morza do morza, od Karpat poza Dźwinę powiewającego, wielkiego Ducha Narodu Polskiego.” *Polska-Litwa-Ruś* 1869, p. 1.

These pronouncements were accompanied by a reference to the principles of universal brotherhood, freedom and equality, as well as the slogan “free with the free, equal with the equal”,¹⁴ which sounded tellingly in the context of the anniversary. In the period after the uprising some individual voices were heard questioning the concept of the borders of 1772 and Poland’s historical claim to the lands in the east. One of the leading democrats of the era following the January Uprising, Jarosław Dąbrowski, put forward the principle of self-determination of nations, which he applied to the Ruthenians inhabiting the territories of the Austrian and Russian partitions.¹⁵ He argued that the Ruthenians could not be denied their right to independence, denied recognition of their nationality, as this risked bringing them under Russian influence.¹⁶ Dąbrowski also pointed to the political divisions existing within the emigration at the time with regard to the future borders of Poland. He noticed the clash between two political ideas – that of the state and that of society; the idea of a Poland within the 1772 borders, bound together by strong centralization, and that of a Poland based on a sense of Polishness and on the development of provincial and individual liberties. This second point of view was supposed to be appropriate for the younger generation of expatriates.¹⁷ Dąbrowski envisaged three possible variants for the arrangement of Polish-Ukrainian relations in the future: “merging of Ruthenia with Poland into a unified whole, the absorption of Ruthenia by Moscow, and the creation of an autonomous Ruthenian country”.¹⁸ He considered the first solution, which could be implemented after Poland regained its independence, to be the most advantageous.¹⁹ “The relationship between Poland and Ruthenia can easily be determined by an agreement between both nations, and a future union, established on the basis of freedom, would tie Ruthenia to Poland not only by political ties but also by feelings of gratitude and brotherhood”,²⁰ Dąbrowski argued.

14 The idea of “free with the free, equal with the equal” is a symbol of the Union of Lublin of 1569. Nearly a century later it was referred to in the text of the Treaty of Hadiach (1658), which provided for the transformation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth into a union of three legal entities (states) based on the principle of equivalence, i. e. the Crown, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Grand Duchy of Ruthenia. However, the attempts to put its provisions into practice failed. This idea was later referred to by advocates of the federation programme. See Stępiak 2020, p. 466–467.

15 Grünberg 1971, p. 38.

16 Dąbrowski 1960, p. 79.

17 *Ibid.*, pp. 87–88.

18 “[...] zlanie się Rusi z Polską w całość jednolitą, pochłonięcie Rusi przez Moskwę i utworzenie z Rusi kraju samoistnego”, *ibid.*, pp. 89.

19 *Ibid.*

20 “Stosunek między Polską i Rusią może być łatwo określony przez porozumienie się obydwóch narodów, a przyszły związek, powstały na podstawie wolności, przywiązałby Ruś do Polski nie tylko więzami politycznymi, lecz i uczuciem wdzięczności i braterstwa”, *ibid.*, p. 93.

Towards the Idea of a Nation and a Federal State

The failure of the January Uprising in 1864 was an important mark for changing the thinking about the nation. It inaugurated a process of transition from the concept of a historical nation characterized by multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity, to the concept of an ethnic nation. However, adopting the ethnic criterion in defining a nation, which was characteristic of nationalist movements, did not exclude the significance of the historical factor.²¹ At the same time, the second half of the 19th century saw an intensification of nation-building processes that encompassed the nations inhabiting the eastern lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians). They did not proceed at an equal pace. The national consciousness was developing the fastest and the strongest among the Lithuanians and Ukrainians. The process was the weakest, on the other hand, among the Belarusians.²² The changing reality had to be taken into account when considering the shape of the territory of the future Polish state. The idea of a unified but multi-ethnic Polish nation, characteristic of the first half of the 19th century, was soon superseded by the idea of a federal state and nation. The proposed formula was to be a compromise solution that would reconcile the still vital idea of restoring the former *Rzeczpospolita* with the increasingly visible aspirations of the nations that once inhabited it.²³ One of the great proponents of this idea was the doyen of Polish socialism, Bolesław Limanowski, who grew up in the cultural borderland of Latvia and Belarus in a Polish family. He was born in the village of Podgórze on the Dvina River on the edge of Latgale and Vitebsk, located on the eastern borderlands of the former *Rzeczpospolita*. Ideological considerations, as well as his youth spent in a multi-ethnic environment, influenced his idea of the territorial scope of the future *Rzeczpospolita* and the national relations within the state.²⁴ Limanowski advocated the rebirth of the *Rzeczpospolita* within its former historical borders, preferring to arrange relations with the constituent nations on the basis of democratic federalism. He was open about the fact that his ideal solution was the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth within the borders of a renewed Union of Lublin. Limanowski's federation programme assumed voluntarism, where the final decision as to the federation with Poland was to be made by the peoples themselves. He was fascinated by the Swiss federation model and hoped for the

21 Nowak 2014, pp. 369–390.

22 The history of the Lithuanian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian national movements and the formation of national identity for Lithuanians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians has been the subject of some interesting studies, see Łossowski 1965; Kaubrys 2000; Hrycak 2000; Gricak 2006; Tereškovič 2004.

23 Wapiński 1994 (2), p. 86.

24 Śliwa 1994, p. 140.

possibility of applying a similar solution in Poland. In the late 1870s, Limanowski's vision was criticized by the Ukrainian socialist Mykhailo Drahomanov, which did not bode well for the future.²⁵ However, it managed to penetrate permanently into the Polish socialist thought of independence. Although it should be noted that not everyone in his political circle at the time was ready to accept it. Some discrepancies were revealed in the discussion regarding the programme, which accompanied the establishment of the Socialist Association of the Polish People (*Socjalistyczne Stowarzyszenie Lud Polski*), established in Geneva in 1881, which Limanowski co-founded with the future ideologist of the national-democratic movement, Zygmunt Balicki. The dispute concerned the choice between historical and ethnic criteria in shaping the borders of future Poland. Limanowski advocated the first option, which he wrote about in his memoirs:

[...] Balicki [...] proposed to name the new organization “Polish People”. Although this was not entirely in line with how I viewed things, because I had the former Commonwealth in mind, and therefore not only the Polish but also other peoples, I did not insist on changing the name. It was a different matter when the topic of Poland's borders was broached. I was adamant as regards the borders of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, based on the Swiss federalist model, giving complete independence to each nation; Balicki opted for an ethnographic Poland. In order for the invaders' yoke to be shaken off – I argued – it is necessary to unite all possible forces of the *Rzeczpospolita*, to engage all its peoples and, for that alone, not to outline Poland's borders today. Once the yoke has been shaken off, the nations themselves will decide by popular vote whether the union is to be resumed or whether each people will form a separate state. [...] After a long and contentious deliberation, a compromise was reached in a document on independent national entity within the borders of voluntary gravity.²⁶

25 Drahomanov was a federalist who saw Ukraine's future in an equal federal union with Russia, modelled on Switzerland or the United States. He combined socialist ideas with the idea of national sovereignty of Ukrainians. However, he rejected the idea of restoring Poland within its pre-partition borders and recreating the Union of Lublin in any form. He accused Polish socialists of planning to denationalise borderland peoples. He presented his views in the socialist magazine *Hromada* published in Geneva. Limanowski responded to Drahomanov's allegations in a special polemical letter. See Żychowski 1971, pp. 196–199; Perl 1932, pp. 409–410; Subtelny 2009, pp. 284–285, 328; Lysiak-Rudnytsky 1987, pp. 243–248.

26 “[...] Balicki [...] zaproponował dać nowej organizacji nazwę “Lud Polski”. Aczkolwiek niezupełnie to odpowiadało memu widzeniu rzeczy, bo miałem na myśli dawną Rzeczpospolitą, a więc nie tylko lud polski, lecz i inne ludy, atoli nie upierałem się o nazwę. Inna rzecz, kiedy przyszło mówić o granicach Polski. Stałem twardo przy granicach dawnej Rzeczpospolitej, urządzonej na wzór Szwajcarii federalistycznie, dającej zupełną samodzielność każdemu narodowi; Balicki był za Polską etnograficzną. Dla zrzucenia jarzma najeźdźczego – mówiłem – konieczne jest zespolenie wszystkich możliwych sił Rzeczpospolitej, poruszyć jej wszystkie ludy i dla tego już samego nie wyodrębnić dzisiaj Polski. Po zrzuceniu jarzma same narody przez powszechne głosowanie postanowią, czy ma być wznowiona unia, czy też każdy naród odrębne dla siebie państwo utworzy. [...] Po długiej spornej rozprawie przyszło

This was also the phrase that appeared in the Association's programme proclamation issued in August 1881.²⁷ The polemic presented above demonstrated the increasing importance of the ethnic criterion in political discourse on the country's borders. The position presented in this matter by Bolesław Wysłouch – one of the organizers of the peasant movement in Galicia, may be considered to be its continuation. In Stanisław Kozicki's opinion, Wysłouch "took the ethnographic stance – he argued that the Polish state must be ethnically homogeneous, and connected with states of related nations only by a union".²⁸ Wysłouch was the author of *Szkice Programowe [Programme Outlines]* published in the *Przegląd Społeczny [Social Review]* in 1886, which can be considered the first programme of the peasant movement. The author departed from traditional thinking about Poland's future borders, where history ruled and ethnic identities were ignored:

A Polish nobleman, when dreaming of the homeland, could only think of the borders from 1772. Across the entire area from Gdańsk to the Dvina and Dnieper the nobility in their villages were all the same. The nobility is tantamount to the nation; where a nobleman was Polish, the country was considered to be Poland. This did not apply to the common people. If a peasant was different in Poznań and in Ukraine or near Vitebsk – it did not matter at all. Because the peasant was not accounted for to take part in political life and had only one strictly defined task in life: to work the land for someone else's benefit. What could then any ethnographic features, like peasants' language or race, mean in creating a national ideal! And to this day serious opinion makers in our country only shrug their shoulders at the mention of ethnography, or ethnographic borders! The tribal differences between Poland, Ruthenia, and Lithuania²⁹ were given the meaning of provincial varieties; the Little Russian, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, and Latvian languages were, in the opinion of our patriots, the same Polish folk dialects as the Masurian dialect or the language of the Beskid highlanders. And it was history that ruled; historical tradition was the decisive factor, but in many cases it was a negation of the right to nationhood. Nobody knew that, for example, the Polish border of 1772 divided the Ukrainian people in two, and that the rebuilding of Poland would mean division for Ukraine. On the other hand, no-one knew that the Polish people in Silesia and Prussian Masuria remained outside this border too [...].³⁰

do pewnej kompromisowej redakcji o "samoistnym bycie narodowym w granicach dobrowolnego ciężenia." Limanowski 1958, pp. 268–269.

27 Ibid., p. 269; Janowska / Jędruszczak 1981, p. 49.

28 "[...] stał na gruncie etnograficznym, dowodził, że państwo polskie musi być narodojednolite, a z państwami narodów pokrewnych mogłoby być związane tylko na podstawach unii", Kozicki 2019, p. 44; Boruta 2002, pp. 47–48.

29 Ruthenia (Ukraine), Lithuania from the historical perspective, i. e. including the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania (ethnic Lithuania and Belarus).

30 "Że szlachcic polski, marząc o ojczyźnie, mógł myśleć tylko o granicach z 1772 roku. Na całym obszarze od Gdańska do Dźwiny i Dniepru siedziała po wioskach swoich ta sama, jednolita szlachta polska. A szlachta – to naród; gdzie szlachcic był Polakiem – tam tem samem kraj za polski uważano. Ludu w rachubę ideał ten nie brał. Że chłop był innym w Poznaniu, a innym na Ukrainie lub pod Witebskiem – w to nie wglądał on wcale. Bo chłop do życia politycznego

Wysłouch also did not accept the argumentation where, in support of Poland's claims to Lithuania and Ruthenia, a reference was made to the civilization merits that Poles had in these countries "as if cultural superiority were a sufficient basis for ruling of one nation over another", he wrote.³¹ He appealed for Polish democracy to revise its current position according to the principle: "The democrats in Ruthenia must be Ruthenians, in Latvia – Latvians". He declared respect for the right of "all peoples that have ever been part of the Polish state – to develop independently".³² He considered it harmful to strive for the expansion of Polishness at the expense of other peoples, which, in his opinion, could only lead to creating enemies in the future. He also condemned Polonisation claiming that it had no chance of ever being successful.³³ Instead, he considered it appropriate to strive for uniformity in Poland proper: "The unification of all parts of ethnographic Poland into a single whole – as the first point of our national programme, and the attainment of the most complete uniformity possible within these borders, as the most important task of our national work – these are the primary tasks of our programme as regards national identity", he wrote.³⁴ The above pronouncements seem original and visionary for their time. The idea of a national Poland, enclosed within ethnographic borders, meant giving up the eastern lands of the pre-partition *Rzeczpospolita*. Treating the borderland nations as separate and granting them the right to create their own statehood was difficult to accept in the political circles of the time, although Józef Karol Potocki, the editor

powołany nie był i miał jedno tylko ściśle określone zadanie w życiu: pracować na roli na cudzą korzyść. Cóż więc znaczyć mogły przy tworzeniu ideału narodowego jakieś cechy etnograficzne, język chłopski, jego rasa! I do dziś dnia poważni publicyści u nas wzruszają tylko ramionami na wspomnienie etnografii, lub etnograficznych granic! Różnicom plemiennym Polski, Rusi, Litwy nadawano znaczenie odmian prowincjonalnych; język małopolski, litewski, ukraiński, łotewski – były to w mniemaniu patriotów naszych takie same gwary ludowe polskie jak np. narzecze mazurskie lub język górali beskidowych. Natomiast panowała historia; rozstrzygała o wszystkim tradycja historyczna, która w wielu razach była negacją prawa narodowości. Tak nie widziano, np. że granica Polski z r. 1772 dzieli lud ukraiński na dwie części, że więc odbudowanie Polski było podziałem Ukrainy. Z drugiej strony nie widziano również, że poza tą granicą pozostaje lud polski na Śląsku i Mazurach pruskich [...]", Wysłouch 1886, pp. 399–400.

31 "[...] jak gdyby wyższość kultury była dostateczną podstawą panowania jednego narodu nad drugim", *ibid.*, p. 401.

32 "[...] wszelkich narodowości, które kiedykolwiek w skład państwa polskiego wchodziły – do samodzielnego rozwoju", *ibid.*

33 *Ibid.*

34 "Zjednoczenie wszystkich części Polski etnograficznej w jedną całość – jako punkt pierwszy naszego programu narodowego, a osiągnięcie w tych granicach możliwie najzupełniejszej jednolitości jako najważniejsze zadanie naszej pracy narodowej – oto pierwszorzędnne zadania naszej pracy narodowościowej strony naszego programu", *ibid.*, p. 403.

of the Warsaw weekly *Głos* [Voice], took a similar stance.³⁵ Limanowski, being in opposition to Wysłouch's views, recognized the superiority of history over ethnography:

[...] ethnography alone is not sufficient to account for the question of nationality [...]. Ethnography provides knowledge of nationality; but how to use this knowledge for creating the moral essence of a nation is taught by history. Without the historical key, it would be futile to try to explain certain national affinities on the basis of ethnographic features.³⁶

According to Limanowski, it was history that provided cohesion which became stronger than a linguistic or religious community.³⁷ According to Juliusz Bardach, "federalism was one of the basic elements of Limanowski's political views".³⁸ The vision of the future federation of Poland with the nations in the East based on the principle "free with the free, equal with the equal" was presented in his flagship work *Historia demokracji polskiej w epoce porozbiorowej* [History of Polish democracy in the post-partition era], where he wrote: "The future Polish-Lithuanian-Ruthenian *Rzeczpospolita* can only be federal. All in all, our ideal is *Rzeczpospolita* modelled on European republics, with free and independent national states."³⁹ In one of his later publications, Limanowski argued the legitimacy of such a relationship as follows: "In such an amalgamation, the Lithuanian-Polish-Belarusian Commonwealth could balance itself against the Russian and the German states."⁴⁰

35 Kizwalter 1999, pp. 292–293; Eberhardt 2004, pp. 65–67. See also Potocki 1887, p. 450. Potocki associated the creation of historical Poland with the negation of other nationalities with regard to their own development, the creation of internal and external enemies and, as a result, the inhibition of the development of the Polish nation.

36 "[...] sama etnografia nie wystarcza do wyjaśnienia kwestii narodowości [...]. Etnografia daje poznać materiał narodowościowy; ale w jaki sposób z tego materiału wyrabia się i wykształca moralna istota narodu, poucza historia. Bez klucza historycznego, daremnie byśmy siliłi się, na podstawie znamion etnograficznych, objaśnić sobie pewne powinowactwa narodowe." Limanowski 1886, p. 51.

37 Ibid., p. 52.

38 "[...] federalizm stanowił jeden z podstawowych elementów politycznego światopoglądu Limanowskiego", Bardach 1974, p. 488.

39 "Przyszła Rzeczpospolita polsko-litewsko-ruska może być tylko federalna. Wreszcie ideałem naszym jest Rzeczpospolita europejska z wolnymi i niepodległymi stanami narodowymi." Limanowski 1901, p. 467.

40 "W takim zespoleniu Rzeczpospolita litewsko-polsko-białoruska mogłaby się równoważyć z państwem rosyjskim i państwem niemieckim." Idem 1906, pp. 94–95.

Modern Political Parties and the Conception of the Eastern Border (Socialists, National Democrats, Liberals, Peasants' Parties)

It seems justified to reconstruct Bolesław Limanowski's views on the question of the borders of independent Poland, including his position on the arrangement of future relations with the nations inhabiting the eastern territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It was in the spirit of these ideas that the programme of the Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*, PPS) was formed.⁴¹ *Szkic programu Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej* [*The Draft Programme of the Polish Socialist Party*], adopted at the Paris congress in November 1892, declared "complete equality of nationalities within the *Rzeczpospolita* based on voluntary federation".⁴² Section 5 of the programme was devoted to the issue of Lithuania and Ruthenia. It was unquestionably accepted that the Polish Socialist Party should cover with its activity the provinces that had been connected with Poland in the past, and "in its relation to the existing Lithuanian and Ruthenian organizations, the party would be guided by the endeavour to create a united political force to fight the oppression weighing down on the country".⁴³ Coordinating the activity of socialists in the eastern areas of the former *Rzeczpospolita* to fight together against the invader under the aegis of the Polish Socialist Party can be seen as preparing the political ground for implementing the concept of federation in the future. Among the Polish socialists it was developed by Józef Piłsudski, Leon Wasilewski and Witold Jodko-Narkiewicz.⁴⁴ In 1900 it was referred to by one of the main theoreticians of the party, Kazimierz Kelles-Krauz. He assumed the struggle for independence of Poland and the nations inhabiting the former lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth against Russia, and then the voluntary choice to form a federation or not. He considered the following scenario: "in every likelihood, Lithuania and Latvia will form a single state with Poland, based on the principles of autonomy and guaranteeing completely

41 Bardach 1974, p. 488. According to Marian Żychowski, the *Draft Programme of the Polish Socialist Party* was, with minor corrections, consistent with Limanowski's views. The conception of a federalized independent Poland was borrowed from Limanowski's earlier publications. According to the historian, at that time Limanowski's views went much further, as they concerned the right of Lithuania and Ruthenia to self-determination of their own fate up to the point of secession, see Żychowski 1971, pp. 241–242.

42 "[...] całkowite równouprawnienie narodowości wchodzących w skład Rzeczypospolitej na zasadzie dobrowolnej federacji", Perl 1932, p. 431.

43 "[...] w stosunku swym do istniejących organizacji litewskich i rusińskich partia kierować się będzie usiłowaniem wytworzenia zjednoczonej siły politycznej w celu zwalczania ciężącego nad krajem ucisku", Wojciechowski 1938, p. 51.

44 Grünberg 1971, p. 116. The need to create separatist socialist parties in Lithuania and Russia was advocated in *Przedświt*. See *Przedświt* 1901/9, p. 328. See also Wasilewski 1908, pp. 247–248.

free development to nationalities, while the link between Ruthenia and Poland will be less intense”.⁴⁵ The editors of *Przedświt* [Dawn], the foreign organ of Polish Socialist Party, formulated their position in 1901. They wrote that: “We would be interested in a voluntary federal relation of both Lithuania and Ukraine with Poland. As far as Lithuania is concerned, we see no other form of independent existence for it than a close union with Poland, but with Ukraine we would probably be linked by less intense relations”.⁴⁶ On the pages of *Walka* [Combat], a magazine published by the Polish Socialist Party for Lithuania, Józef Piłsudski assumed two possible scenarios regarding the future state system in the eastern lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: “Whether it will break up into three or two quite separate, independent republics, or whether they will unite in some federal union – this is a question of the future which will probably be decided by the free and conscious working people of Poland, Lithuania and Ruthenia.”⁴⁷ An important document in the context of federal conceptions developed within the Polish Socialist Party was Piłsudski’s memorial submitted to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1904 in connection with the Russian-Japanese War (1904–1905). Piłsudski argued that Russia’s weakness lay in its multinational structure. One should therefore seek to break it up “into its main constituent parts and to liberate the countries incorporated into the empire by violence”.⁴⁸ The document was propagandistic in nature, but one should note the highlights that were characteristic of Piłsudski’s political thought, where Poland is seen as the main opposing force, able to attract other nationalities conquered by Russia, which could not play an independent role in this struggle. Piłsudski was referring here to the Latvians, Lithuanians, and Belarusians. In the memorial he alluded to the state tradition shared with Lithuanians and Belarusians within the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.⁴⁹

One has to agree here with Roman Wapiński that in the deliberations of politicians concerning future territorial projects in the east of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the North-Eastern Borderlands (historical Lith-

45 “[...] najprawdopodobniej Litwa i Łotwa utworzą z Polską jeden organizm państwowy, oparty na zasadach autonomii i zagwarantowania zupełnie swobodnego rozwoju narodowościom, z Rusią zaś połączy Polskę związek luźniejszy”, Kelles-Krauz 1900, p. 39.

46 “[...] pożądany byłby dla nas dowolnie federacyjny związek tak Litwy, jak i Ukrainy z Polską, co do Litwy, to dla niej wprost nie widzimy innej formy bytu samoistnego, jak tylko w związku ścisłym z Polską, ale z Ukrainą łączyłyby nas zapewne stosunki luźne”, *Przedświt* 1901/9, pp. 328–329.

47 “Czy rozpadnie się on na trzy lub dwie całkiem odrębne, niezależne republiki, czy połączą się one w jakiś związek federacyjny mniej lub więcej ścisły – to jest kwestia przyszłości, którą prawdopodobnie rozstrzygnie wolny i świadomy swych praw lud pracujący Polski, Litwy i Rusi.” Piłsudski 1937 (2), p. 223.

48 “[...] na główne części składowe i usamowolnienia przemocą wcielonych w skład imperium krajów”, *ibid.*, pp. 249–258.

49 *Idem* 1937 (1), pp. 249–258.

uania or Lithuania and Belarus, i.e. the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania after 1569) were of greater interest. They seemed to be closer than the South-Eastern Borderlands (i.e. Volhynia, Podolia, Ukraine).⁵⁰ It was evident from the quoted statements made by socialists that it was mainly with the former that the hopes for a closer political union were pinned upon.

The problem, however, lay in the lack of a positive response to the Polish federation plans from Lithuanian, Ukrainian and Belarusian political circles. Most of the Ukrainian parties formed in Dnieper Ukraine (Ukrainian lands that were administratively part of the so-called Southwestern Krai of the Russian Empire) in the early 20th century supported a federation programme, but related it to Russia. Under such a union, Ukraine would function on the basis of territorial autonomy.⁵¹ The postulate of “an independent democratic republic, consisting of Lithuania, Poland and other countries, united on the basis of a voluntary federation”⁵² was included in the programme of the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (*Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija*, LSDP) in 1896, but over time the idea of federation was removed from it and Lithuanian social democrats accepted the programme of autonomy of ethnographic Lithuania within the Russian state.⁵³ A certain support for the planned federation could have been provided by the Poles living in Lithuania, the so-called *krajowcy* (regionalists),⁵⁴ who had a positive take both on Poland’s role in the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Union of Lublin. Although they played a significant part in

50 Wapiński 1994 (3), p. 55.

51 Hrycak 2000, pp. 101–102.

52 “[...] samodzielnej Rzeczypospolitej demokratycznej, składającej się z Litwy, Polski i innych krajów, połączonych na podstawie dobrowolnej federacji”, Wasilewski 1929–1930, p. 45.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 45; Ochmański 1982, pp. 243–245, 284; Łossowski 2001, p. 45; Miknys 2020, pp. 225–226; Staliūnas 2018, p. 408.

54 *Krajowcy* (regionalists) – a term most likely derived from the official name “Northwestern Krai”, which corresponds to historical Lithuania. The main principles of *krajowość* (regionalism) were formulated in 1905–1907. *Krajowcy* recognized the primacy of the interests of the country as a whole and all the inhabitants of the area over the interests of individual nationalities. They advocated equality for all nationalities that inhabited it. They were against treating Poles as a minority. Initially, they put forward the idea of the autonomy of historical Lithuania, whereas in the years of the First World War – independence. Independent historical Lithuania was to decide on the nature of the future relationship with Poland. Two trends emerged among *krajowcy*: a conservative one supported by the landowning classes, and a democratic one supported by the progressive intelligentsia. Some of the most well-known *krajowcy* included: Ludwik Abramowicz, Tadeusz Wróblewski, Michał Römer, Roman Skirmunt, Konstancja Skirmunt, for more see Bardach 1988, pp. 260–280, 316–321; Michaluk 2010, pp. 94–100; Aleksandravicius 1992, pp. 54–55; Jurkiewicz 1999; Rimantas Miknys refers to the natives as Lithuanian Poles see Miknys 2011, pp. 33–34. For a characterization of the democratic trend among *krajowcy* and their identity ideology see Staliūnas 2018, pp. 253–270. Alexander Smalianchuk points to the heterogeneity of the national ideology and poor chances of its realization, see Smalianchuk 2017, pp. 1–11. See also *idem* 2004, pp. 125–243.

Polish political thought, they did not have mass support among the Lithuanian and Belarusian population. The programme they proposed, which was based on searching for a compromise solution that would take into account both Polish and Lithuanian aspirations, clashed with the programme of Lithuanian nationalists. The Lithuanian national movement was formed in opposition to the Polish one, and it negatively evaluated the former union-based relations with Poland.⁵⁵ An important date for the revival of national movements in the lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was the year 1905 and the partial liberalization of social and political life as a consequence of the revolution in Russia. The most important achievement of this period was the lifting of the ban on printing in national languages, which facilitated the promotion and development of their own national cultures and intensified the activities of political parties. Political demands began to be formulated, which became the starting point for a future struggle for an independent state.⁵⁶ Among the members of the Polish Socialist Party at the time, voices of scepticism about the federation concept started appearing. The postulate of limiting the area of contention to the ethnographic borders of Poland was proposed by Władysław Gumpłowicz in the course of a discussion on the new programme of the Polish Socialist Party – Revolutionary Faction (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna – Frakcja Rewolucyjna*) after the split (Polish Socialist Party after 1909).⁵⁷ He put forward the conception of ethnographic Poland and, at the same time, the need to dissociate from historical Poland. He considered the project of a Polish-Lithuanian-Belarusian-Ukrainian federation to be unrealistic.⁵⁸ He developed his arguments into a book published in 1908 entitled *Kwestia polska a socjalizm* [*The Polish question and socialism*].

55 Szliupas 1884, p. 23; Aleksandravicius 1992, pp. 54–62. The political goal of the Lithuanian national movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was to strive for a nation state. Lithuanian national activists made the existence of an independent Lithuanian nation and later the Lithuanian state conditional on emancipation from the influence of the Poles. In time, the nation state became the political ideal not only of the right-wing but also of the left-wing Lithuanian intelligentsia, for more see Staliūnas 2018, pp. 403–421. On the Polish-Lithuanian relations at the time of the formation of the Lithuanian national movement see Łossowski, 1995, pp. 106–109; idem 1985. The issue of myths and stereotypes and the sources of growing prejudice in Polish-Lithuanian relations in the first half of the 20th century was discussed by Krzysztof Buchowski, see Buchowski 2006.

56 Grünberg 1971, pp. 84–87, 127–139; Ochmański 1982, pp. 243–245, 269–271; Mitkiewicz 2018, pp. 88–89; Michaluk 2010, pp. 100–129; Aleksandravicius 1992, pp. 57–59; Miknys 2005, pp. 145–151. The revolution of 1905–1907 had far-reaching consequences for the Lithuanian movement. At that time, the national idea became more widespread among Lithuanians, but a certain differentiation of attitudes took place, see Łossowski 2001, p. 44.

57 Issues related to the programme were considered in March 1907 at the 10th (1st) congress of the Polish Socialist Party Revolutionary Faction held in Vienna, see Ładyka 1972, p. 41.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 45; Grünberg 1971, p. 137.

Gumplowicz believed that true democracy could catch on only in a monoethnic democratic republic.⁵⁹ When applied to the Polish context, this meant:

[...] an indispensable prerequisite for the consolidation of democracy in Poland is to win the independence of the tri-partitioned Poland within ethnographic borders. And since there is no socialism without democracy, winning the independence of the tri-partitioned Poland within ethnographic borders is a necessary prerequisite for the realization of socialism in Poland.⁶⁰

Gumplowicz considered “the consolidation of the Independent Socialist *Rzeczpospolita* on the lands of indigenous Poland” to be the proper and final solution to the Polish question in the borderlands.⁶¹ His position was questioned by Feliks Perl and Witold Jodko-Narkiewicz, who found the concept of ethnographic Poland to be vague. At the same time, they proposed postponing the question of establishing national borders until the country was liberated.⁶² On the other hand, the Polish Socialist Party – Left (*PPS – Lewica*), which emerged after the split in 1906, postulated a “demand for a federal union of the independent Kingdom with Russia” as a democratic republic.⁶³ The demand for autonomy of Lithuania-Belarus was also put forward.⁶⁴ The anti-independence Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, which represented the internationalist trend in the socialist movement, opposed any federation.⁶⁵

Parallel to the proposal of the Socialists, the National Democrats tried to define the theoretical framework for their own projections of the eastern border. The National Democratic Party traces its origins to the Polish League (*Liga Polska*), an independence-oriented organization established in Switzerland in 1887 on the initiative of Zygmunt Miłkowski and based on a federation programme. The League’s *Programme Act* of December 1887 recognized the following as one of its tasks: “to prepare and concentrate all national forces in order to regain the independence of Poland within the pre-partition borders, on a

59 Ładyka 1972, pp. 27, 49–50.

60 “[...] niezbędną przesłanką utrwalenia demokracji w Polsce jest wywalczenie niepodległości trójzaborowej Polski w granicach etnograficznych. A ponieważ bez demokracji nie ma socjalizmu, więc wywalczenie niepodległości trójzaborowej Polski w granicach etnograficznych jest niezbędną przesłanką urzeczywistnienia socjalizmu w Polsce.” Gumplowicz 1908, p. 27.

61 “[...] ugruntowanie Niepodległej Rzeczypospolitej Socjalistycznej na ziemiach Polski rdzennej”, *ibid.*, p. 46.

62 Ładyka 1972, pp. 45–46.

63 “[...] żądanie federacyjnego związku usamodzielnionego Królestwa z Rosją”, the position on this issue was clarified by Maksymilian Horowitz-Walecki 1906, p. 14.

64 *Ibid.*, 15.

65 Luksemburg 1906, p. 10. According to Rosa Luxemburg, “[...] federacyjny stosunek między państwami jest zawsze albo sztucznym wytworem monarchizmu albo pozostałością z czasów średniowiecznych, przedkapitalistycznych” [the federal relationship between states is always either an artificial product of monarchism or a remnant from medieval, pre-capitalist times], *ibid.*, pp. 10–11.

federal basis and with respect for national differences, not forgetting those parts of the old *Rzeczpospolita* which abandoned it.”⁶⁶ Although in the modified *Act*, passed a year later, we do not find similar pronouncements, yet in section 3 it was declared that “the League will support the independent development of the nationalities which were part of the old *Rzeczpospolita* with warm sympathy.”⁶⁷ The founder of the organization, Zygmunt Miłkowski, who came from Podolia, said that he was *gente Ruthenus, natione Polonus*.⁶⁸ Thus, he was a typical representative of a Pole, an inhabitant of the borderlands with a two-tier national consciousness, for whom it was difficult to imagine a reborn *Rzeczpospolita* other than within the borders of 1772.⁶⁹ Fighting for independence was to be the common goal of all its former co-inhabitants. Miłkowski wrote: “The flag of Poland, the voice of Poland, is a flag and a voice of reclaiming, demanding common work on the part of Poland, Lithuania, and Ruthenia, aimed at liberation.”⁷⁰ It seemed that Miłkowski’s ideological legacy would be continued by his disciples (Zygmunt Balicki, Roman Dmowski), who in April 1893 reorganized the Polish League and established the National League (*Liga Narodowa*). This was indicated by the first proclamations signed by the National League in 1894, where the emancipation aspirations of the nationalities of the former Republic of Poland were favourably expressed. They referred to the principle which was cherished by the founders of the Polish League “free with the free, equal with the equal”.⁷¹ They called for “fighting together against a common enemy, for a common cause – the freedom of nations.”⁷² They also wrote about free Ukraine and the brotherhood of Poland and Lithuania.⁷³ However, the National League

66 “[...] przysposobienie i skupienie wszystkich sił narodowych, celem odzyskania niepodległości Polski w granicach przedrozbiorowych, na podstawie federacyjnej i z uwzględnieniem różnic narodowościowych, nie spuszczając z oka i tych części dawnej Rzeczypospolitej, co od niej odpadły.” Werner 2015, p. 271.

67 “Liga z gorącym współczuciem popierać będzie rozwój samodzielny narodowości, które wchodziły w skład dawnej Rzeczypospolitej”. Ibid., p. 281. The obligation contained in item 3 was enforced by Limanowski in connection with the agreement on cooperation signed in Paris in 1889 between the National Socialist Commune (*Gmina Narodowo-Socjalistyczna*), which he co-managed, and the Polish League, see Boruta 2009, p. 52.

68 Miłkowski 1902, p. 3.

69 Ratajczak 2006, pp. 165, 224–225.

70 “Sztandar zaś Polski, głos Polski, jest sztandarem, głosem rewindykacyjnym, domagającym się wspólnej ze strony Polski, Litwy, Rusi pracy, wyzwolenie na celu mającej.” Miłkowski 1902, p. 64.

71 Werner 2015, p. 172.

72 Ibid.

73 The proclamations were issued on the occasion of the centenary of the Kościuszko Uprising (1794), which covered the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Ukraine. They referred to the uprising fought by Poles hand in hand with Ukrainians and Lithuanians against Russia, see Werner 2015, pp. 172–176. The defeat of the uprising led to the third

began to drift away from the Polish League programme as it started to define its own ideological identity. As a result, neither the tradition of the historical borders of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth nor the concept of federation with the nations in the east gained much recognition among them. As early as in 1898, when writing about the aspirations for independence, Dmowski argued:

No specific territorial conception is actually connected to them. Historical Poland, with its traditional borders of 1772, was already to some extent an oddity in those days, and today, under the present conditions, it would be geographically nonsensical. Ethnographic Poland, on the other hand, can only exist in the conceptions of philologists, not politicians [...].⁷⁴

In the environment of national democrats, the most important role in shaping the ideas about the borders of the future Poland was played by Jan Ludwik Popławski, who emphasized the importance of the lands of the Prussian partition for the future Poland and gaining access to the sea.⁷⁵ He remodelled the previous thinking on borders, shifting the focus from east to west and recognizing the priority of the western border.⁷⁶ It is not a coincidence that Popławski is considered a forerunner of the idea of “Piaś Poland” as opposed to the idea of “Jagiellonian Poland”, which was focused on the east.⁷⁷ For the first time, Popławski presented his views on the future borders of Poland in 1887 on the pages of the Warsaw newspaper *Głos*. He claimed that:

[...] free access to the sea and the complete ownership of the main water artery of the country – the Vistula, are the necessary conditions for our existence. [...] The renunciation of this inherent legacy and the delusions of “conquest in the East” were the cause of our political decline, and today, when working on our restoration, these errors of the past crush us with their weight and hold us back in our march toward a better future. Our politicians still dream of Vilnius and Kyiv, but they care less about Poznań, they have almost completely forgotten about Gdańsk and are not even thinking about Opole. It is time to break with that tradition [...].⁷⁸

partition of Poland and the incorporation of the entire Grand Duchy of Lithuania and most of Ukraine into the Russian Empire.

74 “Nie łączy się z nimi właściwie nawet określone pojęcie terytorialne. Historyczna Polska, w tradycyjnych granicach z r. 1772, już w owych czasach była w pewnej mierze dziwołagiem, dzisiaj zaś, przy obecnych warunkach państwowego bytu, byłaby geograficznym nonsensem etnograficzna może istnieć tylko w pojęciach filologów, nie zaś polityków [...]”, Dmowski 1898, p. 25.

75 Kozicki 2019, p. 39.

76 Kulak 1994, p. 165.

77 Eberhardt 2004, p. 73.

78 “[...] wolny dostęp do morza, posiadanie całkowite głównej arterii wodnej kraju – Wisły, to warunki konieczne prawie istnienia naszego. [...] Wyrzeczenie się tego przyrodzonego dziedzictwa i nieszczęśliwe majaki ‘podbojów na wschodzie’ były przyczyną naszego upadku politycznego i dzisiaj w pracy odrodzenia te błędy przeszłości przygniatają nas swym ciężarem i wstrzymują w pochodzie ku lepszej przyszłości. Nasi politycy marzą jeszcze o Wilnie i

Popławski believed that the idea of returning to historical borders in the east had become obsolete due to the activation of national movements there, which contributed to the depletion of Polishness. The reversal of this phenomenon in the west reinforced his belief that the focus should be on expanding the borders in that direction.⁷⁹ Hence, he assumed the following hierarchy of importance for the various lands: “One can imagine a future Polish state without Lithuania and Ruthenia, without Silesia, even without Poznań voivodeship, or at least without a significant part of it, but without West Prussia it would be a political and economic oddity, not only incapable of development, but not even of subsistence.”⁸⁰

Thinking in similar terms became characteristic of the entire national camp, but it did not mean a lack of interest in the lands of the former *Rzeczpospolita* in the east, let alone relinquishing them. Even if Popławski did entertain such a thought, he treated it as a tactical move, hoping that in the future they would be united with Poland.⁸¹ At the same time, he emphasized that Polish interests and tasks in the west were as important as in the east, where he saw a suitable area for the development of national power and creativity.⁸² Thus, he recommended pursuing a national policy in both directions.⁸³

Kijowie, ale o Poznań mniej już dbają, o Gdańsku zapomnieli prawie zupełnie i o Opolu nie myślą zgoła. Czas już zerwać z tą tradycją [...]”, Popławski 1887, pp. 633–634.

79 Kulak 1984, pp. 187–208.

80 “Można sobie wyobrazić przyszłe państwo polskie bez Litwy i Rusi, bez Śląska, nawet bez Poznańskiego, przynajmniej bez znacznej jego części, ale bez Prus Zachodnich byłoby ono dziwotworem politycznym i ekonomicznym, niezdolnym do rozwoju, nawet do dłuższego życia.” Popławski 1903 (2), p. 680.

81 Idem 1896, p. 172; idem 1903 (1), p. 571.

82 Idem 1902 (2), p. 44.

83 Popławski wrote “Nie byłoby Grunwaldu, który na kilka wieków powstrzymał napad Niemczyzny, bez sojuszu z Litwą i Rusią. Czem byłaby nasza historia, i czem my sami byłibyśmy bez unii w Horodle, w Lublinie i w Brześciu, bez Żółkiewskich, Chodkiewiczów, Sobieskich, bez Kircholmu, Orszy, Chocimia i Beresteczka, bez Kościszki i Mickiewicza, bez Wilna i Krzemienia? Tam ‘leżą gruzem wiekowe zwycięstwa’, tam marnieją rezultaty naszej pracy wiekowej, zabytki i wspomnienia naszej sławy. Tam – znaczna część przeszłości i przyszłości naszej. I o tem, co całe szeregi pokoleń zdobywały i budowały dla Polski w wyczerpanej, nieustraszonej walce z dziczą mongolską i moskiewską, z barbarzyństwem Wschodu, tak lekko dziś się mówi, tak łatwo się zapomina, jakby to była jakaś drobnostka, jak gdyby dla nas nic nie znaczył obszar dwa razy większy, niż nasze terytorium etnograficzne, obszar, na którym łącznie z Galicją wschodnią mieszka co najmniej 4 miliony ludności polskiej” [There would have been no Grunwald, which stopped the German onslaught for several centuries, without the alliance with Lithuania and Ruthenia. What would our history be and what would we be without the Union of Horodło, Lublin and Brest, without the Żółkiewskis, the Chodkiewicz, the Sobieskis, without Kircholm, Orsha, Khotyn and Berestechko, without Kościszko and Mickiewicz, without Vilnius and Kremenets? The ‘ruins of our momentous victories’, the fruit of our age-old toil, the relics of our former glory are all languishing there. The better part of our past and future is there too. And that which the whole generations of Poles had gained and built for Poland in formidable and fearless fights against the Mongolian and Muscovite savagery, against the barbarians of the East, is spoken of so

The ideology of Polish nationalism played an important role in the deliberations of the national democrats about the territorial scope of the future Polish state. The attitude towards the “borderland” nations was determined by the basic components of nationalist thought, which found their full expression in the brochures *Mysli nowoczesnego Polaka* [*Thoughts of a modern Pole*] by Roman Dmowski and *Egoizm narodowy wobec etyki* [*National egoism vs. ethics*] by Zygmunt Balicki published in 1902.⁸⁴ Among these were: prioritised national interest, support for national expansionism and struggle for survival regulating relations between nations, or the idea of a strong national state.

In the face of the national movements developing in the eastern areas of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, mutual tolerance and a policy of coexistence were declared with regard to their cultural work, with the reservation that it would not harm the Polish community. The intention was to fight all tendencies aimed at weakening or eradicating Polish influence there.⁸⁵ The cultural and civilizational dominance of the Polish community over the borderland nationalities was emphasized. In the opinion of national-democratic journalists, Poles were the only element in the “Taken Lands” that embodied a serious cultural and political force.⁸⁶

The least was thought of Belarusians, who were perceived as a politically and socially passive tribe with a low level of intellectual and material culture.⁸⁷ They were denied the ability to develop nationally and culturally on their own.⁸⁸ A greater sense of tribal, but not yet national, individuality was attributed to the Little Russians (Ukrainians), who inhabited the south-eastern borderlands.⁸⁹ However, they were ranked lower than Lithuanians. For the latter were judged best, and “a very distinct tribal individuality and even national awareness” were attributed to them.⁹⁰ At the same time, however, Lithuanians were referred to in terms of an “autonomous cultural group”.⁹¹ The development of political aspirations and national separateness among Lithuanians, despite their undisguised

lightly today, so easily forgotten, as if it were a trifle, as if an area twice the size of our ethnographic territory, an area where, together with eastern Galicia, at least 4 million Poles live, meant nothing to us]. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

84 For more on the question of nationality in the political thought of the national democrats see Zawadka 2006, pp. 5–13.

85 Popławski 1896, p. 172. *Program Stronnictwa Demokratyczno-Narodowego w zaborze rosyjskim* 1903, p. 732. A separate supplement to the programme was devoted to the implementation of policy in the “Taken Lands”, see *Dodatek A. Działalność Stronnictwa w odrębnych warunkach Krajów Zabranych, a w szczególności Litwy* 1903, pp. 753–756.

86 Popławski 1902 (1), p. 430.

87 *Ibid.* See also Dmowski 1901, p. 614.

88 *Program Stronnictwa Demokratyczno-Narodowego w zaborze rosyjskim* 1903, p. 732.

89 Popławski 1902 (1), pp. 429, 431.

90 *Ibid.*, p. 427.

91 Dmowski 1901, p. 620.

opposition to the Polish community, was seen as a positive symptom counter-acting Russification.⁹²

The main task of national policy in the eastern lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was to strengthen Polishness, which was to be achieved mainly through educational activities.⁹³ This was an important aspect of the political activities of the national democrats, who began to organize there in the late 1990s.⁹⁴ Different reality meant that the programme of National Democracy in Vilnius was not always consistent with the Warsaw hub. Part of the Vilnius National Democracy entertained the idea of arranging future relations between Poland and Lithuania on a federal basis.⁹⁵ Dmowski, on the other hand, declared that he did not want to play a prophet or decide in advance about the fate of these lands. He accused the supporters of various solutions regarding the Ruthenian and Lithuanian question, including the federation conception, of superficial thinking. He argued that the programme “cannot be based on conjectures [...] it must come out of the existing state of affairs”.⁹⁶ “Discussing what Lithuania’s attitude towards Poland will be in an independent *Rzeczpospolita* or who should govern this country when the Muscovites stop oppressing it” he considered to be “mental debauchery”.⁹⁷ Dmowski thought like Popławski, who used to say that “it would be ridiculous to establish today the norms of mutual relations between Poles and Lithuanians in the future”.⁹⁸ The plan for today was to strengthen and spread Polishness in these areas, as this was dictated by the Polish national interest, which, as it was emphasized, should be “kept in view everywhere, whether in native Poland, the borderlands, or in exile”.⁹⁹

In their deliberations, national democratic journalists devoted much space to eastern Galicia, as they recognised the political dimension of the Ruthenian

92 Popławski 1902 (1), p. 431.

93 Ibid., p. 433; Dmowski 1901, p. 623.

94 The National League began its activities in Kyiv later than in Vilnius, because in 1903 the work was only just starting there, for more see Kozicki 1964, pp. 142–154.

95 Dąbrowski 2010, p. 296. For more see *ibid.*, pp. 269–306.

96 “[...] nie może opierać się na przypuszczeniach [...] musi wychodzić z istniejącego stanu rzeczy”, Dmowski 1901, p. 611. Dmowski emphasized that today’s Lithuania is not the same as the one that formed a union with Poland. In the official nomenclature, it is called the Northwestern Krai and includes six governorates (Vilnius, Grodno, Kaunas, Minsk, Mogilev, and Vitebsk), see *ibid.*, p. 612.

97 “Rozprawianie o tym, jaki będzie stosunek Litwy do Polski w niepodległej Rzeczypospolitej lub też kto powinien być panem tego kraju, gdy Moskale przestaną go gnębić” Dmowski considered as “rozpuszę umysłową”, *ibid.*, p. 617.

98 “[...] śmieszem byłoby dziś układanie norm stosunku wzajemnego Polaków i Litwinów w przyszłości”, Popławski 1902 (1), p. 430.

99 “[...] mieć na widoku wszędzie, czy to w rdzennej Polsce, czy na kresach, czy na wychodźstwie”, Dmowski 1901, p. 612.

question.¹⁰⁰ Galicia was a centre for the Ukrainian national movement and the activity of Ukrainian political parties under autonomy in the late 19th century.¹⁰¹ Despite their differences regarding ideology and the programme, they agreed on one thing, namely a proposal to divide Galicia into Polish and Ukrainian parts and to establish a border on the San River, which was unacceptable to Polish political circles. This, as Popławski emphasized, referred to the territory that encompassed the political aspirations of the National Democrats.¹⁰² On the subject of Galicia he wrote:

[...] for us it is first and foremost not a part of Austria, but a part of Poland, and our national policy must consider it only as *pars pro toto*. While for the Ruthenians the eastern half of Galicia is part of the ideal Ruthenia-Ukraine, for us half of Galicia is part of the real whole – Poland as an independent national and territorial body.¹⁰³

While recognizing the national claims of the Ruthenians in eastern Galicia, it was recommended that no concessions are made to them, that their national aspirations are not supported and fought if they harm the Polish national interest. Polish conservatives of Galicia were criticized for their policy of appeasement towards the Ruthenians.¹⁰⁴ Dmowski saw two ways out in relation to the Ruthenians: Polonization, if they wanted to be Polish, or breaking with the policy of appeasement and toughening them so that they could become a strong Ruthenian nation.¹⁰⁵ In 1905, *Przegląd Wszepolski* [*All-Polish Review*] wrote that the Ruthenians lacked a sense of political and cultural distinctiveness. They were dubbed an ethnographic formation rather than a nation. The lack of a state-forming tradition was a premise for the conclusion that there is and will be no independent Ruthenia.¹⁰⁶ Two alternative scenarios were envisioned for the Ruthenians – political and cultural unification with Poland or with Russia.¹⁰⁷

The appreciation of the Lithuanian national movement and their creative abilities, with the corresponding lack of similar opinions towards the Ukrainian national movement had a clear impact on the possible political relations.¹⁰⁸ Despite a certain restraint in drawing up scenarios for the future, national

100 Popławski 1910, p. 299.

101 See also Subtelny 2009, pp. 327–333.

102 Mistewicz 1986, p. 20.

103 “[...] dla nas jest ona przede wszystkim nie częścią Austrii, tylko częścią Polski, i nasza polityka narodowa uważać ją musi tylko jako *pars pro toto*. Gdy dla Rusinów wschodnia połowa Galicji jest częścią idealnej Rusi-Ukrainy, dla nas połowa Galicji jest częścią całości realnej, Polski, jako samodzielnego organizmu narodowo-terytorialnego.” Popławski 1910, p. 176.

104 *Ibid.*, pp. 300–307.

105 Dmowski 1904, pp. 100–101.

106 Popławski 1905, pp. 222–223.

107 *Ibid.*, p. 225.

108 Mistewicz 1986, p. 19.

democrats have also succumbed to the myth of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The common state tradition and cultural affinity with the Lithuanians were referred to in the 1903 programme of the National-Democratic Party (*Stronnictwo Demokracji Narodowej*). It provided a basis to believe that:

The Lithuanian people, being Roman Catholics, having been civilized by Poland and therefore possessing customs and ideas close to our hearts, being bound to us by a common state tradition, and last but not least, inhabiting a territory which cannot be separated from the territory of the future Polish state without great harm to it and without condemning Lithuanian individuality itself to annihilation, must not therefore yield to Russian influence and, while continuing to develop its cultural identity, must merge with Poland politically as closely as possible.¹⁰⁹

The position of Zygmunt Balicki, who did not rule out that the union could be based on federation, may seem interesting here, although in his times he was sceptical about the federation idea, considering it an “ideological pie in the sky”. What he did not see, however, was the possibility of building a similar relationship with the Ruthenians.¹¹⁰

After 1905, the national democrats were hampered in revealing their territorial claims in the east by a change in political tactics and the adoption of an orientation aimed at cooperation with Russia. Broad autonomy of the Kingdom of Poland within the borders of 1815 and national equality in the partitioned countries became the political goal then.¹¹¹ It was not until the revolutionary events in Russia in 1917 took place that the national democrats were able to develop the topic in terms of territorial aspirations in the east. The initiative was then taken by Dmowski, who considered the incorporation plan to be the only right one. This was also the position he presented at the Paris Peace Conference. It can therefore be assumed that the eastern territorial project of the National Democracy based on the assumptions of annexation finally crystallized in the last phase of the war and became the goal of its programme.¹¹²

The liberals in the Kingdom of Poland were practically excluded from political discourse on the shape of the eastern border. Seeing no chance for the restoration of an independent Poland at the beginning of the 20th century, they proclaimed a

109 “Lud litewski, jako rzymsko-katolicki, jako ucywilizowany przez Polskę, a stąd posiadający bliskie nam obyczaje i pojęcia, jako związany z nami wspólną tradycją państwową, jako zamieszkujący wreszcie terytorium, nie mogące być wydzielonym z obszaru przyszłego państwa polskiego bez olbrzymiej szkody dla niego i bez skazania na zagładę samej odrębności litewskiej, tem samem nie odda się pod wpływ rosyjski i, rozwijając nadal swą odrębność kulturalną, pod względem politycznym musi się jak najściślej złączyć z polskim.” *Program Stronnictwa Demokratyczno-Narodowego w zaborze rosyjskim* 1903, p. 755.

110 See Mistewicz 1986, p. 19; Balicki 1902, pp. 43, 49–50.

111 Mistewicz, 1986, pp. 24–25. See also *Projekt autonomii Królestwa Polskiego przedstawiony Dumie przez Koło Polskie* 1907, pp. 203–205; *Nasze cele i nasze drogi* 1905, p. 7.

112 Lewandowski 1962, pp. 26–27.

programme of autonomy for the Polish Kingdom and a close relationship with Russia. Jerzy Kurnatowski, a liberal, commented more extensively on this issue, arguing that the borders of the future Poland should include solely unquestionably Polish lands. The Kingdom of Poland, Western Galicia, Poznań region and part of Upper Silesia were considered as such, thus excluding Lithuania and Ruthenia.¹¹³

The Peasants' parties clarified their position towards the historical nations of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the years of the First World War. Until then, only laconic references to this subject are found in the programmes of people's parties. An example is the 1903 programme of the Galician Polish People's Party (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe*), which declared the principle of justice and equal political rights for Ruthenian and Lithuanian elements. It referred to the tradition of the January Uprising and the slogan of rights for Lithuania and Ruthenia equal with the Crown, with free national development ensured.¹¹⁴

The programme announcements of the people's movement in Galicia also reflected the current Ruthenian question. Like other Polish political parties, the peasants' parties opposed the Ukrainian concept of dividing Galicia into two administrative parts (Polish Western Galicia and Ukrainian Eastern Galicia). The demand for independence put forward by the Galician parties in 1917 assumed that Galicia would be incorporated into the reborn state, which was contrary to the aspirations of the Ukrainian community.¹¹⁵

The attachment to the lands in the east of the former Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth was articulated by the peasants' parties of the Kingdom of Poland. A peasant organization, the Young Poland's Union (*Związek Młodej Polski*), which was active between 1906 and 1908, referred in its programme to the idea of federation and the tradition of the old union:

Historically, culturally and territorially we are most closely connected with Lithuania and Ruthenia. If the federation of the peoples of Europe is an ideal of the future, then the union of Poland-Lithuania-Ruthenia – to achieve that future – becomes a historical necessity. Our Lithuanian and Ruthenian brothers will soon share our faith and desire the implementation of this union as much as we do, just as once their and our fathers, the best in the nation, desired the union of Lublin and the Treaty of Hadiach.¹¹⁶

113 Stegner 1990, pp. 92–106.

114 Dunin-Wąsowicz / Kowalczyk 1966, p. 76.

115 Mrocza 1998, pp. 51, 56–60.

116 “Historycznie, kulturalnie i terytorialnie najbardziej jesteśmy z Litwą i Rusią związani. Jeżeli federacja (wszechzwiązek) ludów Europy jest ideałem dnia przyszłego, to związek Polski-Litwy-Rusi – ku osiągnięciu najbliższego jutra, staje się dziejową koniecznością. Bracia Litwini i Rusini niezadługo wraz z nami tę wiarę naszą podzielią i ziszczenia się tego związku na równi z nami zapragną, jak niegdyś związku tego pragnęli najlepsi w narodzie – ich ojcowie i nasi – w Uniach Lubelskiej i Hadziackiej.” Lato / Stankiewicz 1969, p. 72.

This optimistic scenario, as we know, was not the case. A reference to the fraternal alliance of independent Poland with Lithuania and Ruthenia was also found in the programme of the National Union of Peasants (*Narodowy Związek Chłopski*), which was formed in Warsaw in 1912 by activists formerly associated with the National Democracy.¹¹⁷

During the years of World War I and after the restoration of independence, the position among the peasants' parties with regard to the eastern border was not uniform. Established in December 1915, the Polish People's Party (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe*, PSL) (from 1918 as the PSL *Wyzwolenie*), which consolidated peasant activists from the Kingdom of Poland, initially leaned towards incorporation solutions, but after 1917 supported the federation programme.¹¹⁸ The 1918 programme advocated an ethnographic border to the east and a union of "free with the free and equal with the equal". An alliance and union with the independent states of Lithuania and Belarus was preferred. The idea of an independent Ukrainian state was also accepted, although it was believed that the South-Eastern Borderlands with Lviv should belong to Poland.¹¹⁹ The Polish People's Party "Left", headed by Jan Stapiński, presented a similar point of view. The Polish People's Party "Piaś", on the other hand, took a different view of the eastern border. The leader of the party, Wincenty Witos, adopted a position similar to that of the National Democracy (the incorporation programme). He decided that Eastern Galicia should belong to Poland, along with Lviv and Vilnius. In the circles of the Polish People's Party "Piaś" there were doubts about the creation of independent Ukraine, Belarus and even Lithuania.¹²⁰ Over time, however, there was a move toward a federalist programme there as well.¹²¹

Projections of the Eastern Border During World War I

By the outbreak of World War I, a theoretical framework had been developed for various conceptions that were to define the shape of the eastern border of the reborn Polish state. However, it was not until the years of war and the emergence of a real chance for Poland to regain independence that the conditions were created to try to put those conceptions into practice. Initially, the orientation of the left-wing independence camp towards the Central Powers had an inhibiting effect on the development of federation plans. Hence, in 1915–1916 some representatives of this camp considered the incorporation option, which assumed

117 Dunin-Wąsowicz / Kowalczyk 1966, p. 368.

118 Molenda 1965, pp. 94–95, 123.

119 *Ibid.*, p. 256; Lato / Stankiewicz, pp. 147–148.

120 Cimek 2008 (1), pp. 11–16; *idem* 2007, pp. 55–61; *idem* 2008 (2), pp. 52–61.

121 Cimek 2008 (2), pp. 241, 270; Boruta 2009, p. 122.

the incorporation of the Lithuanian-Belarusian territories into the Kingdom of Poland.¹²² This, however, interfered with the policy of German government circles which, after 1915, were the hosts in these territories and had their own plans for Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine.¹²³ The events of 1917 related to the crisis of activist policies aimed at cooperation with the Central Powers and the revolution in Russia caused a return to the federation idea.¹²⁴

Among the representatives of the independence left-wing, federation conceptions were still being developed by Bolesław Limanowski, Edward Abramowski, Józef Dąbrowski and Leon Wasilewski. In March 1914, Abramowski spoke out against the idea of ethnographic Poland, calling its supporters “diminishers of Poland”. He supported the reconstruction of Poland within the pre-partition borders. Referring to the tradition of the Union of Lublin, he stated: “Five hundred years of Poland, Lithuania¹²⁵ and Ruthenia sharing their lives with one another have entered the blood systems of several generations, leaving a deep mark in our souls. There can no longer be a Poland without Lithuania and Ruthenia, just as there can be no Lithuania and Ruthenia without Poland.”¹²⁶ Limanowski, on the other hand, taking into account the progress of national movements and state-forming tendencies in the eastern lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, referred in his pronouncements to the Union of Horodło, which assumed a looser union between Poland and the borderland nations.¹²⁷ Józef Dąbrowski suggested that the best protection for Europe against Russian supremacy would be the creation of a Polish state and its federation with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Courland.¹²⁸ Considered as “the best expert on national relations in the eastern borderlands” was Leon Wasilewski.¹²⁹ As a supporter of the federation concept, Wasilewski aimed at moving Russia’s borders as far as possible to the east and merging the countries formed there with the

122 Grünberg 1971, pp. 296–297. Lewandowski 1962, pp. 48–57. There were suggestions among some German politicians and activists at the beginning of the war that it was possible to rebuild the Polish state at the price of relinquishing the lands of the Prussian partition and compensating this loss with Lithuania, Volhynia and Podolia. However, these suggestions were not binding. See Lewandowski 1962, pp. 46–48.

123 In February 1918, a Lithuanian state dependent on Germany was proclaimed. In turn, the Treaty of Brest, signed by the Central Powers with the Ukrainian People’s Republic on 9 February 1918, provided international recognition for the country.

124 Grünberg 1971, p. 267.

125 In the sense of historical Lithuania.

126 “Pięćset lat wspólnego życia Polski, Litwy i Rusi przeszło już w krew pokoleń, wycisnęło głębokie piętno w duszy naszej. Bez Litwy i Rusi nie może być już Polski, tak samo jak bez Polski nie może istnieć Litwa i Ruś.” Abramowski 1928, p. 287.

127 Bardach 1974, p. 496.

128 Dąbrowski 1915, p. 56.

129 Pobóg-Malinowski 1937, p. 64. For a synthetic account of Wasilewski’s views on Lithuanian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian issues, see Stoczewska 2009.

independent *Rzeczpospolita*, but – as he emphasized – “without forcibly imposing our will, without even the appearance of partitioning tendencies on our part, in accordance with the Polish tradition and motto: ‘free with the free, equal with the equal’.”¹³⁰ He saw the future of the nations inhabiting the lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth only in connection with Poland. In 1917, he described it as follows: “It is only with respect to Poland that these elements have a guaranteed future of development, whereas, on the contrary, surrendering them to Russia means a more or less rapid death for them. [...] is a death sentence for all the elements.”¹³¹ Wasilewski was also an enthusiast of Ukrainian independence and a Polish-Ukrainian agreement against Russia. Like other political circles, he could not imagine Poland without eastern Galicia.¹³² According to his project, the natural Polish-Russian border should be “the line of contact between the two Polish-Catholic and Russian-Orthodox cultures”.¹³³ Wasilewski was one of Piłsudski’s closest associates in the implementation of his eastern policy plans.¹³⁴

The February Revolution in Russia of 1917 and the overthrow of Tsarism had an activating effect on the supporters of the federation programme. A real chance of regaining independence appeared. In May that year, the federation programme with historic Lithuania was supported by all political parties in the Kingdom of Poland, both left-wing activist and right-wing passive, as part of two declarations of Polish political groups on Lithuania.¹³⁵ As in previous years, the offer of the

130 “[...] bez narzucania gwałtem naszej woli, bez pozorów nawet tendencji zaborczych z naszej strony, zgodnie z tradycją polską i hasłem: ‘wolni z wolnymi, równi z równymi’”. Pobóg-Malinowski 1937, p. 81.

131 “Tylko w oparciu o Polskę żywiły te mają zagwarantowaną przyszłość rozwoju, gdy przeciwnie oddanie ich Rosji oznacza dla nich śmierć mniej lub bardziej szybką. [...] jest dla wszystkich żywiołów wyrokiem zagłady.” Wasilewski 1917, pp. 13, 16.

132 He considered the political projects of partitioning Galicia to be thoughtless, see Wasilewski 1917, pp. 3–11; Stoczeńska 2009, pp. 331–332. See also Brzechrzyczyn 2000, pp. 57–68.

133 “[...] linia zetknięcia się dwóch kultur katolicko-polskiej i rosyjsko-prawosławnej”, Wasilewski 1917, p. 15.

134 Friszke 2013, pp. 72–90.

135 The declarations differed in that the former “demands” an independent state for the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, while the latter “recognizes its claim” to the same. Signatories to the former declaration included: The League of Polish Statehood (*Liga Państwowości Polskiej*), the Central National Committee (*Centralny Komitet Narodowy*), the National Party (*Stronnictwo Narodowe*), the National Workers’ Union (*Narodowy Związek Robotników*), the Party of National Independence (*Partia Niezawisłości Narodowej*), the Union of Democratic Parties (*Zjednoczenie Stronnictw Demokratycznych*), the Polish People’s Party (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe*), the Polish Socialist Party, the People’s Union (*Zjednoczenie Ludowe*), and the Party of Polish Democracy (*Stronnictwo Polskiej Demokracji*). The latter declaration was signed by: The Party of Real Politics (*Stronnictwo Polityki Realnej*), the National-Democratic Party (*Stronnictwo Demokracji Narodowej*), the Polish Progressive Party (*Polska Partia Postępowa*), the National Union (*Zjednoczenie Narodowe*), the Union for Economic Independence (*Związek Niezależności Gospodarczej*), the Party of Christian

supporters of the federation programme was addressed primarily to Lithuania.¹³⁶ The relationship with Ruthenia (Ukraine), if considered at all, was based on a loose relationship. Polish-Ukrainian relations had long been tense due to the dispute over eastern Galicia and the belonging of Chełm Land.¹³⁷ The granting of Chełm Land and part of Podlasie by the Central Powers to the Ukrainian People's Republic, at the expense of the Kingdom of Poland, in February 1918 under the Treaty of Brest further irritated mutual relations.¹³⁸

The revolution in Russia also activated advocates of the incorporation programme. The National Democracy's reticence to speak about Polish aspirations in the east, which resulted from the adoption of a pro-Russian orientation, ceased to be a problem. The focus of the party leadership's activities shifted west, to Paris and London. Roman Dmowski revealed his proposals in several documents that were submitted to Western politicians between 1917 and 1918, and then became the basis for the territorial programme of the Polish state presented by the Polish delegation at the peace conference in Paris.¹³⁹ This programme was based on a compromise between historical and ethnographic principle. It expressed a desire to build a strong national Poland, where Poles would constitute a majority and would also be the ruling nation.¹⁴⁰ A strong Poland in relation to the eastern border, which Dmowski considered very troublesome, meant for him the necessity of moving far to the east, but not too far, as this would risk losing the Polish character of the state. At the same time, he considered the north-east (Lithuania, Belarus) to be safer than the south-east (Ukraine), where the Ukrainian question may stand in the way.¹⁴¹ Dmowski based his delineation of Poland's borders on the following assumption:

The territory of a future state cannot be determined either on a strictly historical basis or on a purely linguistic basis. Rebuilding Poland within its historical borders of 1772 is probably not possible today and would not create a very strong state. The basis of Poland's strength is an area where the mass of the population speaks Polish, is aware of

Democracy (*Stronnictwo Chrześcijańskiej Demokracji*) and Non-partisans. See Wasilewski 1929–1930, pp. 56–57.

136 The idea of a Polish-Lithuanian federation in Polish political thought in a broad historical and chronological perspective is discussed in a book by Krzysztof Grygajtis, see Grygajtis 2001.

137 Wapiński 1994 (1), p. 266.

138 Under pressure from Germany, Austria-Hungary agreed, in a secret protocol, to divide Galicia into two parts: Polish and Ukrainian, see Hrycak 2000, p. 130.

139 Kozicki 2019, pp. 509–512, 559–585. For more, see also idem 1921.

140 Friszke 1989, pp. 107, 131–132.

141 *O granicach Polski w 1917 r. List Romana Dmowskiego do Joachima Bartoszewicza z 19 lipca 1917 r.* 1939, p. 4. The addressee of the letter, Joachim Bartoszewicz, was at that time the chairman of the Polish Executive Committee in Ruthenia and the head of Polish policy in the south-eastern territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

their Polish nationality and is attached to the Polish cause. This area is not encompassed by the Polish borders of 1772.¹⁴²

This meant leaving much of historical Poland in the east outside the Polish state. According to Dmowski, the Poles were too weak to manage the entire historical area of the eastern lands. He also did not believe in the ability of Lithuanians, Belarusians and Ukrainians to form independent states. Hence, he proposed to divide these lands into a western part with a predominantly Polish element, and an eastern part that would be held by Russia. In a territory with a predominantly Lithuanian population in the northern part, he projected the creation of a separate country that would be linked to Poland on the basis of autonomy. He believed that Lithuania was not capable of forming a self-sustaining state. So the best solution for it would be to continue the union with Poland.¹⁴³ Dmowski had a negative evaluation of the federation programme, arguing that it would “make the Polish state weak and unable to defend its independence”.¹⁴⁴ He believed that only a unified state could be strong, which was important for Poland because of its location between Germany and Russia.¹⁴⁵

The Paris Peace Conference and its decisions were not conclusive for the Polish border in the east. Its shape was decided by the armed conflict with Bolshevik Russia and the Treaty of Riga (18 March 1921).¹⁴⁶ Its provisions finally buried the conception of federation and implemented the programme of the supporters of incorporation, although not in the literal form proposed by Dmowski during the Paris Conference (the so-called Dmowski’s line). However, the Polish presence in the eastern lands of the former Commonwealth was maintained, and this was what the supporters of both conceptions wanted. In this respect, both programmes referred to a greater or lesser extent to the territorial shape of the former Commonwealth.

It should be noted that from the very beginning the federation programme had little chance of success in view of the other side’s unwillingness to enter a federation with Poland, as well as mutual differences that were difficult to reconcile

142 “Określić terytorium przyszłego państwa nie można ani na podstawie ściśle historycznej, ani też czysto lingwistycznej. Odbudowanie Polski w jej granicach historycznych z 1772 r. nie jest bodaj możliwe dzisiaj i nie dałoby bardzo silnego państwa. Podstawą siły Polski jest obszar, na którym masa ludności mówi po polsku, jest świadoma swej narodowości polskiej i przywiązana do polskiej sprawy. Ten obszar nie zamyka się w granicach Polski 1772 r.” Dmowski 2009, p. 393.

143 *Ibid.*, pp. 477–478.

144 “[...] zrobiliby on z państwa polskiego twór słaby i niezdolny do obrony swej niezależności”, Kozicki 2019, p. 580.

145 *Ibid.*, p. 581.

146 The Ukrainian historian Ivan Lysiak Rudnytsky saw a parallel between the 1921 Treaty of Riga and the 1667 Armistice of Andrusovo, as both marked the division of Ukrainian lands between Poland and Russia, see Lysiak-Rudnytsky 1987, p. 71.

and sometimes contradictory. Polish independence was preceded by the proclamation of independence by the Ukrainian People's Republic (January 1918), the Republic of Lithuania (February 1918), and the Belarusian People's Republic (March 1918). The newly formed states laid claims to the same lands as Poland, and this generated conflicts for years (a dispute over Vilnius with the Lithuanians, a conflict over Lviv with the Ukrainians). The implementation of the incorporation programme within the framework of the Riga Treaty, which continued with the incorporation of Central Lithuania in 1922, affected further relations between Poland and the nations to which the federation programme was addressed.¹⁴⁷

[Translated by Tomasz Leszczuk]

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Jarosław Centek

Die Entwaffnung der deutschen Truppen in den polnischen Gebieten im November 1918

Abstract

Disarming the German forces in Poland in November 1918

The article is devoted to the disarming of the German occupation forces in the territories of the General Government of Warsaw in November 1918. They were well-armed and relatively numerous, albeit with low morale and combat fatigue. On the other hand, there were some Polish forces practically without any weapons, yet determined. In this situation, most garrisons were successfully disarmed thanks to negotiations with local soldiers' councils. Keywords: Polish Military Organisation; *Ober Ost*; revolution in Germany; *Generalgouvernement Warschau*

Militärische Kräfteverhältnisse im Hinterland der deutschen Ostfront 1918

Zu Beginn verdient die Definition des Begriffs „polnische Gebiete“ Aufmerksamkeit. Er bezieht sich nicht nur auf das Gebiet des Generalgouvernements Warschau. Dieses Gebiet umfasste auch die östlichen Korpsbezirke der Königlich-Preußischen Armee (Bezirke V, VI und XVII, zumindest in erheblichen Anteilen). Gleichwohl aber beschlossen Polen auf die Nachricht von der Niederlage der Mittelmächte im November 1918 – zumindest im Gebiet des Generalgouvernements Warschau –, die Initiative zu übernehmen und die dort stehenden deutschen Garnisonen zu entwaffnen. Diejenigen polnischen Gebiete, die zum Deutschen Reich gehörten, wurden von dieser Bewegung erst später erfasst, als polnische Soldaten von den Fronten in die heimischen Garnisonen zurückkehrten. Ein Beispiel hierfür ist der deutlich spätere Beginn des Aufstands in Großpolen – erst kurz vor dem Jahresende 1918. Diese Fragen sollen hier aber nicht behandelt werden.

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Zunächst ist daran zu erinnern, dass in den Städten der deutschen Ostprovinzen entlang der Grenze zur russischen Teilungszone Polens den ganzen Krieg über, also auch 1918, noch Ersatzeinheiten des Landsturms standen. Diese stellten, zumindest auf dem Papier, ein recht großes Potential dar. In der Praxis aber war die Kampfmoral ihrer Soldaten nicht besonders hoch, und ihre eventuellen Aufgaben bei der Aufstandsbekämpfung sollten sich auf die Stationierungsorte beschränken.

Polnische Kräfte

Rückgrat der polnischen Kräfte war die Polnische Militärorganisation (*Polska Organizacja Wojskowa*, POW). Sie war von Piłsudski für den Kampf gegen die Mittelmächte aufgestellt worden. Schon im zweiten Halbjahr 1917 gehörten ihr mehr als 21.000 Männer an. An der Spitze der Organisation stand seit Oktober 1917 Edward Rydz-Śmigły, ihm unterstanden drei Kommandeure für Galizien, die Ukraine und das ehemalige Kongresspolen. Im letzten Kriegsjahr entstanden Zellen der POW auch innerhalb des Deutschen Reiches.¹ Zur Altersstruktur der POW-Kämpfer liegen nur für den Bezirk Siedlce Angaben vor. In der Zeit, als die POW dort die deutschen Einheiten entwaffnete, zählten 37 % der polnischen Verschwörer aus diesem Bezirk 18 Jahre, weitere 34 % waren gerade einmal ein Jahr älter.² 50–60 % der Mitglieder der Organisation waren Bauern.³ Das stellte insofern ein gewisses Problem dar, als daraus hervorgeht, dass ein Großteil des militärischen Potentials der POW außerhalb der Städte lebte, in denen sich die deutschen Garnisonen befanden. Deshalb mussten die POW-Kämpfer zunächst in ihr Einsatzgebiet eindringen.

Im November 1916 hatten Deutschland und Österreich-Ungarn eine sogenannte Polnische Wehrmacht gebildet, mit dem Ziel, polnische Rekruten für den Kriegseinsatz der Mittelmächte zu gewinnen. Der Aufbau der Polnischen Wehrmacht ging jedoch schleppend vonstatten: Gegen Ende 1917 zählte diese Formation lediglich 139 Offiziere und 2.636 Unteroffiziere und Soldaten. Erst als sich die Niederlage Deutschlands und Österreich-Ungarns abzeichnete, wuchs der Zustrom von Bewerbern, so dass im Oktober 1918 bereits 9.000 Mann der Formation angehörten. Zu diesem Zeitpunkt übernahm der polnische Regentenschaftsrat das Kommando über die Polnische Wehrmacht und gestaltete sie in eine Infanteriedivision mit drei Regimentern um.⁴ Schon vorher hatte General-

1 Centek 2019 (1), S. 113–114.

2 Nałęcz 1984, S. 202.

3 Ebd., S. 201.

4 Wrzosek 1977, S. 288–294; Centek 2019 (1), S. 103–105.

oberst Hans von Beseler das Oberkommando abgeben und die faktische Befehlsgewalt an den Regentschaftsrat übertragen. Dieser berief am 25. Oktober 1918 den Generalstab der Polnischen Armee unter General Tadeusz Rozwadowski.⁵

Der Kampfeswille der Polen war hoch, allerdings fehlten ihnen, wie Emil Bauer aus dem Militärsportverein *Sokol* zugab, Waffen:

Am schlechtesten war es um die Waffen bestellt. Freiwillige zum Kampf gegen die Deutschen hatten wir geradezu im Überfluss, aber Waffen gab es nach den vielen Zwangsentwaffnungen der Bevölkerung durch die Deutschen während des Krieges fast überhaupt keine. Das Hauptkommando [des *Sokol*] meldete nur den Besitz einer begrenzten Anzahl von Hieb Waffen, ein paar private Faustfeuerwaffen und ganz wenige Gewehre. Dies führte dazu, dass die ersten Entwaffnungsaktionen der Aufständischen fast mit bloßen Händen stattfanden, zumindest in den meisten Fällen ohne Feuerwaffen. Größere Waffenvorräte mussten erst von den Besatzern erbeutet werden, und sie wurden sofort gegen sie eingesetzt.⁶

Es gab auch kommunistische Organisationen, die zwar ebenfalls am Gewinn von Waffen von den Besatzungsmächten interessiert waren, aber ihre Aktivitäten zielten nicht auf die Unabhängigkeit Polens. Ihre Tätigkeit war auch mit den Aktionen der zuvor erwähnten Gruppen nicht koordiniert.⁷

Deutsche Kräfte

Schon vor dem Ausbruch der Revolution in Deutschland besaßen die deutschen Kräfte im Befehlsbereich von *Ober Ost* keinen großen Kampfwert mehr, weil in Vorbereitung auf die Große Schlacht in Frankreich der Großteil der zum Frontkampf befähigten Einheiten an die Westfront verlegt worden war.⁸ Zusätzlich wurden aus den Landsturmverbänden im Generalgouvernement War-

5 Wrzosek 1988, S. 74.

6 „Najgorzej tylko było właśnie z bronią, gdyż o ile ochotników do wzięcia udziału w akcji zbrojnej przeciwko Niemcom było aż za wielu, o tyle broni po wielokrotnych przymusowych rozbajaniach ludności przez Niemców nie było prawie wcale. W rozporządzeniu komendy głównej [*Sokoła*] była tylko ograniczona ilość broni siecznej, nieco prywatnej krótkiej broni palnej i znikoma ilość karabinów, tak iż pierwsze akty rozbajania wykonane były przez powstańców prawie gołymi rękami, w każdym razie przeważnie bez broni palnej. Dopiero na okupantach zostały zdobyte i natychmiast zużyte przeciw nim większe zapasy broni.“ Interview des Redakteurs der Zeitschrift *Polska Zbrojna* mit Emil Rau über die Haltung des *Sokol* in den Novemberereignissen 1918, in: Łossowski / Stawecki 1988, S. 128.

7 Centek 2019 (1), S. 114–115.

8 Ders. 2018, S. 36.

schau zwischen Oktober 1917 und März 1918 noch etwa 4.200 Mann an die vordere Linie der Ostfront verlegt.⁹

Die Revolution in Deutschland führte dazu, dass auch im Osten Arbeiter- und Soldatenräte entstanden. Die Oberste Heeresleitung hatte ebenso wie die Regierung Ebert die Hoffnung, dass sich die Tätigkeit dieser Räte auf die Aufrechterhaltung von Ordnung und Disziplin richten ließe, aber dies war nicht in vollem Umfang möglich. Am 18. November wurde der Soldatenrat in Kaunas als Zentralrat für die Ostfront außerhalb der Heimat anerkannt.¹⁰

Trotz allem hatte Generaloberst Hans von Beseler Mitte Oktober 1918 noch etwa 12.000 Soldaten zur Verfügung, von denen allerdings 3.000 nur zum Einsatz in der Etappe geeignet waren. Die Personalstellen waren zu 85–95 % besetzt. Im Gebiet des Generalgouvernements Warschau waren etwa 35 von den 154 Landsturmbataillonen, die im Osten standen, stationiert.¹¹ Nicht zu ignorieren ist bei der Bewertung ihrer Kampffähigkeit die Tatsache, dass sie über Maschinengewehre verfügten.¹²

In der Ukraine standen Truppen der Heeresgruppe Kiev, zu denen im Laufe des Novembers noch Einheiten stießen, die aus der Türkei und vom Kaukasus zurückgezogen wurden. Angesichts des in der Ukraine herrschenden Chaos und des Rückgangs der Kampfmoral waren diese Kräfte jedoch zu keinerlei offensiven Einsätzen in der Lage. Sie verlangten einzig danach, schnell nach Deutschland zu kommen.¹³ Die Armee der gerade erst gegründeten Ukrainischen Volksrepublik stand im Wesentlichen auf dem Papier und war nicht in der Lage, das Land zu stabilisieren.¹⁴

Im heutigen Belarus stand die deutsche 10. Armee. Sie bestand aus sechs Divisionen, die sich vor allem aus Landsturmeinheiten mit geringem Kampfwert zusammensetzten. Der Befehlshaber dieses Großverbandes, General der Infanterie Erich von Falkenhayn, meldete schon am 14. November, dass er angesichts der massenhaft erhobenen Forderungen nach Rückkehr in die Heimat nicht in der Lage sei, seine Positionen zu halten. Er schlug den Rückzug auf die Linie der Feldbefestigungen der Jahre 1915–1916 vor, wobei ihm klar war, dass auch diese Linie nur zu halten sein würde, wenn sich genügend Freiwillige zu ihrer Verteidigung bereit erklärten. Er rechnete dabei damit, dass sich solche Freiwillige in den Reihen seiner Verbände finden würden.¹⁵

9 Szczepański 2012, S. 233.

10 *Die Rückführung des Ostheeres* 1936, S. 16–20; Centek 2018, S. 23.

11 Szczepański 2012, S. 233–235.

12 Ebd., S. 246.

13 Centek 2018, S. 31–36.

14 Mędrzecki 2000, S. 277; Krotofil 2011, S. 37–41.

15 Afflerbach 1994, S. 490; Centek 2018, S. 30–31.

Kurland war von der deutschen 8. Armee besetzt. Sie bestand aus sechs Infanteriedivisionen, einer selbständigen Kavalleriebrigade, neun Landsturmregimentern und verschiedenen rückwärtigen Verbänden. Da sich in diesem Gebiet auch die Marinebasen in Libau (Liepaja), Windau (Ventspils) und Reval (Tallinn) befanden, entwickelte sich die revolutionäre Bewegung innerhalb der deutschen Einheiten hier rasch.¹⁶ Infolgedessen war die 8. Armee „unter diesen Umständen ohne wesentliche Bedeutung“, und ihr Einsatz zu irgendwelchen militärischen Zwecken kam nicht in Frage.¹⁷

Die Ersatztruppen und Garnisonen, die nach der Mobilisierung von 1914 im Reichsgebiet belassen worden waren, zählten insgesamt 1,7 Millionen Soldaten. Selbst wenn man annimmt, dass im November 1918 diese Zahl bereits niedriger war, kann man aber doch davon ausgehen, dass in den genannten Korpsbezirken mindestens einige zehntausend Soldaten stationiert waren.¹⁸

Der Bereich Ober Ost löste den Stab des III. Reservekorps aus der 10. Armee heraus, der nach Brest verlegt wurde, aber schließlich in Białystok Quartier nahm. Von dort aus verwaltete er ab dem 17. November den Bezirk Litauen-Süd. In diesem Bereich bestanden Interessenkonflikte zwischen Polen und Litauern, und überdies war die Region als einer der Rückzugswege der deutschen Truppen aus der Ukraine wichtig.¹⁹

Die Situation im polnischen Gebiet am 10. November

In den ersten Novembertagen 1918 entwickelte sich die Lage in den polnischen Gebieten dynamisch. Der Zerfall Österreich-Ungarns seit Ende Oktober 1918 führte dazu, dass sowohl der bislang von Österreich-Ungarn besetzte Teil des ehemaligen Kongresspolens als auch die seit den Teilungen zur Donaumonarchie gehörenden Landesteile Galizien und Teschener Schlesien unter polnische Kontrolle kamen. Gegenüber den österreichischen Kräften begann die Entwaffnungsaktion bereits am 2. November, und in der Nacht des 6./7. November wurde in Lublin die Provisorische Regierung der Polnischen Volksrepublik proklamiert. Zu ihrem Schutz waren 300–400 Soldaten der POW abkommandiert, und auf ihre Seite wechselte auch das zuvor in die Stadt entsandte Bataillon der Polnischen Wehrmacht.²⁰ Einige Mitglieder der POW reisten auf eigene Faust nach Lublin, um dort in die im Aufbau befindliche polnische Armee einzutreten. Dieses Verhalten stieß allerdings bei der Leitung der POW auf entschiedene

16 Centek 2018, S. 28.

17 *Die Rückführung des Ostheeres* 1936, S. 130.

18 Vgl. für Westpreußen Centek 2019 (2), S. 15–18.

19 *Die Rückführung des Ostheeres* 1936, S. 24.

20 Nałęcz 1984, S. 205–219.

Kritik. Die POW-Spitze befahl den in ihren Reihen stehenden Verschwörern, in ihren Wohnbezirken zu bleiben, wo sie sich auskannten und wo sie in unmittelbarer Zukunft gegen die deutschen Besatzungskräfte antreten sollten. Dieser Angriff sollte am 10. November bei einer Besprechung der Bezirkskommandeure ausgerufen werden.²¹

Freilich war die Situation in den von Deutschland kontrollierten Gebieten eine andere. Die Mobilisierung der POW fand dort erst am 10. November statt, und sie galt nur für das Gebiet des Generalgouvernements Warschau.²² Polnische Kräfte verstärkten ihre Aktivitäten in den Ostgebieten des Reiches, wobei sie manchmal auch militärische Optionen in Erwägung zogen. Solche Optionen hatten damals allerdings keine großen Erfolgchancen.

Roman Dmowski schrieb damals, viele hätten erwartet, dass die Revolution in Deutschland die anderen Gesellschaften Zentraleuropas mit sich reißen würde; allerdings hätten sich diese Hoffnungen als verfehlt erwiesen, weil:

Auf der einen Seite die deutsche Gesellschaft, die während vierer Kriegsjahre ungeahnten Herausforderungen ausgesetzt gewesen war, zu erschöpft war, um die für eine Expansion der Revolution nötige Energie zu entwickeln; auf der anderen Seite aber die Nationen, denen der Sieg der Alliierten die Befreiung von fremder Bedrückung brachte, sich auf der richtigen Seite glaubten und deshalb nationaler Ehrgeiz sich als stärker erwies als Umsturzbestrebungen. [...] Revolutionäre Tendenzen gab es damals unter den Besiegten: Deutschen, Österreichern, Ungarn und Bulgaren, während die anderen Völker aus dem Chaos durch die Schaffung der Grundlagen ihrer neuen staatlichen Organisation herauskommen wollten.²³

In dieser Situation wirkten die revolutionären Ereignisse in doppelter und dabei gegensätzlicher Weise. Einerseits war die Moral der deutschen Soldaten durch das Chaos im Reich nach der Abdankung von Kaiser Wilhelm II. und der Kriegsniederlage deutlich geschwächt. Auf der polnischen Seite dagegen war es umgekehrt: Hier fühlte die Gesellschaft, dass die Revolution in Deutschland der richtige Augenblick war, um aktiv gegen die Besatzungstruppen vorzugehen.

21 Ebd., S. 220–221.

22 Centek 2019 (1), S. 114.

23 „Z jednej strony – społeczeństwo niemieckie, wystawione w ciągu czteroletniej z górą wojny na niebywałe próby, było zbyt wyczerpane i niezdolne do wydobycia z siebie większej energii; z drugiej zaś – narody, którym zwycięstwo sprzymierzonych przynosiło wyzwolenie spod obcego jarzma, miały psychologię zwycięzców i entuzjazm narodowy brał wśród nich górę nad dążeniami przewrotowymi. [...] Rewolucyjne dążności wzięły górę tylko wśród zwyciężonych, wśród Niemców, Austriaków, Węgrów i Bułgarów. Wysiłki innych ludów skierowały się ku wydobyciu się z chaosu, ku stworzeniu podstaw swej nowej organizacji państwowej.“ Dmowski 1989, S. 104.

Piłsudskis Rückkehr nach Warschau und die Entwaffnung der dortigen Garnison

Verständlicherweise war die wichtigste Stadt im deutsch besetzten Polen Warschau. Schon am 8. November konstituierte sich dort ein Soldatenrat, der nach kurzer Zeit die Kontrolle über die in der Stadt stationierten deutschen Truppen übernahm.²⁴ Die Soldatenräte waren bestrebt, die Befehlsgewalt zu übernehmen, was eindeutig den Kampfwert der Besatzungstruppen schmälerte. Das wichtigste Ziel ihrer Arbeit war, den schnellstmöglichen Rücktransport in die Heimat zu organisieren; an zweiter Stelle standen die Beziehungen zwischen Offizieren und Soldaten. Sie verlangten gleiche Verpflegungsrationen, d. h. die außerdienstliche Gleichstellung beider Gruppen. Diese Forderungen trieben Gegensätze in die deutschen Truppen und führten dazu, dass Disziplin und Moral weiter absanken.²⁵

Das Schlüsselereignis war die Rückkehr Józef Piłsudskis nach Warschau am Morgen des 10. November, gemeinsam mit Oberst Kazimierz Sosnkowski. Am Bahnhof erwartete ihn schon ungeduldig Fürst Zdzisław Lubomirski vom Regentschaftsrat. Auch der Chef der POW in Warschau, Adam Koc, war zugegen.²⁶ Anschließend begab sich Piłsudski, der zuvor keine Gelegenheit gehabt hatte, sich mit der Situation im Lande vertraut zu machen, in Lubomirskis Palast, wo die beiden unter vier Augen sprachen. Auf diese Weise wurde der Regent der entscheidende Gewährsmann, der Piłsudski die verwickelte Lage der polnischen Sache erklärte.²⁷ Piłsudski nahm aus dem Gespräch die Überzeugung mit, dass es sich nicht lohne, Kontakt mit den Besatzungsbehörden aufzunehmen; das tat er vielmehr mit dem Soldatenrat, obwohl er eigentlich ursprünglich ein Treffen mit Generaloberst Hans von Beseler persönlich oder seinem Stabschef Oberst Nethé hätte haben sollen. Durch diese Entscheidung erreichte Piłsudski ohne Waffeneinsatz auf dem Verhandlungsweg die Evakuierung der deutschen Truppen aus Warschau und dem übrigen Gebiet Polens.²⁸

Allerdings kam es in Warschau schon am 10. November zu spontanen Entwaffnungsaktionen gegenüber einzelnen deutschen Soldaten, die in den allermeisten Fällen keinen Widerstand leisteten. Diese Aktionen waren das Werk von Mitgliedern verschiedener polnischer Organisationen oder auch nicht organi-

24 Drozdowski / Zahorski 2004, S. 271.

25 Łossowski 1986, S. 95.

26 Bericht von Adam Koc über die Ankunft von Józef Piłsudski in Warschau am 10. November 1918, in: Łossowski / Stawecki 1988, S. 98–99.

27 Pajewski 1978, S. 296–297; Nałęcz 1984, S. 221–222.

28 Łossowski 1986, S. 94.

sierten Zivilisten. Auch die Besetzung von bisher von den deutschen Besatzungsbehörden genutzten zivilen Gebäuden kam in Gang.²⁹

In dieser Situation versetzten die Deutschen ihre Truppen in Alarmbereitschaft und verstärkten die Besetzung einiger Objekte in der Stadt; die Besetzung der Warschauer Zitadelle wurde durch zwei Batterien Artillerie aus dem Vorort Rembertów sowie einen Teil des Offiziersaspiranten-Übungsregiments aus Jabłonna verstärkt; diese Soldaten besetzten auch das Rathaus und das Königsschloss.³⁰

Das unkoordinierte Vorgehen der Polen konnte aber in einer so großen Stadt wie Warschau keine Entscheidung herbeiführen, zumal dort nach wie vor bedeutende Truppenverbände stationiert waren. Hierfür war ein zielgerichtetes und organisiertes Vorgehen erforderlich. Deshalb rief das Hauptkommando der POW am Vormittag des 11. November die Mitglieder der Organisation zur Mobilisierung auf. Als Sammelpunkt wurde das Gelände der Warschauer Universität gewählt, wo auch gleich Kompanien und Züge eingeteilt wurden.³¹ Dies geht jedenfalls aus den Erinnerungen von Piotr Michalski hervor, einem damaligen Milizangehörigen, der sich am Morgen des 11. November

[...] in die Konwiktorska Straße begab, mit dem Ziel, eine etwa 100 Soldaten starke Wache zu entwaffnen. Nachdem wir dies teilweise erreicht hatten und die erbeuteten Gewehre bereits auf dem Hof verluden, informierte jemand aus der Wachstube eine in der Nähe auf der Zitadelle stationierte deutsche Einheit, die in Zugstärke (etwa 40 Mann unter zwei Offizieren) [erschien] und Anstalten machte, uns alle zur Erschießung abzuführen. [...] Nur weil es zwischen den beiden Offizieren, die das Kommando führten, irgendein Missverständnis gab, kamen wir mit dem Leben davon. Denn einer der Offiziere [wollte] uns erschießen lassen, der andere war dagegen.³²

Es bleibt eine Tatsache, dass die Polen von diesem deutschen Vorstoß offenbar völlig überrascht wurden, weil der Autor der Erinnerungen kein einziges Wort über eventuelle Versuche, Widerstand zu leisten, verliert. Es wird auch klar, welche Wirkung die Kampfmoral hatte: Über 100 Soldaten waren bereit, ihre Waffen kampfflos abzugeben, während eine kleinere, aber dafür entschlossene

29 Nałęcz 1984, S. 222.

30 Ebd., S. 222; Wrzosek 1988, S. 40.

31 Nałęcz 1984, S. 222.

32 „[...] na ul. Konwiktorską w celu rozbrojenia warty w sile około 100 ludzi. Po częściowym rozbrojeniu wspomnianej warty, kiedyśmy już ładowali na podwórze odebrane karabiny wówczas ktoś z wartowni zawiadomił pobliski oddział Niemców w cytadeli, który to [przybył] w sile jednego plutonu (około 40 ludzi) i 2 oficerów wyprowadzając nas wszystkich w zamiarze rozstrzelania. [...] Jedynie dzięki temu, że między tymi dwoma oficerami, którzy prowadzili ów oddział, nastąpiło jakieś nieporozumienie, to nas uratowało od śmierci, gdyż jeden z nich [chciał] doprowadzić [do] egzekucji, a drugi temu się sprzeciwił.“ Bericht von Piotr Michalski an das 12. Kommissariat der Staatspolizei über die Entwaffnung der Deutschen in Warschau, in: Łossowski / Stawecki 1988, S. 110.

Gruppe von Deutschen um ein Haar die Polen hingerichtet hätte. Dass es hierzu nicht kam, verdankten die Polen einzig dem Versagen der Führung. Eine ähnliche Situation beschrieb auch Sylwester Okoń:

Zu der vor dem Bahnhof versammelten Menge kam ein deutscher Offizier mit einem Zug bewaffneter Soldaten heraus, die sich in Reih und Glied [...] Gewehr bei Fuß aufstellten. Wahrscheinlich warteten sie auf weitere Befehle. In diesem Augenblick kam ein deutscher Soldat [...] in einer gewöhnlichen Mütze mit rotem Band, offener Uniform und einer roten Armbinde auf der linken Seite heraus. Er ging rasch auf den Offizier zu, nahm ihm den Helm vom Kopf, riss den Adler ab und warf ihn zu Boden. Dabei sagte er in scharfem Ton etwas zu den angetretenen Soldaten. Die Deutschen standen wie angegossen und sagten kein Wort. Es war erkennbar, dass ihr Kampfgeist völlig zum Erliegen gekommen war. In diesem Moment rief die Menge vor dem Bahnhof „Marsch, vorwärts, hurra“ und gemeinsam mit der Menge drangen wir ins Innere ein, wobei wir den Deutschen ihre Gewehre abnahmen. Einige von ihnen warfen ihre Waffen auch von selbst weg, und Tornister und Patronentaschen gleich dazu.³³

Die Hauptkommandantur I der POW ordnete am 12. November an, dass die einzelnen Bezirkskommandeure sich mit den Soldatenräten einigen und auf diese Weise zu einer zügigen Übernahme der Waffenvorräte kommen sollten. Der Auftrag lautete auch, bewaffnete Konfrontationen zu vermeiden und den Soldaten freies Geleit ins Reich zuzusichern, sofern sie Waffen und Kriegsmaterial abgäben.³⁴ Ähnlich äußerte sich der deutsche Zentralsoldatenrat und unterstrich vor allem seinen Willen, den möglichst raschen Rücktransport der Soldaten in die Heimat sicherzustellen. Allerdings mussten dazu zunächst die Bahnverbindungen wieder nutzbar gemacht werden.³⁵ Zwar war an der Spitze nach wie vor Generaloberst von Beseler im Amt, allerdings berichtete sein Stabschef Oberst Nethe, dass er am 11. November nicht mehr zu halten gewesen sei: „Der Generalgouverneur sitze apathisch in seinem Zimmer und verweigere jede Tätigkeit.“³⁶ Graf Hutten-Czapski, der am selben Tag eine Unterredung mit von Beseler hatte, erinnerte sich wie folgt:

33 „Do tłumy przed dworzec wyszedł oficer niemiecki wraz z plutonem żołnierzy uzbrojonych, którzy stanęli w szyku rozwiniętym na stopniach [...] z bronią u nogi, którzy prawdopodobnie czekali dalszych rozkazów. W tym momencie wyszedł żołnierz niemiecki [...] w czapce zwykłej z czerwonym lampasem, mundur rozpięty, kokarda czerwona na lewym boku [...] bystro przystąpiwszy do oficera chwycił mu hełm z głowy, zerwał orła, rzucił na ziemię i również zwrócił się do stojącego plutonu, ostro coś do nich przemawiając. Niemcy stali jak wryci, wprost zaniemówili; dało się zauważyć zabicie w nich ducha zupełnie. Wówczas stojący tłum krzyknął „marsz, naprzód, hurra“. Wraz z tłumem wtargnęliśmy do wnętrza zabierając Niemcom karabiny. Niektórzy z nich sami natychmiast porzucali karabiny wraz z tornistrami i ładownicami.“ Bericht von Sylwester Okoń an das 10. Kommissariat der Staatspolizei über die Entwaffnung der Deutschen in Warschau, in: ebd., S. 109.

34 Łossowski 1986, S. 116.

35 Ebd., S. 116–120.

36 Hutten-Czapski 1936, S. 522–523.

In wenigen Worten bat ich ihn, zu bleiben und unser ungewisses Schicksal zu teilen. Jetzt dürfe niemand abreisen, der Kapitän vollends müsse als letzter das sinkende Schiff [verlassen]. Als Antwort zeigte Beseler ein Telegramm Hindenburgs, in dem von dem „bisherigen“ Generalgouvernement Warschau gesprochen war. Er sehe darin die Bestätigung der Auflösung des Generalgouvernements und die Genehmigung seiner Enthebung. Er setzte hinzu, er habe hier nichts mehr zu tun und zu befehlen.³⁷

Schon am nächsten Tag verließ Generaloberst von Beseler Warschau an Bord eines Weichselschiffs und begab sich nach Thorn (Toruń). Seine bisherigen Untergebenen aber blieben vorerst vor Ort.³⁸ Aber auch ihre Evakuierung kam rasch in Gang. Bis zum Ende des 13. Novembers gingen drei Züge nach Mława ab, die insgesamt 3.600 Soldaten transportierten. Weitere 400 Soldaten verließen Warschau in Richtung des oberschlesischen Sosnowiec. Für 600 Verwundete und Kranke wurde ein Sonderzug bereitgestellt. Diese Zahlen wirken eindrucksvoller, als sie tatsächlich waren, denn insgesamt befanden sich bei Kriegsende etwa 30.000 deutsche Soldaten und Beamte in Warschau.³⁹ Am 15. November wurde mit Vertretern des Warschauer Soldatenrates vereinbart, dass die Soldaten aus Łódź und Warschau diese Städte mit ihren Waffen verlassen, diese aber an den Grenzstationen abgeben sollten.⁴⁰ Die Evakuierung wurde auch in den folgenden Tagen zügig fortgesetzt, so dass am 19. November die letzte geschlossene deutsche Einheit aus Warschau abtransportiert wurde.⁴¹ Es handelte sich um 1.500 Soldaten, den Rest der Besatzung der Zitadelle.⁴²

Der Verlauf der Entwaffnungsaktionen in ausgewählten anderen Ortschaften

Leider ist hier nicht der Raum, um das Thema vollständig darzustellen, aber die nachstehend beschriebenen Ereignisse kann man als typisch auch für die übrigen Fälle der Entwaffnung deutscher Verbände ansehen.

Nach Łódź gelangte die Information über die Bildung einer polnischen Regierung am 8. November. In diesem Zusammenhang wurde für den 10. November eine Volksversammlung einberufen. Schon einen Tag vorher hatten die lokalen Zeitungen Sonderbeilagen publiziert, in denen sie über die Abdankung Wilhelms II. informierten.⁴³ Die POW zählte in der Stadt angeblich nur 35 Mit-

37 Ebd., S. 523.

38 Łossowski 1986, S. 120.

39 Ebd.

40 Ebd. S. 130–131.

41 *Die Rückführung des Ostheeres* 1936, S. 23.

42 Łossowski 1986, S. 136.

43 Ajnenkiel 1933, S. 401–402.

glieder,⁴⁴ aber diese Zahl ist höchstwahrscheinlich untertrieben. Auf jeden Fall fanden sich auf Grundlage des ergangenen Mobilisierungsbefehls insgesamt 500 Mitglieder der Organisation an den angegebenen Orten ein, die durch 150 Mitglieder des Nationalen Arbeiterbundes sowie Gruppen von jeweils einigen Dutzend Angehörigen anderer Organisationen verstärkt wurden. An den Aktivitäten gegen die Besatzungstruppen waren neben der POW auch sogenannte „Dowbor-Leute“ (also Soldaten des entwaffneten I. Polnischen Korps in Russland) und ehemalige Angehörige von Piłsudskis Legionen beteiligt, wobei die Reihen der kämpfenden Mitglieder sich oft durchmischten.⁴⁵ Während in der Stadt Łódź die beiden genannten Gruppen schnell zu einer Zusammenarbeit kamen, herrschte zwischen den POW-Mitgliedern und dem Werbebüro der Polnischen Wehrmacht in der Stadt ein feindseliges Verhältnis.⁴⁶ Unter den Deutschen hatte sich unterdessen ein Soldatenrat gebildet. Aus den Erinnerungen von Mieczysław Pęczkowski, Teilnehmer der Novemberereignisse in Łódź:

Kommunisten gab es unter ihnen überhaupt keine. Die ganze Organisationsstruktur ihres Soldatenrates hatte, ebenso wie dessen Handeln, etwas ziemlich Konservatives. Sie stellten sich eine einfache Aufgabe: geordnet und möglichst schnell nach Hause zurückkehren, um an den dort stattfindenden Entwicklungen teilzuhaben.⁴⁷

In dieser Situation ist es kein Wunder, dass es zwischen dem Soldatenrat und den örtlichen Vertretern der polnischen Linken zu keiner Verständigung kam. Denn letztere hatten keine Möglichkeit, den Deutschen eine sichere Heimkehr zu garantieren. Auch deshalb waren die Deutschen einzig an Verhandlungen mit einer Delegation der POW interessiert.⁴⁸ Sie begannen erst am Abend des 11. November, als es schon zu den ersten spontanen Entwaffnungsaktionen gekommen war. Gegen 2 Uhr morgens am 12. November wurde ein Waffenstillstand vereinbart, aber wie öfters in solchen Situationen konnte dies weitere Zwischenfälle nicht verhindern. Wie bereits erwähnt, war in Warschau am 15. November vereinbart worden, dass die Garnison von Łódź mit Handwaffen sowie schweren Maschinengewehren abreisen und diese erst an der Grenze in Mława abgeben sollte. Letztlich aber behielt nur eine Handvoll Soldaten ihre Waffen auch nach der Entwaffnung der Besatzungstruppen. Die polnische Stadtkommandantur erhielt 160 Autos, 38 Maschinengewehre und einige tausend Gewehre. Die Entwaffnungsaktion in Łódź war also eine der größten in Polen; in ihrem Verlauf kamen

44 Nałęcz 1984, S. 201.

45 Ajnenkiel 1933, S. 404–405; Pęczkowski 1935, S. 121; Bogalecki 1999, S. 156.

46 Pęczkowski 1935, S. 116.

47 „Sami oni nic w swoim składzie komunistycznego nie mieli. Cała struktura organizacyjna ich Soldatenratu, jak i działanie, miało dość konserwatywne oblicze. Zadanie, jakie sobie postawili, było proste: wrócić w porządku i jak najprędzej do kraju, aby wziąć udział w wypadkach, tam się rozgrywających.“ Ebd., S. 118–119.

48 Ebd., S. 118–120; Bogalecki 1999, S. 163.

auf polnischer Seite sechs Menschen ums Leben und ein gutes Dutzend Männer trug Verletzungen davon. Auf deutscher Seite gab es mindestens einen Toten und zwei Verwundete.⁴⁹ Dabei muss erwähnt werden, dass an der Entwaffnung der Besatzungssoldaten in Łódź auch Polen teilnahmen, die in von den Deutschen rekrutierten und in der Stadt stationierten Einheiten dienten. Sie trugen dazu bei, dass eine Reihe wichtiger Objekte unter die Kontrolle der polnischen Seite kam.⁵⁰

In Łomża war der 11. November als Tag der Entwaffnung der Deutschen festgelegt worden. In diesem Zusammenhang kamen schon einen Tag zuvor Mitglieder der POW aus dem Umland in die Stadt. Als die Polen dem Stadtkommandanten ein Angebot für die Abgabe der Waffen machten, brachen in der Stadt Schießereien aus, die sich die ganze Nacht über hinzogen. Örtliche Zivilisten unterstützten die Aktivitäten der POW.⁵¹

In Tomaszów Mazowiecki zählte die örtliche Zelle der POW etwa 100 Mitglieder, vor allem ehemalige Angehörige der Legionen sowie Pfadfinder.⁵² In der Stadt war eine Kompanie Landsturm stationiert, die sich am 11. November auf den für den kommenden Tag vorgesehenen Abzug aus der Stadt vorbereitete. Am folgenden Tag sollte ein Zug die Stadt passieren, in dem sich bereits eine Kompanie deutscher Soldaten aus Spała befand. In Tomaszów sollten sich beide Einheiten vereinen und gemeinsam ins Reich fahren. Die Polen verlangten unterdessen, dass die Garnison von Tomaszów Mazowiecki die Waffen abgebe. Obwohl die Landsturmsoldaten sich damit einverstanden erklärt hatten und die Abgabe der Gewehre bereits begonnen hatte, kam es im allgemeinen Durcheinander zu einer Schießerei. Glücklicherweise ließ sich die Situation recht schnell unter Kontrolle bringen, und die Deutschen wurden unter Bewachung zum Bahnhof geführt. Dort allerdings kam es wieder zu Reibereien, weil die Polen verlangten, dass auch die Kompanie aus Spała ihre Waffen abgab. Nach mehrstündigen Verhandlungen gaben die Deutschen ihre Waffen ab, und beide Einheiten reisten über Koluszki und Kalisz ab.⁵³

In Włocławek war es dem Stadtpräsidenten Stanisław Borysowicz gelungen, nach dem Ausbruch der Revolution in Deutschland Waffen für die Bürgerwehr von den Deutschen zu kaufen. Am 10. November wurde ein Polnischer Rat einberufen, dessen Vertreter den Soldatenrat aufsuchten und die Abgabe der Waffen gegen freies Geleit in die Heimat verlangten. Der Soldatenrat wies diese Forderung zurück, und am kommenden Tag begann die Entwaffnung der etwa 600 Soldaten zählenden Garnison. Auf polnischer Seite beteiligten sich je 50 Mitglieder der POW und der Bürgerwehr sowie 5 uniformierte Angehörige der

49 Bogalecki 1999, S. 166–167.

50 Ebd., S. 163.

51 Świdorski 1925, S. 137–139.

52 Jarno 2015, S. 148–149.

53 Ebd., S. 149–150.

Legionen. Widerstand leisteten die Besatzungstruppen einzig auf dem Bahnhof und an der Verladestelle für die Weichselschiffahrt. Sie verteidigten somit ihren eigenen Rückzugsweg. Die ganze Aktion endete am 11. November und kostete zwei Menschenleben.⁵⁴

In Jabłonna bei Warschau gab es ein Militärlager, in dem im November 1918 zwei Kompanien des 2. Landsturm-Infanteriebataillon „Burg“ sowie das Offiziersaspiranten-Übungsregiment Jabłonna sowie das Heimgekehrten-Lager Jabłonna untergebracht waren. Diese Kräfte waren verhältnismäßig zahlreich und gut bewaffnet, aber ihre Kampfmoral war sehr niedrig. Nach dem Ausbruch der Revolution wurde auch dort ein Soldatenrat gewählt, der das Kommando über die Garnison übernahm. Die Aufgabe, von polnischer Seite die Kasernen unter Kontrolle zu bekommen, erhielt Polikarp Wróblewski, der mit etwa 100 POW-Mitgliedern den Angriff startete. Die Polen eroberten einen Teil der Gebäude des Lagers und erbeuteten einige Dutzend Gewehre sowie mehrere tausend Uniformen. Eine militärische Auseinandersetzung mit den deutschen Hauptkräften blieb jedoch aus, da beide Seiten Verhandlungen aufnahmen. Diese führten dazu, dass über dem Gebäude des deutschen Stabes am Morgen des 14. November die weiße Fahne gehisst wurde.⁵⁵

Im Raum von Ostrów Mazowiecki befanden sich Ausbildungszentren für die Infanterie der Polnischen Wehrmacht. Nachmittags gingen dort Informationen ein, wonach „deutsche Abteilungen die Bevölkerung berauben, Rinder und Pferde stehlen“.⁵⁶ Drei Offiziere, acht einfache Soldaten und vier bewaffnete Zivilisten nahmen die Verfolgung auf. Als sie die deutsche Kolonne erreichten, war zu sehen, dass sie in gesicherter Formation und mit aufgefplanten Bajonetten marschierte. Die Polen verlangten, die Beute und die Waffen herauszugeben. Nach einigen spannungsreichen Minuten gelang dies unter Nutzung einer Kriegeslist: Den Deutschen wurde vorgespiegelt, stärkere polnische Kräfte seien im Anmarsch. Wie sich Stefan Rowecki erinnerte:

Die Deutschen willigten ein, ihre Waffen, die Pferde und Rinder sowie die mitgeführten Vorräte an Waffen, Munition, Stiefeln usw. abzugeben. Ich erlaubte ihnen, Marschverpflegung und ein paar Fuhrwerke sowie je ein Gewehr und 50 Patronen pro zehn Mann mitzunehmen, damit sie sich gegen eventuelle Angriffe der polnischen Zivilbevölkerung verteidigen konnten, die sie sehr befürchteten. [...] Auf diese Weise entwaffneten wir eine ganze Kompanie und gewannen ihre Beute und andere Vorräte zurück: gut vierzig Pferde, einige Dutzend Fuhrwerke voller Waffen, Munition und

54 Kieloch 1999, S. 688.

55 Szczepański 2015, S. 347–350.

56 „Oddziały niemieckie rabują ludność, zabierając bydło i konie“, Bericht von Stefan Rowecki über die Entwaffnung der deutschen Besatzer im Raum Ostrów Mazowiecka, in: Łossowski / Stawecki 1988, S. 130.

Ausrüstungsgegenständen sowie eine ganze Herde von Rindern, die sie der Zivilbevölkerung abgenommen hatten und die jetzt zu unserer Beute wurden.⁵⁷

Ein zweiter Teilnehmer des Geschehens erinnerte sich, dass:

Ein sturer Leutnant schließlich einwilligte, die Waffen niederzulegen und die mitgeführten Vorräte abzugeben. Erst jetzt trat bei den Deutschen ein völliger psychischer Zusammenbruch ein. Vor allem, nachdem ein Pole aufgetreten war, sein Gewehr und seine Pickelhaube zu Boden geworfen und erklärt hatte, dass der Krieg nun Gottseidank vorbei sei, und dass er auf unserer Seite bleiben werde. Daraufhin stürzte sich der Leutnant wie ein wildes Tier auf ihn und warf ihm Desertion und Eidbruch vor, aber die übrigen Deutschen verhehlten nicht, dass sie mit der Entwicklung nicht unzufrieden waren.⁵⁸

Die hier beschriebene Situation zeigt, dass Polen in den Reihen der Besatzungstruppen eine wichtige Rolle bei der Entwaffnung spielen konnten, auch wenn sie nur einen kleinen Prozentsatz der Soldaten ausmachten.

Aus Ostrołęka zogen sich die deutschen Bahnbeamten am 12. November mit einem Zug nach Ostpreußen zurück; allerdings hielt sich in den nahegelegenen Kasernen immer noch ein deutsches Ersatzbataillon auf. An der Spitze der polnischen Kräfte stand Tadeusz Wardejn-Zagórski; er hatte nur 25 Mann zur Verfügung. Auch wenn sie mit Gewehren bewaffnet waren, hätten sie bei einem Angriff auf etwa 500 Soldaten mit drei Maschinengewehren keine Chance gehabt. Da halfen nur Verhandlungen. Nach einigen Stunden willigten die Deutschen ein, ihre gesamten Waffen abzugeben. Interessanterweise verfügten sie zwar über Maschinengewehre, allerdings aber nur über alte Gewehre vom Typ 88.⁵⁹

Nicht überall verliefen die Entwaffnungen problemlos. In Biała Podlaska sollte eine Garnison von etwa 1.000 Soldaten stationiert sein, in Międzyrzec Podlaski

57 „Niemcy zgodzili się złożyć broń, oddać wozy, konie, bydło oraz wiezione zapasy broni, amunicji, mundurów, butów itp. Pozwoliłem im zabrać żywność i kilka wozów oraz po karabinie i 50 naboji na 10 ludzi dla ewentualnej obrony przed napadami cywilnej ludności, czego się ogromnie obawiali. [...] W ten sposób nastąpiło rozbrojenie całej kompanii i odebranie jej łupów i zapasów. Czterdzieści kilka koni, kilkadziesiąt wozów pełnych broni, amunicji, ekwipunku, całe stado zrabowanego ludności bydła stało się naszą zdobyczą.“ Ebd., S. 132.

58 „Uparty lejtnant zgodził się na złożenie broni i wydanie eskortowanych zapasów. Teraz dopiero nastąpiło u Niemców całkowite załamanie. Przede wszystkim wystąpił jeden Polak i rzucając karabin i pikelhaubę na ziemię, zawołał, że chwala Bogu iż wojna skończona i on z nami pozostaje. Na to lejtnant rzucił się jak dzikie zwierzę do niego, iż przecież przysięgał cesarzowi, że to jest dezercja itd., ale reszta Niemców także nie kryła swego zadowolenia.“ Erinnerungen von Eugeniusz Quirini an die Entwaffnung der Deutschen in Ostrów Mazowiecka, ebd., S. 135.

59 Bericht von Tadeusz Wardejn-Zagrski für die historisch-operative III. Abteilung des Ausbildungsstabes des Generalstabes der Polnischen Streitkräfte über die Entwaffnung der Besatzer in Ostrołęka, ebd., S. 137–139.

befanden sich weitere 500.⁶⁰ Anfangs verlief alles wie an vielen anderen Orten auch.⁶¹ Angeblich sollen Polen sogar versucht haben, durch Verhandlungen die Kontrolle über die Festung Brest zu erreichen.⁶² Aber es kam zu Komplikationen, wie sich ein Verhandlungsbeteiligter in Biała Podlaska erinnerte:

Wir stellten die Bedingung, dass die Deutschen die Stadt innerhalb von 24 Stunden verlassen und dabei nur ihr privates Hab und Gut mitnehmen sollten. Dagegen sollten Waffen und alles militärische Gerät zurückbleiben und an uns übergeben werden. Im Prinzip willigten die Deutschen ein, dass sie innerhalb von zwei Tagen abfahren, wenn ihre persönliche Sicherheit garantiert wird. Das wurde dann auch vertraglich so vereinbart. Einige Objekte übernahmen wir bereits. [Doch inzwischen] kam es in einigen Fällen dazu, dass Deutsche verprügelt wurden. Die deutsche Führung protestierte und warf uns vor, dass wir den Vertrag nicht einhielten.⁶³

Nach der offiziellen deutschen Darstellung hatte die militärische Führung im sogenannten Etappen-Hauptort Biała Podlaska die Kommandogewalt behalten. Obwohl man die Kontrolle über Międzyrzecz Podlaski verloren hatte, kam es zu einer schnellen Intervention des Stoßtrupps der Etappeninspektion, einer Einheit, die sich im Wesentlichen aus Offizieren des Inspektionsstabes zusammensetzte. Ober Ost verstärkte überdies die Truppen in der Region durch das Leibhusarenregiment 2.⁶⁴ Die nicht von der Revolution erfassten Soldaten dieses Regiments wurden noch in der Nacht nach Biała Podlaska verlegt und gewannen am Morgen die Kontrolle über die Stadt. Dabei beseitigten sie den Soldatenrat und zwangen die POW, ihre Truppen aus der Stadt zurückzuziehen.⁶⁵ Am 16. November eroberten die Deutschen Międzyrzecz Podlaski zurück, wobei sie eine Gruppe von POW-Mitgliedern massakrierten, die sich im dortigen Palast der Familie Potocki verteidigte. Sie brachten auch den dortigen Bahnhof unter ihre Kontrolle. Es kam in Einzelfällen zur Tötung und Beraubung von Zivilisten. Die polnischen Gesamtverluste betragen 45 Getötete, davon 26 Einwohner der Stadt,

60 Centek 2018, S. 27.

61 Łossowski 1986, S. 212–213.

62 Centek 2018, S. 28.

63 „Postawiliśmy warunki, że Niemcy opuszczą w ciągu 24 godzin miasto, zabierając z sobą jedynie swoje prywatne rzeczy, natomiast broń, sprzęt wojskowy, materiały pozostawią, przekazując nam w posiadanie. Niemcy zasadniczo zgodzili się z tym, że wyjadą w ciągu 2 dni i że zagwarantowane zostanie im bezpieczeństwo osobiste. Gwarancję otrzymali i umowa została zawarta. Częściowo niektóre obiekty już zajęliśmy. [Tymczasem] doszło w kilku przypadkach do pobicia Niemców. Dowództwo niemieckie zaprotestowało przeciwko temu, zarzucając nam, iż nie dotrzymujemy umowy.“ Aus der Antwort von Marian Jeżewski auf eine Umfrage des Militärhistorischen Büros von 1931 über die Entwaffnung der Deutschen in Biała Podlaska, in: Łossowski / Stawecki 1988, S. 260.

64 *Die Rückführung des Ostheeres* 1936, S. 27.

65 Aus der Antwort von Marian Jeżewski auf eine Umfrage des Militärhistorischen Büros von 1931 über die Entwaffnung der Deutschen in Biała Podlaska, in: Łossowski / Stawecki 1988, S. 261.

und zumindest zum Teil bewaffnete POW-Kämpfer. Die Zahl der Verletzten lässt sich leider nicht mehr rekonstruieren.⁶⁶

Besonderes Augenmerk lenkten die Deutschen auch auf Grajewo, weil die Polen dort die wichtigste Bahnlinie für die Evakuierung deutscher Truppen von der Ostfront hätten unterbrechen können.⁶⁷ Durch Verhandlungen wurde am 18. November vereinbart, dass die Bahnlinie Brest – Białystok – Grajewo zur Evakuierung der Kräfte von Ober Ost benutzt werden konnte, und die polnische Seite verpflichtete sich, diesen Abzug nicht zu behindern.⁶⁸

Zusammenfassung

Deutschland und Österreich-Ungarn waren nicht in der Lage gewesen, sich über die Zukunft Polens zu verständigen. Während dies im Zuge der deutschen Offensiven im Frühling und Sommer 1918 nicht von größerer Bedeutung war, wurde die Position der Besatzungstruppen ab dem Moment des Gegenangriffs am 18. Juli merklich schwächer, und die Entscheidung dieser Frage geriet unwiderruflich außer Reichweite der Mittelmächte. Damian Szymczaks Aussage kann man nur zustimmen:

Unter dem Strich gelang es der polnischen Seite im Verlauf des Jahres 1918 nach und nach, die Konkurrenz zwischen den Mittelmächten für sich auszunutzen und so das Rückgrat der künftigen Staatlichkeit zu schaffen. Das erwies sich im November 1918 als unschätzbare Vorteil, als das Verwaltungs- und Militärsystem der Besatzer sich auflöste und deshalb eine zügige Übernahme der Verwaltung des Landes möglich wurde.⁶⁹

Wie schon erwähnt, war die Frage der Moral der Truppen von entscheidender Bedeutung für den Verlauf der Entwaffnungsaktionen. Die offizielle deutsche Darstellung der Evakuierung der deutschen Truppen von der Ostfront hält fest:

[...] die große Masse der fast nur aus Landsturm bestehenden Besatzungstruppen versagte vollkommen und ließ sich mit wenigen rühmlichen Ausnahmen widerstandslos entwaffnen und abtransportieren. [...] Damit war der Weg durch Kongreßpolen und Galizien für allen Verkehr von Osten und Südosten her gesperrt. Die wenigen

66 Łossowski 1986, S. 214–217.

67 *Die Rückführung des Ostheeres* 1936, S. 25.

68 Erinnerungen von Adam Rudnicki über die Rolle der POW bei der Eindämmung des Durchmarsches der Armee von Ober Ost im November 1918, in: Łossowski / Stawiecki 1988, S. 285.

69 „W rezultacie przez cały rok 1918 polska strona wykorzystując rywalizację pomiędzy Państwami Centralnymi stopniowo umacniała swoją pozycję i tworzyła kościec przyszłej państwowości. Było to niezwykle istotne w listopadzie 1918 roku, gdy rozpadł się okupacyjny system administracyjny i wojskowy i możliwe było płynne przejęcie zarządu nad krajem.“ Szymczak 2010, S. 130.

Transporte, die freiwillig oder gezwungen ihren Weg über die polnischen Bahnen nahmen, wurden entwaffnet und beraubt.⁷⁰

Der Ansatz der deutschen Seite wird gut illustriert durch Worte, die einer der Soldaten am Morgen des 9. November zu einem Mitglied der POW gesagt haben soll: „Vielleicht werden wir bald von hier weggehen und in unser Vaterland zurückkehren. Aber es soll niemand versuchen, mit uns Kämpfe anzufangen: dann werdet ihr sehen, wozu der deutsche Soldat in der Lage ist.“⁷¹ Da diese beiden Ziele – die Rückkehr der Deutschen nach Deutschland und die Übernahme der Kontrolle über das polnische Territorium – miteinander vereinbar waren, waren die Verhandlungen zwischen polnischen Vertretern und den deutschen Soldatenräten in vielen Fällen erfolgreich. Die überwiegende Mehrheit der Zwischenfälle, zu denen es im Verlauf der Entwaffnung kam, hatte ihre Ursache im Chaos, in dem diese Aktionen oft abliefen, und war nicht Folge absichtlichen Handelns. Die vorstehend angeführten Beispiele sowohl aus größeren, als auch aus kleineren Stationierungsorten zeigen dies deutlich.

Gleichwohl konnte den Polen auch das Element der Drohung nicht entgehen, die in dem vorstehend angeführten Zitat enthalten war. Sie kam zum Tragen, als die Truppen der Etappen-Inspektion Bug die Kontrolle über Międzyrzecz Podlaski kurzzeitig zurückgewannen und bei dieser Gelegenheit die ihnen Widerstand leistenden POW-Mitglieder und die Zivilbevölkerung brutal behandelten.

Der Verlust der Kontrolle über das Generalgouvernement Warschau stellte auch für die deutschen Eisenbahnen einen schweren Schlag dar. Es ging nicht nur um die Unterbrechung von Strecken, sondern auch um den Verlust rollenden Materials: 590 Lokomotiven und 11.000 Waggons fielen in polnische Hände. Das war etwa ein Drittel der Bahnfahrzeuge über die die deutsche Seite im November 1918 im Osten verfügte.⁷² Sowohl die Evakuierung der Truppen als auch die Nachschubversorgung konnten nur „durch Litauen und durch den national umstrittenen Raum von Brest-Litowsk – Bialystok“ erfolgen, und die Wartung der dorthin führenden Bahnlinien war „eine Lebensfrage, deren Lösung in erster Linie der Etappen-Inspektion Bug, dem eben neuerrichteten Militärgouvernement Litauen und dem Generalkommando III. Reservekorps zufiel.“⁷³

[Übersetzung: Elżbieta Marszałek]

70 *Die Rückführung des Ostheeres* 1936, S. 23.

71 Pęczkowski 1935, S. 117.

72 *Die Rückführung des Ostheeres* 1936, S. 158.

73 Ebd., S. 23.

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Krzysztof Kania

Diplomatic and Military Efforts for Recognition of the Republic of Poland and Its Borders, 1914–1921 (1923)

Abstract

This study examines the action taken by Polish politicians and diplomats aimed at restoring Poland's sovereignty and its borders lost as a result of the triple partition at the end of the 18th century. The author presents the major organisations and related independence activists during the Great War. He further discusses the efforts and struggle of the Polish delegation in Paris, mainly in terms of the border with Germany, and then the diplomatic and military mobilisation of the newly created state for international recognition of the eastern border.

Keywords: First World War; fight for borders; Polish diplomacy; Versailles-Riga system; irredenta

Introduction

This article takes a fresh look at the most important and arduous events for Polish diplomacy in the Polish political and diplomatic effort to gain recognition for the Republic of Poland and its future borders during the Great War (1914–1918), followed by the peace conference in Paris (1919–1920) and in the first years of its independence (1918–1921). Accordingly, the difficult relations between Poland and selected neighbouring countries will be briefly characterised along with the final crystallisation of its borders as a result of the treaty provisions (Germany), as well as the military campaigns carried out at that time against the Red Army (Soviet Russia) or the Halych Army (Western Ukrainian People's Republic, Ukrainian People's Republic). Not all the various themes and threads could be elaborated in this text; so, for the sake of clarity, a conscious decision was taken to omit, *inter alia*, the Greater Poland Uprising, Upper Silesian Uprisings, plebiscites in Upper Silesia, Warmia, Masuria and Powiśle, and the issue of Cieszyn Silesia. The end point of the considerations also requires comment. The year 1921

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and the Peace of Riga closes a certain chapter in the history of interwar Poland, but international confirmation of its eastern border took place only in March 1923. This will be the topic of the final part of the article and its conclusion.

Efforts for the Recognition of Poland during the Great War

The politicians and diplomats who represented Poland at the peace conference in Paris (1919–1920), and who then served in the reborn Republic of Poland, were not chosen at random. Previously, they had been active in many organisations, authorities and bodies whose main goal was to regain independence, which had been lost in the 18th century.

On 16 August 1914, the Supreme National Committee (*Naczelny Komitet Narodowy*, NKN) was established in Cracow, headed by the long-time president of this city and an excellent administrator, Juliusz Leo. The foreign operation was to be led by Secretary General Michał Sokolnicki, one of the closest associates of Józef Piłsudski, the future head of state and undisputed leader of Poland between 1926–1935 whose cult-like status as commander was cemented during the Great War.¹ Besides Sokolnicki, who held a number of prominent offices in the interwar period – from Polish envoy in Helsinki to ambassador in Ankara – Leon Wasilewski and Stanisław Kot were also active. The former, shortly after Poland regained independence, would briefly stand as Minister of Foreign Affairs. In turn, the talents of the latter would come to the fore particularly during the Second World War, when he was a minister of several offices and an ambassador to Moscow. The NKN joined various political circles (from conservatives to socialists) and sought to establish an Austro-Hungarian-Polish trialist monarchy. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that members of the NKN were motivated by the idea of establishing permanent foreign agencies. These included missions in Berlin, Budapest, Constantinople, London and Rapperswil. During the meetings, efforts were made to establish relations with politicians and diplomats from foreign countries and with Poles living in a given country, as well as to present the NKN's point of view on the issue of Polish independence.²

The NKN's informal head of foreign affairs, Michał Sokolnicki, carefully analysed the situation on the front in mid-1915 and the victories of the German and Austro-Hungarian troops over the Russians, including during the Battle of Gorlice. It was he who was already convincing Józef Piłsudski that diplomatic action should take precedent and carry more weight than a military campaign. According to Sokolnicki, the possibility of peace talks between the superpowers

1 Kloc 2021, pp. 115–149.

2 Sibora 2013, pp. 13–43; Kloc 2018, p. 290.

was possible in the short term, and so the prospects for Poland regaining independence became increasingly real. This prompted him to change the structure of the NKN and create the Foreign Department of the NKN. This department was mainly tasked with developing the activity of NKN institutions, conducting preparatory work for the future peace conference and piloting operations that would facilitate the creation of future state structures. One of the major manifestations of the Foreign Department's endeavours was a conference convened on 9–11 July 1916 in Christiania (later Oslo). An organisation called Polish Independence Work Abroad (*Polska Robota Niepodległościowa Za Granicą*) was established there, whose objective was to provide information about Poland and promote its independence. The following actors were involved in the irredenta: Szymon Askenazy, who was a Polish professor and expert on international affairs and the history of diplomacy of the 18th and 19th centuries, and Gabriel Narutowicz – a professor at the University of Technology in Zurich, later Minister of Foreign Affairs and the first President of Poland.³

The role of the NKN was altered not only by the volatile international situation, but above all by the announcement of the creation of an independent Kingdom of Poland from the lands annexed by Russia, which was announced on 5 November 1916 by the Austro-Hungarian Emperor Franz Joseph I and the German Emperor William II (whence one of the common names for the document: *Two Emperors' Proclamation*). This declaration sparked a decline in the relevance of the NKN, which was politically oriented towards Austria-Hungary and torn by internal conflicts. After the establishment of the Regency Council (1917–1918) as the supreme authority of the Kingdom of Poland, a decision was made to dissolve the NKN.

The act of 5 November 1916 revived the Polish cause in the political milieu, despite the fact that, immediately after its announcement, it sparked protests from the Entente countries. In less than two years, however, they had to deal with this issue and stop treating it as an internal Russian affair (France) or a threat to the balance of power on the continent (Great Britain).

Unfortunately, little was known in Western Europe about Polish aspirations for independence. This was largely due to a lack of awareness of the history, geography, and political affairs of Eastern Europe and Russia. Ignorance on the part of young Britons in this regard was highlighted by, *inter alia*, August Zaleski, who from March 1915 acted as an emissary in the United Kingdom on the orders of Józef Piłsudski. Zaleski was to inform the Foreign Office on behalf of Piłsudski that the Polish Legions were fighting on the side of the Central Powers solely

3 Sibora 2013, pp. 57–76; Kloc 2018, pp. 352–353.

against Russia and that Piłsudski would never allow them to be used against the Western Allies.⁴ In his memoirs, the young diplomat noted, *inter alia*, that:

Such was the knowledge of Polish history possessed by the teachers, the level among students was much lower! In the Common Room of the school during luncheon a student sitting next to me, after having made his usual comments about the weather, very politely enquired whether the people in Poland used knives and forks or if they ate with chop sticks like the Chinese. After a few minutes conversation it transpired that my neighbour thought that Poland was so far to the east that Chinese influences prevailed there. Another girl student, hearing my complaint of a bitterly cold wind on a November day, expressed her astonishment that I was not used to much colder winds as she thought that Poland was situated near the North Pole.⁵

All such examples prompted Zaleski to conduct an in-depth information and propaganda campaign in Great Britain to support Poland's independence. One might recall, for example, the Polish Information Committee (PIC) that operated in England from the beginning of the war under the auspices of political activist, historian and advocate of the break-up of Austria-Hungary, Robert William Seton-Watson. In time, Zaleski became its manager as he also oversaw publications under the PIC banner – *The Polish News* weekly and *The Polish Review* quarterly. Zaleski also collaborated with journalist John Hunter Harley, a Polonophile and advocate of Polish independence, and author of *Poland Past and Present: a Historical Study* (London 1917). Among the many varieties of activities undertaken at that time, one ought to mention: organising readings, discussions and concerts on the Thames for the victims of the war in Poland, publishing brochures and inspiring press articles, or establishing a parliamentary committee for Polish affairs bearing the meaningful name “Friends of Poland”.⁶

Following the Act of 5 November 1916 and the ordinance of the Governors-General, the Provisional Council of State was established in Warsaw, which began operating on 14 January 1917.⁷ The Department of Political Affairs was established within its structures, headed by Wojciech Rostworowski, who was associated with National Democracy, and later with conservatives from the National Party. The main duties of the Department of Political Affairs included training the diplomatic and consular service and administrative staff who might partic-

4 Kania et al. 2017, p. 16.

5 Instytut Polski i Muzeum im. gen. Sikorskiego w Londynie: *Kolekcja Augusta Zaleskiego*, col. 424/2, pp. 11–12; see also Kania et al. 2017, p. 34.

6 Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie: *Naczelny Komitet Narodowy*, sig. 23, pp. 14–15, 101–110; *ibid.*, sig. 24, pp. 13–15, 152–158; Archiwum Instytutu Józefa Piłsudskiego w Ameryce: *Archiwum Michała Mościckiego*, col. 75/4 [no pagination]; Kania et al. 2017, pp. 15, 17, 58–59; Wandycz 1999, pp. 15–17, 19; Sibora 2013, pp. 247–248.

7 *Rozporządzenie c. i k. Jenerał-Gubernatora wojskowego z dnia 6-go grudnia 1916 r. o tymczasowej Radzie Stanu w Królestwie Polskiem* 1916.

ipate in the planned peace conference, and then building future state structures. After the resignation of the Provisional Council of State on 25 August 1917, its powers were assumed by the Regency Council, and the Department of Political Affairs changed its name to the Department of State. It was still headed by Rostworowski, and then successively by Władysław Wróblewski, an outstanding lawyer and head of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, and Janusz Franciszek Radziwiłł, a conservative politician who would sow the seeds of the future diplomatic service. It is worth adding that on 26 October 1918, the State Department became the Ministry of External Affairs, and on 27 January 1919, it changed its name to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was headed by a politician associated with the National Democratic Party, Stanisław Głąbiński, a professor of political economy, who was then succeeded by Wróblewski once again.⁸ Until Ignacy Jan Paderewski took over as prime minister and head of Polish diplomacy on 16 January 1919, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was headed by Piłsudski's close associates connected with the Polish Socialist Party: Tytus Filipowicz and Leon Wasilewski.⁹

Regardless of the actions discussed above, the endeavours undertaken by politicians associated with the Polish National Committee (*Komitet Narodowy Polski*, KNP), established during the Lausanne debates in August 1917, was of major significance for the Polish cause during the Great War and the first months after its end. Based in Paris, it was represented by, *inter alia*, former MP of the 2nd and 3rd State Duma of the Russian Empire and chairman of the Polish circle Roman Dmowski, publicist of the national movement Stanisław Kozicki, as well as later eminent diplomats and foreign ministers of independent Poland: Konstanty Skirmunt, who became a KNP delegate in Rome, Władysław Sobański (the KNP representative in London), and Ignacy Jan Paderewski (the KNP representative in Washington). The jurisdiction of the KNP included operations aimed at Poland regaining independence. This involved conducting an information campaign in European capitals and around the world in order to present the aspirations and needs of the Polish nation regarding its own statehood, as well as establishing and developing diplomatic ties with representatives of allied countries, whose real impact on future geopolitical solutions in Europe was widely believed. The KNP also set itself the goal of due preparation for the peace conference, the provision of civil protection to Poles dispersed throughout the globe and exercising authority over the emerging Polish Army.¹⁰

8 Dębski 2016, p. XV; Sibora 2013, pp. 269–270, 277–282, 287, 295, 310–312, 343; Michowicz 1995, p. 6.

9 In the main text I do not mention Ignacy Daszyński, the prime minister and minister of foreign affairs of the Provisional People's Government of the Republic of Poland in Lublin, who held office between 6/7–11. 11. 1918; Michowicz 1995, pp. 6–9.

10 Sibora 2013, pp. 351–361; Dębski 2008, p. VIII; Nowak-Kiełbikowa 1998, p. 49.

As soon as 24 August 1917, the KNP announced its creation in a note sent to the governments of France, England, Italy and the United States, and argued the benefits of establishing an independent, stable and territorially vast Poland in the future. Recognition for the KNP as a substitute for the Polish government in exile and the representative of Poles initially stemmed from Paris on 20 September. In the following months, the recognition of the KNP as the official representation of the Polish nation was approved in London, Rome and Washington.¹¹ The endeavours undertaken for the Polish cause over the next several months began to yield some tangible results. These certainly include President Woodrow Wilson's address to Congress on 8 January 1918, in which he defined the objectives of the war in the so-called 14 points. Point 13 read as follows:

An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant.¹²

The prime ministers of the European powers – France, Italy and Great Britain (Georges Clemenceau, Vittorio Emanuele Orlando and David Lloyd George) – did not remain deaf to the voice drifting from across the sea, and in Versailles, on 3 June 1918, they announced a declaration in favour of Poland, which read: “The creation of a united and independent Polish state with free access to the sea constitutes one of the conditions of a solid and just peace, and of the rule of right in Europe.”¹³ Despite the fact that military operations were still ongoing and the outcome of the Great War was not a foregone conclusion, this declaration placed Poland at the side of the Entente countries and guaranteed that the much longed-for independence would be regained in the short term. The declaration did not specify the boundaries and shape of the future Polish state, nor the rules for using the seaport in Gdańsk. These issues were to be the subject of a peace conference and the objective of political and military struggles which the reborn state was to fight in order to make them real.

11 Sibora 2013, pp. 370–374.

12 Sierpowski 1989, pp. 34–35; Łossowski 2002, p. 455; Berg 2014, pp. 469–472; Borodziej / Górny 2018, p. 16. It was the second obviously pro-Polish declaration from the President of the United States, after the address to the Senate on 22.01.1917. In 1917, Wilson said “I take it for granted, for instance, if I may venture upon a single example, that statesmen everywhere are agreed that there should be a united, independent, and autonomous Poland.” Wandycz 1980, p. 113; Łossowski 2002, p. 450; Berg 2014, pp. 421–422.

13 Fuller 1933, p. 873.

Paris Peace Conference (1919–1920)

On 11 November 1918, Germany signed an armistice agreement with the Entente countries in a railway car in the Compiègne forest. Their fate was to be decided by a conference whose debates began in January of the following year in Paris. On the same day, Józef Piłsudski arrived in Warsaw from Magdeburg, having been released from his arrest for provoking the soldiers of the Legions to refuse to swear allegiance to Germany *en masse*. The commander arrived in glory almost as a legendary hero of the struggle for Polish independence and he knew how to use his position by taking over military (11 November) and civil (14 November) authority from the Regency Council. On 22 November 1918, he issued a decree on the highest representative authority of the Republic of Poland, becoming the Provisional Head of State,¹⁴ and then the Head of State from 20 February 1919.¹⁵ Independence activists present in the resurgent Poland, as well as those still in exile, realised that vital decisions concerning Polish lands would be made in the capital of France. After 123 years of non-existence, the Polish state had an opportunity to reappear on the maps of Europe. Piłsudski was fully aware that only a Polish delegation to the peace conference that was at one and united in its views could contribute to success in this matter, one that externally – regardless of political divisions – would present a unified point of view on the emergence of the Polish state, recognition of its government and borders. Hence, Piłsudski's conciliatory letter to his political opponent and head of the KNP, Dmowski, issued on 21 December 1918 was no accident. Therein he stated:

Please believe me that, above all, I wish to avoid a double representation of Poland towards the Allies: only one common representation can ensure that our demands are heard. Based on our long-standing acquaintance, I hope that in this case, and at such a serious moment, at least a few people – if, unfortunately, not all of Poland – are able to rise above the interests of parties, cliques and groups. I would very much like to see your good self among such people.¹⁶

It should be emphasised that these two politicians differed in everything – from the country they saw as the greatest danger (Russia vs Germany), their views

14 *Dekret o najwyższej władzy reprezentacyjnej Republiki Polskiej* 1918.

15 *Uchwała Sejmu z dnia 20 lutego 1919 r. o powierzeniu Józefowi Piłsudskiemu dalszego sprawowania urzędu Naczelnika Państwa* 1919.

16 “Niech mi Pan wierzy, że nade wszystko życzę sobie uniknięcia podwójnego przedstawicielstwa Polski wobec aliantów: tylko jedno wspólne przedstawicielstwo może sprawić, że nasze żądania zostaną wysłuchane. Opierając się na naszej starej znajomości, mam nadzieję, że w tym wypadku i w chwili tak poważnej, co najmniej kilku ludzi, – jeśli, niestety, nie cała Polska – potrafi się wzniesić ponad interesy partyj, klik i grup. Chciałbym bardzo widzieć Pana między tymi ludźmi.” [all translations of quotations by Tomasz Leszczuk] Piłsudski 1937, pp. 45–46.

(socialism vs a national movement), and ending with the territorial program of the future state (federal concept vs incorporation). Despite this, Dmowski rose to the occasion and accepted Piłsudski's proposal. The latter also showed great tact and appointed Paderewski, who was linked with the KNP, to the office of prime minister and minister of foreign affairs. This politician, and at the same time an internationally esteemed piano virtuoso, seemed at the time the best candidate to head the coalition cabinet. At that time, Paderewski was extremely popular and respected by his compatriots at home and abroad. His actions to popularise the Polish cause worldwide and his contribution to the development of Polish culture were much appreciated. In 1910, he funded the Grunwald Monument in the form of an equestrian statue of Władysław Jagiełło, which commemorated the victory of Polish and Lithuanian troops in the Battle of Grunwald over the Teutonic Order 500 years earlier. The unveiling of this monument had a symbolic meaning and stimulated Polish national discussion. During the war years, Paderewski had been the vice-president of the Swiss General Committee for Aid to War Victims in Poland (the so-called Veveyski Committee). Apart from Roman Dmowski and another National Democracy politician, the eminent economist Władysław Grabski, he played a significant role at the peace conference in Paris, which began on 18 January 1919.¹⁷

On 29 January, Dmowski presented Poland's territorial aspirations before the Supreme Council of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers at the peace conference. He perceived Poland reborn as an internationally important Central and Eastern Europe state with the same borders as before the first partition of Poland (1772).¹⁸ In accordance with conference regulations, these and subsequent postulates and proposals from the Polish delegation were submitted to a special peace conference commission on Polish affairs chaired by the pro-Polish French diplomat Jules Cambon. In mid-March 1919, he proposed a very favourable borderline with Germany. The Republic of Poland was to include, *inter alia*, Upper Silesia, Poznań and Gdańsk Pomerania. Later that month, these demands were discussed at subsequent meetings of the Supreme Council of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers. British Prime Minister David Lloyd George was the main opponent. This personal commitment of his and his chief adviser Lewis Namier, of Polish Jewish origin (then as Ludwik Bernstein Niemirovski), later resulted in the decision to resolve the matter via plebiscites in Upper Silesia, Warmia, Masuria and Powiśle and to create the Free City of Gdańsk. Great Britain did not intend to support the idea of creating a strong and territorially vast Poland in Central and Eastern Europe, which London perceived to be an ally of France. This would be in contradiction to the balance of power

17 Łossowski 1995, pp. 101–103.

18 Dębski 2016, pp. 165–176; Kawalec 2016, pp. 329–333.

doctrine promoted by Downing Street at the time, and in the longer term could threaten the repayments of war reparations ordered by the great powers against Germany.¹⁹

Of course, Polish diplomacy tried by all means to remedy these decisions from the conference, which were detrimental to the Republic of Poland. However, each attempt met with opposition from Lloyd George, and later from President Wilson too, who had adopted the British point of view about the possibility of a retaliatory war on the part of the Germans in the event of too many concessions granted to Poland. Was there an actual threat of war? Perhaps Berlin was still able to concentrate significant military forces on the western and eastern borders of the Polish state. However, these were units of little combative value, consisting of soldiers whose heads held only one thought – to return home as soon as possible, which was especially true of the military stationed in the east.²⁰

On the other hand, the kind of buffer provided by the German forces gathered in the area of the Supreme Commander of All German Forces in the East (*Gebiet des Oberbefehlshabers-Ost*) certainly made it impossible for the Polish and Bolshevik troops to come to blows, at least up to some point. The German troops withdrew systematically and, for example, most of them had left Vilnius by the end of 1918. Other units still remained in Grodno, Białystok and its vicinity to protect the railway line, but they finally pulled back in February 1919. The first contact between the Polish Army and the communists and militiamen occupying the headquarters of the Vilnius Council of People's Delegates took place on 2 January 1919, after the rejection of the Polish ultimatum issued the day before. The Polish-Bolshevik war broke out on 4 January 1919, when the regular armed forces of the Polish Army and the Red Army fought a battle at Nowa Wilejka (today the district of Vilnius, more on this below).²¹

Ultimately, the Polish-German border was decided by the Treaty of Versailles signed on 28 June 1919 between Germany and the Entente powers, allied and associated countries (it came into force on 10 January 1920). Its detailed provisions in this regard were not satisfactory for the Polish side, although this is not a matter for this particular work. Moreover, Poland was obliged to sign the treaty on the international protection of national minorities, which Germany did not have to conclude. Weaker states had to yield to the onslaught of stronger states, and accepted these discriminatory commitments as they were a condition for the conclusion of the Treaty of Versailles. In this way, minorities living, among others, in Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and

19 Nowak 2015, pp. 15–16, 235–265; Cohrs 2008, p. 60; Łossowski 1995, pp. 105–110; Kania 2007, pp. 34–36.

20 Centek 2018, pp. 11–43.

21 Rezmer 2010, pp. 64–70; Waligóra 1938, pp. 40–54.

Slovenes (SHS), and Greece were guaranteed the right to lodge complaints directly with the League of Nations, bypassing the national judiciary. The treaty concluded with Poland formed the basis for those concluded with other countries.²² In addition, Poland was burdened with war debts, and “diplomatic” intervention in establishing its eastern border was announced.²³

Despite all these detrimental decisions from the point of view of the Polish government, the Treaty of Versailles achieved a fundamental success: recognition of the emergence of an independent Poland, resurrected as a subject of international law after 123 years of non-existence. This should be considered a victory for all those who, long before that date, had started taking action on behalf of a Polish independent state.

The borderline remained a problematic issue, especially in the east and west. Their formation was to take place over almost the next four years.

Diplomatic and Military Struggle over the Shape of the Eastern Border

The Bolsheviks posed the greatest threat in the east. Having invaded the territories of Lithuania and Belarus abandoned by the German Army, they increasingly came into direct contact with Polish troops. A regular Polish-Bolshevik war can be considered to have started on 4 January 1919, when Polish Army units (formerly Lithuanian and Belarusian Self-Defence troops composed of Polish volunteers) in Vilnius, under the command of General Władysław Wejtko, resisted the advancing Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army. The enemy’s goal was to rebuild the pre-war state of Russia, and at the same time to extend the idea of the Bolshevik revolution to Western Europe.²⁴

Meanwhile, in the south-east, a Polish-Ukrainian war was being waged over the affiliation of Eastern Galicia to the West Ukrainian People’s Republic or Poland. The fight for Lviv began on the night of 31 October to 1 November 1918.²⁵ The issue of the intersection of Polish and Ukrainian territorial aspirations was discussed by the Council of Ten during the Paris conference, which called for both sides to settle the dispute diplomatically. However, the actions of the Ukrainian Army of Halych resulted in a counterattack and the May offensive of the

22 Fink 2006, pp. 261, 267–268.

23 Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie (hereinafter: AAN): *Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych 1918–1939*, sig. 7961t, p. 256; Nowak 2015, p. 19; Kania 2021, p. 77.

24 Rezmer 2010, p. 70; Łukomski / Stolarski 1994, pp. 15–44. The middle of February 1919 marked the beginning of the regular war; Materski 2005, pp. 24–39; Mel’ťuhov 2009, pp. 17–26.

25 Krotofil 2002, pp. 39–40; Wilson 2002, pp. 130–131.

Polish Army under the command of General Józef Haller.²⁶ Western decision-makers flaunted the idea of a Polish border that ran partly along the Neman (Memel) and Bug rivers, and so its temporary route, established on 8 December 1919, was not accidental. The Supreme Council of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers declaration mentions (approximately) the border from Grodno in the north, through Brest, along the Bug to Kryłów and Sokal in the south, without dividing Galicia.²⁷ The line became known as the Curzon Line, although its main originator was the previously mentioned Lewis Namier.

The Polish offence caused repercussions that were unpleasant for the Polish delegation and provoked anti-Polish speeches by Prime Minister Lloyd George and President Wilson, who first undermined the Polishness of Lviv and the surrounding area, and then accused Poles of creating permanent troubles, discrediting conferences and making decisions on their own without consulting the Entente countries. Poland was also accused of fostering an obvious desire to seize valuable oil fields located in this area, which, taking into account the ethnographic aspect, should belong to Ukraine.²⁸

This negative rhetoric, presented from mid-May to early June, took an about turn on 25 June 1919, when the Supreme Council of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers gave consent for Poland to conduct operational activities against the “Bolshevik gangs” as far as the Zbruch River (Zbrucz) with the official use of Haller’s Army (decision of 28 June), which *de facto* meant allowing the occupation of the entire Eastern Galicia.²⁹ Nevertheless, the Polish government had to back up the militant facts committed through a diplomatic campaign that was also intended to counteract the ideas of the Cambon Commission, which had devised a project of temporary political and cultural autonomy in Eastern Galicia and wanted it to remain in force until a plebiscite was held on this territory. The Polish delegation was against this postulated temporariness and believed that the incorporation of Eastern Galicia into Poland would result in its consolidation and development (note from 25 August). Paderewski’s speech of 23 September 1919, before the Council of Five, maintained the same spirit. Once again Prime Minister Lloyd George turned out to be irreconcilable. Ultimately, on 21 November, the Verkhovna Rada introduced the so-called “mandate concept” and decided to give Poland the right to administer Eastern Galicia for the next 25 years.³⁰ The ephemeral nature of this project and its economic aspects con-

26 Klimecki 2009, p. 379.

27 Kumaniecki 1924, pp. 175–179.

28 Bierzanek / Kukułka 1967, pp. 253–254, 256–257, 259–262, 267–272, 297–302, 308, 315–316, 318; Elcock 1972, p. 153.

29 Bierzanek / Kukułka 1967, pp. 336–337, 353.

30 Dębski 2019, p. 567. According to Dębski the decision was made on 20 November; *ibid.*, p. 799; cf. Łossowski 1995, pp. 128–129.

tinued to raise doubts on the Polish side. Moreover, there was a conviction that Eastern Galicia needed to be integrated due to several hundred years of historical ties with Poland, as expressed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Stanisław Patek:

Granting Poland a temporary mandate to rule so-called Eastern Galicia, nullifying the country's unity with Poland, would represent serious difficulties for the country's economic development and the consolidation of internal peace. It takes billions to elevate the economy of a country devastated by war and the recent disturbances caused by the intrigues of Germany and Austria. Poland is ready to give such an amount; it has already begun reconstruction work, but this effort can only be sustained on the condition that Galicia be finally incorporated into the Polish state, to which it had belonged for five centuries.³¹

On 22 December 1919, the Supreme Council, concerned about the development of the situation in Eastern Europe caused by the threat from Bolshevik Russia, withdrew from the mandate concept for the administration of Eastern Galicia, subject to reconsideration.³² Nevertheless, this step backwards by the Western powers was undoubtedly a success for Polish diplomacy.

It was also during this period that Poland began to prepare for a final confrontation with Soviet Russia. Piłsudski predicted that after the end of the civil war in Russia he would be forced militarily and diplomatically to face the winner of the “fratricidal” duel being fought there. Piłsudski was afraid of a “white” Russian government, because their plans did not take into account the territorially vast Poland in the east, agreeing at most to an eastern border that partly ran along the Neman and Bug rivers. Nor did he trust the “red” government of Soviet Russia, with which he had waged war throughout almost the whole of 1919. Despite this, he did not hesitate to enter into secret negotiations with them, disappointed with border declarations by the “whites”. The talks took place in Białowieża, Baranowicze (Baranavichy) and Mikaszewicze (Mikashevichy), and led, *inter alia*, to a suspension of military operations on the Polish-Bolshevik front in October 1919.³³ These decisions, which Piłsudski had initiated, met the expectations of Vladimir Lenin's government. The Bolsheviks could finally concentrate, redeploy and finally crack down on the “white” troops. The civil war in Russia was approaching an end, and Lenin emerged victorious.

31 “Przyznanie Polsce tymczasowego mandatu na rządzenie tak zwaną Galicją Wschodnią, niewzając jedność kraju tego z Polską, przedstawiałoby poważne trudności dla rozwoju ekonomicznego kraju i utrwalenia pokoju wewnętrznego. Na podniesienie ekonomiczne kraju, zniszczonego przez wojnę i przez ostatnie zaburzenia wywołane intrygami Niemiec i Austrii potrzeba miliardów. Polska gotowa jest je dać; zaczęła ona już dzieło odbudowy, jednakże wysiłek ten może być podtrzymany jedynie pod warunkiem, że Galicja zostanie przyłączona ostatecznie do państwa polskiego, do którego należała od pięciu wieków przeszło.” Bierzanek / Kukułka 1967, p. 374.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 376; Łossowski 1995, pp. 128–129.

33 Mihutina 1994, pp. 275–301; Łossowski 1995, pp. 116–124.

Piłsudski promoted the concept of a federation, assumed to be based on the existence of buffer states in the east separating Poland from Russia, including Latvia, Belarus, Ukraine and Romania. This idea was open to other countries, including to Lithuania, Finland, Estonia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the Kingdom of SHS and was associated with a foreign policy doctrine called *Intermarium*, which referred to the tradition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. To this end, Polish diplomats conducted political and military talks with the Finns, Lithuanians, Latvians, Romanians and Ukrainians (Symon Petlura). Only with the latter could a political and military agreement be reached, which was concluded on 21 and 24 April 1920 (the so-called Warsaw Agreement).³⁴

A day later, the armies of the Ukrainian People's Republic³⁵ and the Polish Army began a joint campaign against the Red Army, known in historiography as the Kyiv Operation. This resulted, *inter alia*, in the capture of Kyiv on 7 May. The operation was diplomatically supported by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Stanisław Patek, visiting Rome and Paris. Besides presenting the assumptions and goals of cooperation with Petlura, his talks were also intended to obtain political and military support. This would consist in increasing the supply of war materials for the Polish and Ukrainian troops. Their supplies to the front encountered enormous problems, often caused by communist agitation in individual countries and the activity of pacifist associations. An excellent example of this type of action was the English Hands off Russia Committee organisation, which successfully blocked the aid granted by the British government in the form of military equipment, and organised anti-Polish protests.³⁶

The situation in the civil war, which increasingly favoured the Bolsheviks, allowed them to redeploy troops, rearm and embark on a counter-offensive in Ukraine, Belarus and the Vilnius region. The Polish Army was forced to retreat, and this translated into uncertainty about the future of the state. Scapegoats were sought, which led to a change of government, and thus Patek's resignation from the post of Foreign Minister. In June 1920, his place was taken by Eustachy Sapieha, associated with Piłsudski, who was summoned for this purpose by new prime minister Władysław Grabski from the London post.³⁷ The situation on the Polish-Bolshevik front was becoming very grave indeed. Therefore, in Poland it was acknowledged that Grabski should not so much seek military support or help

34 Jędruszczak / Nowak-Kiełbikowa 1989, pp. 94–99; Krotofil 2002, p. 159; Karpus 1999, pp. 21–25.

35 On 22.01.1919, the Ukrainian People's Republic and the West-Ukrainian People's Republic united as the Ukrainian People's Republic; Krotofil 2002, p. 12.

36 Rossijskij gosudarstvennyj woennyj arhiv, Moskva: 2-oj otdel General'nogo štaba Pol'shi. g. Varšava, sig. f. 308k, op. 9, d. 105, fols. 104–105; Łossowski 1995, pp. 144–145; Kania 2007, pp. 40–42, 48–50.

37 Kania 2007, p. 17.

from the Allies in terms of exerting moral pressure on Latvia, Finland and Romania in order to obtain their active assistance, but primarily seek the mediation of Western powers in order to obtain a ceasefire with the Bolsheviks.³⁸

Heading for the Peace of Riga

Putting this plan into action, the Polish prime minister travelled to the Belgian town of Spa, where a conference of the heads of the Entente governments was held in order to work out solutions related to German delays in the issue of disarmament and repayment of war reparations arising from the provisions of the Paris Peace Conference. The representatives of the Entente perceived the Polish-Bolshevik war as something that might threaten a new political disorganisation in Europe and bankrupt the peace that had only just been worked out (the Treaty of Versailles). Therefore, they agreed to mediation, but on extremely ultimative terms. Poland was to retreat to the previously mentioned line of 8 December 1919 (from Grodno in the north, through Brest, along the Bug to Kryłów and Sokal in the south; in Eastern Galicia the armies were to halt at the line they would reach on the day of the truce and withdraw by 10 km to create a neutral zone), which would mean the collapse of the entire concept of the policy pursued by Poland in the eastern section. Neither Piłsudski's federation concept outlined above, nor Dmowski's incorporation idea – assuming Lithuania and Eastern Galicia as well as lands up to the Berezina River would be included within Poland in the east – would come to fruition. Moreover, the Poles would agree to unfavourable decisions regarding the affiliation of Cieszyn Silesia (disputed with Czechoslovakia), the negotiated Polish-Gdańsk convention, and handing over Vilnius to Lithuania. With his back against the wall, Grabski agreed to these conditions on 10 July 1920, being well aware of the dangers of the situation and the possibility of Poland losing its independence.³⁹

The next day, the head of the Foreign Office, George Nathaniel Curzon, wrote a note to the Soviet government, proposing British mediation in the peace talks in London and sent truce conditions that were even more favourable than those agreed with the Polish delegation on 10 July 1920, leaving Eastern Galicia with Lviv and the oil basin on the Soviet side (the line from Kryłów was to run west of Rawa Ruska and east of Przemyśl). The British added that defending these new and ethnographically correct Polish borders would not be ruled out should they be threatened by the Red Army. As we read in this document:

38 Bruski / Wołos 2020, pp. 400–403.

39 Laurinavičius 2019, p. 61; Łossowski 1995, pp. 146–148.

[...] if, therefore, Soviet Russia, despite its repeated declarations accepting the independence of Poland, will not be content with the withdrawal of the Polish armies from Russian soil on the condition of a mutual armistice, but intends to take action hostile to Poland in its own territory, the British Government and its Allies would feel bound to assist the Polish Nation to defend its existence with all the means at their disposal.⁴⁰

Moscow was given a week to respond.⁴¹ The reaction came on 17 July, when the Soviet government sent a note to the British government, expressing their opinion on England's mediation in establishing peace in Central and Eastern Europe. The People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Georgy Chicherin, believed that the decision for London to mediate was unfortunate, since Downing Street did not remain neutral during the Polish-Bolshevik conflict and the ongoing civil war in Russia. The Bolsheviks lamented the fact that Warsaw elected not to enter into direct talks with Moscow, as it could have obtained – territorially – much more favourable terms of peace.⁴² It was a typical diplomatic affront and a long-awaited revenge on the government of Great Britain, which had different political and ideological views (although some economic interests intersected with Russia, both in Central and Eastern Europe as well as in the Middle East and India).

Following the suggestion of the government of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, Polish Foreign Minister Sapieha sent Chicherin a radio-telegram on 22 July in which he suggested an immediate ceasefire and peace talks. A day later, Moscow responded with a proposal for talks in Baranowicze on 30 July. The Soviet side was clearly playing for the time, making the results of the talks dependent on the current situation at the front. Unfortunately, this was not auspicious for Poland, as the Polish Army retreated westwards along the entire front line. This favoured the multiplication of further absurd ideas and demands on the part of the Bolsheviks. During the next round of negotiations in Minsk, Lenin's government presented its peace terms on 19 August. In 15 theses with no regard for Poland's dignity, dictated by the first chairman of the Soviet delegation, Karl Daniszewski (Kārlis Daniševskis), an attempt was made to deprive Poland of its newfound independence.⁴³ Obviously, this must have met with strong opposition from the Polish delegation. All the more so because optimistic news began to emerge from the Polish-Bolshevik front, where on 16 August the Polish Army launched a counter-attack on the Wieprz River, and managed to approach the rear of the Red Army attacking Warsaw. This manoeuvre turned out to be a turning point in the war. It caused heavy losses among the Bolsheviks

40 Bruski / Wołos 2020, p. 404.

41 Ibid., pp. 403–404, 412; Nowak 2015, pp. 144–174, 377–428.

42 Bruski / Wołos 2020, pp. 414–419.

43 Ibid., pp. 430–435, 449, 470–478; Łossowski 1995, pp. 153–155.

and, as a consequence, sparked their desperate retreat eastwards. The Polish-Soviet negotiations in Minsk took a completely different turn, because after the successful defence of Warsaw, the Polish Army moved east, pushing the Red Army troops as far as eastern Belarus. A decision was made to discuss the details of concluding peace in a neutral area – Riga, the Latvian capital.

The talks began on 21 September. The Polish delegation was armed with Sapieha's note explaining Poland's attitude towards the Russian-Ukrainian delegation. The then government in Poland had ceased their interest in building a Polish-Belarusian-Lithuanian federation and an independent Ukraine.⁴⁴ Therefore, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) was acknowledged as a party to the negotiations (as a Ukrainian Soviet state), which was tantamount to a withdrawal from the Warsaw Agreement of April 1920 and a lack of further support for the Ukrainian People's Republic of Symon Petlura.⁴⁵ At subsequent meetings, attended by Deputy Foreign Minister Jan Dąbski on the Polish side and Adolf Joffe, who replaced Daniszewski on the Soviet side, efforts were made to agree on the terms of the peace preliminaries. The breakthrough, also made possible thanks to further Polish victories in the east, took place on 1 October with the participation of secretaries general Aleksander Ładoś from Poland and Ivan Lorenc from Soviet Russia. The solutions presented, including Polish border concepts, were accepted by Moscow and, as a consequence, led to the signing of peace preliminaries and a truce on 12 October 1920, which entered into force six days later. The following months were spent on agreeing a definitive peace treaty and working out a consensus on all disputes related, *inter alia*, to matters of compensation, re-evacuation of property and Polish cultural goods, and the return of prisoners and war refugees in 1915 from the territory of the former Kingdom of Poland and western governorates of the Russian Empire (Poles, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Jews), and optants.⁴⁶ Finally, in mid-February 1921, an agreement was reached, which in turn resulted in the signing of a peace deal between Poland and Russia and the USSR⁴⁷ in Riga on 18 March 1921.

The conclusion of peace with Soviet Russia was a tremendous success story for Polish diplomacy. The expectations of Dmowski, who on 29 January 1919 envisaged a territorially vast Poland during the meeting of the Supreme Council in Versailles, had come true – at least in the east. The exact route of the eastern border was precisely regulated in Article II of the treaty. This was approximately the border from the second partition of Poland, with some minor corrections. In

44 Michaluk 2021, p. 92.

45 Bruski / Wołos 2020, pp. 511–512.

46 Borzęcki 2012, pp. 197–201, 221–251, 300–327.

47 From December 1922, one of the republics of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

the north, it was demarcated by the Daugava River (Düna), and in the south by the Zbruch and Dniester.⁴⁸

Peace with Poland's eastern neighbours should be considered as one of the most important agreements signed by the Republic of Poland immediately after the end of the Great War (establishment of the Versailles-Riga system), but also extremely important for political and economic relations throughout Europe. The Polish state successfully demarcated the borders in the east and signed the pact two days before the planned plebiscite in Upper Silesia⁴⁹ (20 March 1921). On the other hand, leaving a loophole that allowed Soviet Russia to drag on indefinitely the implementation of the provisions contained in the agreement, thereby never implementing them, proved to be an appalling oversight.

The peace treaty with Soviet Russia was the third major event of international importance within a month. On 19 February of the same year, Poland signed a political deal with France along with a secret military agreement in the event of war against Germany and Soviet Russia. On 3 March, however, Poland formed a defensive alliance and secret military pact with Romania (*versus* Soviet Russia).

Conclusions

It remained for Polish politicians and diplomats to obtain international confirmation of the eastern borders of the Republic of Poland and to end the ongoing dispute with Lithuania. Regarding the latter, it should be added that the Polish-Lithuanian truce was obtained during the conference in Suwałki (30 September to 7 October 1920). However, the Polish side had no intention of offloading Vilnius and to this end used a ruse to initiate the alleged rebellion of General Lucjan Żeligowski. This trusted friend of Piłsudski took over Vilnius with his knowledge, and this city became a puppet capital of Central Lithuania. General Żeligowski granted himself supreme authority in Central Lithuania by a decree of 12 October 1920, while executive power was exercised by the Provisional Governing Commission. Central Lithuania with its capital in Vilnius was in line with Piłsudski's federation concept and had been previously considered as one of the elements of the Lithuanian state, together with Eastern Lithuania and Western Lithuania, that would remain in union with Poland. In the elections held on 8 January 1922 in Central Lithuania, the Vilnius Sejm was elected, which on 20 February 1922 adopted a resolution on the incorporation of the Vilnius Region

48 Jędruszczak / Nowak-Kiełbikowa 1989, pp. 150–175.

49 After all, the experiences gained from losing the plebiscite in Warmia, Mazury and Powiśle on 11.07.1920 proved instructive. On these and other issues not covered in this article, see Kania 2021, pp. 75–84.

into Poland. This was met with protests and a boycott of the elections by Lithuanians, Belarusians, Jews, and even some Lithuanian Poles, such as the Legion soldier, Michał Römer.⁵⁰

On the other hand, a positive solution to the Eastern Galicia matter in favour of Poland was brought about by actions taken by the head of Polish diplomacy, Gabriel Narutowicz, and one of the most eminent Polish foreign ministers, Aleksander Skrzyński. The former, in addition to fostering positive relations with Romania, the Baltic states and Finland, also strove for a good rapport with Great Britain in the context of incorporating Eastern Galicia into the Polish state. “Warmer” winds for the Republic began to blow over the Thames. In October, there was a change in prime minister, with Bonar Law replacing Lloyd George who had grown unpopular in Polish circles. In Warsaw, it was understood that an excellent opportunity had arisen for the international recognition of its eastern borders. First, Narutowicz informed the Western powers about the general elections to be held in Poland, also covering the area of Eastern Galicia. Then with the silent consent of England and the benevolent neutrality of France and Italy, elections were held in November 1922, which was another important step towards gaining final approval – from the Western powers – of the Republic’s border in its eastern section.⁵¹

Upon the decision of the Council of Ambassadors, an optimum was reached on 14 March 1923. A day later, under the leadership of Raymond Poincaré, the then Prime Minister of France, an additional protocol to the Treaty of Versailles was signed. Thus, a decision was made to recognise the eastern borders of the Republic of Poland, with Vilnius and Eastern Galicia on the Polish side. Thus, the process of shaping Poland’s borders after the Great War ended. The reborn Republic was to function as an element of the Versailles-Riga order, the existence of which was approved by peace treaties, but whose borders were also determined by the sacrifice of blood.

[Translated by Tomasz Leszczuk]

50 Balkelis 2018, pp. 150–152; Senn 1966, pp. 48–102; Błaszczak 2017, pp. 192–194; Januszewska-Jurkiewicz 2010, pp. 163–190; Łossowski 1996, pp. 40–42, 196–202; idem 1995, pp. 157–159, 175–176. A similar situation took place after the occupation of Vilnius in April 1919, when the nations inhabiting the Vilnius region expressed their disapproval of Piłsudski’s appeal to the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania on April 22, Michaluk 2010, p. 344.

51 AAN: *Ambasada RP w Paryżu*, sig. 61, pp. 254–255; Nowak-Kiełbikowa 1975, p. 392; Łossowski 1995, pp. 201–204.

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Evgeniya L. Nazarova

Establishment of the Latvian State. From the Origin of the Idea to the Emergence of a Democratic Republic, 1905–1922

Abstract

In the early 20th century, the emergence of the Latvian nation resulted in the initiation of discussions on Latvian statehood in the form of autonomy within the Russian Empire. The autonomy project was presented by the Latvian Democrats to the Provisional Government in May 1917. The Latvian Democratic Republic was proclaimed on 18 November 1918. Its vitality and the popular support for it was confirmed in the resistance to the Soviet Power and to the attempt to subjugate Latvia to Germany.

Keywords: Latvian Autonomy Project in Russia; Latvian political parties; Latvian Soviet Republic 1919–1920; Latvian War of Independence

Preconditions for the Creation of the Modern Latvian Nation

The idea of statehood arose among Latvians in the second half of the 19th century, the period when the modern Latvian nation was formed. National ideology and national symbols among the Young Latvians, leaders of the national awakening (*Pirmā Tautas atmoda*), emerged since the 1870s.

The modern Latvian nation is considered to have come into existence at the turn of the 20th century. By that time, Latvian society had already been multi-estate; there were representatives of medium and small businesses, national intelligentsia, both civil (teachers, lawyers, doctors, engineers, administration officials) and military (junior, middle, and even high officers of different types of troops).¹

Latvians (like Estonians) were the most educated and economically advanced nation in the Russian Empire. Yet, in their homeland, under the Baltic-German autonomy, Latvians could only participate in parish self-government and parish court, controlled by local landlords and county authorities, as well as in the

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1 Bleiere et al. 2006, pp. 33–34; Nazarova 2012, pp. 331–334; eadem 2018, pp. 73–109.

elected city (town) self-government, if they were able to overcome the high property qualification. The number of wealthy Latvians was gradually growing, but they could not protect the interests of Latvians in the domestic policy of the Baltic Sea Region: Vidzeme (the Latvian part of Livonia province) and Kurzeme (Courland province). A similar situation, though with some local differences, was found in Latgale (the Latvian-Latgalian part of Vitebsk Province), with many ethnic Poles among the landlords there.²

Discussion of Latvian Self-Government and Autonomy in the Russian Empire in the Years of the Revolution of 1905–1907

During the Russian Revolution of 1905–1907 Latvians gained the political experience necessary for the functioning of the state. As early as in 1906, Latvian deputies worked in the First State Duma. By the eve of the revolution, the first Latvian political parties had already been established. In 1903, the Latvian Social Democratic Union (*Latvijas Sociāldemokrātu savienība*, LSDU) was formed, and in 1904 the Latvian Social Democratic Labour Party (*Latvijas Sociāldemokrātiskā Strādnieku partija*, LSDLP) was founded.³ In 1905, when the revolution was underway, the Latvian Democratic Party (*Latviešu Demokrātiskā partija*, LDP) and the Latvian Constitutional Democratic Party (*Latvian Constitutional Democratic Party*, LCDP) were established.⁴

The political activities of the Latvian people were also manifested in the Congress of Latvian Teachers and two Congresses of Parish Deputies in 1905.⁵ The most relevant issue to discuss in Latvian society was the reform of self-government, beginning with the lowest, parish, level. The reform, which presupposed the maximum participation of Latvians in public administration of their ethnic regions, was discussed both in political parties and at public meetings, namely the congresses of teachers and parish representatives.

It was emphasised that the formation of national autonomies in the country would be impossible without the abolition of autocracy and the establishment of a democratic republic.⁶ Both the LSDLP and LSDU argued for an overthrow of the autocracy and the establishment of a democratic republic with broad political, administrative, and economic authorities in various levels in villages and towns.

2 Bleiere et al. 2006, pp. 58–62.

3 The LSDS existed until 1913, then it was reorganised into the Latvian Revolutionary Socialist Party, in 1914–1916 it was not active and was restored in 1917. From 1906 the LSDLP was called the Social Democracy of the Latvian Region.

4 Postnikov 1997, pp. 184–189; Šilde 1976, pp. 150–153; Šalda 2013, pp. 349–357.

5 Greitjānis 2000, pp. 358–361.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 371; A. G. 1906, pp. 2–3.

Yet, the LSDLP programme did not specify the role of indigenous nationalities in self-government, as party members believed that national problems distracted workers from the class struggle.

On the contrary, the LSDU claimed Latvian national and administrative autonomy in Latvian ethnic territories. At the end of 1905, the Congress of the LSDU defined the boundaries of Latvian autonomy as follows: Kurzeme, Vidzeme and Latgale. It was planned to convene the Constituent Assembly (*Učreditel'noe sobranie / Учредительное собрание*) of elected deputies to draft a constitution for autonomy. The supreme legislative authority should have been the parliament elected by universal suffrage.

It is noteworthy that, as early as 1903, Mikelis Valters, a Social Democrat, called not only for the overthrow of autocracy, but also for Latvia's withdrawal from Russia. During the revolution he repeated his appeal. But he did not suggest a concrete plan for Latvia's exit from the Russian Empire.⁷

The Latvian Democratic Party and the Latvian Constitutional Democratic Party supported the idea of Latvian national autonomy within the Russian Empire. As early as in autumn 1905, Pēteris Zalīte, one of the Latvian Democratic Party's leaders, published his project of national political autonomy within the borders of the three Latvian regions, in the newspaper *Majas Viesis*.

According to his draft, the autonomy should have had its own constitution and parliament; representatives of the Latvian autonomy were to protect interests of Latvians in the Russian government. All the autonomy's authorities were to be elected in universal, direct suffrage. The autonomy would have been responsible for administration, economy, especially agriculture, schools, and the church. During the war, the Russian authorities could have used citizens of the autonomy only on the Latvian territory for its defense and to secure Russia's western borders.⁸

The development of the Latvian autonomy was also part of the Constitutional Democratic Party programme, but Frīdrihs Grosvalds and Jānis Kreicbergs, the leaders of the party, and the First State Duma deputies, were not consistent supporters of this idea. The inconsistency of Grosvalds' position was also evident in his speech before Nicholas the Second who visited Riga in 1910; he expressed "loyalty and gratitude" to the Monarch, both on behalf of himself and all Latvians.⁹

In November 1905, Latvians took part in the congress of the All-Russian Union of Autonomists-Federalists (*Vserossiiskij Soûz Avtonomistov-Federalistov / Всероссийский Союз Автономистов-Федералистов*), where the issue of es-

7 Boge 1996, pp. 73–90; Feldmanis 2013, p. 8.

8 Greitjānis 2000, p. 372; Zālītis 1937, p. 32.

9 See, for example: *Saruna ar latviešu deputātiem* 1905, pp. 147–149; Nazarova 2016, p. 213.

tablishing a “democratic government in Russia on the basis of a federal system” was discussed. The creation of national autonomies was perceived as necessary for further existence of the multinational state, but the congress did not reach an agreement on the specifics. At the same time, supporters of national autonomy believed that their ideas could only be accomplished in a federative democratic state. The main points of the programme of the autonomist faction in the State Duma largely coincided with the points of the project for the creation of a Latvian autonomy.¹⁰

The Latvian National Autonomy Draft and its Realisation in the Context of the National Policy of the Provisional Government in Russia

The discussion on the issue of national autonomy in Russia was renewed in the Latvian press on the eve of World War I, due both to the growing national consciousness among the peoples of the empire and to the increasing tendencies towards Russification in the state policies in the national provinces of the Russian empire.¹¹

The retreat of the Russian Army and military operations on the territory of the national provinces encouraged the intellectual elite of non-Russian peoples to raise the question of creating national military units, which in the future were seen as armed formations of national autonomies. The initiators of the Latvian Riflemen units were the deputies of the Fourth State Duma. In July 1915, they coordinated this issue with General Mikhail V. Alexeyev, the commander of the North-Western Front.¹²

In Latvian society, the support for the formation of national military units reflected the patriotic feelings inflamed by the Germanisation of Latvians in Kurzeme, conducted by the German Occupation with the support of the German landlords of Courland (*Ober Ost*).¹³

On 24 March 1916, at the session of the State Duma, Jānis Zalitis, Latvian deputy, suggested a draft to set up Zemstvo (institutions of local government) in the Baltic provinces, which implied a significant expansion of the administrative

10 Nam 1998, pp. 56–57; A. G. 1906, pp. 2–3; Lazarovskis 1906/7–8, p. 1; *Politiskās frakcijas Valsts Domā* 1906, p. 1.

11 *Teritoriālā un kulturālā autonomija* 1906, pp. 1–2; Nazarova 2018, p. 75.

12 Šiliņš 2015, p. 168.

13 About civilians in Kurzeme after the occupation of the region by the German Army, see Zariņš 2104, pp. 50–61.

rights of Latvians and Estonians there. The draft was signed by 96 deputies but was rejected by the government and generals.¹⁴

At the same time, the press interpreted the concept of national autonomy as an intermediate stage between self-government and an independent state, explaining the reasons for its creation, and its functions as part of a federal state.¹⁵

After the overthrow of the autocracy, Russia was governed by the dual power of the Provisional Government and the Soviets of Deputies (*Sovety deputatov / Советы депутатов*).

One of the first decrees of the Provisional Government was to equalise the rights of all nations and confessions, but the questions regarding the form of the state were postponed until the decision of the Constituent Assembly, scheduled for October 1917.¹⁶

Looking forward to the transformation of Russia into a federal republic, Latvians, like other nations of the empire, began to develop their own project of national self-determination. Moreover, by March to April 1917, differences in the views on national autonomy between the democratic forces and the Bolsheviks had already surfaced.

In 1915, due to disagreements between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, the Social Democracy of the Latvian region, divided into two parties: the Latvian Social Democratic Party (Bolsheviks), and the Latvian Social Democratic Labour Party (Mensheviks), whose members were supporters of national political autonomy within the Russian Empire.

In resolution of 29 April 1917, the Bolsheviks recognised the necessity of a united Latvia as an administrative region. After the victory of the proletarian revolution, the Bolsheviks planned to create a unitary state, not a federal one, with elements of cultural autonomy of nations. However, some Bolsheviks and their supporters (Pauls Dauge, Linārd Laicens, Jānis Lapiņš, Jānis Rainis) offered options of political autonomy, but they were rejected by the Bolshevik leaders with Pēteris Stučka at the helm.¹⁷

Until the autumn 1917, the Bolsheviks did not gain an advantage in the Soviets of Deputies in the areas of mass location of Latvian refugees. On the contrary, until the October coup the activities of the Latvian Central Committee for the Provision of Refugees (*Latviešu Bēgļu Apgādāšanas Centrālkomiteja*) with more than 200 branches throughout the country, was of great importance in the lives of Latvian refugees. In 1915–1917, representatives of the democratic parties Vilis Olavs, Jānis Čakste, and Zigfrīds A. Meierovics, the leaders of the Committee,

14 Kar'āharm 2000, pp. 357–395.

15 Freibergs 1916, pp. 29–33; Skujenieks 1916; Kurševics 1916, pp. 33–39.

16 *Ob otmene* 1917, p. 46.

17 *Vēl reiz Latvijas autonomija* 1917/35–37, p. 1; *Rezolūcija Latvijas pašvaldības* 1917, p. 1; Bērziņš 2000, p. 603; Nazarova 2018, p. 86.

gained great experience in administration and management of large populations. In the scope of its activities, the Committee was a kind of people's government.¹⁸

The first step toward the unification of the Latvian lands was the division of the Livonian province along ethnic lines. This problem was addressed in Riga on 24 March 1917, by the commission headed by the Minister of Internal Affairs and the commissioners of the State Duma's Provisional Committee (*Vremennyj komitet Gosudarstvennoj Dumy / Временный комитет Государственной Думы*), representatives of Latvians (Jānis Zalitis, Jānis Goldmanis) and Estonians (Jaun Ramota). The Estonian counties were transferred to the province of Estland, and those of Latvia formed a separate province (Livonia or Vidzeme). The division was ratified by the Russian Provisional Government on 30 March 1917.¹⁹

On 12–13 March 1917, the assembly of Vidzeme representatives elected the Provisional Provincial Zemstvo (Land) Council (*Vidzemes Pagaidu Provinces Zemes Padome*), which consisted of representatives of different social groups in Latvian society. Since the assembly was attended by delegates from Kurzeme and refugees from different Latvian regions, Jānis Goldmanis, one of the initiators of the assembly, called it the first Latvian Constituent Assembly.²⁰

The first draft of the Latvian autonomy's constitution used Pēteris Zalite's suggestions from 1905. It was published in *The Tauretājs [The Trumpet]* magazine on 1 April 1917. Latvia (Vidzeme, Kurzeme and Latgale) was considered as a broad political national territorial autonomy with all the rights of legislative and executive power on its territory and as an integral part of the Russian federal republic. The draft mentioned political, administrative and legal functions the autonomy was to delegate to the central government. Residents of border settlements with an ethnically mixed population were given the opportunity to decide the issue of the boundary line in referenda.

The draft provided for direct election to all the local councils of all residents not younger than 20 years old (one deputy per 15,000 residents). Vidzeme Provisional Zemstvo Council was to work jointly with a government-representing provincial commissar. They determined the operational scope of the county councils within the zemstvo's self-government, administration, and local tax collection. The primary language was to be Latvian, but it was allowed to address the administration in Russian and German.²¹

On 25–28 April, the resolutions of Vidzeme Provisional Zemstvo Council and the draft of the Latvian autonomy constitution were supported by the meeting of Kurzeme representatives in Tartu, where the Kurzeme Provisional Zemstvo

18 Nazarova 2017.

19 *O vremennom ustrojstve* 1918, p. 256; *Pravila o vvedenii [...] 30 marta 1917 g.* 1918, pp. 177–185; *Latvijas un Jgaunijas robežas* 1917, p. 1; *Baltijas guberņu sadalīšana* 1917, p. 2.

20 Šiliņš 2015, p. 174; *Vidzemes Pagaidu Zemes Padomes sede* 1917, p. 3.

21 *Latvijas satversmes projekts* 1917, pp. 122–125.

Council (*Kurzemes Pagaidu Provinces Zemes Padome*) was elected. On 26–27 April, the first congress of Latgalian towns and parishes took place, where serious debates were held between the advocates of united Latvia and proponents of a separate Latgalian autonomy, while the latter emphasised differences in languages and the region's historical development. Yet, the congress decided for Latgale to join the united Latvian autonomy.²²

The Latvian delegation brought their draft of the national autonomy constitution to Petrograd at the end of May 1917, when the Provisional Government was discussing a new all-Russian regulation of the zemstvo system, which virtually eliminated all the Latvian draft's requirements for land ownership and use, as well as the draft on the self-determination of Estonia, which had already been approved (but not published) on 30 March.

The Latvian and Estonian delegates present at the meeting of the governmental commission declared that they had no authority to discuss the issue of the zemstvo system instead of drafts and promised to leave the meeting. To avoid problems in the important military strategic region, the governmental commission left the draft of Estonian self-determination in force and began to discuss the draft of Vidzeme self-determination (the Latvian autonomy's constitution). Andrejs Priedkalns was appointed the Governor's Commissioner in Vidzeme, and Kārlis Ulmanis was appointed as assistant to the Commissioner.²³

On 22 June, the Provisional Government adopted the Resolution on Temporary Arrangement of the Administration and Self-Government of Livonia and Courland provinces and the Regulations on the Self-Government for Livonia, having added at the end that the provisions of the document somewhat changed would be applied to the Courland province after the war.

However, the unification of both provinces into one administrative unit was not mentioned in the documents. Besides, the Provisional Government Commission refused to use this Resolution in Latgale, emphasising the great differences between this region and Vidzeme and Kurzeme.²⁴ The electoral preparations for Vidzeme provincial and municipal councils were conducted by a special commission of the Vidzeme Provisional Zemstvo Council, which had been appointed in March. The elections were scheduled for the end of August 1917.²⁵

22 *Svarīgs breidis* 1917, pp. 1–2; *Autonomijas pretiniki* 1917, p. 4; Kemps 1991, pp. 133–155; Valters 1995, pp. 15–22.

23 *Vidzemes Pagaidu Zemes Padomes valdes sēde* 1917, p. 2; Bērziņš 2000, p. 590; Nazarova 2018, p. 92.

24 *Postanovlenie o vremennom ustrojstve* 1918, pp. 185–189; *Pravila o vvedenii v dejstvie [...] Līflāndskoj gubernii* 1918, pp. 189–196; *Vidzemes Pagaidu Zemes Padomes valdes sēde* 1917, p. 2.

25 *Noteikumi* 1917, p. 3.

At the meeting of all the Latvian parties²⁶ and organisations on 30 July in Riga, a resolution was passed, proclaiming: 1) Latvians, like other peoples, have the right to full self-determination; 2) three historical Latvian ethnic regions were to join the united Latvia; 3) Latvia had to become an autonomous part of the Russian democratic republic.

However, the National Democratic Party (*Latviešu Nacionāldemokrātu partija*) favoured a complete separation from Russia. Later, this demand was supported by the Latvian Military Union, which was formed on 5 August by some officers of the Latvian riflemen units.²⁷

The Competition for the Influence over the Latvian People by the National-Democratic Forces and the Bolsheviks

The Bolsheviks mostly agreed with the first two points of the resolution but set the task of creating a proletarian republic. Their influence among Latvians increased as the economic situation worsened both in Vidzeme and among refugees, as well as in the army due to the unfavourable situation at the front.

The Bolsheviks dominated the Soviet of Workers' Deputies of Riga. On 16–17 July, the pro-Bolshevik Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' (*Latvijas strādnieku, karavīru un bezzemnieku padomes izpildkomiteja*), and the Landless of Latvia (*Iskolat*) were created. By the end of the summer, the Bolsheviks prevailed in the Executive Committee of the United Council of Latvian Rifle Regiments (*Latviešu strēlnieku pulku apvienotās padomes izpildkomiteja*), formed at the end of March 1917.²⁸

On 20 and 27 August, the Bolsheviks won the elections for the Vidzeme provincial and county councils, having been held during the German offensive and the capture of Riga. A week earlier, they had prevailed in the elections to Riga City Council. Since the Bolsheviks refused to concede to the opinion of other deputies, the latter withdrew from the new Vidzeme Provincial Council.²⁹

On 16–18 November 1917, in Valka the Organizational Assembly (*Organizatoriskā sapulce*) was held with the participation of elected delegates from the

26 In 1917, the Latvian Peasant Union was created, as well as the Latvian Republican, Radical Democratic and National Democratic parties, the Latvian Revolutionary Socialist Party renewed its work.

27 *Apspriešanas par Latvijas autonomiju* 1917, p. 1; Ģermanis 1993, pp. 23–24, 80–81; Līgotņū 2001, p. 43; Bērziņš 2000, p. 611.

28 Ģermanis 1993, p. 61; *Par Rīgas pilsētas domes vēlēšanu* 1917, p. 3; Bērziņš 2000, p. 611.

29 *Par Rīgas pilsētas domes vēlēšanu* 1917, p. 3; *Latvijas autonomija* 1917, p. 1; *Gubernas Zemes Padomes vēlēšanu iznākums* 1917/191, pp. 1–2; *ibid.* 1917/196–197, p. 1; Bērziņš 2000, pp. 620–621; Nazarova 2018, p. 98.

historical regions, all the political parties (except the Social Democrats), Latvian Riflemen, refugees. Also, delegates from the Democratic Bloc, which had been active in Riga since mid-September, were present. The delegates to the Assembly elected the Latvian Provisional National Council (*Latviešu pagaidu nacionālās padomes*, LPNC) headed by Voldemars Zamuels, Zigfrīds Meierovics and Jānis Goldmanis.

The delegates adopted the “To the Latvian people!” declaration which proclaimed a united Latvia as “an autonomous state unit, whose internal organisation and relations with the outside world must be decided in the Constitutional Assembly (*Satversmes sapulce*) implementing the will of the people.”³⁰ Also, the appeal to the leading Western powers to support Latvia’s national and political autonomy was adopted.³¹

The domestic and foreign problems facing autonomy had to be addressed by the staff of the eight departments formed within the National Council, a kind autonomous government.³²

The declaration did not mention Latvia as an independent state. However, many members of the Council, disappointed in the policies of the Russian Provisional Government (*Vremennoe pravitel'stvo / Временное правительство*), representatives of the Democratic Bloc among them, Meierovics and some others, advocated the necessity for Latvia’s complete separation from Russia. A serious reason for disappointment was Russia’s proclamation of a republic on 1 September 1917, with no mention of any federal or multinational elements of the future state.

On 19 September, during the reception of the Latvian delegation, Kerensky did not address the issue of an administrative unification of the Latvian regions. Neither did the City Code, edited by the Government on 18 October, name Latvian and Estonian as the primary languages in the Baltic provinces. The official language remained Russian.³³

The National Council had the support of the residents of Northern Latvia. On the contrary, the Bolsheviks relied heavily on the soldiers of the army units stationed there, including the revolutionary Latvian Riflemen. They also took part in local elections.

On 16–18 December, the Bolsheviks held the Congress of the Soviets of Workers’, Riflemen’s, and the Landless Deputies in Valmiera; they proclaimed the establishment of the Soviet Republic of Latvia (Republic of Iskolat). The

30 “[...] autonoma un nedalāma valsts vienība, kuras iekšējo organizāciju un ārējās attiecības noteiks tās Satversmes sapulce, paužot tautas gribu” [translation by the author], *Visionem latviešiem!* 1917, p. 1.

31 *Apspriede* 1917, pp. 1–2; *Latviešu pagaidu* 1917, pp. 5–6; Lerhis 2003, pp. 73–90.

32 Feldmanis 2013, pp. 11–12; Šiliņš 2015, p. 181.

33 Līgotņū 2001, pp. 44–52; Bērziņš 2000, pp. 621–623.

Republic was recognised by the Council of People's Commissars of Soviet Russia, and Latgale was also incorporated into Soviet Latvia. The Provisional National Council was banned (its members continued their underground work in Petrograd) and the democratic newspapers *Lidums* and *Laika Vēstis* were shut down.³⁴ The Republic of Iskolat existed until the end of February 1918, when the German Army occupied the whole of Latvia.

Towards a Democratic Republic. The Proclamation of Independence

Despite the disappointment felt by the Latvian democratic leaders towards the national policy of the Russian Provisional Government, the Latvian delegates participated in the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, dispersed by the Bolsheviks on 6 January. Yet, on 5 January 1918, the first day of the Constituent Assembly, Jānis Goldmanis made a statement about the Latvian people's desire for political freedom and for the autonomy of the united Latvia.³⁵

On 15–18 January 1918, at the second session of the Latvian Provisional National Council, held secretly in Petrograd, it was decided to establish an independent Latvia.

In summer 1918, members of the Latvian Provisional National Council moved to Riga, but due to numerous tactical differences, they could not unite with the Democratic Bloc. The Bolsheviks and the pro-German "People's Party" led by Frīdrihs Veinbergs and Andrējs Krastkalns did not join either organisation.³⁶

The Democratic Bloc attempted to create a Latvian national statehood under the German occupation, while the pro-German United Council of Livonia, Estonia, Riga and Oesel intended to create a monarchic constitutional state unified with the German empire. On 22 September, Emperor Wilhelm II proclaimed the Baltic area a "free and independent region". It is clear, that the main role in this area was given to the Baltic Germans. The German monetary system was used throughout the Baltic region. The leaders of the Democratic Bloc submitted their draft for an independent Latvian state to the German Emperor, but it had not been considered before the German (November) Revolution.³⁷

In summer 1918, the Latvian Provisional National Council sent Čakste, Meierovics and Kreicbergs to the USA and Great Britain. They were to introduce the idea of establishing the independent Latvia to the Allies. On 11 November, the day Germany signed its surrender, Great Britain admitted Latvia's *de facto* in-

34 Kemps 1991, pp. 156–157; Bērziņš 2000, p. 623.

35 Novickaâ 1991, pp. 151–153; Šiliņš 2015, p. 184.

36 Šiliņš 2015, pp. 184–185; Feldmanis 2013, pp. 9–10.

37 Bērziņš 2000, pp. 646–652; Feldmanis 2013, pp. 10–11; idem 1997, pp. 33–34.

dependence, and the National Council was recognised as Latvia's Provisional Government.³⁸

On 17 November in Riga, the Democratic Bloc members, jointly with some members of the LPNC and with the consent of the Allies, formed the People's Council. Jānis Čakste was elected chairman. Marģeris Skujenieks and Gustavs Zemgals became his deputies, and Kārlis Ulmanis was appointed head of the government.

The independence of the democratic republic of Latvia was proclaimed on 18 November. The People's Council became the provisional legislative body of the republic. On 25 November, August Winnig, the German attorney in the Baltic region, who retained his mandate after the fall of the Empire, gave his consent to the creation of the Republic of Latvia.³⁹

After the capitulation of Germany, Soviet Russia cancelled the Brest Treaty, the Red Army took the offensive at the Western Front and in early December occupied Latgale, moving towards Riga. Under the Armistice of Compiègne of 11 November 1918, German troops remained in the Baltic region to fight the Bolsheviks. On 7 December, an agreement to form volunteer units ("the Baltic Landeswehr") of local German, eight Latvian companies and a Russian one was signed between the Latvian Provisional Government and August Winnig. Adolf Fletcher, a German Major, was appointed *Landeswehr* commander. Latvian government promised to grant Latvian citizenship and a plot of land to foreigners who would join the *Landeswehr*. This caused unrest among the Latvian population; five Latvian companies refused to obey the command. The social democrats left the government.⁴⁰

The Civil War and the War for Independence

On 17 December 1918, the rule of the Soviets was proclaimed in Valka and the Soviet government headed by Pēteris Stučka was created. On 22 December, a decree of the Council of People's Commissars of Soviet Russia recognised the independence of the Soviet Republic of Latvia. Soviet Russia pledged to facilitate the armed liberation of Latvia from the "yoke of the bourgeoisie".⁴¹

On 3–4 January 1919, units of the Red Latvian Riflemen occupied Riga. On 10 January, the meeting of Soviets of Workers, Soldiers and the Landless proclaimed Soviet power in Riga and the Executive Committee headed by Sīmanis

38 Šiliņš 2015, pp. 184–186; Feldmanis 2013, p. 15.

39 Ģermanis 1993, p. 169; Feldmanis 1997, pp. 34–35.

40 Ciganovs 2009, pp. 90–91; Šiliņš 2015, p. 189; Feldmanis 1997, p. 36; Stučka 1958, p. 106; *Socialističeskāā Sovetskāā Respublika* 1959, pp. 140–143, 146–147, 186.

41 Krastiņš 1958, pp. 150–152; *Sobranie uzakonenij i rasporāženij* 1942, p. 1417.

Bergis was formed to exercise political and economic power in Riga. On 13–15 January, the Congress of Soviets of Workers, Soldiers and the Landless proclaimed the Latvian Soviet Republic and adopted its constitution. The constitution basically repeated that of Soviet Russia. The leaders of Soviet Latvia openly expected that Latvia would soon be united with Soviet Russia.⁴²

The Latvian Provisional Government and People's Council retreated to Kurzeme and continued to work in Liepaja. In 1919, the Latvian democratic government and the Bolsheviks waged an armed struggle both for power in the country and for influence among Latvians. The economic transformation policies of both governments were perhaps the most important actions. The Bolsheviks announced the nationalisation of land, the supreme ownership of land by the state, and began a programme of socialisation of agriculture, depriving peasants of the hope for their own land and own farms. Peasants became either workers at Soviet farms or tenants of their former lands.⁴³ Besides, medium and minor individual businesses of trade and crafts were either confiscated, or the owners were subjected to fees and taxes, which caused discontent among the population, who refusal to serve in the army of Soviet Latvia.⁴⁴

The force of the Latvian Soviet Army were units of the Red Latvian Riflemen who had come from Russia. However, some of the Riflemen, once in their homeland, dispersed to their homes, and the most combat-ready units of the Red Latvian Riflemen had to return to Russia to fight Wrangel's army.

In its turn, the Provisional Democratic Government, controlling a small territory in Kurzeme, began preparations for the land reform, which supposed a distribution of land to local peasants. Besides, on 22 February, Goldmanis made a statement, that all the peasants, voluntarily joining the Latvian Army, would get land after the war. In March 1919, paramilitary self-defense detachments (*Aizsargi*) were formed from the local population.⁴⁵

In the War of Independence, Latvians had to fight both the army of Soviet Latvia and German troops. In January 1919, the Iron Brigade was formed of the volunteers of the 8th German Army located in Kurzeme, later renamed the Iron Division, the *Landeswehr* being part of it. On 1 February, General Rüdiger von der Goltz became the division commander. Officially the "Iron Division" was supposed to fight the Bolsheviks jointly with the army of Latvian Republic, but Goltz's plan was to establish German control over the entire Baltic region.

On 5 February, Goltz declared himself governor of Liepaja. On 6 March, Battalion Commander Oskars Kalpaks, Student Company Commander Nikolajs

42 Stučka 1919, pp. 11–23.

43 Seržants 1919/2–7, p. 1; Krastiņš 1958, pp. 156–157, 371–372; Krastyn' 1957, pp. 70–76.

44 Krastiņš 1958, pp. 340–341, 383.

45 Šiliņš 2015, p. 187; Ščerbinskis 1997, pp. 44–53.

Grundmanis and Cavalry Division Commander Pēteris Krievs were killed during a supposedly accidental clash between the Latvian battalion of the *Landeswehr* and German militaries.⁴⁶ On 16 April, Goltz ordered a coup in Liepāja, replacing the Ulmanis government with a pro-German government of Andrievs Niedra.⁴⁷ On 22 May 1919, during the offensive on Riga, German units overtook the Latvian battalion; they were the first to enter the city and carried out mass executions of Bolshevik supporters. The Pēteris Stučka government retreated to Rēzekne in Latgale.

Executing the plan to subdue the entire Baltic, Goltz sent the “Iron Division” to Northern Latvia. On June 19–23, in a heavy battle near Cēsis, German troops were defeated by joint forces of the Latvian Brigade, Estonian troops and area residents. On 3 July, in Strazdmiuža near Riga, Goltz was forced to sign an armistice with the Latvian and Estonian commanders, with the attendance of representatives of the British High Command. Goltz was to resign and withdraw all the German troops from Latvia. On 8 July 1919, the Ulmanis government and the People’s Council, headed by Čakste returned to Riga.⁴⁸

Yet, the German troops remained at the Latvian-Lithuanian border. In October 1919, a new offensive of the German and White Guard Corps through Kurzeme to Riga began, under the command of Pavel Bermond-Avalov. Military operations continued until February 1920 in South Kurzeme, at the Lithuanian border.

The Latvian and Estonian units drove the army of Soviet Latvia into Russia. In Latgale Latvian units fought jointly with the Polish troops against the army of Soviet Latvia, and later against the Red Army. On 20 January 1920, the Soviet government resigned. The truce at the Latgale front was agreed on 30 January 1920.

But local battles and clashes on the front lines continued until 11 August 1920, when the peace treaty between the Republic of Latvia and Soviet Russia was signed in Riga.⁴⁹

The lack of support of the inhabitants of Latvia for the Soviet Army in Vidzeme and Latgale showed that Latvians took the side of democratic republic, a fact mentioned by Čakste on 18 November 1919, in his speech at the National Council session. On 1 May 1920, the Constitutional Assembly was elected as a temporary supreme authority in the Republic of Latvia, headed by Čakste. On 3–7 November 1922, the Constitutional Assembly transferred power to the Par-

46 Gol’c 2015, pp. 132–148; Mugarēvičš 1989, p. 6.

47 Gol’c 2015, pp. 183–192.

48 Ibid., pp. 208–214; Jēkabsons 2017, pp. 153–154.

49 Kapenieks 2011, pp. 97–115.

liament, the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia.⁵⁰ This event crowned the creation of the first Latvian state.

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50 Dimants 1999, pp. 50–54, 80–82.

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Latvian War of Independence: the Main Features (1918–1920)

Abstract

The chapter characterises the main stages of the Latvian War of Independence in the years 1918–1920, briefly describing their main military and political features, the warring parties, the peculiarities of the development of the Latvian Armed Forces, and enemies and allies. In the course of politically and militarily complicated processes, the Provisional Government of Latvia gradually gained the support of the entire nation. In August 1920, after intense combat with the Red Army of Soviet Russia, Germany, local Germans and Anti-Bolshevik Russian Army of Pavel Bermond-Avalov, it managed to end the war with victory.

Keywords: Latvian War of Independence; Army of Latvia; Soviet Russia; Germany; Army of Pavel Bermond

Introduction

The year 1918 marked an important turning point in the history of Europe and of the world. Many national states in Central and Eastern Europe were born during the end phase of the First World War, with not a few of these appearing for the first time in history. The right to self-determination abetted the collapse of empires already weakened by war. However, the conditions facing the new governments in their fight for independence and settling the borders of their countries differed to a lesser or greater degree (this struggle ended in the above-mentioned region of Europe in March 1921 with the peace treaty of Riga between Poland and Soviet Russia which also signalled the emergence of the Versailles-Riga system). This was most certainly the case for the three Baltic States, despite, at first glance, the similarity of their geopolitical situation. The differences in the dates when independence was proclaimed are telling (February 1918 for Estonia and Lithuania, November 1918 for Latvia), for which there is a credible explanation. The German occupation of Lithuania began in 1915 when its ter-

ritory was completely occupied by Germany, who was interested in establishing an anti-Polish entity. Estonia for its part was only occupied by German forces in February 1918, so that the Estonian political elite managed to proclaim independence in advance of the arrival of the German Army. The German occupation authorities did not tolerate the emergence of genuine statehood in either of these cases (fully suppressing the tendency in Estonia, and, partially, in Lithuania). Of the three Baltic lands, Latvia stood alone as a zone of ongoing combat for three years, and, this precluded major public political activities, including the proclamation of any form of independence.

Once fighting ceased on the Western Front in November 1918, the situation changed as well in those territories in the east which had been occupied by the German Army. National governments set to work in Lithuania and Estonia – previously, the occupation authorities had simply forbidden such activities. The Republic of Latvia was proclaimed in Riga on 18 November, but the Provisional Government had to wait one and a half year for recognition, a period of protracted and complex military and political struggle to sustain independence. Over the time period 1918–1920, the following entities collided with one another and even became inter-twined in a variety of ways on the territory of Latvia: the armed forces of the nascent Republic of Latvia, as well as those of Soviet Russia and of the Latvian Bolsheviks, defeated and humiliated the German forces along with various ambitious anti-Bolshevik forces of Russia, various Russian anti-Bolshevik forces, the armed forces of the new and renewed neighbouring countries – Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, and Finland – as well as those of the Belarusian People’s Republic (BPR) and of the Ukrainian People’s Republic, both of whom had declared independence yet failed to secure it, and, finally, forces representing the interests of the Great Powers of the West under various, occasionally differing guises. During the time period under consideration, three governments were active on the territory of Latvia, each with an armed force to hand, together with a transient civilian authority established in Zemgale and located at the rear of the army led by Pavel Bermond-Avalov. After their liberation from Bolshevik forces several territories in Latvia also found themselves, albeit for a shorter or longer period, in the jurisdiction of, even military rule by their neighbouring states – Estonia, Poland, and Lithuania.

The Baltic countries and countries of the region had much common yet they also differed in many respects. One aspect that illustrates the significant differences between five states of the Baltic Sea region is that the period of struggle for independence in these states is named differently: Finland referred to it as Civil War and War with Soviet Russia; Estonia as Liberation War; Lithuania as Freedom Struggles, while Poland called it Fighting for Borders and War with Soviet Russia. The processes and events in Latvia from 1918 to 1920 are called the War of

Independence, War of Liberation, etc. There is no unified conception, for different objective reasons.

Latvia was located not only in the geographic centre of the region but also in the military and political centre. This was already visible from 1915 when the German-Russian front line stabilised across Latvian territory. Of all the Baltic States, Latvia was most affected, because the front crossed its territory for several years, thus causing the most destruction and loss of life, industrial and social infrastructure (also as a result of mass movement of refugees and evacuation). This was the main reason why the proclamation of the Latvian state could only take place in November of 1918, while Lithuania that had been occupied by German force from 1915 proclaimed its independence on 16 February 1918, but Estonia which virtually unaffected by active warfare, proclaimed its independence on 24 February 1918 (the day before the German troops entered). Of all three Baltic States, Latvia had the most difficult situation. In Latvia, from 1918 to 1920, the interests of many other states and political forces clashed in military and political combat, resulting in the establishment of an independent Republic of Latvia. The process was particularly complex and characterised by exceptional cruelty and devastation on the part of all forces involved. Before the Provisional Government proclaimed the Republic of Latvia on 18 November 1918, an arduous, two-year military and political struggle had taken place to liberate the territory from the hostile armies and even a longer fight for international recognition *de facto*. The territory of Latvia witnessed a clash between different interests – those of the Republic of Latvia, Soviet Russia and Latvian Bolsheviks, the Baltic-Germans and Germany, anti-Bolshevik Russia, the new and revived neighbour states of Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, and Finland, even the Belarussian People's Republic and Ukrainian People's Republic to a lesser extent, and finally the interests of the Western Great powers or Allies. There were three Latvian governments in the territory of Latvia during mentioned period (National, soviet and pro-German), civil administration of Bermondts white troops, some territories of Latvia were under the administration of the Estonian, Polish, and Lithuanian authorities.

Government of Latvia and armed forces during the War of Independence faced military and political problems similar to those in other Central and Eastern European countries (destruction, changes in all spheres of life, the involvement of all parts of society including women and children in military processes, the consequences thereof etc.). Already devastated during the First World War, many Nations had to engage in warfare for their own national independence against many internal and external enemies. And in the case of Latvia, the number of enemies was quite considerable. Combat in the territory of Latvia until June 1919 certainly contained elements of civil war – as confirmed by the many victims and acts of cruelty. Then one may speak about the war against

Soviet Russia and German-Russian – the so-called West Russian Army of Pavel Bermond. Victory of National Latvia in the War of Independence was achieved because of the favourable military political situation, as well as support for Latvian statehood gradually conceded by the people.

Since the spring of 1919, Western Allied missions arrived in Latvia, such as military and political missions from Great Britain, France, and USA, which were actively involved in regulating the situation after the German *coup d'état* against the Provisional Government of Latvia in the spring of 1919 and after the victory of the Estonian Army and Latvian Brigade in the battle of Cēsis / Wenden at the beginning of summer.¹

Periods of War

November 1918 to April 1919. The Latvian War of Independence began on 18 November 1918, with the proclamation of independence still during the German occupation. The Provisional Government was forced to co-operate with the German occupation authorities, as well as with the German-Baltic military formations at the time of the arrival of the Soviet Russian Red Army and its Latvian Red Rifle units. The government entered into agreements with the German government to form a *Landeswehr*, which diminished the Interim Government's popularity because of people's hostility towards the Germans. At the beginning of 1919, the government, together with the *Landeswehr*, including only a small part of the Latvian Army, retreated from Riga to Zemgale, and from there to Kurzeme.

In a short time, almost the entire territory of Latvia, except for Liepāja and a small area around it, fell into the hands of the Bolsheviks who, thinking of Latvia as a “bridge to the flame of the world revolution”, formed a formally independent state formation in Soviet Russia – Soviet Latvia. General terror was introduced and a radical agrarian policy was implemented, so the government lost support within a few months. The significant numerical strength of the Soviet Latvian Army also did not yield results.² The Soviet regime also resulted in social catastrophe in the major towns and cities.³

The situation in and around Liepāja at the beginning of 1919 was almost completely controlled by the German military authorities, which, without trusting the Latvian government, prevented it from mobilising freely. On the other hand, units loyal to the Provisional Government fought against the Soviet

1 Jēkabsons [2022].

2 Šiliņš 2013.

3 Jēkabsons 2016, pp. 163–182.

Latvian forces together with the Germans in Kurzeme, and Latvian units were formed in the Estonian Army, which together with the Estonians took part in the liberation of Northern Latvia (at the end of March, a Northern Latvian brigade was formed).

April to August 1919. During this period, Provisional Government of Latvia worked in Liepaja, where on 16 April a *coup d'état* took place against it, organised by Germans who were not satisfied with the pro-western politics of the government, which was subsequently able to continue working on a ship under the guard of a British warship.⁴ Moreover, the most difficult period was the first phase when the government was only able to conduct limited activities in Liepaja and its vicinity, while the rest of the territory was governed by the Soviet regime. On 22 May, German and Latvian forces liberated Riga, but afterwards the *Landeswehr* and the German Iron Division moved to the territory in Vidzeme occupied by the Estonians and Northern Latvian Brigade. In June, Estonian and Latvian troops defeated the Germans in a crucial battle and were forced to retreat to Riga and in the area of Zemgale. This happened in accordance with the armistice signed under pressure from Allied missions. Subsequently, the Provisional Government of Kārlis Ulmanis that had regained power firstly returned in Liepaja and afterwards started forming state institutions and a unified Latvian army in Riga.

August to December 1919. This was a period of preparation for combat with Bermond's German-Russian troops in Latvia, while simultaneously the Latvian authorities tried to strengthen the Army of Latvia. The aggression began in October and continued all through November. Battles with heavy losses for both sides took place in Riga, Liepaja and elsewhere in Latvia. In November, the Latvian Army achieved an important victory in Riga with support from the British-French Navy artillery. Afterwards Bermond's forces slowly retreated from the territory of Latvia. In December, the Provisional Government and The Army of Latvia started to prepare for the liberation of the Eastern territory of Latvia (Latgale) from the Red Army.⁵

Besides the battle in the Daugavpils (Dyneburg) vicinity in August and September of 1919 the largest confrontation in the history of the whole region in this period (all the Baltic States) took place, one that has been mainly forgotten. This is because of the "wrong kind of" Latvians and Estonians (Soviet Estonian and Soviet Latvian units of Red Army) who fought the attacking Poles and Lithuanians (Polish Army and Lithuanian Army units). At the end of this battle, French tanks with French soldiers from the Polish Army 1st Tank's Regiment were involved. Overall about 500–700 soldiers on both sides lost their lives in this

4 Jēkabsons / Zariņš 2019.

5 Jēkabsons / Šiliņš 2021.

battle.⁶ Besides, in 1919 and 1920 Danish, Finnish (in the Estonian Army) and even Chinese units (Red Army) fought in Latvia.⁷

January to August 1920. The Latvian Army in cooperation with the Polish Army liberated the Eastern Latgale part of the country from the Red Army of Soviet Russia and afterwards the authorities began their work in this region, which was in a disastrous humanitarian state. At the same time, restricted warfare (a secret truce treaty was concluded at the beginning of February) with Soviet Russia continued until August 11 when the Peace treaty with Soviet Russia was signed and the Latvian War of Independence was over.

A Balance Drawn for the War of Independence for the Army of Latvia

The number of soldiers of the Army of Latvia had increased rather quickly by early 1920: at the start of the campaign against Bermondts on 3 October 1919 there were 39,241 soldiers in the Army of Latvia (incl. 2,371 officers and military clerks),⁸ while at the end of this campaign there were, as of 1 December 1919, a total of 65,296 soldiers, together with 5,495 horses and 79 automobiles (active combatants numbered 23,015), and on 31 December there were 69,232 soldiers, and 2,179 individuals under contract for a total of 71,411, whereas in January 1920 the total reached a maximum of 73,246 soldiers. Thereafter, the numbers began to fall gradually as soldiers of different categories retired (for example, students, elderly persons, etc.).⁹ Latvian units which had been formed in Siberia, and in the Far East of Russia, returned to Latvia during May to November 1920, as well as other units constituted at the end of 1918, the Imanta Regiment (which was disbanded immediately upon its repatriation) and the 1st Latvian Riflemen Battalion (the so-called Troitsk Battalion – after the city in Russia where the unit was constituted), which, upon repatriation, was renamed a regiment and, bearing the same name, integrated into the Border Guard Division (a separate Border Guard Division, consisting of four regiments, was formed in the Autumn of 1920, corresponding to the four so-called border districts defined between the end of 1919 and March 1920).

The ranks of the Army of Latvia had to be reduced once the War of Independence was over (11 August 1920) and adapted to peacetime needs. At the time of signature of the Peace Treaty, the army numbered 52,940 individuals (2,468 officers, including medical officers, 708 military clerks, 8,651 non-commissioned

6 Jēkabsons 2005 (2), pp. 50–60; idem 2005 (1) pp. 49–64.

7 Idem 2021, pp. 8–15.

8 Peniķis 1938, p. 63.

9 *Brīvības cīņas* 1928–1929, col. 2973–2976.

officers, and 38,566 enlisted men, with an additional 2,547 individuals under contract); the Army had at its disposal 138 artillery pieces, four armoured trains, six armoured automobiles, 23 aircraft and eight tanks.¹⁰ The ethnic composition of the soldiers of the Army of Latvia in the summer of 1920 was as follows: 84.2% Latvians, 5.6% Germans, 3.9% Russians, 1.8% Poles, 1.7% Jews, 1.3% Belarusians, 1.5% others. The number of minority representatives was relatively large,¹¹ although these figures demonstrate that Latvians without any doubt formed the core of the Army, an entirely understandable state of affairs.

Respect of the religious beliefs and national sentiments was a principled stance of the Army of Latvia in granting leave on specific holidays, which applied to national minorities and non-Christians alike. Thus, the Commander of the 10th Aizpute Infantry Regiment gave special leave to his Jewish soldiers on 9 May 1920 that they might take part in a solemn religious service in honour of “the recognition of Palestine”, while on 7 September 1920 the Commander of the Zemgale Division, then stationed in Southern Latgale, granted special leave to Jewish soldiers to attend services on the Holy Days of 12–14, 21, 22, 27, and 28 September, in all locations where there were synagogues.¹²

The losses suffered by the Army of Latvia in battle during the War of Independence numbered 154 officers and 2,875 soldiers of other ranks; the largest number of casualties were incurred during the campaign against Bermond’s army, with the next largest number of casualties suffered in combat with the Red Army during the operation to liberate Latgale. The number of soldiers wounded in battle was 3,844, and 241 soldiers of the Army of Latvia were shell-shocked. However, hundreds of soldiers also fell victim to various diseases; in late 1919 and early 1920 epidemic typhus spread from soldiers of the Russian North-West Army interned in Estonia, also due to the prevalence of this disease among soldiers of the Red Army, and an influenza epidemic and dysentery arrived from Western Europe culminating in the Summer of 1920. There were many fatalities among the soldiers, and, additionally, tens of medical personnel perished, including several Red Cross nurses and Elizabete Krīgere, a medical doctor at the Riga Military Hospital. Her death notice of 17 April 1920 reads as follows: “Death from epidemic typhus which she contracted while carrying out her duties as a doctor.”¹³ Illnesses were particularly widespread among units deployed at the front in Latgale, and these were exacerbated by the extremely poor sanitary conditions which prevailed there among the civilian population. Even in the rear,

10 Bērziņš / Bambals 1991, p. 38.

11 *Latvijas Kareivis* 1920.

12 Latvijas Nacionālais Arhīvs: *Latvijas Valsts Vēstures Arhīvs* (hereinafter: LNA: LVVA): sig. 1527. f., 1. apr., 2. l., fol. 237; 1498. f., 1. apr., 9. l., fol. 42.

13 “Mirusi no izsituma tīfa, ar ko viņa saslimusi, izpildot savus dienesta pienākumus” [translation by the author], *ibid.*: sig. 3413. f., 1. apr., 2. l., fol. 42.

illnesses could be fatal, and “121 soldiers died of a combination of typhus and influenza” at the garrison infirmary in Liepāja between 5 January 1920 and 22 February 1920;¹⁴ however, the Sanitary Service of the Army of Latvia was able to deal with this critical situation.¹⁵

Many members of the national minorities were to be found among casualties suffered by the Army of Latvia – Germans, Russians, Jews, Poles, Lithuanians, Estonians, Belarusians, Gypsies, etc. The highest military decoration – the Military Order of Lāčplēsis,¹⁶ which was awarded for bravery on the battlefield, first conferred on the day of victory in Riga over the forces of Bermondts on 11 November 1919,¹⁷ – was awarded to a total of 47 Germans, 15 Russians, nine Poles, six Estonians, four Jews, and three Belarusians, who served during the First World War in units of the Army of Latvia and Latvian Riflemen.¹⁸ German Home Guard units rendered great service in fighting the Red Army – many Latvians and members of other nationalities fought in these units, including several Tatars, who had been taken prisoner at the front in Latgale, and who then volunteered for the Army of Latvia. Participation of Russian units in the War of Independence must be noted – a partisan unit was gathered in November 1918 in Rēzekne, led by Colonel Mihail Afanasjev, and which was composed mostly of Russian soldiers; it was later briefly part of the armed forces loyal to the Provisional Government. This unit was disbanded in 1919 in Liepāja, at which time most members of the unit joined the Russian Unit of the Landeswehr under the command of Anatol Lieven, which was instrumental in clearing Bolshevik forces from Kurzeme and Riga. Furthermore, the commander of this unit refused to support the instigators of the coup mounted on 16 April in Liepāja, and the unit fought together with Germans, Estonians and Latvians at Cēsis. During the end of June and the beginning of July, the unit commanded by Anatol Lieven ensured order in Liepāja after the departure of the German forces from the city, while, after the battles at Cēsis this unit left Latvia to join the North-Western Russian Army in Estonia.¹⁹

14 “[...] 121 kareivis nomira no tīfa un gripas kombinācijas” [translation by the author], *ibid.*: sig. 6033. f., 1. apr., 286. l., fol. 2. For details of the sanitary situation in Latgale see *ibid.*: sig. 1515. f., 1. apr., 243. l., fol. 381.

15 Gīle 2012, pp. 95–120; eadem 2015, pp. 17–36.

16 Latvian military award established in 1919. It was named after the Latvian epic hero, Lāčplēsis – The Bear Killer – a superhumanly strong hero of the Latvian national epic written in 1872–1887 by Andrejs Pumpurs and based on the local legends.

17 This date must be considered as the official date of the award, whereas the actual medals were struck considerably later, after much debate, with the first soldiers receiving them on 11. 11. 1920.

18 Šēnbergs / Bambals / Rauzāns 1995.

19 For details see Jēkabsons 1996, pp. 42–59; Čapenko 2003, pp. 95–110.

On 23 July 1919, Jorģis Zemitāns, the commander of the Vidzeme Division, informed the Army Supreme Commander that his units included relatively many Russian soldiers, and that, training them together with Latvian soldiers was impossible, and also that command in the field is difficult, since most of them do not understand Latvian.²⁰ He, therefore, sought permission to set up a separate unit consisting only of Russian soldiers (there were 121 Russian soldiers in the Division who did not understand Latvian), and so at the beginning of August, a “separate Russian Unit” was created in the 6th Riga Infantry Regiment with 35 Russian speaking soldiers (the unit was disbanded on September 21st transferring these soldiers to other Companies).²¹ Most of the units with Russian-speaking soldiers were to be found in the Latgale Partisan Regiment. Soldiers from practically all nationalities present in Latvia were found in the ranks of the Army of Latvia during the War of Independence, including Ukrainians, Karaites, Czechs, Swedes, Frenchmen, Danes, etc.²² At least one officer from Sweden served voluntarily in the Army of Latvia on ideological grounds, and one from the USA.²³ A British officer, Robin Ritchie, presenting himself at the Representation of Latvia in London in February 1920, expressed a desire to serve in the Army of Latvia either as an officer or non-commissioned officer; his offer, like others made by several other English officers and soldiers, was politely turned down.²⁴

Soldiers who had fought during the First World War in the Tsarist Russian Army, including those who had served as members of the Latvian Riflemen units (this was particularly true for non-commissioned officers) made up the core of the Army of Latvia; however, many who were mobilised had no previous military experience. In the same way, at least initially, the experience of all officers, military clerks, and military medical doctors derived from service in the Tsarist Russian Army, although later a number were commissioned from the ranks after demonstrating bravery in battle; two educational establishments were established in the Autumn of 1919 with a larger number of cadets at the Infantry School, than at the Artillery School.²⁵ The first contingent of new officers graduated on 20 May 1920, after completing a six-month so-called wartime short training course, immediately to join the officer corps of the armed forces.²⁶ When compared with the situation in the Army of Lithuania, the Army of Latvia had many senior officers, middle-ranking officers, as well as medical doctors-officers

20 LNA: LVVA: sig. 1494. f., 1. apr., 2. l., III. daļa, 31., fol. 96.

21 Ibid.

22 LNA: LVVA: sig. 5601. f., 4. apr., all files.

23 Jēkabsons 2010 (2), pp. 30–31; idem 2010 (1), pp. 30–31.

24 LNA: LVVA: sig. 3601. f., 1. apr., 469. l., fols. 103, 153.

25 Dambītis 2012, pp. 42–50.

26 Ekman 2006, pp. 107–122.

who had completed a higher institution of military education (graduates of military academies in Russia).²⁷

Relations were also strained with neighbouring states – reasons for this can be found first of all in conflicting territorial claims. Cooperation with Estonia, which found itself in a better military-political situation, had begun at the start of 1919, and, in the first instance this took the form of help in liberating part of the territory of Latvia, as well as operational direction and supply for the Brigade of Northern Latvia (a group of Estonian military cadets visited the 1st Separate Latvian Battalion in Kurzeme early in 1919, and even participated in one battle alongside units of the Army of Soviet Latvia). Volunteer Finnish and Danish units as part of the Army of Estonia took part in liberation of the territory of Latvia.²⁸ The attitude adopted by the Provisional Government of Latvia and the Great Powers after victory at Cēsis offended the Estonian side, as did the refusal of the Latvian Government to live up to the agreement signed by Jorģis Zemītāns concerning state borders, on the grounds that he had exceeded his authority as a military *attaché*. Consequently, when the armed forces of Bermondts attacked, the Estonians set out impossible financial and territorial demands for their support, and meeting with refusal, withdrew their armoured trains from Riga. Part of the territory of Northern Vidzeme remained under Estonian control until early in 1920, when the Mission of Great Britain acted as intermediary to resolve the border issue (an initial agreement on borders was concluded in June).

At the end of 1919, the Army of Lithuania which had liberated part of the district of Ilūkste expressed a growing determination to integrate this territory into their state, and the Lithuanian Government spoke about the need to reconsider the status of Daugavpils and Latgale. This led to lengthy arguments between both sides, even skirmishes during September 1920 (an agreement on borders was concluded only in March 1921 with both sides swapping disputed territories, incl. Palanga).²⁹

Territorial disputes also existed with Poland which, despite providing military assistance to Latvia during the liberation of Latgale, claimed part of the district of Ilūkste. There were indications that differences might have also arisen with the BPR, and this did not happen simply because of the dire straits in which this state found itself (a unit led by General Stanisław Bułak-Bałachowicz (Stanislaŭ Bułak-Bałachovič, Stanislaw Bulak-Balachowitsch) which had left being part of the Army of Estonia and was moving via Daugavpils to join the Polish Army, since it was considered for some time to be part of the armed forces of Poland, remained

27 For a description of the officer corps of the Army of Latvia see Jēkabsons / Ščerbinskis 1998, pp. 9–53.

28 For details see Ščerbinskis 1997, pp. 78–84.

29 Kapenieks 2006, pp. 164–186.

static in Alūksne, from the end of 1919 to early March 1920). Initially active relations were in place with the Military-Political Mission of the BPR in Riga; these were gradually broken off unilaterally by the Latvian side when the general situation in Belarus worsened, and Latvia initiated its peace talks with Soviet Russia.³⁰

Another potential state entity in the region was the Government of Northwestern Russia with which the government of Latvia maintained active, albeit very complicated relations (not excluding military issues); these relations were imposed by Great Britain, who had by then recognised the independence of Estonia and Latvia. Latvia broke off these relations after the Army of Nikolay Yudenich was defeated at Petrograd and its remnants interned.³¹

The relationship between three states – Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania – which appeared to be in a similar situation was very complicated, each of the parties seeking to realise their interests in an exaggerated way. This was evident in separated peace talks with Soviet Russia, as well as at joint conferences at Tartu (Dorpat, Derpt) in the Autumn of 1919 and at Riga (Bulduri) in August to September 1920. Furthermore, a delegation from the Ukraine People's Republic attended the latter conference, during which substantial differences, even conflicting interests were evident, which directly impacted military processes in the region.³²

The attitude of the Western Great Powers in regard to Latvia was peculiar, and this played an important role up until the summer and autumn of 1919. On the one hand pressure by the Allied Missions led Latvia to agree the very disadvantageous Armistice of Strazdumuiža (Strasdenhof),³³ and at the end of August – the never implemented Treaty of Riga signed by the Baltic States, Poland, and the forces of Yudenich and Bermondts about a common front against the Red Army; on the other hand, Allied warships provided artillery support for the Army of Latvia, even to the extent of incurring casualties, in fighting the forces of Bermondts (the Army of Latvia was assisted by English Marines who worked artillery pieces on the Latvia armoured train). Military missions from Great Britain and France were present in Latvia, inasmuch as they did not recognise the independence of Latvia, hoping for rebirth of a non-Bolshevik Russia;³⁴ Lady Muriel Padget led a humanitarian mission (UK), and a US military-political mission was headed by Warwick Greene (until the Summer of 1919).³⁵ A State Department Commission was present from the autumn of 1919, with

30 Jēkabsons 2011, pp. 158–172.

31 Idem 2001, pp. 54–84.

32 Lehti 1998.

33 Jēkabsons 2017, pp. 171–186.

34 Idem 2019, pp. 21–40.

35 Idem 2014, pp. 152–176.

several US organisations, the American Relief Administration, the American Red Cross, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), which provided humanitarian assistance not only for civilians, but also for members of the armed forces.³⁶ Great Britain and the USA extended a substantial loan to the Provisional Government of Latvia – to purchase war materials, medical supplies, as well as uniforms and footwear for soldiers, and this had tremendous consequences for ensuring the military capabilities of the army.

Balance of War

The government of Latvia and its armed forces had to face military and political problems that were similar in most countries in Central and Eastern Europe. This country, devastated during the First World War, was forced to contend with several powerful external and internal enemies, standing fast about their national independence, while the military political situation in Latvia was particularly complex and the enemies numerous.

Just as could be observed in practically all European armies, members of all layers of the society in Latvia were engaged in military processes – this was determined by the national patriotic sentiment which had infused society as well as its level of development. The issue of women and children participating in armed struggle to strengthen the state was relevant for the armed forces of Latvia. Firstly, this was manifested in the creation of a specific organisation – the Women's Auxiliary Corps of Latvia – on 25 September 1919,³⁷ and from this time onwards members of this Corps not only provided social support for soldiers of the Army of Latvia, but also helped bury fallen soldiers, etc.³⁸ Furthermore, women in the Army of Latvia acted as nurses, on occasion demonstrating extraordinary valour through their selfless acts on the battlefield, worked in unit administration, in the offices of various bodies, in procurement centres, and elsewhere dealing with national defence matters. Over and above members of the Women's Auxiliary Corps, almost 1,000 women participated directly in the War of Independence. Most were members of the medical service (at least two women doctors, 250–350 nurses and an equal number who cared for convalescent patients) while approximately 300–400 were telephone operators, worked in offices, were cleaners, washed laundry, etc. A significant number were young and well-educated, the largest absolute number were Latvians as was the case for soldiers (approximately 85–90%); however, there were significant numbers of German,

36 Idem 2018.

37 LNA: LVVA: sig. 5192. f., 1. apr., 60. l., fols. 83–86.

38 Bērziņa 2013, pp. 155–179.

Russian, Polish, Jewish, Lithuanian, and Estonian women. Apparently invisible among the soldiers, their contribution was significant and they helped achieve results on the battlefield and in liberation of the entire country, in this way demonstrating qualitative advances in society and their readiness to participate in society and in the life of the state on an equal footing to men. The largest influx of women to military units and offices was evident after the Army of Latvia was created in the Summer of 1919, although they had already been present previously in various military offices.

The struggle against the army of Bermondts represented a turning point when the degree of patriotic sentiment rose substantially among the citizens of Latvia of all age groups and gender – this was manifested in the rising number of volunteers. Furthermore, a turning point was evident in official policy – women’s participation in defending the state began to be debated in public (as regards first in constituting a Women’s Auxiliary Corps), and both the left and centrist press came out in support of engaging all citizens in the defence of the state. Two women were awarded the Military Order of Lāčplēsis for bravery in battle – Lance corporal Valija Veščūna³⁹ and Elza Žigļevica, a member of the Women’s Auxiliary Corps who died of her wounds sustained while delivering food to soldiers in the trenches on the banks of the Daugava while fighting the forces of Bermondts.⁴⁰

This also applied to boys who were still minors and who had not yet reached the age when they might officially be called up for service. The youngest soldier in the Army of Latvia was a Jewish boy named Konstantīns Goreliks, who was only 10 years old when he voluntarily joined the armed forces in June 1919,⁴¹ while some 300 boys younger than 16 volunteered and were accepted for military service, and some 800–1,000 youths entered service aged less than the official limit of 18 years of age. Many of these saw combat, many carried out special missions, not excluding reconnaissance in the enemy’s rear. Many fell in battle, were wounded and shell-shocked, went missing in action, while also demonstrating conspicuous bravery, even acts of heroism. A total of 27 boys, who were younger than 18 at the time, were awarded the Military Order of Lāčplēsis for heroic behaviour in combat. Several companies comprised students of Riga (one in November to December, two in the summer of 1919), the Student Company of Cēsis (in June 1919) as part of the 5th Cēsis Infantry Regiment, and the so-called Student Company of Liepāja (in the autumn of 1919) as part of the Zemgale Division – a substantial part of these companies of soldiers consisted of under-age boys. During the campaign against Bermondts, a Boy Scout Company was created in the Autumn of 1919 as part of the 1st Student Battalion, in which a total

39 Jēkabsons 2010 (3), pp. 36–40.

40 Idem 2012, pp. 20–39.

41 LNA: LVVA: sig. 3318. f., 1. apr., 373. l., fol. 296.

of 120–140 boys aged 11–14 were members and performed special duties.⁴² The oldest serviceman in the Army of Latvia was Andrejs Hofmanis, born in 1830, who in 1919 volunteered for service in the Brigade of Northern Latvia, and who then served as an orderly at the first aid post of the 6th Riga Infantry Regiment.⁴³

The struggle which played out on the territory of Latvia up until June 1919 undoubtedly contained features of a civil war – this may be inferred from the large number of combat casualties, and cruelties inflicted by all sides (including on prisoners) in Kurzeme, at Jūrmala near Rīga, and in Northern Vidzeme (having stated this, occurrences ought not to be exaggerated, since a different tradition has been now established in historiography, one that essentially is not incorrect). Furthermore, one must recall the facts of the war between the Republic of Latvia and Soviet Russia, and that with the peculiar Russian-German Western Russian Army of volunteers led by Bermond. Victory in the War of Independence was gained thanks to a favourable military and political situation in the region, as well as the gradually growing popular support for Latvian statehood, and, by extension, for its armed forces. Practically all types of weapons were deployed by the Armed Forces to good effect, while popular support was manifested through the selfless courage and heroism of soldiers, as well as through direct support for their Armed Forces given by society, in general, and by various social and ethnic groups, in particular. The presence of experienced officers inherited from the Tsarist Russian Army, in addition to astute choice of operational tactics in the fight against different enemies, contributed greatly to a favourable outcome.

Prolonged warfare was the reason for some serious social problems in society, including epidemics, crime etc. Evidence exists of the criminal activities perpetrated by soldiers of the German Army, Bermond army, and the armies of Latvian allies – Estonia, Poland and Lithuania – in the territory of Latvia, where not only the political and military interests of many parties clashed, but due to the prolonged war-fare, a difficult social situation and mass displacements of populations and other circumstances, moral norms generally declined, which significantly aggravated previously existing disagreements and hatred between various social and ethnic groups. Since the end of 1918, Red and White Terror had taken place in the country, killing thousands of civilians, war and civilian prisoners. As a result of the war processes, crime in society had increased to a previously unimaginable extent, and this could not be without effect on the army. The moral principles of a significant proportion of the soldiers and the population in Latvia had changed dramatically during the long years of the war, and during the War of Independence this manifested itself in a general increase in

42 Jēkabsons 2013, pp. 5–24.

43 89 *gadus vecs kareivis* 1919, p. 6.

criminality which was barely held in check by the authorities; moreover, the perpetrators of the crimes in many cases did not see their deeds as criminal but rather as a reaction to the necessities of the circumstances and as an appropriate response to the situation. The crimes were committed by soldiers of all armies, and the Latvian Army was no exception. However, in proportion, soldiers of the Latvian Army who were in their country and among their own, did so less than the neighbouring countries or other armed forces in foreign territory, and, compared to the events in the territories directly affected by the Russian Civil War, these were just minor cases. As elsewhere, the crimes committed by the soldiers against the civilian population were caused by insufficient army supplies, demoralisation, and a sense of impunity.⁴⁴

Conclusions

Between 1918 and 1920 Latvian soldiers (including national minorities of Latvia), which in this context means the Latvian People, took up arms, made great sacrifices, demonstrating through their persistence and ever increasing determination the fact that the people were ready for statehood, that the people were prepared to fight, to sacrifice their lives so that an independent state of Latvia might exist. The Latvian War for Independence, together with the First World War in the territory of Latvia (1914–1918), was one of the most important and decisive stages or processes in the history of Latvia in the first half of the 20th century, which played a crucial role in all aspects of life, radically and completely changing the hitherto existing territorial, demographical, political and social order. Moreover, it was noticeably more pronounced than in other countries. In Latvia's case, one of the first, but not the last, such decisive turn that is markedly reflected both in the number of Latvians today (there are fewer now than in 1914, which is a very unusual phenomenon for Europe on the whole) and in the fates of inhabitants of the land. The process that in the case of Latvia and its population, unlike for example, Western Europe, where hostilities ceased in November 1918, was a practically inseparable, just as complicated and heavy, continuation in the shape of Russian Civil War and the Latvian War of Independence.

During the War of Independence, population losses and changes were smaller, but the beginning of the return of refugees and evacuees to their homeland should be noted. Overall, about 4,000 Latvians died in warfare from 1918 to 1920 (including about 3,000 from Latvian Provisional Government's armed units, later – Latvian Army soldiers), about 7,000 to 11,000 were killed in onslaughts inflicted

44 Jēkabsons 2020, pp. 65–93.

by the warring parties, while the epidemics spreading amongst civilians and armies claimed about 20,000–25,000 lives. Altogether, the total loss during the War of Independence comprised 32,000–37,000 inhabitants. Latvia suffered enormous casualties during the First World War – by the middle of the 1920s, when most of the refugees returned to Latvia, more than 700,000 people belonging to the pre-war territory had been lost to the country. The reason for much greater losses suffered in comparison to the neighbouring countries – Lithuania and Estonia – is the fact that only the territory of Latvia was crossed by the front line for several years, among other adversities causing a number of socio-political consequences, including the exodus of a large part of the population from their homes or country. Thus, the prolonged war not only meant the displacement of a vast proportion of the population, as they became refugees or joined various armies; moreover, it also brought about tremendous losses of human resources. The lost 27% of the Latvian population never subsequently recovered, even to this day.

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The Expectations of Government Members and Diplomats of Lithuania and the Real Capabilities of the Armed Forces while Fighting the Bolsheviks in 1919

Abstract

After the restoration of Lithuanian independence, the armed forces and diplomatic service played a significant role in expelling the Red Army from the territory of Lithuania in 1919. The text analyses the expectations of diplomats and government members of Lithuania towards the military forces and reveals their limited capabilities to meet political and diplomatic needs. The Lithuanian political, diplomatic and military elite was forced to rely on the German Army, which had real power on the front against Bolsheviks, even after it had left Lithuania in the middle of 1919. The Entente's support for the emerging Lithuanian Army was limited, despite Lithuania's political efforts to balance between Germany and Entente. Balance policy between the Entente and Germany pushed the emerging state into a dead end, forced it to rely on the limited military potential of the emerging state of Lithuania.

Keywords: wars of independence; German Army; Western political and military missions in Baltic states; fighting the Bolsheviks; diplomacy and negotiations

Introduction

On 16 February 1918, the Council of State of Lithuania announced the restoration of Lithuania's independence, but the real functioning of state institutions began on 9 November 1918, after the formation of the first Lithuanian government,¹ and on 23 November 1918, after the formation of the Lithuanian armed forces, which together with the diplomatic service played a significant role in expelling the Red Army from the territory of Lithuania, defeating the military formations of Bermond-Avalov and halting the Polish forces in 1920.

This article will explain the influence of the army's capacity and capabilities on Lithuanian diplomacy, whether it strengthened or weakened the political positions of government members and diplomats. How did the latter factors interact?

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1 Eidintas / Lopata 2018, p. 36.

I will try to determine how Lithuanian diplomats assessed the capacity of the Lithuanian armed forces in the fight against the Bolsheviks and clarify their expectations and opportunities for the army in the fight against the Bolsheviks. The chronological boundaries of the article cover the period from the beginning of the establishment of the Lithuanian armed forces on 23 November 1918 until the Bolshevik Russia proposal to negotiate peace on 11 September 1919, after which the fighting against the Bolsheviks ended.

Lithuania's struggles for independence have been analysed in detail in historiography, but the diplomatic perspective on the use of the military to pursue political goals has been explored in a very fragmented way. Regarding this question, two traditions of research have been established in Lithuanian historiography.² The first one may be called military historiography, which examines military actions and battles, but has not been integrated into a more detailed political and diplomatic context. The latter tradition is historiography of diplomacy and foreign policy,³ which only identifies the most important battles and their results, without paying further attention to a more detailed analysis of military action.

Such a historiographical tradition creates preconditions for a thorough study of the political and military factors, and the versions raised in Lithuanian historiography on the limited capabilities of the army during the Wars of Independence call for a more in-depth study of the problem. The interwar military officers accused the first prime minister Augustinas Voldemaras of delaying the formation of the army and repelling the attacking Red Army. Historiography states that Germany's refusal to support the Lithuanian Army's march on Vilnius in March 1919 was fateful, although according to the officers of the German General Staff, who supported the Lithuanian Army and planned the operation to take Vilnius, German support would have been enough to attack the Red Army and occupy Vilnius.⁴ Finally, with only 25,000 troops in the autumn of 1920, the Lithuanian Army was unable to protect Vilnius from Lucjan Żeligowski's march.⁵ Vytautas Jokubauskas stated that about 2.5% of the Lithuanian population (45,314) took part in the struggles for independence, while in Latvia this figure was 5% (76,394) and 7% in Estonia (74,500),⁶ the number of troops was incomparably higher.

2 Lescius 2014; Ališauskas 1972; Rukša 1982; Statkus 1986; Gruzdienė 2011.

3 Laurinavičius 1992; Butkus 2019; Bukaitė 2013.

4 Butkus 2019, pp. 137–138.

5 Norkus 2014, p. 40.

6 Jokubauskas 2013, p. 229.

Fighting the Bolsheviks in 1919 at the Crossroads of the Entente and Germany

The formation of the Lithuanian armed forces began on 23 November 1919, although historiography is dominated by the interwar narration that Augustinas Voldemaras only sought to create a militia and maintained a reserved attitude towards the creation of regular armed forces. However, the diplomatic service documents show that the government, diplomats and officers, after the creation of Lithuanian Army, made considerable efforts to arm and strengthen the army because when the Bolsheviks began to invade Lithuania, Germany ignored Clause XII of the Compiègne Ceasefire Treaty, started to withdraw from Lithuania and on 14 December 1918 began to evacuate the army from Vilnius.⁷

As the Red Army approached, the Lithuanian government appealed to the Entente and Germany with requests for military assistance. The first representative of the Lithuanian government, Konstantinas Olšauskas, was sent to the town of Spa in Belgium, to ask the Entente that the German Army would defend Lithuanian territory and provide weapons.⁸ On 23 December 1918, the Lithuanian delegation went to Liepaja, where, after being disturbed by the German Army, they managed to see Edward Alexander Sinclair, the captain of the English squadron stationed in the Baltic Sea, and stated that Lithuania was in danger and needed weapons.⁹ Balyš Giedraitis, a member of the then Council of State, mentioned in his memoirs a “worked out” memorandum to invite the Entente army.¹⁰

On 23 December 1918, at a meeting of the Lithuanian government, it was decided to hire German volunteers for national defence, although it was suspected that they were “allying” with the Bolsheviks.¹¹ Meanwhile, the Lithuanians requested weapons and the army wherever it was possible, and the Lithuanian Ambassador to Berlin Jurgis Šaulys addressed the Minister Plenipotentiary of Ukraine Julius Lukševič,¹² and Gen. Maximilian Hoffman and Ludwig Zimmerle assured the Minister of National Defence Mykolas Velykis that the Germans would hold the Kaunas–Grodno line and would provide weapons only with the permission of Berlin.¹³

7 Lesčius 2014, p. 24.

8 Eidintas / Lopata 2018, pp. 261–263.

9 Ibid., p. 124.

10 Giedraitis 1925, p. 121–128.

11 Eidintas / Lopata 2018, p. 121.

12 Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas (hereinafter: LCVA): sig. f. 923, ap. 1, b. 35, fol. 54–55: *Lietuvos pasiuntinio Berlyne J. Šaulio laiškas, 28. 12. 1918, Berlin.*

13 Ibid.: sig. f. 923, ap. 1, b. 2, fols. 153–154: *Krašto apsaugos ministro M. Velyko pokalbio su gen. Hoffmanu ir E. Zimmerle, 28. 12. 1919, Kaunas.*

On 29 December, the Lithuanian Provisional Government decided to demand that the German authorities re-occupy the Baranoviči, Molodečno, Daugavpils (Dyneburg) line in order to supply weapons to the Lithuanian Army, and also to call for volunteers.¹⁴ Unfortunately, the situation did not change significantly. The Red Army continued to push forward and on 4 January in 1919 Mykolas Sleževičius demanded that the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs provide arms, ammunition, artillery, clothing and 6,000–8,000 troops.¹⁵ During his visit to Copenhagen, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Voldemaras was also interested in the issue of hiring volunteers in Sweden and Denmark.¹⁶ During the visit of the Minister of Finance Martynas Yčas to Stockholm, the Lithuanian government realised that recruiting soldiers in Sweden at the cost of 1,000 krona was too expensive; therefore, the Swedish government was asked to appoint 50 officers.¹⁷

On 31 December 1919, the Lithuanian government, lacking sufficient forces to defend Vilnius, decided to retreat to Kaunas, but stated that Vilnius would not be handed over without a shot and a platoon of officers remained in Vilnius, which, under the leadership of Liudas Gira and Kazys Škirpa, were to engage in combat should the need arise, while a government representative needed to issue a protest to the Bolsheviks.¹⁸ Thus, neither the Entente nor Germany agreed to give weapons to the Lithuanian Army and, furthermore, when withdrawing from the east, the German Army handed over territories, weapons and ammunition to the Red Army.¹⁹

The Red Army incursion into the territory of Lithuania was thwarted by a shift in the political position of the German government and army, when a decision was taken to defend the Mitau (Mitawa, Jēglava)-Grodno-Kaunas border after feeling the danger of the Bolshevik revolution in Germany.²⁰ On 30 January 1919, the German representative Ludwig Zimmerle warned that they expected a disturbance among soldiers in one of German battalions, which was agitated by the Bolsheviks and was planning to attack the Lithuanian government.²¹ Lithuanian historiography mentions that a Bolshevik uprising was expected on 2–4 February.²² In such circumstances, at a government meeting, Aleksandras Stulginskis proposed to cut ties with the Germans and rely on the Entente, but the Minister of

14 Eidintas / Lopata 2018, pp. 133–134.

15 Ibid.: sig. f. 923, ap. 1, b. 140, fol. 465: *M. Sleževičiaus raštas pasiuntiniui Berlyne J. Šauliui, 04.01.1919, Kaunas.*

16 Ibid.: sig. f. 383, ap. 7, b. 63, fols.1–4: *A. Voldemaro pranešimas pasiuntiniui Berlyne J. Šauliui, 11.01.1919, Kaunas.*

17 Ibid.: sig. f. 923, ap. 1, b. 2, fols. 123–125: *M. Yčo laiškas M. Šleževičiui, 19.02.1919, Stockholm.*

18 Eidintas / Lopata 2018, pp 138–139.

19 Butkus 2019, pp. 129–130.

20 Ibid.

21 Eidintas / Lopata 2018, p. 193.

22 Surgailis 2014, p. 166.

National Defence Mykolas Vėlykis objected to this, as it could “destroy our young military forces”.²³ The government was forced to rely on Germany because it was the only real military force that could stop the Bolshevik invasion at the time.

With the help of German military units on 9–13 February 1919, the Lithuanian Army stopped the Bolsheviks near Kėdainiai, Jieznas and Alytus²⁴ and remained on the border protected by the German Army along the Grodno-Kaunas-Liepaja line. As we shall see shortly, this line was not crossed until May.

Units of German Saxon volunteers were sent to Lithuania and helped to repel the first Red Army attacks.²⁵ At the end of January 1919, these volunteer units were enlisted in the 46th Saxon Division of the 10th Army and replaced the demoralised troops.²⁶ Their arrival was extremely important, since at that time the Lithuanian Army consisted of 4,000 to 4,500 soldiers, but these forces were small, poorly armed and scattered.²⁷ This is obviously evidenced by the battle of Alytus, when the German crew, in which the “Spartacians” operated, withdrew from the defence positions at the beginning of the battle, which led to the departure of the 1st Infantry Regiment, which was defending it, and the city was occupied by the Bolsheviks.²⁸

At the end of February and the beginning of March 1919, the Daugai-Staikliškės-Žašliai-Pagelažiai-Bukonys line was established between the Lithuanian forces, German Army and Bolsheviks.²⁹ The Lithuanian armed forces did not carry out any major operations, except for “expeditions” of individual units of the Panevėžys Battalion in attacking the towns of Šėta, Ramygala, Krekenava and Truskava.³⁰ Meanwhile, German forces were ordered to occupy the Kaunas-Šiauliai-Liepaja railway line at the beginning of March.³¹

The German Army followed this line, and the Lithuanian Army failed to cross it, despite attempts to do so. This is evidenced by the attempt of the Lithuanian Army to march to Vilnius at the end of March 1919. On 28 February 1919, Minister of National Defence Mykolas Vėlykis instructed Kazys Škirpa to prepare a plan for the management of occupied Vilnius. According to Škirpa, two infantry battalions, two hussar squadrons, 300 military policemen and 50 cavalry scouts were needed, but he thought this contingent should take part in the occupation of Vilnius with other forces,³² therefore the military leadership realised that the

23 Eidintas / Lopata 2018, p. 193.

24 Balkelis 2019, pp. 195–196.

25 Lesčius 2014, pp. 39–40.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Lesčius 2014, p. 60.

29 Ibid., p. 61.

30 Surgailis 2014, p. 169.

31 Lesčius 2014, p. 64.

32 Ibid., p. 80.

troops which they were trying to organise, would not suffice to take back Vilnius from the Bolsheviks and additional forces would be needed.

This is also reflected in the protocol of the government meeting on 21 March under the direction of Aleksandras Stulginskis, where it was decided that the Germans should push towards Vilnius, but the city must be taken by the Lithuanians.³³ Therefore, the government turned to Berlin for help, where Jurgis Alekna and Juozas Purickis asked the German government to support the march to Vilnius with two battalions of infantry and two artillery batteries, but at the meeting of the German government on 22 March, they decided not to provide help.³⁴ In historiography, the most important reason for this is the military factor, which states that in the event of the occupation of Vilnius, a front would be left exposed, which would have been inopportune for the German Army due to the threat of being surrounded by the Bolsheviks.³⁵ Although at that time there was only one reserve regiment 153 of the Red Army left in Vilnius.³⁶

Without support, the Lithuanian Army began marching to Vilnius on 24 March with two detachments marching from Kaunas and Alytus, but the first detachment was stopped at Žašliai and the second at Varėna.³⁷ The Bolsheviks halted the march of both detachments and revealed the limited offensive potential of the Lithuanian Army, which was visible to both foreign observers and Lithuanian diplomats.

In March, Allied military missions arrived in Lithuania and the competing influence of political and military factors between the Entente and Germany on the Lithuanian government and military leadership began to become apparent, resulting in Lithuania reaching a dead end in its political efforts to strengthen its army and defend itself against the Bolsheviks. A vicious circle ensued. As stated in the report of the Lithuanian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, relations with the Germans deteriorated – particularly with the arrival of the English and French missions – when Pranas Eimutis, a soldier from the Kaunas Commandant's head-quarters, was shot dead by the Germans.³⁸ As may be determined from poor diplomatic sources, Ober Kommando Nord Hauptman Tchunk asked the Minister of National Defence whether the French Army could assist in organising and training the Lithuanian forces. At the same time, if that was the case then the Germans would no longer be able to work “in parallel” and

33 Laurinavičius 2014, p. 163.

34 Butkus 2019, pp. 137–138.

35 Ibid.

36 Laurinavičius 2014, p. 165.

37 Lesčius 2014, p. 84.

38 LCVA: sig. f. 383, ap. 7, b. 11, fols. 31–41: *Lietuvos delegacijos prie Paryžiaus Taikos konferencijos apyskaita, 07.05.1919, Paris.*

help the Lithuanian Army to organise.³⁹ This was a serious warning, as the support of the German Army was important in all the previous battles.

In attempt to counteract the pressure of the German military, the Lithuanian envoy in Berlin, Jurgis Šaulys, suggested addressing the Entente generals Padovani and Dupont in order to take measures against the German threats.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, the German Army, instead of merely talking, began to take action. On 11 April 1919, the Lithuanian government learned that the Germans had agreed to sell 400 soldiers of the Lithuanian Army to the Bolsheviks on the front near Kaišiadorys for 9,000,000 marks.⁴¹ The government also received news that the German Army might abandon the front near Kaišiadorys and negotiate with the Bolsheviks “for the occupation of certain places” and send arms and ammunition to the Bolsheviks. According to the Prime Minister Sleževičius, such a situation on the front threatened Kaunas,⁴² as the road to Kaunas was solely guarded by units of Saxon volunteers.

As far as can be determined from the data presented in the Lithuanian military historiography, the 18th and 19th regiments of the Saxon Volunteer Brigade of Southern Lithuania were stationed in Žiežmariai-Kaišiadorys district, and at the end of April, when the Polish Army occupied Grodno, the 20th regiment of Saxon volunteers also left for Žiežmariai.⁴³ One should also note that Vytautas Lesčius claims that at the end of February, soldiers of the 18th Saxon regiment made friends with the Bolsheviks.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, from 10 April, the Lithuanian government left the protection of Ziezmariai to the German Army, and the Separate Vilnius Battalion withdrew to Kaunas after unsuccessful battles in Žasliai and Strošiūnai.⁴⁵ It should also be added that when the Lithuanian Army launched an attack on the Bolsheviks, the Soviet Russian government accused the German units of violating the treaty of 18 January 1919.⁴⁶

Due to the limited capabilities of the army, Lithuania could not stop the actions of the Polish Army in Grodno. On 17 April 1919 at a government meeting it was decided that Grodno could not be handed over to the Poles without resistance and ordered the Minister of National Defence to “take appropriate steps”,⁴⁷ but given the deployment and structure of the Lithuanian armed forces it was not possible to do so, as Poland managed to reach an agreement that the

39 Ibid.: sig. f. 923, ap. 1, b. 40, fol. 227: *J. Šaulio pranešimas M. Sleževičiui, 25.03.1919, Berlin.*

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.: sig. f. 671, ap. 1, b. 84, fol. 12: *Lietuvos spaudos biuro vadovo A. Rimkos pranešimas, 13.04.1919, Kaunas.*

42 Ibid.: sig. f. 383, ap. 7, b. 54, fol. 327: *M. Sleževičiaus telegrama į Berlyną, 16.04.1919, Kaunas.*

43 Lesčius 2014, p. 40.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid., p. 89.

46 Ibid.

47 Gimžauskas 2012, p. 137.

Lithuanian Army Bielorussian Battalion stationed in Grodno would be at Poland's disposition.⁴⁸ Therefore, on 22 April 1919, the Lithuanian government protested the withdrawal of the German Army from Grodno and its handover to the Poles, saying that Lithuania was ready to defend that part of its land, and asked the Entente to intervene in explaining to the Germans that they would help Lithuanians defend Grodno.⁴⁹ In the absence of military forces and after the occupation of Grodno by Poland on 26 April 1919, all that remained for the Lithuanian government was to issue a protest.⁵⁰

Lithuania needed to strengthen its military. Therefore, on 3 April 1919, during the Peace Conference in Paris, Petras Klimas reported that “the Entente was seriously concerned about the danger posed by the Bolsheviks and planned to actively support one front with Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland”.⁵¹

Representatives of the US and French military missions, who arrived in Lithuania in March, were quite critical of the army's capabilities. For example, the US captains Charles Pain and Hill,⁵² who visited Marijampolė, Kalvarija, Krosna, Simnas, Alytus, Jieznas, Kruonis and Rumšiškės, thought that Lithuania would not be able to defend itself from the “Bolsheviks”, that the organisation of the army was too slow, that the Lithuanians and Germans were “comrades”, and the Lithuanian Army was characterised by the words “it is a pity it is so small”.⁵³ Warwick Green, a spokesman for the US mission, who considered the Germans to be the only anti-Bolshevik force in the Baltic states, thought similarly.⁵⁴

The limited capabilities of the army were also quite obvious for Lithuanian diplomats. Juozas Purickis was even more pessimistic. As he informed the representatives of Lithuania in Berlin in a telegram: “the help in Kaunas is very bad, everything, especially the army, is coming to a standstill and starting to fall apart, so it is necessary to get money by any means possible”.⁵⁵ Jurgis Šaulys, who went to Warsaw on a diplomatic mission, called for the bolstering of the army. In his view, the army needed to be mobilised to have at least 40,000 troops by the end of

48 Laurinavičius 2020, p. 229.

49 LCVA: sig. f. 383, ap. 7, b. 9, fol. 131: *J. Purickio protestas dėl Vokietijos kariuomenės pasitraukimo iš Gardino, 22.04.1919, Kaunas.*

50 Ibid.: sig. f. 383, ap. 5, b. 56, fol. 38–39: *Lietuvos ypatingojo įgaliotinio A. Žilinsko protestas lenkų kariuomenės vadui, 26.04.1919, Kaunas.*

51 “Antantė visai rimtai susirūpino dėl bolševikų pavojaus ir sumanė aktyviai remti vieną frontą su Estija, Latvija, Lietuva ir Lenkija” [all translations of quotations by the author], *ibid.*: sig. f. 671, ap. 1, b. 95, fol. 1–4: *P. Klimo raštas Lietuvos atstovybei Vokietijoje, 03.04.1919, Kaunas.*

52 Name unidentified.

53 “[...] gaila, jog jos taip maža yra”, LCVA: sig. f. 923, ap. 1, b. 12: *Lietuvos valdžios atstovo M. Šalčiaus raportas apie Amerikos Raudonojo Kryžiaus Misijos kelionę, Kaunas.*

54 Laurinavičius 2020, p. 204.

55 “[...] padėjimas Kaune labai blogas, viskas ypač kariuomenė labai stoja ir pradeda irti, tai pinigų reikia nors iš po žemės iškasti”, LCVA: sig. f. 383, ap. 7, b. 9, fol. 1–2: *J. Purickio telegrama Lietuvos atstovams Berlyne, 20.04.1919, Kaunas.*

the year.⁵⁶ Purickis called for an offensive against the Bolsheviks (using the panic at the Bolshevik front) from Varėna to Courland (Kurzeme) at the end of April, but realised that success could only be real with the support of the German Army, which was angry at the Lithuanians, that the French mission was welcomed too friendly.⁵⁷ On 26 April 1919, Gen. Silvestras Žukauskas was appointed Chief of the General Staff and he concluded that the Lithuanian military forces were too weak to carry out larger-scale operations.⁵⁸

The situation in the army was bad. There was a lack of weapons, shoes and food; the requisitions were slow, as stated at a government meeting, and there was no backbone to rely on.⁵⁹ Mykolas Sleževičius instructed the Lithuanian delegation at the Peace Conference in Paris to put pressure on England and America to provide weapons, ammunition and clothing as soon as possible.⁶⁰ On 25 April 1919, the Minister of Industry and Trade Jonas Šimkus announced that he addressed the French Admiral Briten, who was in Liepaja at the time, to provide weapons and ammunition.⁶¹ In the absence of forces, the recruitment of 5,000 German soldiers was considered, although the recruitment of volunteers in Sweden, Denmark and England was unsuccessful. As the government meeting shows, Sleževičius was well aware that without military force it would not be possible to resist the Bolsheviks, and without stopping the Bolsheviks it would not be possible to expect the Entente's military assistance.⁶²

The situation was complicated because the Entente linked the issue of support for Lithuania with the German loan and the presence of the German Army in Lithuania,⁶³ and the government's actions did not offer much hope. In April, Prime Minister Mykolas Sleževičius and Minister of National Defence Antanas Merkys appealed to the Provisional Government of Latvia to allow Latvians who considered themselves Lithuanian citizens and spoke the Lithuanian language to join the Lithuanian Army.⁶⁴ The visit of Foreign Office representative in the Baltic states Herbert Grant Watson to Kaunas – who, according to Sleževičius, was very kindly disposed and promised to provide Lithuania with loans, weapons, am-

56 Ibid.: sig. f. 383, ap. 7, b. 64, fol. 209–210: *Misijos Lenkijoje vadovo J. Šaulio pranešimas, 22. 04. 1919, Vašuva.*

57 Butkus 2004, p. 141.

58 Aničas 2006, p. 68.

59 Eidintas / Lopata 2018, p. 308.

60 LCVA: sig. f. 383, ap. 7, b. 23, fol. 1–3: *M. Sleževičiaus laiškas delegacijai prie Taikos konferencijos, 22. 04. 1919, Kaunas.*

61 Gimžauskas 2012, pp. 138–139.

62 Eidintas / Lopata 2018, p. 308.

63 LCVA: sig. f. 383, ap. 7, b. 24, fols. 24–28: *Lietuvos delegacijos prie Paryžiaus Taikos konferencijos apyskaita, 25. 04. 1919, Paris.*

64 Ibid.: sig. f. 923, ap. 1, b. 29, l. 21: *M. Sleževičiaus ir A. Merkio kreipimasis į Latvijos laikinąją vyriausybę, 14. 04. 1919, Kaunas.*

munition and clothes – did not offer much hope. However, Watson's report, which describes his impressions upon his arrival in Lithuania on 6 April 1919, does not mention any military promises to the Lithuanian authorities.⁶⁵ Therefore, we assume that his words were only diplomatic gestures of diplomatic courtesy, and the government was at a dead end and dependent on German forces.

This is also noted in Watson's report, which states that at the end of March, the Germans, who had about 30,000 troops in Lithuania, stated that they would not march beyond the line south of Bauska, as it was the most convenient line of defence, and when the French military mission arrived in Lithuania he threatened to leave the country and hand Lithuania over to the Bolsheviks. Relations between the Lithuanian and German armies were described as strained.⁶⁶ He also emphasised that the Lithuanian Army tried to cross the line, but had to withdraw.⁶⁷

The only wider operation carried out by the Lithuanian Army at the end of April and the beginning of May was the occupation of Ukmergė, when – in response to the fact that on the 19–21 April 1919 the Polish Army occupied Vilnius and while routing the Bolsheviks broke through in the direction of Trakai, Maišiagala and Ukmergė – the Panevėžys Battalion, on 3 May, supported by the 18th Regiment of Saxon Volunteers, occupied Ukmergė, and on the 7–9 May together attacked Širvintos and Giedraičiai with the Poles.⁶⁸

Fighting the Bolsheviks after the Loss of German Support in the Summer of 1919

It seems that our previously mentioned Kaunas-Šiauliai-Liepāja line of defence only moved in May, when Landwehr and the Iron Division occupied Riga. As the historiography indicates, the loss of Vilnius and Riga was a major blow to the expansion of the Bolsheviks in the Baltic states.⁶⁹ Another important aspect was that after the occupation of Vilnius by the Polish Army, the Bolsheviks moved beyond the Neris river and concentrated in north-eastern Lithuania. Therefore, the Saxon and Lithuanian forces located in Alytus and Žiežmariai lost their strategic significance.⁷⁰ After the narrowing of the front, the Lithuanian Army was redeployed and concentrated in two directions of attack: Ukmergė-Utena-Zarasai and Kėdainiai-Panevėžys-Rokiškis. The forces that attacked in these

65 Gruzdienė 2011, pp. 43–44.

66 Grodis 2019, p. 183.

67 Ibid.

68 Lesčius 2014, p. 93; Aničas 2005, p. 8.

69 Butkus 2019, p. 143.

70 Lesčius 2014, p. 97.

directions were the Ukmergė (1st Infantry Regiment, 4th Artillery Regiment, Saxon Volunteer Battalion) and Panevėžys (Panevėžys Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Light Artillery Battery) detachments, respectively.⁷¹

The Panevėžys detachment together with one battalion from the 18th Saxon volunteers regiment on 24 May occupied Panevėžys, and on the 28–30 May failed to occupy Kupiškis. The attack in this direction was rescued by the partisans of Joniškėlis who, with a team of German riders detachment, occupied Rokiškis on 31 May. The detachment successfully continued to attack and on 30 June 1919 fortified its position along the Kukliai-Suviekas-Vaidminai-Gudai-Kovenka-Eglainė railway station – Kalnaberžiai-Bebrinė line.⁷²

Meanwhile, the Ukmergė detachment supported by the Saxon battalion occupied Utena on 2 June and at the end of June fortified its position on the Dusetos Lakes front. The attacks on the Lithuanian armed forces in May and June were painful. The front line practically did not move. The ranks of the armed forces were severely dispersed. Only 1,100 soldiers remained in the Panevėžys detachment, and the lack of weapons and ammunition complicated the situation. Therefore, the Lithuanian military leadership asked Germany to allocate five million pieces of ammunition, 10,000 rifles, 200 carbines and 100 machine guns.⁷³ However, it was impossible to expect help as the German Army had ceased taking part in the military action against the Red Army, since Germany was furious with the terms of the Treaty of Versailles imposed upon it.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the German Ministry of Defence instructed the military leadership to take “immediate” action to reach an agreement with Russia regarding a ceasefire.⁷⁵ At the same time, it shows that the Lithuanian government’s disappointment with German support⁷⁶ was not general, as the officers believed in German support despite the withdrawal of its army.

The limited capabilities of the army were revealed by Col. Warwick Green on 30 June 1919 at the Paris Peace Conference, stating that the Allied mission would help the Baltic states to defend themselves from the Bolsheviks and support the Baltic states with military materials, ammunition, weapons as well as grant a loan.⁷⁷ However, the report by Col. Ernest Dawley, member of the USA mission, not only includes exhortation for military support to be provided to Lithuania until it was able to defend itself, but also doubts as to whether the support would

71 *Ibid.*, p. 98.

72 *Ibid.*, pp. 132–134.

73 *Ibid.*, pp. 134–135.

74 Butkus 2019, p. 147.

75 *Ibid.*

76 *Ibid.*, p. 149.

77 Gruzdienė 2011, pp. 136–142.

be used against Poland.⁷⁸ The opinion of the head of the Polish mission in Lithuania Stanisław Staniszewski was even more categorical, according to whom “in the fight against the Bolsheviks, the Lithuanians are being assisted by Germany, without which they would not succeed”.⁷⁹

The first attacks without German support were difficult, for example during 6–12 July, the Panevėžys detachment suffered heavy losses, because it failed to reach the shores of the Daugava river.⁸⁰ This loss was agonising, since at a government meeting on 15 July, Mykolas Sleževičius explained that the left wing of the Lithuanian Army had overextended and after suffering heavy losses (about 300 killed and wounded) had to withdraw.⁸¹ Thus, the issue of the army’s capabilities was again relevant; therefore, the issue of inviting French, English and Swedish military instructors to the Lithuanian Army was repeatedly discussed in the government in June and July.⁸² The government also decided to send a mission to the United States, and Prime Minister Sleževičius claimed that the creation of an army must be the mission’s first task.⁸³ In June and July 1919, the Lithuanian military mission to the Lithuanian delegation at the Paris Peace Conference actively organised the American Lithuanian Brigade, which consisted of about 6,000 American Lithuanians,⁸⁴ and also addressed Gen. Henry Alby on the return to Lithuania of Lithuanian officers who served in Polish, Ukrainian, Armenian, Denikin’s, Kolchak’s and Judenich’s armies.⁸⁵ This was meant to substantially strengthen the Lithuanian Army and practically double its combat power.

In the context of Lithuania’s limited military potential, the Polish military factor became clear. After the occupation of Vilnius by the Polish Army, it began to invade the territory of Lithuania and encountered Lithuanian units in Širvintos, Vievis, Ukmergė and Merkinė. After the Lithuanian and Polish military representatives failed to agree on a demarcation line separating the armies in May,⁸⁶ Augustinas Voldemaras appealed to the Entente Conference on 13 June to define the line. On 18 June 1919, the Supreme War Council of the Entente determined a demarcation line between the Polish and Lithuanian armies, leaving the entire Suwałki province with Augustów on the Lithuanian side and extending 5 km to the west of the Varėna-Vilnius-Daugavpils railway.⁸⁷ It was

78 Ibid.

79 “[...] kovoje su bolševikais lietuviams padeda Vokietija, be kurios jie neišsiverstų”, Gimžauskas 2012, pp. 195–197.

80 Lesčius 2014, p. 139.

81 Eidintas / Lopata 2018, p. 451.

82 Ibid., p. 488.

83 Eidintas / Lopata 2018, p. 411.

84 Lesčius 1999, pp. 16–17.

85 Gimžauskas 2012, p. 223.

86 Ibid. pp. 179–180.

87 Laurinavičius 2014, pp. 187–188.

Lithuania's victory, but Poland was not satisfied and a second line was approved on 26 July, which assigned Augustów, Sejny, Suwałki and Puńsk to the Polish side and pushed the line 10–12 km west of the Varėna-Vilnius-Daugavpils railway.⁸⁸ Kaunas refused to recognise this line, and at the beginning of July, the Polish Army occupied Žiezmariai, Stakliškės, Butrimonys, and Daugai.⁸⁹ According to the opinion of commanders of the Lithuanian military units guarding the southern front, the Lithuanian Army was not able to repel the invasion of the Polish units. Commander of the Separate Battalion Capt. Kazys Škirpa reported that he would not be able to stop the Polish Army with 19 horsemen and two companies.⁹⁰ “If we have to fight the Poles, we will not withstand them with our current forces”,⁹¹ said the commander of the Suwałki Front, Col. Konstantinas Žukas.⁹² Diplomatic signals showed that Poland would respect the demarcation line, at least that was the promise made by the representative of the British mission Gen. Watson to the Minister of Trade and Industry Jonas Šimkus.⁹³

At the government meeting on 16 August 1919, it was decided to follow the demarcation line established by the Entente, as the Minister of National Defence Mykolas Velykis stated that only a “temporary line between the Poles and our armies”⁹⁴ had been determined rather than a demarcation line and the Prime Minister argued that “we have too few weapons, we’re wasting our last shots and we will not be able to hold out against the Poles.”⁹⁵ At the same time, it was decided to strengthen the armed forces in Seinai (Sejny) in order to show the public their aspirations, and to return Škirpa's Battalion to Žiezmariai.⁹⁶

Because of the growing threat posed by Poland, the military aspect made the position of the chief of war untenable, as Minister of Trade and Industry Šimkus accused the supreme commander Gen. Žukauskas of systematically failing to comply with government resolutions and patronising people of Polish nationality, and proposed to relieve him of his duties.⁹⁷

Later, Steponas Kairys, Aleksandras Stulginskis, Petras Leonas, Jonas Noreika also suggested removing the military commander. Their attitude was serious, as only Minister of Defence Pranas Žadeikis defended the supreme commander, who stated that the Cabinet of Ministers had no right to do so, and the supreme

88 Ibid. p. 197.

89 Gimžauskas 2012, p. 236.

90 Ibid. p. 229.

91 “Jeigu mes turėsime kariauti su lenkais, tai dabartinėmis jėgomis neatsilaikysim”, *ibid.*, p. 294.

92 Ibid.

93 Eidintas / Lopata 2018, p. 465.

94 “[...] laikina linija tarp lenkų ir mūsų kariuomenių”, *ibid.*, p. 514.

95 “[...] mes maža ginklų turime, eikvojame paskutinius patronus ir lenkams negalėsime pri-
taikyti”, *ibid.*, p. 514.

96 Ibid., p. 514.

97 Ibid., p. 521.

commander was subordinate to the President.⁹⁸ The pressure on the military commander also increased during the next government meeting,⁹⁹ until finally on 26 August the Cabinet of Ministers handed over a letter to the supreme commander demanding that enough forces be mobilised along the demarcation line to repel the Polish invasion.¹⁰⁰ However, the supreme commander ignored the decision, as the most significant forces were concentrated in Aukštaitija, and refused to send troops due to a lack of men.¹⁰¹ It should be noted that the military situation in the north and south of Lithuania was difficult. On 16 August, the government was informed that there were four German sections and 1,500 Kolchak's soldiers in Radviliškis, while the Lithuanian Army had only 1,000 soldiers on the front.¹⁰² In addition, the current situation forced the Lithuanian government to refrain from a conflict with the Germans, as a German transport with weapons and ammunition was expected.¹⁰³

Despite the conflict between the government and the supreme commander, on 24–30 August 1919, the Lithuanian Army carried out a successful attack on the Bolsheviks, during which the 1st Brigade approached the Ilzė-Medumas-Smalvairgis-Luokesa lakes line, the Ilze manors, the Didžiosios Samanės, Smėlynė villages, and the 2nd Brigade Aleksandravėlė-Šapeliai-Subatė-Obeliai line.¹⁰⁴ Regiments of Saxon volunteers were no longer involved in this attack.¹⁰⁵ Finally on 30 August, the forces of the Lithuanian armed forces approaching in the direction of Daugavpils aligned with the forces of the Polish armed forces, reached Turmantas and approached Daugavpils.¹⁰⁶ The successful attack explains why on 11 September, Georgy Chicherin, Commissioner for Foreign Affairs of Bolshevik Russia, addressed the governments of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia with a proposal to start peace talks.¹⁰⁷

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid., pp. 530–531.

100 LCVA: sig. f. 929, ap. 1, b. 3, fol. 46: *M. Sleževičiaus raštas, 26.08.1919, Kaunas.*

101 Ibid.: sig. f. 384, ap. 3, b. 24, fol. 26: *Generalinio štabo viršininko pranešimas, 22.08.1919, Kaunas.*

102 Eidintas / Lopata 2018, p. 514.

103 Ibid.

104 Lesčius 2014, p. 139.

105 Ibid., p. 162.

106 Ibid., p. 168.

107 Laurinavičius 2014, p. 212.

Conclusions

The territorial ambitions of the Lithuanian state (which restored independence after the First World War) surpassed the capabilities and possibilities of its army to operate effectively in the geographical area designed by politicians and diplomats. This problem became worse due to Lithuania's geopolitical situation and geographical borders – it had to contend with the armies and military formations of Russia, Poland and Germany on several fronts. The Lithuanian political, diplomatic and military elite was forced to rely on the German Army which had real power, even after the German Army left Lithuania. The Entente's support for the emerging Lithuanian Army was limited, despite Lithuania's political efforts, and the balancing act between the Entente and Germany pushed the emerging state into a dead end – forced to rely on the limited military potential of the emerging state.

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Tomas Balkelis

The Conflict over Vilnius, July to September 1920

Abstract

The chapter offers a general account of the political conflict over Vilnius during one of the most stormy periods of the Soviet-Polish War: from 10 July to 9 October 1920. During these three months the Vilnius population witnessed three rapid changes in government: from Polish to Bolshevik, from Bolshevik to Lithuanian, and from Lithuanian to Polish. While following the hectic chronology of military and political events, the chapter focuses on the situation and political moods of the multinational population of Vilnius. Based on the range of various Lithuanian archival sources, local press accounts and memoirs, the chapter presents an analysis of Bolshevik and Lithuanian policies in the city and the responses of local population groups to these policies.

Keywords: Vilnius; Lithuania; Poland; Ethnic conflict; Soviet-Polish War

Introduction

This chapter is intended as a general account of the political conflict over Vilnius during one of the most stormy periods of the Soviet-Polish War: from 10 July to 9 October 1920. The period witnessed the signing of the Spa agreement between Poland and the Entente on 10 July and the Soviet-Lithuanian peace treaty on 12 July. Both political agreements were sparked by the rapid Red Army advancement into Belarus, Lithuania, Ukraine and Poland that eventually resulted in the fall of Vilnius on 14 July and the subsequent Soviet transfer of the city to Lithuania on 25 August. The Lithuanian government remained in control of the city until 9 October, when the Polish troops led by General Lucjan Żeligowski recaptured it.

This stormy period of the conflict over Vilnius from mid-July to late September is less known in comparison with the earlier battles for Vilnius that took

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place in the winter of 1918–1919, spring of 1919 or October 1920.¹ This chapter attempts to fill in this historiographical gap by providing a chronological account of the Polish withdrawal, the Soviet occupation and the Lithuanian take-over of Vilnius. It focuses on the situation of the multinational population of the city during these drastic shifts of power. Their political moods, attitudes, economic condition and strategies of adaptation here are studied in the light of the military take-overs and political changes brought by the Bolshevik and Lithuanian authorities.

The chapter is concerned with three major questions. What were the circumstances and consequences of Bolshevik and Lithuanian take-overs of Vilnius? What were the policies of the Lithuanian government in the city? How did the main national groups among the city's population react to the several changes in power?

One of the aims here is also to introduce a range of sources into the study of this period of Vilnius history that may be unfamiliar to English-speaking readers: from the documents of Lithuanian government and political declarations of Polish, Lithuanian, Jewish and Belarusian communities of Vilnius to everyday life accounts in the city's newspapers and various diaries and memoirs of the residents.

The Geopolitical Situation in Mid-July 1920: the Spa Agreement, the Soviet-Lithuanian Peace Treaty and the Bolshevik Occupation of Vilnius

As the Red Army approached Vilnius, the Polish government urgently asked for support from the Allies. On 10 July 1920, in the city of Spa, Polish Foreign Minister Władysław Grabski signed an agreement under which the Entente would provide military assistance to Poland, if it handed over Vilnius to Lithuania and withdrew its forces behind the demarcation line of 8 December 1919.² In this way, the Allies tried to mediate in the war between Poland and Soviet Russia, hoping that both sides would stop fighting at this demarcation line. Knowing that Soviet Russia was willing to recognize Vilnius as the capital of Lithuania, they hoped that the Red Army would not occupy Vilnius.

1 For the accounts of the conflict, see Waligóra 1938 and idem 1934; Deruga 1972; Łossowski 1996; Łukowski / Stolarski 1994; Łukomski 1997; Róžański 2006; Senn 1959 and idem 1966; Čepėnas 1992; Lesčius 2004; Rukša 1981–1982; Laurinavičius et al. 2013; Balkelis 2018; Laurinavičius 2020.

2 The treaty stipulated that the final borders between Poland and Lithuania would be established by the Supreme Council of the Allies. The Soviet-Lithuanian peace agreement is published in Gimžauskas 2012, p. 378. The Spa treaty is published in idem 2012, pp. 382–383.

On the same day, British Foreign Secretary George Curzon sent a note to Moscow and invited the Bolsheviks to negotiate in London on the following terms: Poland would withdraw its troops behind the demarcation line of 8 December, if the Soviets stopped at the line; if they left Vilnius for the Lithuanians; if they stopped 50 km east of the Grodno-Vilnius-Daugavpils (Dyneburg) railway, and if they discontinued their attack on the White Russian Army of General Piotr Wrangel in the Crimea.³

The Bolshevik government understood that the Entente essentially offered international recognition of Soviet Russia in exchange for Vilnius for Lithuanians and peace with Poland. Yet, ultimately, they rejected the offer. Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders still believed in spreading of the world revolution to the west. Finally, military success at that time was on their side, and so they decided that by negotiating directly with the Poles and Lithuanians, they would achieve more than with the Allies. The British proposal prompted the Bolsheviks to sign a peace treaty with Lithuania as soon as possible. By signing it, Soviet Russia believed that Lithuania would remain under its influence, not of the Entente's.

In this way, on 12 July 1920, Lithuania and Soviet Russia signed a peace treaty whereby the Bolsheviks recognised Lithuania's independence, cancelled its old debts and agreed to pay it three million rubles.⁴ Of key importance for the Lithuanian government was that Soviet Russia confirmed the eastern borders of Lithuania and recognized not only Vilnius as part of Lithuania, but also the territories much further east than the ones offered by the British to the Soviets in Curzon's note. The treaty stated that Lithuania would receive not only Vilnius, but also Grodno, Mosty, Lida and Braslau.

This treaty became a challenge for Poland, whom neither side bothered to consult about its eastern borders. The fifth clause of the agreement declared Lithuania a neutral state. However, in one of the annexes to the treaty, Lithuania allowed the Red Army to use its territory during the Polish-Soviet War "for military-strategic reasons", which essentially turned Lithuania into an ally of Soviet Russia.⁵ Later, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Juozas Purickis acknowledged that the Bolshevik leaders forced the Lithuanian delegation to sign the annex in Moscow, threatening that the entire peace treaty would be suspended, if Lithuanians refused to accept the condition.⁶ Not surprisingly, Britain reacted negatively to such a peace treaty. Poland generally refused to recognize it and viewed it as a mere anti-Polish Lithuanian and Bolshevik conspiracy.⁷

3 Laurinavičius 2019, p. 61.

4 Žiugžda 1961, pp. 64–76.

5 Gimžauskas 2012, pp. 396–397.

6 *Ibid.*, pp. 401–402.

7 Łukomski 1997, p. 30; Łossowski 1996, p. 116.

The Spa agreement could not be implemented either, as it turned out that the Polish government did not intend to hand over Vilnius to the Lithuanians at all, or was unable to decide whether it was better to leave the city to the Bolsheviks or the Lithuanians. The Lithuanian government could receive Vilnius from the Poles (under the terms of the Spa agreement), from the Bolsheviks (under the terms of peace treaty of 12 July), or try to occupy it with its own forces. Apparently, at least initially, the third option seemed the most acceptable. Thus, on 12 July the Commander of the Armed Forces, General Stasys Nastopka, ordered the Lithuanian troops to occupy Vilnius “before the Bolsheviks”.⁸ Realizing that the military situation was hopeless, Piłsudski reluctantly ordered the Polish forces to allow Lithuanians into Vilnius only as late as in the morning of 14 July.⁹ Stephen George Tallents, the British representative who mediated the transfer of the city from Poles to Lithuanians later wrote to his government: “The representatives of the Polish authorities delayed [the transfer] until their decision to transfer Vilnius to the Lithuanians became meaningless.”¹⁰

In the evening of 13 July, two armoured Lithuanian trains moved from Kaunas to Vilnius. On 14 July, after regrouping, they moved out of Vievis. However, they were attacked by Polish forces near Kazimieriškės, who had not yet received an order to let the Lithuanians through. After four hours of shooting, the commander of the Polish unit admitted that the conflict was a misunderstanding.¹¹ However, it blocked the Lithuanian attempt to take Vilnius before the Red Army which in the afternoon of the same day occupied the city. The first units of the Lithuanian armed forces arrived in Vilnius only at about 2 pm on 15 July.

In an attempt to defend Vilnius, on 12 July the Polish military authorities appealed to all former soldiers, riflemen, members of the Polish Military Organisation (*Polska Organizacja Wojskowa*) and “citizens of good will” to join the city’s defenders.¹² The mobilization of civilians began – many women and teenagers joined their ranks. The military authorities declared a curfew. Some of the city’s Jews were forced to dig trenches, while Vilnius was flooded with an influx of Polish refugees. However, when rumours spread that the Bolsheviks were already nearby, Vilnius residents panicked: an evacuation of Polish government offices began, shops closed, and vendors refused to accept zlotys. There was a shortage of food, thus the Polish military militia began requisitions of grain and flour.¹³ Polish forces were unable to resist the mobile units of the Soviet cavalry in an organized manner, and the city fell virtually without much battle.

8 Gimžauskas 2012, p. 392.

9 Čepėnas 1992, p. 586.

10 Senn 1961, p. 36.

11 Jankauskas 2007, p. 223.

12 *Dziennik Wileński* 12.07.1920, p. 1.

13 *Lietuva* 14.07.1920, p. 1.

Having arrived in Vilnius in the afternoon of 15 July, the Lithuanian troops found it full of Bolsheviks and already decorated with red flags. The majority of the Vilnius population, Poles and Jews, watched with curiosity how recent enemies, Bolshevik and Lithuanian soldiers, marched next to each other on the streets. The Commander of the Lithuanian Forces, Kazimieras Ladyga, congratulated the Red Army.¹⁴ The Lithuanian anthem was performed, followed by the International, and the flags of both countries were flown on the tower of Gediminas Castle.¹⁵

In the meantime, the public mood in Kaunas went jubilant. On 16 July a huge crowd gathered in front of the city council to celebrate “the recovery of the capital”. The *šauliai* (members of the Lithuanian Riflemen Union) and various public organizations, including Jewish and women societies, sent their representatives, while several prominent speakers greeted the crowd.¹⁶ As people marched from the city centre to the British mission, an orchestra played Lithuanian and British anthems and the crowd cheered the British delegates for the Spa agreement that had acknowledged Vilnius as part of Lithuania.¹⁷ The Christian-Democrat newspaper *Laisvė* [*Freedom*] summed up the public mood: “Kaunas is celebrating [...] soon all our towns and villages will be celebrating too [...] Vilnius is ours!”¹⁸

Bolshevik Rule and the Lithuanian Military Garrison in the City

Despite the presence of Lithuanian forces in the city and the Soviet-Lithuanian peace agreement, the Red Army behaved like occupiers in Vilnius. Red soldiers openly looted the apartments of the “Polish bourgeoisie” and took over the military supplies left by the Polish Army. The train station soon filled up with echelons full of war bounty bound to Soviet Russia. The Bolsheviks also took away the equipment of print houses and cultural artefacts: for example, the private libraries of Władysław Zahorsky and Michał Brenstein.¹⁹

On 22 July the Lithuanian and Red Army forces agreed on a temporary demarcation line separating them (Adučiškis – Švenčionys – Naujieji Trakai – Varėna – Grodno – Sidra).²⁰ The leadership of the Lithuanian troops withdrew its

14 *Nepriklausomoji Lietuva* 17.07.1920, p. 1.

15 *Ibid.* 18.07.1920, p. 2.

16 *Lietuva* 18.07.1920, p. 1.

17 Petruitis 1937, p. 37.

18 “Džiaugiasi Kaunas [...] džiaugsis visi Lietuvos miesteliai ir sodžiai [...] Vilnius mūsų!” [all translations of quotations by the author], *Laisvė* 18.07.1920, p. 1.

19 Čepėnas 1992, p. 591.

20 Gimžauskas 2021, pp. 411–412.

forces from the city to avoid possible tensions with Bolshevik soldiers. Only the military commandant, Captain Vladas Kurkauskas, with two infantry companies were left in Vilnius. In this way, Lithuanians established their symbolic presence in the city. Yet the commandant could only watch helplessly as the Bolsheviks robbed the city. The only thing he could do was to register complaints of Vilnius residents about illegal expropriations or robbery of their properties, and protest. Nevertheless, the office of the commandant provided a refuge for the Lithuanian press of the city (*Vilniaus aidas* [Vilnius Echo], *Wiadomości Wileńskie* [Vilnius News] and *Litva* [Lithuania]). In his memoirs, a leader of the Lithuanian community in Vilnius, Mykolas Biržiška, wrote that for a few weeks, every day Lithuanian and communist newspapers were stacked on the streets next to each other.²¹ By publishing the Russian language newspaper *Litva*, the Lithuanians tried to gain the loyalty of the local Jews who did not know the Lithuanian language.²²

The Bolsheviks largely ignored the Lithuanian commandant and his small contingent in the city. They kept sending full echelons of war booty to Soviet Russia and delayed transfer of the city to Lithuania. They complained to the Kaunas government about poor condition of the country's roads and demanded permission to use Lithuania's roads and railways. The Lithuanian government refused, but there came reports that the Red Army was already using Lithuanian roads near Varėna.²³

Despite the Soviet-Lithuanian peace agreement, on 15 July 1920, in Vilnius, the Bolsheviks established a revolutionary committee (*revkom*) consisting of the former leaders of Litbel (the Lithuanian-Belarusian Socialist Republic): Romuald Muklewicz, Vincas Kapsukas, Zigmas Angarietis and others. Communist propaganda intensified significantly in the Bolshevik controlled Vilnius region. Soviets sprang up in various places, and the local Bolshevik press started calling for an armed workers' uprising in Lithuania.²⁴ Soon the Bolsheviks closed down the Lithuanian newspapers *Nepriklausoma Lietuva* [Independent Lithuania] and *Echo Litwy* [The Echo of Lithuania],²⁵ and imprisoned their editor Mykolas Biržiška. In this way, Soviet Russia tried again to pursue Lenin's policy of "internal Sovietization" that failed in early 1919. Furthermore, on 28 July, in Białystok, the Bolsheviks established a revolutionary Polish Committee, headed by Julian Marchlewski and Felix Dzierżyński. It seemed that, eventually, their second attempt to export the revolution to the west would be more successful.

21 Biržiška 1962, p. 200.

22 Ibid., p. 200.

23 Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas (hereinafter: LCVA): sig. f. 496, ap. 2, b. 778, p. 6: *St. Nastopkos telefonograma Nr. 492 Vilniaus m. ir apskrities komendantui*, 28.07.1920.

24 Šarmaitis 1971, pp. 484–486; Laurinavičius et al. 2013, p. 265; Žiugžda 1953, p. 153.

25 *Echo Litwy* was a newspaper published by the Lithuanians in the Polish language.

After the return of the Red Army, the Lithuanian government monitored the situation in Vilnius with increasing concern. There was a danger that Soviet Russia, having defeated the Poles, would violate the Soviet-Lithuanian peace treaty and occupy the whole of Lithuania. On 12 July an underground armed communist organization of 20 members was arrested in Kaunas.²⁶ Therefore, on 23 July 1920, a state of war was re-established in Lithuania. The Minister of National Defence and the Commander of the Lithuanian Armed Forces Konstantinas Žukas explained to the members of the Diet (*Seimas*) that it was needed to stop the growing communist propaganda, illegal transit of food provisions from Kaunas to Vilnius, and to ensure more effective mobilization of the army.²⁷

The Soviet-Lithuanian Military Convention and the Withdrawal of the Red Army

On 6 August 1920, in Kaunas, the Commander of the Fourth Red Army Janis Mežlauks and Konstantinas Žukas signed a military convention that the Red Army would be evacuated from Lithuania in three stages: first, within three days, it would be withdrawn from the northern zone (Švenčionys, Pabradė, Svyriai). Secondly, by 1 September it would leave Vilnius and its environs, and finally, by a separate agreement, it would be removed from the southern zone, which covered the territory of Grodno, Lida and Maladečna.²⁸

The Soviet government made this decision before the painful defeat of the Red Army on 14–16 August 1920 near the Vistula. On 4 August Lenin agreed to postpone the Sovietization of Lithuania and keep the promise to return Vilnius to the Lithuanians. This decision was made because of the sharp increase in anti-Bolshevik sentiment in Western Europe after the Red Army invaded Poland (crossed the line of 8 December), and the Allies began to provide military assistance to Poland. The Bolshevik leadership attempted to contest this negative image by highlighting Soviet Russia's peaceful coexistence with the Baltic states, declaring itself the liberator of Lithuania "from the Polish yoke" and trying to isolate Poland diplomatically. The pressure from Lithuania to abide by the Soviet-Lithuanian peace treaty also prompted the Bolsheviks to sign the convention. On 6 August the Lithuanian Seimas ratified the peace treaty, ensuring the Soviets that Lithuania did not intend to join any anti-Bolshevik coalition. Finally, another reason to transfer Vilnius was the sharp deterioration of eco-

26 Łossowski 1996, p. 130.

27 Žiugžda 1961, p. 77.

28 LCVA: sig. f. 929, ap. 3, b. 10, pp. 183–185: 1920 m. rugpjūčio 6 d. konvencija tarp Lietuvos ir Sovietų Rusijos.

conomic conditions in the city. Vilnius, already devastated by evacuation, war and requisitions, faced food shortages and a cholera epidemic.²⁹

The defeat near Warsaw and the sudden withdrawal from Poland forced the Bolsheviks to hand over Vilnius to Lithuania even earlier than agreed. Under pressure from a rapid Polish attack, they abandoned the city on 27 August. However, as early as on 8 August, they allowed the Lithuanian militia to be introduced in Vilnius and agreed to abolish the local Revolutionary Committee.³⁰ The transfer of city's companies and institutions to Lithuania started already in mid-August, though, initially, it was rather slow. At the meetings of the joint Lithuanian-Russian Evacuation Commission, both sides argued over the Soviet requisitions of properties of local residents, evacuation of the spoils of war, continuing Bolshevik agitation against the Lithuanian government and the organization of the Lithuanian militia in the city. The Bolsheviks dismantled the city's telephone exchange and tried to take away the equipment of factories, railway machines and warehouse supplies.³¹ Tensions also grew near the Lithuanian-Bolshevik demarcation line: on 22 August Lithuanian soldiers fired at a unit of the Red Army and killed a commissar and two soldiers. This incident provoked the Bolsheviks to threaten to stop the transfer of the city.³²

Gradually, the Lithuanian government began putting more pressure on the Bolsheviks. On 19 August 1920 it sent a protest note to Georgy Chicherin, the Foreign Minister of Soviet Russia, over the removal of properties from Vilnius.³³ On 21 August the Lithuanian Minister of Defence, Konstantinas Žukas, presented another note of protest to the Bolshevik city authorities regarding their attempt to introduce the Soviet regime in Lithuania and the removal of various properties, raw materials and factory equipment from the country. He called on the Bolsheviks to follow the agreed evacuation and suggested that Lithuania might be "forced to take the necessary measures" to protect the rights of its citizens.³⁴ The Soviet War Commissar Leon Trotsky himself responded to this note with a telegram, reassuring Lithuanians that Soviet Russia intends to keep its promise and the Red Army would be evacuated.³⁵

The final transfer of Vilnius to Lithuania was highly chaotic and quite hostile. While waiting for the Lithuanian forces, the residents of the city tried to hide from the retreating Red Army their last food stockpiles, various goods and more

29 Laurinavičius et al. 2013, p. 267.

30 Laurinavičius 2020, p. 364.

31 *Lietuva* 21.08.1920, p. 2.

32 *Ibid.* 22.08.1920, p. 2.

33 *Ibid.* 24.08.1920, p. 1.

34 *Ibid.* 25.08.1920, pp. 1–2.

35 Čepėnas 1992, p. 592.

valuable equipment. In the train station district, the Soviet city administration posted job adds for 600 well-paid workers to load goods into trains.

On the eve of the withdrawal, a wave of robberies, arrests and terror swept the city. On 10 August the Soviets executed seven Poles and Jews. Two days later, the city press reported that human corpses were found in Žvėrynas, half-buried and eaten by birds. A city newspaper called for their removal because they dampen the spirit of the residents.³⁶ In Lentvaris (near Vilnius) the Bolsheviks pillaged the local population.³⁷ On the eve of their evacuation, in Vilnius, they arrested about 180 people, mostly prosperous traders; the majority were executed at night, the others were taken by train to Soviet Russia.³⁸ Meanwhile, Lithuanian commandant Kurkauskas stopped the removal of 43 prisoners, and, at the Naujoji Vilnia station, a Lithuanian unit liberated 62 prisoners destined to Soviet Russia, mostly Poles.³⁹

The leadership of the Lithuanian Army pressured the Bolsheviks, realizing that after their withdrawal, the Lithuanians must occupy Vilnius before the advancing Polish troops. In July and August, Lithuanian forces, taking advantage of the withdrawal of the Polish Army, occupied the Suwałki region and part of the territory near Augustów, which was beyond the line of 8 December. The Lithuanian government quite naively expected that the Polish Army would not occupy Vilnius and the Suwalki region, because once again Lithuania declared itself neutral on 27 August 1920.

The Lithuanian troops avoided a major armed conflict with the Bolsheviks. Yet, in an attempt to hurry up their evacuation, they derailed one of their trains near Lentvaris and cut off telephone lines to Moscow. The Soviet leadership sent a note of protest over the first incident, but they did not escalate it.⁴⁰ In those days Lithuania's neutrality gave the Soviet leadership hope that the Poles would not use the Lithuania's territory to continue their attack.

The first Lithuanian units reached Vilnius on 25 August 1920. Two days later, in the morning, the first Lithuanian train with a government delegation and press representatives left Kaunas for Vilnius. In Vilnius, at the train station, they were solemnly greeted by the troops of the Lithuanian garrison. Colonel Žukas officially thanked the soldiers for "liberating the capital of our ancestors". The tricolour flag was returned to the Gediminas tower, and in Kaunas the press jubilantly celebrated the victory.⁴¹ Meanwhile, in Vilnius, the Lithuanian press reported:

36 *Vilniaus aidas* 12.08.1920, p. 2.

37 *Lietuva* 26.08.1920, p. 2.

38 *Laisvė* 29.08.1920, p. 3.

39 Čepėnas 1992, p. 591.

40 Laurinavičius et al. 2013, p. 275.

41 *Lietuva* 28.08.1920, p. 1.

Crowds of people are on the streets; they walk and whisper. It seems that some joy has overtaken them [...] that they are waiting for something. The Red troops are seen less and less every time. Kapsukas, Angarietis, Tsikovski are passing by. Why are they in such a hurry?⁴²

On 27 August the Lithuanian newspaper *Vilniaus aidas* published an *Open letter* to Bolshevik leaders Vincas Kapsukas and Zigmas Aleksa-Angarietis, signed by “Lithuanian workers in Vilnius”:

Thank you for leaving for us empty apartments in Vilnius, they will be more spacious without any furniture. [...] Thank you [...] for the money you paid us for the work we have done. Now we will be able to decorate with your money the walls of our apartments.⁴³

The Significance of Regaining the Capital and the Early Arrival of the Lithuanian Government Structures

The take-over of Vilnius was extremely significant for both the Lithuanian political elite and the mood of Lithuanian society. It fulfilled the long-cherished political vision of the Lithuanian national elite that was written down in the Declaration of Independence of 16 February 1918: Vilnius, finally, became the capital of independent Lithuania. After the city fell into the hands of the Lithuanian authorities, the political consolidation of the country gained a new momentum. On 28 August 1920 pro-governmental *Lietuva* wrote:

The final act of occupation of Vilnius strengthens the Lithuanian state politically and culturally. From this hour on, grandfather Kaunas, where our state apparatus was established, will remain the backup of Vilnius [...]. A completely new road had opened to the east of Lithuania. Today, Vilnius must be a place where new organizations to educate and cultivate the east of Lithuania must be reborn or established without delay. Long live Vilnius – the capital of Lithuania!⁴⁴

42 “Žmonių minios gatvė; vaikštinėja jie ir šnabzdasi; iš akių matyt, kad kažkoks džiaugsmas juos apėmė [...] kad jie laukia ko. Gi raudonarmiečių matosi kaskart mažiau. Pražaibuoja Kapsukas, Angarietis, Cichovskis. Ko gi jie taip skubinasi, ko?” [all translations of quotations by the author] *Vilniaus aidas* 28.08.1920, p. 2.

43 “Ačiū jums už tai, kad jūs paliekate mums Vilniuje tuščius butus, juose bus erdviau mums gyventi be baldų [...]. Ačiū jums [...] už tuos pinigus, kuriais jūs mokėjote mums už darbą ir kuriais mes galėsime gražiai nusilipdyti savo sienas.” *Ibid.* 27.08.1920, p. 2.

44 “Galutinis Vilniaus užėmimo faktas Lietuvos valstybę sustiprina politiniai ir kultūriniai. Nuo šios valandos senelis Kaunas, kur susiorganizavo mūsų valstybės aparatas, lieka vėl Vilniaus paspartimi [...] į Lietuvos Rytus jau atsidarė visai kitas kelias. Šiandien Vilnius privalo būti vieta, kur tuoj turi vėl atgimti arba susikurti naujos organizuotės šviesti ir kultūrinti Lietuvos Rytam. Tat, valio Vilnius – Lietuvos sostinė!” *Lietuva*, 28.08.1920, p. 1.

The euphoria that accompanied city's take-over seemed to confirm that the most important task for the local Lithuanian community was the political and cultural integration of the city into Lithuania. The Lithuanian press in Vilnius wrote:

Here the civic spirit of Lithuanians has always been insulted, humiliated and persecuted [...]. First of all, we must awaken this spirit [...]. We need to raise the civic consciousness of our east and introduce not only a common democratic order, but also [...] a civic understanding.⁴⁵

However, the Lithuanian government, first all, took steps to restore order in the city. After the Bolshevik evacuation, Vilnius was abandoned, robbed, and many goods were either inaccessible or excessively expensive. According to a local resident, all the gardens, city houses, more expensive fences, squares, etc. were so broken and abandoned that it was scary to even think.⁴⁶ During the change of government, part of the city's population tried to appropriate the furniture and other goods from the deserted apartments of their neighbours. Kurkauskas, the military commandant of Vilnius, immediately declared a state of war in the city. He introduced a curfew from 9 pm until 6 am, ordered gun registration, and banned illegal rallies and demonstrations.⁴⁷ Soon, the Government's Representative in Vilnius, Ignas Jonynas, established a nine-member Provisional City Magistrate, to which, in addition to several Lithuanians, two Poles, two Jews and a Belarusian were appointed. The Lithuanian press wrote that the composition of the magistrate is highly qualified for its tasks and the best local staff who know city's concerns have been selected.⁴⁸ The government approved decision to include the Poles. It was also supported by the leader of Lithuanian community in Vilnius, Mykolas Biržiška, who consulted the government and urged it to improve its relations with the city's Poles.⁴⁹ According to the Polish census of December 1919, of 129,000 Vilnius residents the Poles composed 56.2%, the Jews – 36.1%, the Lithuanians – 2.3% and Belarusians – 1.4%.⁵⁰ Townspeople eagerly awaited the appointment of the magistrate and reacted to its emergence quite favourably.

In order to stop the robberies and thefts that took place during the Bolshevik evacuation, the magistrate strictly banned “the moving of furniture from apartment to apartment” and established a city militia, more than half of whose

45 “Čia pilietinis Lietuvos gaivalas buvo visada ujamas, žeminamas, persekiojamas [...]. Pirmas tad mūsų uždavinys yra pažadinti tą gaivalą į naują gyvenimą [...]. Mums reikia kelti pilietinę mūsų rytų sąmonę ir įvesti ne tik bendrai valstybinę demokratinę tvarką [...] bet ir pilietinį susipratimą.” *Vilniaus aidas* 28.08.1920, p. 1.

46 Ibid. 14.08.1920, p. 1.

47 Ibid. 27.08.1920, p. 1.

48 *Lietuva* 2.09.1920, p. 2.

49 Laurinavičius et al. 2013, p. 283.

50 Romer 1920, p. 31.

members were Poles and Jews.⁵¹ From 11 September the Vilnius Regional Court and the Prosecutor's Office became operational. The return of World War I refugees from Russia to Vilnius resumed. A post office was set up at the station, and regular train connections with Kaunas and other Lithuanian cities opened. Faced with mass unemployment and food shortages, city officials started registering the unemployed. They banned food exports out of the city and promised to open cheap canteens for which the government allocated 300,000 auksinai.⁵² In the first week of September, the Lithuanian government started supplying food to Vilnius from western Lithuania. The Vilnius Union of Cooperatives signed a three-month food supply contract in Kaunas: every month the government undertook to deliver 15 train carriages of rye, wheat, oats, butter and pork to Vilnius' population.⁵³ On 4 September, after the city's power station and water supply workers threatened with a strike due to unpaid wages, the government made a quick decision to provide them with food at the expense of future wages.⁵⁴

However, the Lithuanian authorities faced a more serious challenge than the restoration of the normalcy of everyday life in the city: how to integrate the city's multinational residents into the political and cultural fabric of the state and turn them into loyal citizens? The inability to deal with this crucial task and the lack of a coherent strategy were the most important factors that considerably weakened the Lithuanian government in Vilnius.

Non-Lithuanians and Their Attitudes Toward the Lithuanian Authorities

Its own image in the eyes of Vilnius population and the political mood of non-Lithuanians were quite important to the Lithuanian government. However, over time, it became clear that the desire to strengthen the structures of government and to integrate the Vilnius region became more critical. Meanwhile, the attitude of non-Lithuanian residents of Vilnius towards the new government was ambiguous and changing: it shifted significantly from the last days of August to the first days of October 1920.

After the chaotic Bolshevik occupation, many Vilnius residents viewed the arrival of the Lithuanian authorities quite favourably or neutrally. Even for

51 *Lietuva* 3.09.1920, p. 1; *ibid.* 23.09.1920, p. 3.

52 The auksinas (derived from *auksas*, Lt. for gold) was the name of the Lithuanian currency introduced on 26 February 1919. Its exchange rate was set 1:1 with the German mark. *Vilniaus aidas* 18.09.1920, p. 2.

53 *Lietuva* 16.09.1920, p. 2.

54 LCVA: sig. f. 923, ap. 1, b. 102, p. 123: *Vyriausybės įgaliotinio I. Jonyno laiškas Ministrui Pirmininkui*, 4.09.1920.

radical Polish nationalists, they seemed to be more acceptable for at least some time than the Bolsheviks, who openly plundered the city and terrorized its population. Reflecting the mood of the local Poles, Helena Römer wrote that the occupation of Vilnius by the Lithuanians after the terrible days of the Bolshevik occupation was a great relief.⁵⁵ The people of Vilnius were especially looking forward to a certain (government) manifesto that Lithuanians came not as occupiers, but as the hosts of the city.⁵⁶ There were rumours that in Kaunas the government would soon announce a separate address to the Poles in Vilnius and offer them self-determination and autonomy.⁵⁷ However, having received no significant concessions from the Lithuanian government, most Poles began to view it negatively and some even spitefully.

This attitude was primarily determined by the fact that the Poles were the majority in Vilnius, and they considered it the cradle of their civilization and culture that must belong to Poland. Their changing stance was also determined by the fact that the Poles in Vilnius did not speak Lithuanian. Thus they had to communicate with the arriving Lithuanians in Russian, which complicated mutual understanding. The Polish city press wrote that the inscriptions in the offices and everywhere are exclusively in Lithuanian; they are incomprehensible to the majority of the population. This annoys them.⁵⁸ Soon there was a mockery of city's new hosts. Wanda Niedziałkowska wrote that "no one wanted to take this new government seriously".⁵⁹ The main mission of the local Polish Committee, established on 23 September, was to "protect the rights of the Polish population."⁶⁰

Nevertheless, some ethnic, social and political groups of non-Lithuanians publicly expressed their support for the Lithuanian government in the Vilnius region. On 31 August workers in Vileika handed over a declaration to the Lithuanian authorities, where they expressed their determination to work on building Lithuania. On 7 September, the government also received a request from the people of Grodno (mostly Jews and Belarusians) to annex the Grodno region to Lithuania.⁶¹

On 29 August, at their meeting, the Polish *krajowcy* (regionalists) also expressed a desire to create a new organization of Lithuanian Poles based on Lithuania's independence.⁶² They accepted Vilnius' accession to independent

55 Łossowski 1996, p. 157.

56 *Lietuva* 2.09.1920, p. 2.

57 Łossowski 1996, p. 156.

58 *Gazeta Krajowa* 8.09.1920, p. 1.

59 Łossowski 1996, p. 158.

60 *Lietuva* 25.09.1920, p. 2.

61 *Steigiamojo Seimo darbai*, 15.09.1920, p. 352.

62 *Lietuva* 31.08.1920, p. 3.

Lithuania, optimistically concluding that, in the new situation, Lithuanians will have to come to terms with “historical statehood”, and the presence of different languages as well as Polish culture alongside Lithuanian culture.⁶³ *Krajowcy* started publishing their newspaper *Gazeta Krajowa* [*The Homeland Newspaper*] where they discussed the forms of Lithuanian and Polish coexistence. They were the only Polish political group to favour the Lithuanian government. However, their influence on the Polish community of the city was small. The majority of Poles in Vilnius supported the vision of the Polish National Democrats that Vilnius should be annexed to Poland. As a result, the majority of local Poles lived largely waiting for the return of the Polish Army. Soon even the *krajowcy* grew disappointed with the policy of the Lithuanian government in Vilnius because of its unfulfilled promises, anti-Polish attitudes, and increasing attacks of the Kaunas press on them for their “sympathies to Warsaw”.⁶⁴

The Jews of the city were the most benevolent towards the Lithuanian government. Exhausted by the requisitions and repressions carried by both the Poles and the Bolsheviks, they accepted the Lithuanian government as a guarantee of their security, or, at least, as the lesser evil. On 6 September a solemn meeting of the Jewish community was held “to honour the liberation of Vilnius from the occupiers’ yoke”. The participants included the leaders of the local Jewish community (Rabbi Izaak Rubinstein (Rubinsztein / Rubinštein) and Doctor Jakub Wygodzki) and some high-ranking Lithuanian officials (Minister of Jewish Affairs Maks Sołowiejczyk (Maksas Soloveičikas), Chairman of the Jewish Council of Lithuania Shimson Rosenboim (Simon Rozenbaum, Simonas Rozenbaumas) and the Government’s Representative in Vilnius Ignas Jonynas). The latter thanked the Jews for their support and stated that the government was determined to give the Jews full national autonomy.⁶⁵ Wygodzki, the Chairman of the Council of the Vilnius Jewish Community, expressed the joy of the Jewish people over the liberation of Vilnius and their determination to contribute to state building.⁶⁶

Initially, the leaders of the city’s Belarusian community also responded in good faith to the arrival of Lithuanians. At the end of August, Michaś Kachanovič, the chairman of the Belarusian Rada of Vilnius and Grodno, notified Jonynas that although Belarusians are not completely satisfied with Lithuania’s borders, they promise to support the Lithuanian government, if it is endangered, unconditionally and fully.⁶⁷ During the short reign of Lithuanians, in Vilnius, there were twelve various political, cultural, professional and charitable Be-

63 Januszewska-Jurkiewicz 2010, p. 152.

64 *Lietuva* 22.09.1920, p. 1.

65 *Ibid.* 15.09.1920, p. 2.

66 *Vilniaus aidas* 15.09.1920, p. 3.

67 *Ibid.* 29.08.1920, p. 1.

larusian organizations.⁶⁸ In their magazine *Pahonia* published in Vilnius, they demanded national autonomy. Therefore, having read the government declaration of 16 September issued to the residents of Vilnius region (discussed below) and having realized that no autonomy could be expected, the Belarusians began to protest.⁶⁹ The promises made by the Lithuanian authorities to the Belarusian People's Committee to grant them more rights in the city administration, cultural and educational institutions were practically ignored. Soon the city's Belarusian organizations expressed their distrust of the Lithuanian Minister of Belarusian Affairs, Daminik Siemaška, but he refused to resign. In September, due to the rising tensions with Lithuanians, one of the Belarusian leaders, Vacław Łastoŭski, resumed his relations with the Polish government.⁷⁰

Attempts to Integrate Vilnius into Independent Lithuania

On 16 September 1920 the Lithuanian government issued its long-awaited *Declaration on the Region Liberated from the Occupation (Ministerių kabineto deklaracija Steigiamajam Seimui dėl atvaduotų iš okupacijos kraštų)*. It invited "all Lithuanian citizens to creative state-building", but to the disappointment of the Poles, it explicitly offered no plebiscite. The government announced the end of occupation and promised "the citizens of the liberated region" self-government, elections to the Constituent Assembly of Lithuania, and freedoms of speech, religion and culture. The declaration stated that citizens would be able to use their language not only in churches and schools, but also in government institutions. The government also promised to work on the reduction of unemployment and announced a forthcoming land reform.⁷¹

There is a debate whether the Lithuanian government had any Vilnius integration program, and, if so, what it entailed. Lithuanian historian Česlovas Laurinavičius argued that the takeover of Vilnius seemed to be prepared in advanced, but apparently without a clearer plan, and the government steps were uncoordinated. The official plans of governing Vilnius were never announced before the take-over, and, in the end, a strong hand policy was adopted.⁷² American historian Alfred E. Senn believes that the Lithuanian government sought to create a Lithuanian national state and eventually refused to fulfil the promises given to Vilnius residents in its declaration, especially in regard to the use of their languages. As a result of this refusal, Lithuania significantly weak-

68 *Lietuva* 8.09.1920, p. 3.

69 Januszewska-Jurkiewicz 2010, p. 157.

70 Łatyszonek 1995, p. 109.

71 *Lietuva* 16.09.1920, p. 1.

72 Laurinavičius et al. 2013, pp. 283–284.

ened its presence in the city.⁷³ According to Polish historian Piotr Łossowski, after the Lithuanian take-over of Vilnius, the relations between Lithuanians and Poles had a chance to improve. However, the government missed the opportunity because it “did not show goodwill” to the Poles of Vilnius, and, instead, started Lithuanising the city.⁷⁴ Yet, according to others, the integration of the Vilnius region could not be successful at all, no matter what the government had proposed, due to the heated military and political situation and the preconceived negative disposition of the local Polish population.⁷⁵

The Lithuanian government started debating the draft of the above-mentioned declaration on 3 September.⁷⁶ However, due to disagreements, it was only announced a couple of weeks later. The fact that the Lithuanian political elite did not have a clear and coherent vision on how to integrate Vilnius was also evident in the heated debate about the declaration that took place in the Seimas on 15 September. Only the Social Democrats opposed it. They demanded the right to self-determination (plebiscite) and amnesty for the residents of the Vilnius region. They argued that the population of Vilnius had a special disposition and that the western Allies could also demand a plebiscite in the future. However, the Social Democrats met with fairly united opposition from the right and centre parties, and Jewish representatives. Moreover, the Socialist Populists (led by Mykolas Sleževičius) and the Christian Democrats (led by Mykolas Krupavičius) called for the withdrawal of the right of self-determination for the Polish landowners in Vilnius, to prevent them from returning to their estates. They also named the Polish priests the enemies of the state. In light of these disagreements, the Seimas managed to agree only on the organization of the economic life of the region, as offered by the Minister of Finance Ernestas Galvanauskas.⁷⁷

Thus, the tension between the desire to Lithuanianise the Vilnius region, to reduce the Polish influence in it as much as possible and the intention to create a civil multinational Lithuanian state did not allow Lithuanian politicians to develop a coherent integration program for the Vilnius region. Therefore, first of all, efforts were made to revive the economy of the city, with the hope that in this way the loyalty of the local population would be ensured. The second task was to strengthen state structures in Vilnius. The issues of civil and cultural integration of the local non-Lithuanian population remained only a third priority.

Ultimately, these aspirations for Vilnius’ integration were hit hard in the second half of September. After the Polish Army broke through the defensive lines of the Lithuanian and Bolshevik military forces in the Suwałki and Grodno

73 Senn 1966, p. 48.

74 Łossowski 1996, p. 156.

75 VideoAlkas [2021].

76 LCVA: sig. f. 923, ap. 1, b. 86, p. 277: *Ministrų kabineto posėdžio protokolai*, 3.09.1920.

77 *Steigiamojo Seimo darbai* 15.09.1920, pp. 347–359.

regions during the Battle of the Neman on 22–23 September 1920, the mood of Lithuanian politicians and society changed completely. Soon the press of Kaunas declared: “the Polish government wants the only thing – to conquer and enslave us.”⁷⁸ Lithuania was swept by a campaign of patriotic agitation whose major slogan became a fight against the Polish landlords who want to take away the land.⁷⁹ The social dimension of the conflict became particularly important as it merged with an ethnic hatred of Poles. The Constituent Diet (*Steigiamasis Seimas*) urged the population: “Let us defend our peaceful inhabitants from the massacres of the Polish Army, let us defend our women from desecration!”⁸⁰ On 27 September 1920 a special Defence Committee of Lithuania (*Lietuvos gynimo komitetas*) was established and general mobilization of the population began.⁸¹ On 1 October the Committee called on the military commandants to closely monitor the Polish landowners in Lithuania, to arrest suspects and restrict their movement to their manors.⁸²

The intensifying war between Lithuania and Poland and the anti-Polish campaign that took over the country led to the radicalization of Vilnius’ integration. Intensive Lithuanisation of the city began. Ethnic tensions rose in Vilnius. There were incidents when Lithuanian soldiers tried to rip Polish eagles off the hats of Polish civilians on the streets.⁸³ Many Polish officials lost their jobs because the government relied on the Lithuanian Citizenship Law to build a new cohort of civil servants. The law required those working in the civil service to speak Lithuanian.⁸⁴ Minister of the Interior Rapolas Skipitis expressed the hope that Polish workers who had lost their jobs would leave and thus would reduce the number of unemployed.⁸⁵ Lithuanian language courses were established *en masse* throughout the city.

In the first week of October, the changed attitude of the Lithuanian government was summarized in the pro-governmental *Lietuva*:

It is time for the Polish citizens of Lithuania to understand that there is no Lithuanian-Polish issue on the territory of Lithuania. There is only a question of the relationship of the national majority with national minorities. And the state cannot put any national

78 “Lenkų valdžiai rūpi tik vienas dalykas – užkovoti ir pavergti mus.” *Lietuva* 28.09.1920, p. 1.

79 *Ibid.*, p. 1.

80 “Ginkime savo ramius gyventojus nuo lenkų kariuomenės skerdynių, ginkime mūsų moteris nuo išniekinimų.” *Ibid.*, p. 1.

81 Jokubauskas et al. 2015, p. 66.

82 LCVA: sig. f. 504, ap. 1, b. 15, p. 56: M. Krupavičiaus raštas Krašto apsaugos ministrui, 1. 10. 1920.

83 Biržiška 1962, pp. 221–222.

84 Laurinavičius et al. 2013, p. 284.

85 *Lietuva* 26.09.1920, p. 3.

minority into a position to consider themselves citizens of two states. If Lithuania's Poles do not want to understand this, it is their problem.⁸⁶

The Transfer of Lithuanian Government Institutions to Vilnius

On the last of August 1920 the government made a decision to relocate key state offices to the recovered capital.⁸⁷ On 14 September an evacuation plan was confirmed. It was decided that officials, their families and property should be transported free of charge.⁸⁸ Soon an agitation campaign in support of this transfer was launched in the national press. Meanwhile, a Lithuanian newspaper in Vilnius reproached the population of Kaunas for resting at the Baltic seashore instead of hurrying to Vilnius.⁸⁹ Finally, on 24 September the pro-government *Lietuva* announced: "Kaunas is evacuating! [...] the government is returning home to Vilnius, the capital of our ancestors [...]. Thousands of train carriages are on the move [...] they evacuate ministries, departments, agencies, divisions."⁹⁰

Among the first to move to Vilnius were the Board of the Lithuanian Rifle-men's Union (September 4) and the State Treasury (September 16). A couple of days later, the Seimas decided to move too. The Ministries of Finance and Belarusian Affairs were also transferred. From 26 to 29 September the Ministries of Transport and Justice arrived in Vilnius. And on 29 September the first meeting of the Lithuanian government took place in the city. One of the last to move was the Ministry of the Interior. The status of the capital was reasserted not only by the influx of state officials from Kaunas. Foreign diplomats followed them to Vilnius: on 25–30 September, the British, French, Estonian and Italian diplomatic missions transferred. The last to arrive were representatives of Germany (4 October) and Soviet Russia (8 October).⁹¹

The mass influx of Kaunas officials sometimes evoked dissatisfaction among the population of Vilnius. Mykolas Biržiška wrote in his memoir that not all

86 "Lietuvos piliečiams lenkams metas suprasti, kad Lietuvos teritorijoje nėra jokio lietuvių lenkų klausimo. Yra tik tautinės daugumos su tautinėmis santykiavimo klausimas. Ir valstybė negali bet kurios tautinės mažumos pastatyti tokioj padėty, kad ji galėtų laikyti save dviejų valstybių piliečiais. Jei Lietuvos lenkai nenori to suprasti, tai jau jų reikalas." *Lietuva* 3.10.1920, p. 1.

87 LCVA: sig. f. 923, ap. 1, b. 86, p. 273; *Ministrų kabineto posėdžio protokolai*, 30.08.1920.

88 *Ibid.*: sig. f. 923, ap. 1, b. 83, p. 36; *Komisijos pasitarimo aktas*, 14.09.1920.

89 *Vilniaus aidas* 14.09.1920, p. 1.

90 "Kaunas evakuojas! [...] Grįžta namo Lietuvos valdžia, kelias į Vilnių, savo protėvių sostinę [...]. Grįžta atgal tūkstančiais vagonų [...] evakuojas ministerijom, departamentais, įstaigom, skyriais." *Lietuva* 24.09.1920, p. 6.

91 Biržiška 1962, pp. 218–219.

Lithuanian officers sent from Kaunas to Vilnius were fit for their assigned duties.⁹² Their excessive bureaucracy, arrogance, narrowly understood Lithuanian patriotism and the lack of knowledge of local languages often irritated local residents. Such clerks, through their lack of delicacy repelled people, Biržiška complained.⁹³

With the start of the transfer from Kaunas, the cultural life of Lithuanians revived in the city. It was considerably enlivened by the arrival of two Lithuanian opera singers, brothers Kipras and Mikas Petrauskai. On 5 September they gave a big concert at the city hall. Meanwhile, the Lithuanian Club of Vilnius became a venue for regular lectures and performances.⁹⁴ The government also planned to reopen Vilnius university after the relocation from Kaunas of the School of Higher Courses (*Aukštieji kursai*). Although the university planned to rely mostly on Lithuanian academics, there was an intention to also invite some Polish, German and Russian professors. The teaching process had to be carried not only in Lithuanian but also in Polish.⁹⁵

In general, the Lithuanian government to a certain degree supported linguistic pluralism in the city. Yet it was strictly controlled and limited. Initially, it was publicly declared that the best Lithuanisation is non-Lithuanisation. There were calls to refrain from forced language policies and to create a state that would accommodate all citizens.⁹⁶ Thus on 27 August the government allowed the appointment of non-Lithuanian speakers as justices of the peace and interrogators because there was a shortage of ethnic Lithuanian court staff in Vilnius. The magistrate accepted the requests of local residents in their languages. However, mostly Lithuanian-speaking individuals were appointed as officials. The language barrier often prevented Poles, Jews and Belarusians from being employed in the civil service. In addition, their political orientation and loyalty to the Lithuanian government were closely monitored during the appointment. On 15 September the Minister of Jewish Affairs Maksas Soloveičikas complained to the government that in the Vilnius region, Jews were not admitted to the civil service. The government urged ministers to employ Jews as well, but only with recommendations from the Jewish community.⁹⁷

92 Ibid., p. 206.

93 Ibid., pp. 206–207.

94 Ibid., pp. 219–220.

95 *Vilniaus aidas* 24.09.1920, p. 2.

96 Ibid. 16.09.1920, p. 1.

97 LCVA: sig. f. 923, ap. 1, b. 86, p. 285: *Ministrų kabineto posėdžio protokolas*, 15.09.1920.

The Economic Situation

After the Vilnius take-over by Lithuania, the Kaunas press wrote about its poor economic condition: “Vilnius is devastated and emptied; it is in need of great economic and cultural help.”⁹⁸ The anarchic withdrawal of the Red Army deeply affected the everyday life of the city’s population. Therefore, the strategy of the Lithuanian government to revive its urban economy was felt from as early as the first days of autumn. In early September the government granted to the Vilnius magistrate a loan of one million auksinai to meet the city’s most important needs. A local correspondent described the changing situation in the city:

Vilnius is waking up from the heavy sleep, janitors are cleaning its courtyards, sweeping the streets, vendors are opening their shutters, scrubbing large windows of shops and placing various goods in them; they are plucking them out of cellars and secret hide-outs.⁹⁹

Soon restaurants, tea houses and cafes opened their doors. Salt, potatoes, vegetables, butter and meat reappeared in the city markets. German merchants re-emerged in Vilnius. The vigorous economic recovery policy and trade liberalization have led to falling food prices. The press reported that bread already cost 7–8 Polish marks per pound, though recently it was 18–20. The price of meat from 60 marks fell to 25–35 per pound. Dairy products have also become cheaper because they were freely imported from the surrounding farmsteads.¹⁰⁰

In Vilnius, the Lithuanian government faced the problem of different currencies. When the city was taken, several currencies were in use: tsarist rubles, Russian krenki, Polish marks, Soviet rubles and German marks.¹⁰¹ In Eastern Lithuania, the population traditionally valued the tsarist ruble the most. Meanwhile, Soviet rubles rapidly lost their value. The Lithuanian auksinas was soon introduced into the city, but to avoid the economic chaos, Vilnius residents were allowed to use Polish marks. Yet its exchange rate was constantly changing.

However, the revival of trade and the re-emergence of goods could not compensate for the damage that the First World War and the ensuing armed conflicts had inflicted on the city. One of the most painful consequences was the harsh humanitarian situation of part of the population. Minister of the Interior Skipitis, while describing the situation in Vilnius at the Seimas, noted that Vilnius

98 *Lietuva* 29.08.1920, p. 1.

99 “Vilnius nubunda, kaip iš sunkaus miego. Kiemsargiai valo savo kiemus, šluoja gatves, pardavėjai atidarinėja langines, šveičia didelius krautuvių langus ir stato į juos įvairių priekių, išrausę jų iš rūsių ir slaptų landynių.” *Ibid.* 2.09.1920, p. 1.

100 *Ibid.* 11.09.1920, p. 2.

101 *Kerenki* was the currency issued by the Provisional Government of Russia of Aleksandr Kerensky in 1917.

was a city of beggars. From 129,000 residents (counted in the Polish census of 1919), as many as 36,000 relied on material assistance from various Polish, Lithuanian, Belarusian and Jewish relief societies. There were about 10,000 people in city's shelters alone.¹⁰² Of those a large number were children. It was decided to register the unemployed as soon as possible, to reduce the number of relief shelters, and to establish a network of cheap public canteens. Although their establishment was delayed, the government proposed 10,000 cheap or free lunches to be served daily from early October. Of those 5,000 were to be given to worker organizations and the remaining 5,000 to public kitchens (2,500 to Christians and 2,500 to Jews).¹⁰³

Another challenge for the new city authorities was a sudden outbreak of cholera. The epidemic in Vilnius began among the Red Army soldiers before the Bolshevik evacuation. Yet in the first days of September it also spread among the Vilnius population. From mid-August to 11 September, 43 people fell ill with cholera and 18 died. In the city there were three to seven infections daily in September.¹⁰⁴ The magistrate urgently organized sanitation. Property owners were ordered to clean the courtyards, streets and toilets.¹⁰⁵ In the area of Vokiečių and Pylimo streets, full of narrow and densely populated streets, the city authorities planned, but did not manage to start, sewage works, that would have employed 300 workers. These public works were planned as a means to reducing mass unemployment in the city.

The new government had a harder time reviving Vilnius industry. It hoped first and foremost, to revive small-scale enterprises, as larger factories had been looted and their equipment taken to Soviet Russia. At the end of September, the Ministry of Trade and Industry informed the Seimas that some factories would be able to start operating in a week's time, as German equipment was already being shipped.¹⁰⁶ At the beginning of October, after the arrival of new equipment from Kaunas and Šiauliai, the railway workshops, previously looted by the Bolsheviks, started operating again.¹⁰⁷ The marmalade factory "Victoria" that the Polish authorities had sequestered as a spoil of war, was also opened. However, most factories failed to recover due to the lack of time and money.

102 *Steigiamojo Seimo darbai* 20.09.1920, p. 389.

103 *Lietuva* 5.10.1920, p. 1.

104 *Vilniaus aidas* 15.09.1920, p. 3.

105 *Ibid.* 1.09.1920, p. 1.

106 *Steigiamojo Seimo darbai* 20.09.1920, p. 389.

107 *Lietuva* 2.10.1920, p. 2.

Epilogue

The Bolshevik occupation of Vilnius on 14 July 1920 and its subsequent transfer to Lithuania on 25 August were conditioned by their military offensive and the eventual withdrawal in the Soviet-Polish War, their efforts to ensure that Lithuania remained a friendly or neutral state in the ensuing conflict with Poland and their desire to keep Lithuania in their sphere of influence.

Although the Lithuanian government partially revived the city's economic life and alleviated the difficult humanitarian situation, the ongoing political and military crisis in the Lithuanian-Polish relations and the growing ethnic tension between Lithuanians and Poles prevented the restoration of a stable daily life in Vilnius. If the policies of the Lithuanian authorities attracted support from the local Lithuanians and part of the Jews, they failed to win the hearts and minds of the majority of city's Polish population. The inability of government to manoeuvre between its desire to integrate Vilnius by turning its residents into loyal citizens and the public pressure to Lithuanianise it significantly weakened its position in the city. Ensuring the political loyalty of Vilnius population was not a top priority of the Lithuanian authorities. Instead, their major efforts were directed at the strengthening state structures in the city.

However, it was, first and foremost, the renewed war between Poland and Lithuania that ended Lithuanian rule in Vilnius on 9 October 1920. A new wave of violence approaching from the southwest has once again plunged the city into a sea of political chaos. Although, after the Żeligowski's takeover, the city population experienced peace that lasted until the first days of World War Two, the interwar conflict between the two nationalizing states, as we are aware, failed to add political stability to the region. Throughout the interwar years the population of Vilnius and the surrounding region remained trapped in the continuing "frozen" conflict between Poland and Lithuania.

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The Emergency of Independent Lithuania in 1918 and Two (Un)Realized Institutional Models of Autonomy

Abstract

The article discusses the development of the question of territorial and personal forms of autonomy in Lithuania as a method to integrate national minorities within the emerging statehood. The historical development of the ideas outlines the route to the Lithuanian political system through other countries that appeared on the map after World War I. Thus, the autonomous institutions were rather temporary in character, following patterns in other countries.

Keywords: Lithuania; State building; Autonomy; Belarusians; Jews

At the beginning of modern Lithuanian statehood, the question of autonomy was often associated with the Jewish question, and elements of national cultural autonomy were introduced in the early 1920s. However, autonomy in its various forms was discussed far more broadly during the first years of the emerging Lithuanian state. For the Belarusians and Jews, it became one of the crucial political goals in Lithuanian politics. Various scholars have already investigated the role of minorities in the development of the Lithuanian state. The most significant contribution to the topic was made by the following Lithuanian authors: Eglė Bendikaitė,¹ Edmundas Gimžauskas,² Česlovas Laurinavičius³ and Šarūnas Liekis.⁴ International scholars Klaus Richter,⁵ Tomasz Błaszczak⁶ and Theodore Weeks⁷ also worked on this issue. The problem was investigated additionally by scholars researching the broader context of Jewish autonomy in

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1 Bendikaitė 2011 (2).

2 Gimžauskas 1999; idem 2003.

3 Laurinavičius 1989.

4 Liekis 1997; idem 2005.

5 Richter 2015.

6 Błaszczak 2010; idem 2013; idem 2017.

7 Weeks 2011.

20th century Europe and the idea of non-territorial autonomy and its spread throughout Europe before and after World War I.⁸

This article investigates the overlapping interactions of Territorial and Non-Territorial (or National-Personal) Autonomy ideas and their complexity in internal politics to resolve the Lithuanian state's national question and, to some point, as a key to settling the question of international recognition and the state's territory in foreign politics. The narrative is limited to relations within the Lithuanian-Belarusian-Jewish triangle, paying attention to the institutional nature of the autonomy. Furthermore, bearing in mind that many questions raised here derive from the broad context of relations between these three nations, together and separately, with the other three "big neighbours" – Poland, Germany, and Russia.

World War I and the period of the German occupation of the part of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) empowered the three analysed nations. Cultural and linguistic rights, although limited, were granted to their members residing within the borders of the administrative unit of *Ober Ost*. In the context of further analysis, not only does the empowerment of the nationalities play a crucial role, but the fact that during almost three years of German rule in the country, the term "Lithuania" spread throughout the administration of the land. This caused and still often causes disputes about the term "Lithuania" as the meaning of this term has shifted over time. In February 1918, it covered the whole territory of the *Ober Ost* and was referred to as the Lithuanian Military Administration (*Militärverwaltung Litauen*). The land covered a wider territory than "ethnic Lithuania" or even the imagined future Lithuanian State. The state, organised on an ethnic and national basis, faced the question of how to include representatives of other nationalities inhabiting the projected state and with their own visions of Lithuania.

Nevertheless, the question was raised only when the state institutions were preparing themselves to take over administrative tasks from the Germans. The idea of autonomy came as one of the possible methods of inclusion. However, it was a bottom-up proposal, undiscussed, and finally a mix of the two types of autonomy mentioned above was adopted.

The Roots of Autonomy

Both models of autonomy date back to the late 19th century Austro-Hungarian Empire, as territorial autonomy had developed in the various provinces under the Habsburg rule. Some of the provisions of the non-territorial model were im-

8 Żyndul 2000.

plemented. In our context, the most important was the case of Galicia from the 1860s, playing a crucial role in the development of political thought in the region. Among the local institutions of autonomy – the Diet, and the Provincial Committee from 1871 – the central government included the Minister for Galician Affairs. The Galician model was broadly discussed and analysed by Poles and Ukrainians, and the experience gained during those times had a significant impact on the development of the independent statehood of Poland and Ukraine.⁹

The ideas of non-territorial autonomy relate to the works of Austro-Marxist theoreticians, Karl Renner (published under the pseudonym of Rudolf Springer) and Otto Bauer. They developed the idea of separating the nation from the territory, making it a non-territorial association. In their thinking, this was how to organize the Habsburg Empire as a federation of nations gathered as a non-territorial association of persons. In their opinion, the reforms should answer the problems of national emancipation that the Empire faced at the turn of the century, and, until 1914, several provisions empowering the smaller nations in the multinational provinces of the Empire. Just months before the outbreak of WWI, Galicia was one of the Habsburg provinces (along with Moravia, Bukovina, and Bosnia) that implemented non-territorial arrangements between Poles and Ruthenians (Ukrainians).¹⁰

The ideas of Renner and Bauer became well known in Russia, as their texts were translated and published in Russian relatively quickly and were analysed in depth, gaining popularity, especially among Jewish politicians.¹¹ Some of the elements were already adopted to the Bund program by Vladimir Medem in 1905.¹² They inspired Simon Dubnow to initiate a folkist movement (represented by Folkspartei) that saw the development of the Jewish nation as a “spiritual nationhood” preserved in local communities maintaining self-rule, rejecting and opposing both assimilation and Zionism.¹³

In his research on the transformation of the concept of non-territorial autonomy, Börries Kuzmany describes it as the history of “a traveling idea”.¹⁴ Indeed the concept developed before WWI in the Habsburg Empire travelled through the Russian Empire, developing and adapting to local traditions. Scholars mark two examples in which the Austrian ideas developed in the two countries that emerged after the collapse of the Russian Empire: Ukraine and Lithuania. The Ukrainian People’s Republic was the first state to make its

9 Kucmani 2017, p. 263

10 Kuzmany 2016, pp. 55–58.

11 Żyndul 2000, pp. 35–39.

12 Kucmani 2017, pp. 263–265.

13 Silber 2011, pp. 121–123.

14 Kuzmany 2021, p. 316.

promise. The Ukrainian Central Council (UCC), an assembly that worked in Kyiv from March 1917 till the end of April 1918, adopted several solutions to include the non-Ukrainian inhabitants of the country in its work.

The Third Universal of UCR, dated 20 November 1917, promised national-personal autonomy for “Great Russian”, i. e., Russian, Jewish, and Polish minorities.¹⁵ Just before it declared independence on 22 January, the UCC passed a law on national-personal autonomy for the Russian, Jewish, Polish, and *de facto* minorities numbering over 10 thousand inhabitants.¹⁶ The executive of the UCC General Secretariat of Ukraine included the Secretary of Nationalities, the protoplast of the future Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Secretary appointed the deputies (vice-secretaries) for Jewish (Moishe Zilberfarb), Polish (Mieczysław Mickiewicz), and later as well Great Russian (Dmytro Odinets). After the proclamation of independence, and the law on autonomy, they were promoted to the rank of ministers, and appropriate ministries were organized. The institutions were temporary in character. They were closed after Pavlo Skoropadskyi’s *coup d’état* at the end of April 1918, and only the minister of Jewish Affairs was appointed.¹⁷

After the Ukrainians chronologically, the Lithuanians made the following steps towards independence. However, as the territory of Lithuania was under German control, the impact of the Russian revolution was limited. The Lithuanian Council depended on the decisions made in Berlin. Therefore, consent for organizing the government was only granted in the fall of 1918. The attempt to create an independent state was made in Belarus. However, it repeated the Ukrainian scenario. The result was far less successful than the Ukrainian one, as the lands of Belarus fell under the control of Bolsheviks in later 1918 and then became a subject of Polish-Bolshevik conflict over the region. The Council of the Belarusian People’s Republic (BPR)¹⁸ announced its independence on 25 March 1918 and emerged from the Council of the All-Belarusian Congress held in December 1917.

Non-territorial autonomy for all the nations inhabiting the territory of the Belarusian State was granted in two constituent charters of the BPR. The first one adopted on 21 February 1918 stated: “The Belarusian people must assert their right to full self-determination, and the national minorities their right to national and personal autonomy.”¹⁹ The second constituent charter dated 9 March stated:

15 Kucmani 2020,

16 Żyndul 2000, p. 55.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

18 Sometimes in English literature and among Belarusian diaspora called the Belarusian Democratic Republic, as under this English translation of the Council of the Republic exists in exile.

19 English translation according to *The Constituent Charters of Belarus of 1918*.

“Within the borders of the Belarusian Democratic Republic, all peoples have the right to national and personal autonomy; and equal rights for all the languages of the peoples of Belarus are proclaimed.”²⁰ The first government of BRP, headed by Jazep Varonka, included two ministers (originally “people’s commissars”) for Jewish (Moishe Gutman) and “Great Russian” (Pavel Zlobin) affairs. In 1917, the former resided in Kyiv and was a member of the UCC. In December 1917, he took part in the First All-Belarusian Congress and was elected to the Executive Committee of the Congress, which later transformed into the Council of the BPR.

Inna Gerasimova shows the contribution of Gutman to the establishment of personal-national autonomy in the BPR.²¹ In her view, based on the provisions on the rights of the Jewish minority contained in Ukrainian and Belarusian declarations, the similarities between the documents produced by the BRL and the UCC indicate that Gutman, in taking part in the creation of the Belarusian State, benefited from the political experience gained in Ukraine. The ministers for the minority affairs were appointed only in the first government of the BPR. After Roman Skirmunt changed Varonka on the post of the prime minister, the posts were no more appointed. We know little about the actual work of the ministers in the Council of the BPR, but this episode links the Ukrainian and Lithuanian cases.

From Kyiv and Minsk to Vilnius

The formation of the Lithuanian state started back in September 1917, when Lithuanians organized a Conference in Vilnius with the support of the German administration. The conference elected the Lithuanian Council (LC) as the executive body of the conference. The LC initially had faced much trouble trying to include Lithuanian national minorities in its works. At the time, the idea of an “ethnic Lithuania” proposed by the LC was not attractive to Jews and Belarusians. It seemed to them that it was an artificial formation capable of splitting the historical space of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, in which most Jews and Belarusians lived for a long time. Until the end of 1918 (and Poles even through the whole Interwar period), the other nations saw the LC only as a tool of German occupation. Before declaring the independence on 16 February 1918, the question of the integration of other nationals that inhabited the Lithuanian State was not commonly on the political agenda of the LC. Those questions were put forward in practise when the state had already been established. Closer talks and negotiations repeated through the following months. The LC selected a com-

20 Ibid.

21 Gerasimova 2003, p. 172.

mittee to negotiate with Jews and Belarusians but did not bring any significant breakthrough in the matter.²²

The Belarusians organized an alternative Conference in January 1918. They elected their own Council representing Belarusians from the territory of *Ober Ost*, which at the end of the year would form a basis for the planned Lithuanian state. The Belarusian Council declared itself equal to its Lithuanian counterpart and, from this position, negotiated future relations with the Lithuanian Council. In April 1918, a joint meeting took place. Among the other requirements, Belarusian representatives stated that their goal was the rebirth of the GDL as a federation of Lithuania and Belarus. The Belarusian part should have cultural and administrative autonomy in the future state.²³ The administrative autonomy and the proportional representation in the Lithuanian Council, together with territorial provisions, were set as a condition on which the Belarusian side could enrol in joint political work within the framework of the Council.

At that time, Jewish politicians were ever further away from cooperation. Jewish and Lithuanian collaboration on a political level had a relatively long tradition as they supported each other during the elections to the State Duma in the Russian Empire.²⁴ In all four elections held between 1906 and 1912, the Lithuanians and Jews formed electoral blocks in the provinces of Kaunas, Vilnius, and Suwałki, both between right and left-wing parties. Although it was a pragmatic alliance of politicians directed against the Polish and Russian landlords who dominated the country, both nations had common political interests and this formed the basis for further cooperation. Thus in 1918, there were also repeated talks without anything in this phase that could be called a real breakthrough in Lithuanian–Jewish relations.²⁵ The Jewish community lacked leadership, and no politician or party wanted to claim the right to represent the whole community. In the second part of 1918, the Zionists started to dominate, taking control of local Jewish media.²⁶

The turning point in the formation of the Lithuanian state took place in October 1918. The German authorities decided to gradually transfer land administration to the Lithuanian Council, acting from July as a Lithuanian State Council (LSC), allowing the formation of the government. The main conditions under which the process might proceed were that other nationalities be included in the functioning of the LSC and that the German Army remain on the territory of Lithuania. The latter condition was crucial to the state's future as its borders-to-be coincided with the territory over which German held the military control

22 Tauber 2007, p. 436.

23 Błaszczak 2017, p. 88.

24 Staliūnas 2011, p. 88.

25 Liekis 2003, p. 64.

26 Tauber 2007, p. 436.

for the significant part of 1919. The LSC maintained the position that the minorities themselves should elect these representatives at their conferences. Thus, such a decision legalized the Belarusian Council's existence in the expectation of the Lithuanian side. The LSC also stated that only the legal problem of regularising the status of national minorities and their cultural rights could be discussed. Any form of autonomy was categorically opposed.²⁷

The idea of Jewish autonomy in Lithuania has been based on personal autonomy. In the Belarusian case, the forms of autonomy had two main dimensions: the right to personal autonomy in the territories inhabited by Belarusians as a national minority and the right to territorial autonomy in the territories inhabited by the Belarusian majority. The second case was also entangled with independent Belarus, since the creation of the BPR as an independent country failed. However, the failure of the Belarusian project is crucial in terms of autonomy in Lithuania.

The negotiations between Lithuanians and Belarusians took place in November 1918 and, at least according to the sources preserved, had an unusual agenda. According to the preserved sources during the negotiations, both sides exchanged several official letters without official negotiations.²⁸ Once again, the Belarusian side made the aforementioned statement regarding extensive autonomy and proportional representation in the LSC, alongside the issue of the Belarusian Army. In the following steps, the question of autonomy was detailed: the Belarusian quota in the LSC should consist of 25% members, the Collegium and the Secretariat of Belarusian Affairs (as a representation of Belarusians in the LSC) should be established, and one ministry should be given to the Belarusians. The appointment of government representatives in the autonomic territory should occur with the Secretariat's agreement. In response to those requirements, the first interim prime minister Augustinas Voldemaras acting on 11 November 1918, stated that the question of autonomy should be resolved by the Legislative Council, as the Interim Government could not decide on such an important issue.²⁹

Finally, the negotiations ended with unusual results, as no formal agreement had been worked out. The institution of Belarusian Secretary within the LSC was formed, and Belarusian detachments in the Lithuanian Army were organized. Finally, the first prime minister of the BRP, Varonka, was appointed as Minister of Belarussian Affairs (MBA). In his inauguration speech as a minister, he ap-

27 Eidintas / Lopata 2017, p. 567.

28 On the negotiations' detailed process, see: Błaszczak 2017, pp. 95–103; Gimžauskas 1999, pp. 11–25.

29 Błaszczak 2017, p. 98.

pealed not only to the idea of territorial autonomy but also to personal autonomy:

As a supporter of the power of the people and the harmonious life of all nations, the completion of state construction is treated as the creation of an independent Lithuanian People's Republic (sic!) In a federation with its neighbours, which will be most suited to its interests, with the autonomous power of those parts which are inhabited by a non-Lithuanian population, and which will be within the limits of the newly built state and national-personal autonomy for all minorities in the state.³⁰

The quote shows several problems that the Lithuanian-Belarusian consensus faced. At first, the realization of the agreement was entrusted to politicians that had no experience in Lithuanian politics. The appointed minister, former prime minister of the BPR, just arrived from Minsk and had, in fact, no idea of his exact role in the country, and the development of future events only testified to this. The question of the legal frameworks of the desired autonomy was complicated, as the international and internal situation on the question of the Eastern borders of Lithuania was volatile.

The agreement with Belarusian opened the way to negotiations with the Jewish community – more precisely, with the Zionists. At first sight, this may sound strange because usually the left-wing Jewish parties were traditionally keener on the idea of autonomy. However, in the Lithuanian case, they did not oppose the idea of autonomy in general, but ignored the LSC as an authority in the region.³¹ Other political entities took the same line, who saw future Lithuania (in the historical territories of the GDL) as a part of democratic Russia. Back in October 1918, the leader of the Jewish community in Vilnius, folkist and democrat Tsemah Szabad stated that none of the Jewish political options had any intention of cooperating with the LSC at its then national, exclusively Lithuanian, shape.³² Leftist parties gradually radicalized and openly supported the Bolsheviks, and it was the Zionists who took over the domination of Jewish life in Lithuania, particularly in Vilnius.

The Zionist Congress, organized by the Central Zionist Committee acting in Vilnius since September, took place in Vilnius from 5 to 8 December 1918. The congress amended two declarations: the political situation and the Lithuanian

30 “З’яўляючыся староннікам народаўладства і згоднага хаўруснага жыцця ўсіх народаў, заканчэннем дзяржаўнага будаўніцтва Літвы я лічу заснаванне незалежнай Літоўскай Народнай Рэспублікі ў федэрацыі з суседзямі, якая найболей будзе адпавядаць яе інтарэсам, з аўтаномным упраўленнем дзеля тых частак, якія ўсцэль заселены нелітоўскай нацыянальнасцю і акажуцца ў граніцах новабудуемага Гаспадарства і з нацыянальна-персанальнай аўтаноміяй дзеля ўсіх меншасцей у Гаспадарстве наагул [translation by the author].” Zasiocki 1919, pp. 3–4.

31 Silber 2011, p. 148; Bendikaitė 2011 (1), pp. 257–253.

32 Liekis 2003, pp. 71–72.

case. The first expresses the desire to grant national/personal autonomy in all countries. The Lithuanian declaration supported the reconstruction of the democratic Lithuanian State but did not recognize the LSC as a governing body due to Lithuania's residents' lack of legitimacy. The conference recognized the complexity of the political situation in the country and the impossibility of holding elections and agreed to Jewish cooperation with the LSC under the following conditions: recognition of the conference's view of the legal standing of the LSC in the country, proportional representation of all nationalities, and the creation of a self-government.³³

On 11 December 1918, the LSC voted on the co-optation of Jewish representatives. The initial number of seats increased from two to three, and Nahman Rachmilewitz, Shimson Rosenboim (Simon Rozenbaum / Simonas Rozenbaumas), and Jakub Wygodzki were appointed as new members of the LSC, albeit without officially representing any Jewish organization and without claiming to represent the entire Lithuanian Jewish community.³⁴ In this case, it was not only the Lithuanian progress in including one more nationality in its works but also a Zionist victory against other political forces. Like in the Belarusian case, the Minister of Jewish Affairs (MJA) Wygodzki was appointed.

An Office Without a Portfolio

At the stage of negotiations, the executive power in Lithuania was already organized. However, the formation of the first government took almost all the period of its existence between November and December 1918. Here as well, one should pay attention to the personality of the first prime minister of Lithuania, historian Augustinas Voldemaras, who spent the fall of 1917 in Kyiv as a Lithuanian delegate to the Congress of Nations. Later, he joined the delegation of UPR to the peace negotiations in Brest Litovsk as a consultant. After half a year spent in Kyiv, he moved to Vilnius in March 1918 and became a member of the LC. However, our knowledge about his relations with the UPR is limited. We can conjecture that he was familiar with the model developed by the UPR and could have been in favour of transferring such regulation to the emerging political system of Lithuania. That may assume that the process that took place in Lithuania was similar to the one in Ukraine and Belarus. First came the creation of the position, and only then was the legal framework developed.

The inclusion of both Jewish and Belarusian representatives in the LSC and both ministries illustrate another problem. Officially, the ministers were called

33 Bendikaitė 2011 (1), pp. 264–265.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 263.

ministers without portfolios, but on the other hand formal Ministries were established. However, the Lithuanian section usually referred to the institution as “the minister’s chancellery”, while the Belarusian side called it “the Ministry”.³⁵ The Jewish side was rather keen on such terminology but, from 1921 to 1922, made efforts to legalize the office as an entire ministry.³⁶ As a result, no one knew what exactly the role of both institutions should be. On the other hand, representatives of those two minorities joined the government in the ranks of vice-ministers: Kipryjan Kandratovič (Defence), Rosenboim (Foreign Affairs), and Rachmilewitz (Trade and Industry).³⁷

Apart from institutional development, the main symbol of the linguistic rights given is the first edition of the government’s official bulletin, *Vyriausybės Žinios* [Government News], which appeared on 29 December 1918 and was printed in four editions: Lithuanian, Belarusian, and Yiddish.³⁸ The fourth language was Polish. However, no formal provisions for Lithuanian Poles were made. This was the only multilingual issue of the bulletin and the only one published in Vilnius. From the second edition issued in Kaunas, it was printed exclusively in Lithuanian.

A few weeks after Belarusians and Jews enrolled in the formation of the Lithuanian State, both the Council and the government had to evacuate Vilnius because of the threat that the city would fall to the Soviets. All the institutions should evacuate to Kaunas, where the German authorities still resided, and the army controlled the city and the region. According to the provisions, the only institution to be transferred elsewhere was the MBA, which was supposed to rally in Grodno, together with the Belarusian detachments in the Lithuanian Army.³⁹ That decision strengthened the image that the agreement made in November guaranteed territorial autonomy for Belarusians in the southern part of the Lithuanian State. The activity of the MJA was suspended, as minister Wygodzki stayed in Vilnius, and a replacement was not appointed.

The MBA’s residency in Grodno lasted only four months, as in the Spring of 1919, the Polish Army took the city and the region. During that time, Minister Varonka made some efforts to legalize the ministry’s existence. Varonka, who served as a minister till the end of 1919, was trying to formally settle the ministry’s role in the political system of the Lithuanian State. His proposals were constantly turned down by the government, according to the prime minister Mykolas Sleževičius, autonomy was provided for the Belarusian part of Lithuania, contrary

35 Błaščak 2010, p. 230.

36 Bendikaitė 2011 (2), p. 102.

37 Błaszczak 2017, pp. 131–132.

38 Viešči 1918.

39 Błaszczak 2017, p. 123.

to previous agreements.⁴⁰ The last such an attempt to settle the position was submitted by Varonka to the government in August. It was based on previous proposals from the Belarusian side, only codified from the legal point of view. The document repeated previous assumptions. The division of the Lithuanian State into two parts and the autonomy of Belarus based on territory in the southern part and the national and personal autonomy in the northern part. The proposal was once again rejected and, in fact, finished the discussion over Belarusian autonomy in Lithuania.⁴¹

One of the effects of the agreements made at the end of 1918 was the participation of minorities in Lithuanian diplomacy. Belarusian Vaclau Lastouski was appointed to the Lithuanian Legation in Berlin as an attaché. Moreover, although the agreements intended to send representatives of minorities to every diplomatic service, the solution was ephemeral. The participation of a Belarusian and Jewish minority representative was more significant in the delegations to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 and the peace treaty negotiations with Soviet Russia in Moscow the following year. In both cases, Daminik Siamaška (member of Belarusian Secretary, later the MBA) represented Belarusians, and Shimson Rosenboim (Jewish member of the LSC and the leader of the Lithuanian Zionists).

The role of Rosenboim was significant in the 1920 negotiations with Soviet Russia and the city of Vilnius and its regional recognition of Lithuania and the formation of the eastern borders of Lithuania. It is believed that Rosenboim managed to convince the head of the Soviet delegation, a Jew named Adolf Joffe, that the Vilnius Jews and Belarusians wanted to belong to Lithuania, not Poland. So, the territory of the Lithuanians living in Belarus must be transferred to Lithuania.⁴² A critical moment in developing Jewish autonomy in Lithuania was the declaration made in Paris.⁴³ The leader of the Lithuanian delegation to the Peace Conference, Voldemaras, promised the Jews equal national and political rights. They were guaranteed participation in enacting laws and in state administration apparatus, freedom of speech, and faith. They could use their language in public alongside the state language of Lithuania. The declaration stated that the provisions of autonomy related to internal affairs, such as religious matters, charity, social security, would be guaranteed constitutionally.

As Paul Radensky stated, on the theoretical level, the question of the ministry for a particular nationality was never discussed.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the MJA, in fact, did not become an institution of Jewish Autonomy. After moving from Vilnius,

40 Blaščak 2010, pp. 238–240.

41 Błaszczak 2017, pp. 126–127.

42 Silber 2011, p. 119; Liekis 2003, p. 158.

43 Liekis 2003, p. 124; Näf 2006, p. 74; Leiserowitz 2019, pp. 157–161.

44 Radensky 1995, p. 86.

the MJA was not operational until mid-1919, when Max Soloveichik was appointed a minister, and his office was formed. His mission was to organize the elections to the local Jewish Councils. By the beginning of 1920, 81 such councils representing traditional *Kehils* (communities) were organized on the territory controlled by the Lithuanian state.⁴⁵ The delegates of local Councils formed the Jewish National Council with Rosenboim as chairman, who served in this position for its entirety.⁴⁶ As the councils were fully independent from the state (albeit without a formally legalized status), the ministry was fully dependent on the ruling coalition and the Jewish community had no legal tools to control the minister. This was extremely relevant in Belarusian case, as Minister Siamasška acting from 1920 was strongly opposed by the Belarusian community, which never succeeded in its attempts to have him replaced.

The institutional structures of Jewish personal autonomy followed the model inspired by Renner's and Bauer's provisions.⁴⁷ On 10 January 1920, the Lithuanian government passed a *Provisional Law for Taxation of Jewish Citizens* that made the framework for Jewish Autonomy in the country, as independent taxation was seen as the main issue when determining autonomy.⁴⁸ In March, the MJA issued detailed executive instructions to the *Provisional Law*, limiting its institutional role to the supervision of autonomy. The Jewish National Congress played the leading political role in the autonomous system. However, it did not succeed in finally legalizing autonomy. It existed under the *Provisional Law*, mainly because the institutions faced conflicts within the Jewish community as opposition towards the Zionists grew.⁴⁹

Between Eastern and Western Lithuania

Belarusian activists once again raised the question of Belarusian autonomy in 1920, when Vilnius and its region were under Lithuanian control for a short period.⁵⁰ This time Belarusian National Committee opted for the establishment of autonomy in the territory of the Belarusian people. The formation of the National Council was called upon to include representatives of all nationalities living in the autonomous territory. This authority should be in charge together with the governor appointed by the central government. This proposal once again was left without further negotiations, as the government, led by agrarian Kazys

45 Liekis 2003, p. 129.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 130.

47 Näf 2006, pp. 75–76; Garfunkelis 1920, p. 5; Gringauz, 1952, pp. 226–228.

48 Liekis 2003, pp. 130–142.

49 *Ibid.*, pp. 185.

50 Błaszczak 2017, pp. 168.

Grinius, stressed the unitarian character of the country, promising linguistic rights in state administration.

However, the question of autonomy emerged internationally one year later during Polish-Lithuanian negotiations over Vilnius and the projects developed by Belgian negotiation from the League of Nations – Paul Hymans. The first project in which the territory of Lithuania was to consist of two federated Cantons of Kaunas and Vilnius along with tighter economic, military, and foreign policy ties with Poland. The second project, delivered on the 3 September 1921, rejected the idea of the federation but proposed granting the Vilnius region autonomous status within the borders of Lithuania and extensive autonomy with the right to have its own parliament and local army. Neither the Poles nor Lithuanians were keen on such a solution. As Poland rejected it, the League of Nations gave up the negotiations process, which came as the first major disappointment of the new international organization. The Lithuanian side was not keen on such provisions either but did not reject the idea of autonomy outright, proposing several significant amendments regarding the autonomy of the Vilnius region: to give its parliament competence only in administrative, educational, and religious matters, and not the power of local legislation, nor to establish separate military forces.⁵¹

The city of Vilnius was officially incorporated into Poland in 1922. However, the Lithuanian side never accepted the loss of its historical capital, and the struggle for its “liberation” gradually took centre stage in the nation’s collective identity. Between November 1920 and March 1923, when the Conference of Ambassadors confirmed Polish control over Vilnius and its region, the cooperation between Lithuanians, Belarusian, and Jews was the most intensive, both internationally and locally. Since the MBA did not end up becoming an element of Belarusian autonomy and the Belarusians did not construct a significant minority in the Lithuanian State, the ministry lacked a *raison d’être*. Moreover, after 1920 the Belarusian file in Lithuanian foreign policy was transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁵² However, the MBA could not be dismantled before the MJA existed. The attitude towards Lithuanians and Belarusians shifted in 1922. The failure of the policies regarding Vilnius and the de facto loss of the region to Poland raised awareness of political tactics towards the minorities. The entire constitution adopted on 6 August 1922 limited their rights to two articles. No provisions on autonomy and the minority ministries were made, as according to the ruling majority, the contribution of minorities to independence was too

51 Laurinavičius 2013, p. 347.

52 Liekis 2003, p. 180.

weak.⁵³ Later, the ministries were simply closed after no funds were allocated from the budget.

After 1923 the Republic of Lithuania was ruled by Christian democrats, who strictly opposed the idea of granting more extensive rights for national minorities and made attempts to break down all the provisions introduced during the emergency of the statehood. Then, when the territorial shape of the republic was settled and the political system was stable, unnecessary temporary institutions could be dismantled. In the Belarusian case, it was sufficient to relocate the funds. In the Jewish case, a new law on the Jewish Councils was adopted, ending the process of legalizing the *Kehilots* nationally. Finally, it demoted its status to ordinary civil organizations with no administrative rights, thereby effectively abolishing their autonomy.⁵⁴

Still, territorial autonomy was in force in Lithuania, but after the transfer of the Territory of Memel (Klaipėda). After the revolt that took place in January 1923 the Territory of Memel went under Lithuanian control as an autonomous territory, ruled on the Convention concerning the Territory of Memel on 8 May 1924.⁵⁵ Autonomy for the Memel Territory was granted in the I Annex to the Treaty “preserving the traditional rights and culture of the inhabitants”, to enjoy “legislative, judicial, administrative and financial autonomy”.⁵⁶ The power in the district was divided between the Local Chamber of Representatives with the Directory as the executive body. The governor acted as a representative of the government. At the negotiations stage, the idea of appointing a minister without a portfolio for Klaipėda affairs was being considered, although it was never executed. What never happened in the south-eastern part of the country became a reality in the West. The autonomous status of the Territory of Memel existed until March 1939, when it was annexed by the Third Reich.

Conclusions

The discussion over the role of national minorities in developing the project of Lithuanian statehood after WWI was usually limited to military issues and the influence of minorities on Lithuanian foreign policy. The problem of autonomy is usually associated with the question of the country’s international recognition, but is generally limited to the model of Jewish Personal Autonomy developed through the years of 1918 and 1920, and existing until 1925. The Belarusian

53 Bendikaitė 2011 (2), p. 102.

54 Liekis 2003, p. 197.

55 Łossowski 2007, p. 73.

56 *League of Nations* 1924, p. 95.

attempts to settle Belarusian territorial autonomy are marginalized as the project had already failed in early 1919 and was not even discussed over at the level of state authorities. But these attempts link the issue to the broader context of the transfer of ideas, and this shows that Lithuanians followed the patterns of other states that emerged on the map of Eastern Central Europe, and had its roots in the developments of the 1917 Ukrainian Revolution and the establishment of the Ukrainian People's Republic.

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The Ukrainian People's Republic Directorate – The State Centre of the Ukrainian People's Republic in Exile (1919–1926): A Study of Military and Political Activity in Ukraine and Poland

Abstract

The article provides insight into the main aspects of the military and political activity of the Ukrainian People's Republic Directorate and, particularly, its confrontation against “red” and “white” Russia, which aimed to destroy Ukrainian statehood. The study also presents Polish-Ukrainian interstate relations in military and political spheres after the Treaty of Warsaw in April 1920 and focuses on the specific features of how the UPR State Center functioned in exile on the territory of Poland as an institution that consistently upheld the ideas of independence and sovereignty of the Ukrainian People's Republic and constantly supported the interned UPR Army.

Keywords: the Ukrainian People's Republic Directorate; Symon Petlura; army; Poland

Introduction. Historiography of the Problem

The period of the Ukrainian People's Republic (UPR) Directorate occupies a special place in the history of the Ukrainian National Revolution of 1917–1920. This was conditioned, on one hand, by the struggle of some Ukrainians for their rights and national power, and, on the other hand, by the transformation of Ukrainian lands into an arena of confrontation between powerful states, which had not unsuccessfully tried to subordinate Ukraine (or part of it), and use it as a source of resources and, in the future, incorporate some of its territories into their structure. Consequently, from 1919 to 1920, Ukrainian lands became a battlefield for several armies (first of all, the Volunteer and Bolshevik armies). Moreover, the situation grew more complicated, as separate parts of Ukraine were controlled by the forces of partisan otamans (Nestor Makhno, Nykyfor Hryhoryev, Zelenyi (Danylo Terpylo), and others), and Greek-French troops landed in Odessa, taking Kherson and Mykolaiv under their control (December 1918 – March 1919). The proclaiming of the Western Ukrainian People's Republic

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(WUPR) on 19 October 1918 caused its military confrontation with the newly created Polish State. It was active until the beginning of the summer of 1919.

Due to this set of circumstances, systematic and consistent state-forming endeavours by the UPR Directorate were impossible, as all its resources were being used for the struggle against Bolshevik Russia conducted by the UPR Army with limited success. One of the main tasks of the UPR Directorate was to replenish and coordinate UPR Army units and connections. The most complicated issue for the UPR Directorate was the blockade of the UPR imposed by the Entente, which in 1919 was actively supporting the idea of restoring a “one and indivisible” non-Bolshevik Russia. Lack of weapons, ammunition, and medicines, which were impossible to purchase and transport to Ukraine in time, caused enormous military and civilian casualties in the autumn of 1919 and forced the decision to liquidate the regular front and transit to partisan methods of warfare.

The first attempts to conceptualize various aspects of the UPR Directorate’s activity were carried out in the 1930s–1950s by direct participants in those events.¹ Ten years later, a seven-volume edition with a detailed account of the UPR Directorate’s history was issued.² A brief essay about the 20 years of the UPR State Centre’s activity in exile was created by Mykola Livytskyi.³ From the beginning of the 1990s, this issue attracted a good deal of Ukrainian researchers, resulting in several articles, theses, and monographs.⁴ At the same time, the development of this issue has started to interest Polish historians.⁵ The process of studying and comprehending the events concerning the Treaty of Warsaw in 1920 continues up to now.⁶ Of prevailing concern are the various aspects of the military organization of national armed forces during the UPR Directorate period in Ukraine and its first years in exile.⁷ The emigration period of the UPR State Centre was covered in research by Vasyl Yablonskyi.⁸ Coherent and objective reconstruction of this issue can be carried out only by using multiple

1 Mazepa 1950; idem 1951; idem 1943.

2 Stakhiv 1962–1965.

3 Livytskyi 1984, 72 p.

4 Troshchynskyi 1994, p. 260; Sribnyak 1995, p. 216; Yablonskyi 2001, p. 160; Karpus / Sribnyak 2002, pp. 212–216; Yanevskyi 2003, p. 767; Piskun 2006, p. 672; Parandiy 2012, p. 19.

5 Bruski 2000, p. 600; Wiszka 2004, p. 752; Pisuliński 2004, p. 480.

6 Sribnyak 2004, pp. 333–344; Mykhaylova 2005, pp. 154–175; Serhiychuk 2010, p. 264; Bruskiy 2020, pp. 22–37; Doroshko / Matviyenko 2021, pp. 122–135.

7 Karpus / Sribnyak 2000, pp. 81–89; Krotofil 2002, p. 225; idem 2011, p. 224; Mykhaylova 2007, pp. 198–220; Rukkas 2013, p. 480; Sribnyak 1997, p. 187; idem 2018 (2), pp. 151–176; idem 2020 (2), pp. 86–102.

8 Yablonskyi 2020, p. 646.

sources, in particular archival materials, epistolary,⁹ and collections of documents.¹⁰

The UPR Directorate's Rise to Power and Search for Rapprochement with Poland (1919)

As a result of the national uprising led by the Ukrainian National State Union, the Ukrainian State of Hetman Pavlo Skoropadskiy fell in the middle of December 1918 and power was transferred to the Ukrainian People's Republic Directorate. On 26 December 1918, the Directorate appointed the Council of People's Ministers of the UPR headed by Volodymyr Chekhivskiy and publicized the political program of the new government. On 22 January 1919, the Labour Congress was convened in Kyiv as a temporary legislative body aimed at defining the form of state government in Ukraine. The delegates of the Congress were peasants, workers, and intelligentsia elected from the majority of the Ukrainian regions and West-Ukrainian territories. On 22 January 1919, the Congress delegates ratified the Act of Union of UPR and WUPR into one state and the *Law on Provisional Power in the Ukrainian People's Republic (Zakon pro tymчасovu vladu v UNR / Закон про тимчасову владу в УНР)*. Due to the Bolshevik troops' advancement on Kyiv, the Congress was suspended, temporarily passing supreme power in Ukraine to the UPR Directorate, namely Volodymyr Vynnychenko (head of the Directorate), Chief Otaman Symon Petlura, Andrii Makarenko, Fedir Shvets, Panas Andrievskiy, and Yevhen Petrushevych.

It should be pointed out that the UPR Directorate lacked unity – Vynnychenko was looking for a way to consolidate with Soviet Russia, and Petlura and his supporters were Entente-oriented. This duality ruled out the elaboration of a common political approach in Ukrainian statehood formation, as the headlines of the UPR Directorate proposed different formats: a Ukrainian type system of councils (*radas*) (Vynnychenko) vs parliamentary democracy (Petlura). Bolshevik Moscow made use of this situation to inspire the creation of a puppet “Ukrainian” Soviet government in Kharkiv and started a military offensive on Left-Bank Ukraine. At the beginning of February 1919, the UPR Directorate was forced to evacuate from Kyiv to Vinnytsia (later to Proskuriv), while Bolshevik troops entered the Ukrainian capital.

In this situation, Vynnychenko resigned from his position as Directorate leader and went abroad. After that, Petlura was elected a Chairman of the Directorate, and he made every effort to stabilize inter-state relations with Poland.

9 Petlura 1956; idem 1979, p. 627; Fayzulin 2019, p. 688.

10 Vynar / Pazunyak 1993, p. 494; Hunchak 1984, p. 478; Yablonskyi 2012, p. 840.

In particular, for this purpose, he sent Colonel Borys Kurdynovskiy on a secret mission to Warsaw on 19 February 1919. The mission resulted in a confidential military and political agreement signed between Kurdynovskiy and Polish Prime-Minister Ignacy Jan Paderewski on 24 May 1919. Following this agreement, the UPR Directorate confirmed the transfer of Ukrainian territories – Eastern Galicia and Volhynia (Wołyń, Volyn’) – to Poland. The Polish State, in its turn, agreed to recognize the UPR as a sovereign state and provide support in its struggle against Bolshevik troops.¹¹

It is noteworthy that the signing of this agreement (in fact, it was not carried out because of the continuing war between Western-Ukrainian People’s Republic and Poland) was conditioned by the Bolsheviks capturing Right-Bank Ukraine in the spring of 1919. So, Petlura tried to secure a reliable back front or at least a neutral one for withstanding “red” Moscow. He had to take into account that the Entente did not support the Ukrainian drive for independence and continuously maintained its postulate of restoring a “One and Indivisible Russia”.¹²

Notwithstanding, the positions of Bolsheviks in Ukraine were precarious because of the strong mass partisan and insurgent movement there, in the rear of the “reds”. Owing to this, the position of the UPR government stabilized. Besides, of great significance was the opportunity to unite the forces of the UPR Army and Ukrainian Galician Army (*Ukraińs’ka Halyc’ka Armija / Українська Галицька Армія*, UGA), which had been forced to leave Galicia under the pressure of Polish troops and retreated to the east from the Zbruch river. With support from insurgents, the United Army of the UPR went on the offensive and managed to liberate large territories of Right-Bank Ukraine from the Bolsheviks. At that moment, Petlura realized the critical importance of stabilizing inter-state relations with Poland. He kept unofficial contacts with the Polish government through his representatives, and on 9 August 1919, for the first time, the Chairman of the UPR Directorate addressed a personal letter directly to Józef Piłsudski.

In that letter, Petlura drew the attention of the Head of the Polish State to the disunity of the Poles and Ukrainians in resisting the common enemies “that caused the temporary decay of the Polish and Ukrainian States”,¹³ and that the struggle of the Ukrainian people against Moscow, which imposes “forms of a communist regime alien to Ukraine”,¹⁴ could hardly fail to evoke compassion from the Polish side. The negative circumstance impeding the struggle of the Ukrainian people according to Petlura was “isolation from neighbours and first

11 Stakhiv 1965/7, pp. 158–159.

12 Kosyk 1980, p. 33.

13 “[...] спричинилась до тимчасового занепаду Польської і Української Держав” [all translations of quotations by Liubov Pikulia], Petlura 1979, p. 358.

14 “[...] Україні чужі їй форми комуністичного ладу”, *ibid.*

of all, from Poland”,¹⁵ considering the aspirations shared by Poland and Ukraine, meanwhile, as “strategic interests that demand coordination and coaction”.¹⁶ In this regard “the ultimateness of certain agreement becomes obvious”¹⁷ between the military commands of both countries. Petlura also expressed hope, that “returning the Ukrainian war prisoners from Poland to Ukraine, adequately armed, could be the first step to further acts of friendship between Polish and Ukrainian people, acts that are of mutual interests of both peoples”.¹⁸

Meanwhile, the military and the political situation continued to favour the UPR Army. On 31 August 1919, it entered Kyiv having been abandoned by the Bolsheviks. That year it was the greatest achievement of the UPR Directorate. But the Volunteer Army of Anton Denikin also participated in the military defeat of the Bolsheviks and its detachments entered the Ukrainian capital on the same day. Petlura could not reach any agreement with “white” Russia, because the latter unaccepted the legal personality of the UPR as an independent state. Consequently, the UPR Army was forced to take military action against Russian volunteers. As ousting them from Kyiv was already impossible, which encouraged Petlura to double his efforts towards rapprochement with Poland. On 26 September 1919, the UPR Directorate elaborated and adopted directives for the UPR diplomatic mission (headed by Andrij Livytskyi), which came to Warsaw two weeks later and started the negotiation process.¹⁹

In the meantime, in the autumn of 1919, the state of the UPR Army considerably deteriorated because of a typhus epidemic and lack of medicines due to the blockade by the Entente. Lack of food and medical care soon nudged the Ukrainian fighters towards the brink of survival; the Army was rapidly losing personnel and combat readiness. In this desperate situation, trying to save the Ukrainian Galician Army from total destruction, its Commander, General Myron Tarnavskiy took a controversial step – he subordinated the Galicians to the Volunteer Army command.

The UPR Army was also in a dramatic situation, being isolated in the so-called “death triangle”, it tried to hold the front against volunteers, Bolsheviks, and Polish troops. Most of the soldiers had typhus, which reduced their numbers to 8,000–10,000. In mid-November 1919, the UPR Army’s position was so compli-

15 “[...] ізольованість від сусідів і насамперед від Польщі”, *ibid.*

16 “[...] інтереси стратегії вимагають координації та співділання”, *ibid.*

17 “[...] стає очевидною konieczність певного порозуміння”, *ibid.*

18 “[...] повернення на Україну перебуваючих у Польщі наших полонених, відповідно озброєних, було б першим кроком до слідуючих дружніх актів польського та українського народів, які, я певен в цьому, лежать в обопільних інтересах обох народів”, *ibid.*

19 Mykhaylova 2011, pp. 229–252.

cated that upon the request of the Ukrainian government, Polish troops took Kamianets-Podilskyi and nearby territories under their control.²⁰

Notwithstanding, even in such circumstances, Petlura did not accept the idea to stop fighting against the Russian Bolshevik regime, because just the very act of struggle was positive evidence of the state-making potential of the Ukrainian nation. His confidence in the strong forces of the Ukrainian society gave him grounds to claim the following on 26 November 1919: “[...] we have entered the arena of history in times when the whole world did not know what Ukraine is [...] nobody considered our people as a separate nation. With united struggle, persistent and non-compromising, we have shown the world that Ukraine exists, its people live and fight for their rights, their freedom, and state independence.”²¹

Along with that, Petlura understood that further struggle against Moscow required political agreement with the Polish State. To intensify the process of negotiation, the Chairman of the UPR Directorate ordered the head of the diplomatic mission Andriy Livytskyi to sign a unilateral declaration in Warsaw (2 December 1919) which confirmed a cease-fire from 1 September 1919 in exchange for territories – Poland received Eastern Galicia, thus opening the way for the UPR Army’s retreat. The declaration also contained a request to the Polish side to officially recognize the UPR’s independence and provide it with military support.²²

On 4 December 1919, the Chairman of the UPR Directorate Petlura called a military meeting in Chortoryi, where all the division commanders and ministers of the UPR government were present. The meeting resulted in the decision to eliminate the regular front and conduct a raid in the rear of the enemy (Volunteer and Bolshevik armies). This raid is better known in history as the First Winter Campaign of the UPR Army and lasted from 6 December 1919 to 6 May 1920.

Polish-Ukrainian Consolidation to Withstand the Spread of Bolshevism in Europe (1920)

On 5 December 1919 the Chairman of the UPR Directorate Petlura left for Warsaw to agree on the issue of providing military aid to Ukraine with the Polish government, which confirmed the validity of the declaration from 2 December 1919. Petlura was deeply convinced that Poland – with its well-trained and nu-

20 Bruskyi 2020, p. 28.

21 “[...] ми виступили на арену історії тоді, коли весь світ не знав, що таке Україна [...] ніхто не вважав нашого народу за окрему націю. Єдиною боротьбою, упертою і безкомпромісовою, ми показали світові, що Україна є, що її народ живе і бореться за своє право, за свою свободу й державну незалежність.” Petlura [2022].

22 Lisevych 1997, pp. 85–87; Pisuliński 2004, pp. 169–188; Matviyenko 2004, pp. 502–507.

merous army, equipped at the expense of the Entente – could become one of the most important allies for Ukraine. But reaching the corresponding agreement would inevitably have foreseen territorial concessions from the side of the UPR, and this not only concerned the territory of Galicia. In his letter of 15 March 1920 to the Prime Minister of the UPR government, Isaak Mazepa, Petlura wrote: “Poland has to recognize us, but, obviously, at a high price – it wants to take 5 Volhynia counties: Kovelskyi, Lutskyi, Dubenskyi, Rivenskyi and part of Kremenetskyi. Today they don't speak of this officially but tomorrow or after tomorrow can firmly state this.”²³

Simultaneously, Petlura came to the reasonable conclusion that “anyway, without some agreement with Poland we cannot renew our state labour [...]”²⁴ Further in this letter, Petlura emphasized the importance of trade relations between the UPR and Europe: “Without trade exchange, we can neither form an army nor restore state life”,²⁵ but this would only be possible with Romania and Poland. Romania, though, had no adequate transport capacity. So only Poland remained, “the only broader window to Europe in the context of transport and relations [...]. The way I look at it is that we will have to make concessions to the Poles with the fact that the final word on these decisions [...] will be said by our future parliament”.²⁶

Consequently, the core of the Polish-Ukrainian agreement in 1920 was supposed to be a military union of the two states opposing Bolshevik Russia. In support of this are the words from Petlura's letter to the UPR Military Minister, Colonel Volodymyr. Salskyi, on 31 March 1920, the Directorate Chairman explained the content of the agreement stressing that the union should be achieved “to resist Moscow”.²⁷ In Petlura's opinion, new relations between the two neighbouring countries required “corrections to the former policy from the Polish side as well”,²⁸ and above all “Poland's vital interest compels it to have an independent Ukraine”.²⁹ The UPR Directorate Chairman insisted that Polish political leaders, namely Józef Pilsudski, “have to fight in Poland as well for the

23 “Польща має визнати нас, але очевидно за дорогу ціну – 5 повітів Волині хоче собі взяти: Ковельський, Луцький, Дубенський, Рівенський і частину Кременецького. Про це офіційно сьогодні не говорять, але завтра-позавтра можуть рішуче заявити.” Central'nyj Deržavnyj Archiv Vyščych Orhaniv Vlady ta Upravlinnja Ukraïny (hereinafter: CDAVO Ukraïny): sig. f. 3696, op. 1, spr. 124, fols. 23–26.

24 “[...] в кожному разі без того чи іншого порозуміння з Польщею ми не можемо одновити нашої державної праці [...]”, *ibid.*

25 “Без товарообміну ми не можемо армії формувати, ні життя державного відновити”, *ibid.*

26 “[...] як єдине ширше вікно до Європи в смислі транспорту і зносин [...]. Я дивлюсь на справу так: нам прийдеться йти на уступки полякам з тим, що остаточне снова про ці рішення [...] буде говорити наш майбутній парламент”, *ibid.*

27 “[...] щоб перед Москвою устояти”, Petlura 1956, p. 263.

28 “[...] і з боку польського корективів до минулої політики”, *ibid.*, pp. 267–268.

29 “[...] життєвий інтерес Польщі примушує її мати самостійну Україну”, *ibid.*

idea of our statehood”³⁰ because only the existence of a sovereign and democratic Ukraine could create a reliable barrier against the penetration of the bolshevism “bacillus” into Poland and Europe.

In fact, before signing interstate agreements, the Polish military took measures to organize units and formations of the UPR Army manned by the Ukrainian soldiers interned in Poland. From the Ukrainian side, this task was performed by the UPR Military mission headed by General Viktor Zelinskyi. The mission started by forming the 6th (Sich) rifle division in the Lantsut Camp under the command of Colonel Mark Bezruchko. In early March 1920, the division was transferred to Berestia for some intensive one-and-half-month military training and recruitment of Ukrainian soldiers from other Polish camps to replenish the cossacks and senior staff.³¹ At that time the organization of another military formation also started – the future 3rd Iron rifleman division under the command of Colonel Oleksandr Udovychenko.³²

The difficult negotiation process lasted more than four months and finished on 22 April 1920 with the signing of the Polish-Ukrainian interstate agreement in Warsaw. In its provisions, the Polish government recognized the UPR’s independence, and the UPR agreed to transfer Galicia, Western Volhynia, part of Polesia (Polesie, Polissia), and some other borderline territories under Polish jurisdiction. The parties agreed to guarantee the national and cultural rights of Ukrainians in Poland and Poles in Ukraine. An integral part of the Polish-Ukrainian agreement in 1920 became the secret military convention signed on 24 April. It contained 17 articles. According to its provisions, the Polish State was bound to provide the formation of three divisions of the UPR Army on its territory and supply them with appropriate weapons and necessary military equipment. Signing this convention allowed the UPR government to continue the struggle against Bolshevism with the help of the common Polish-Ukrainian front against Soviet Russia.

The beginning of the anti-Bolshevik campaign of the united Polish-Ukrainian army was quite successful. Within two weeks the allies conquered almost all of Right-Bank Ukraine. Successful operations by the UPR Army headed by General Mykhailo Omelianovych-Pavlenko in the rear of the Bolshevik troops facilitated the military campaign run by the Polish-Ukrainian forces. Carrying out the orders of Chief Otaman Petlura, the army advanced westwards to unite with the Polish-Ukrainian main attack forces. On 6 May 1920, the UPR Army broke the

30 “[...] повинні боротися в самій Польщі за ідею нашої державності”, *ibid.*

31 Karpus / Sribnyak 2000, pp. 81–89.

32 Mazepa 1943, p. 6.

Bolshevik front and moved to the liberated Ukrainian territory, thus finishing its raid in Yampil.³³

On 7 May 1920, Polish troops together with the 6th Sich division of the UPR Army in avant-garde took over Kyiv. But this Polish and Ukrainian success in May was temporary. Due to the breakthrough in the front by Semyon Budyonnyi's First Cavalry Army, on 10 June, the Ukrainian capital was abandoned by the UPR Army. Though it was desperately defending its positions on the extreme right flank of the Polish forces, it was impossible to stabilize the front. During the summer of 1920, Bolshevik troops advanced to the line of the Zbruch river and occupied large swathes of territory in Right-Bank Ukraine, Galicia, and Volhynia. They could only be defeated in the battle near Warsaw and its successful conclusion positively changed the strategic position of the allies. All this time Poland was providing the UPR Army with all necessary aid, both military-technical, and organizational.³⁴

The haphazard retreat of the “reds” facilitated the advance of the Polish-Ukrainian troops further into Ukrainian territory, but the forces of both parties were almost exhausted. For that matter, Polish diplomats started negotiations with Moscow in September 1920 which resulted in the signing of the Polish-Soviet Treaty on 12 October 1920. Despite this, the Directorate and the UPR government did not cease their legislative and military organization work, aiming to form the basis for further development of the Republic's armed forces. For this purpose, the Chairman of the Directorate and Chief Otaman of the UPR Armed Forces, Petlura passed the *Law on High Military Regulation (Zakon pro vyshche viyskove upravlinnya / Закон про вище військове управління)* on 12 November 1920, approved by the UPR Council of People's Ministers. According to this law, the Chairman of the Directorate “exercises high command over the UPR land and sea forces”.³⁵ He was also given the right “to determine the structure of the army and the navy; he gives orders and directives as for deployment of troops, placing them in combat position, training, military service of the personal staff of the army and navy and everything that refers to [...] the defence of the UPR.”³⁶ This law defined the boundaries of the senior officials' jurisdiction in the UPR Army – the head of the General Staff, general inspector, and military minister.³⁷

33 Shankovs'kyi 1958, p. 241.

34 Sribnyak 2020 (2), pp. 86–102.

35 “[...] зверхне керування всіма сухопутними і морськими силами УНР”, CDAVO Ukrayiny: sig. f. 1075, op. 1, spr. 59, fols. 2–6.

36 “[...] визначати устрій армії і фльоти, від нього виходять накази і розпорядження відносно дислокації військ, переведення їх у бойовий стан, навчання їх, проходження служби персонального складу армії і фльоти і всього, що торкається [...] захисту УНР.” Ibid.

37 Karpus / Sribnyak 2002, pp. 212–216.

Specific Features Regarding How the UPR State Centre Functioned in Poland (End of 1920 to 1926)

It should be noted that legislative innovations were made as the UPR Army fought hard against the prevailing Bolshevik forces, and unable to resist the pressure, it had to retreat behind the line of the Zbruch river on 21 November 1920. Weapons and military property were given to the Polish authorities, and personal staff had to be interned according to the international norms. The political and military leadership of the UPR took all the measures so that the retreat from different territories did not provoke the spread of anarchy and discord in the army. Already on 23 November 1920, following the order signed by the Chief Otaman of the UPR Armed Forces Petlura and Commander of the Acting Army, General Omelianovych-Pavlenko, it was prohibited to dismiss any military detachments that had to be concentrated “on general requirements of internship for the organization and preparations to return to Ukraine.”³⁸

On the same day, Petlura (through the intermediary of the Deputy Head of the UPR Diplomatic mission in Warsaw, Leonid Mykhailov) addressed a letter to the Polish government, where he stressed the need to preserve the UPR Army, which crossed the border without losing its unity and combat readiness, and was in good moral standing. In Petlura’s opinion, the main condition for keeping up the army’s morale was the close connection between the army detachments and the UPR State Centre. “Continuous contact between them”, he said, “is the basis of the future strength of the army and the key to preventing discord and provocations.”³⁹

Only a legitimate and effectively active UPR Government could take care of the army’s needs and represent its interests abroad. Sustainment of the Government’s adequate functioning in exile was of vital importance for the international representation of the UPR, and for uniting all the Ukrainian emigration. Thus, addressing Mykhailov directly concerning diplomatic support for the functioning of the UPR State Centre, Petlura emphasized:

The Government of the UPR, its apparatus, and army, though under changed circumstances, are not subject to and cannot subject to liquidation as it contradicts the international law and threatens public law organization of the Ukrainian people, who provided military aid to Poland in difficult circumstances.⁴⁰

38 “[...] на загальних умовах інтернування в цілях організації і підготовчої праці для повернення на Україну”, CDAVO Ukrainy: sig. f. 1429, op. 2, spr. 32, fol. 69.

39 “Постійний контакт між ними, – вважав він, – база майбутньої сили армії і запорука того, що в її лавах не буде місця розбрату та провокаціям.” Ibid., fol. 70.

40 “Уряд УНР, його апарати і військо, хоч і в змінених обставинах, не підлягають і не можуть підлягати ліквідації, бо це б йшло попри всі норми міжнародного права та унеможливило

In his letter from 28 November 1920, addressed to the UPR Government Prime Minister Andriy Levytskyi, Petlura presents his understanding of the last political and military events and described in detail the tasks that had emerged before the Council of People's Ministers after he escaped Ukraine. He qualified the unfortunate for the UPR Army course of war events "not as liquidation of [...] statehood, not as liquidation of our state efforts, but as liquidation of one of the military attempts against occupational forces in Ukraine".⁴¹ Petlura believed that

[considering] the public mood of the Ukrainian people and their desire for Ukrainian statehood combined with their hostility towards the Bolsheviks, the Government, fully aware of its responsibility on behalf of the republic and the people, should work to improve their future destiny. We should use all our efforts, all our state wisdom, and energy [...] so that the people's faith in the bearers of statehood would not weaken but remain stable.⁴²

For this purpose, the UPR government, according to Petlura, had to realize "a complex of political and diplomatic tasks aiming at interesting the global political elite in the fate of Ukraine",⁴³ and "reorganize the government itself to adapt it to the needs of future struggle",⁴⁴ consolidate all the public efforts "into a solid and monolithic whole, with an overwhelming understanding of state needs and feeling of duty in front of the State".⁴⁵ The primary task for the government was supposed to be the implementation of a set of measures "directed towards preserving the army [...] and its reorganization".⁴⁶

Petlura's addresses resulted in the elaboration of a certain plan for the UPR State Centre and Army to stay in Poland. First and foremost, the legal status of the Ukrainian warriors was rationed by the Instruction of the Polish Ministry of Military Affairs from 2 December 1920; thereby the UPR Army was interpreted as friendly and allied. The instruction also obliged Polish authorities to provide

правно-державну організацію українського народу, котрий у тяжких умовах надав Польщі збройну допомогу." Ibid., fol. 70.

41 "[...] не як ліквідацію [...] державності, не як ліквідацію наших державних зусиль, а як ліквідацію однієї з мілітарних спроб з окупантською владою України", *ibid.*, fol. 71.

42 "[...] настрої населення України і його прагнення до створення Української Державності, його вороже ставлення до більшовиків, Уряд, у повному розумінні тієї відповідальності, яка припадає на нього, який ім'ям Республіки і народу працює для поліпшення його долі у майбутньому, повинен напружити всі свої сили, весь свій державний розум і енергію [...] щоб та віра народу в нас, як носіїв державності не послабла, а навпаки, як швидше дала доказ про ґрунтовність тієї віри." Ibid., fols. 71–72.

43 "[...] комплексу певних заходів політично-дипломатичного характеру, маючих своєю метою зацікавити долею України вирішальні світові чинники", *ibid.*, fol. 72.

44 "[...] реорганізацію самого уряду в цілях пристосування його до потреб майбутньої боротьби", *ibid.*, fol. 72.

45 "[...] в суцільне і монолітне ціле, пройняте однаковим розумінням державних потреб і почуттям обов'язку перед Державою", *ibid.*, fol. 72.

46 "[...] скерованих на збереження армії [...] і її реорганізацію", *ibid.*, fol. 72.

adequate conditions for the interns in the camps: organize food supplies and medical care, and prepare the necessary number of barracks for living.⁴⁷ Ukrainian troops were located in six camps: Aleksandrów Kujawski, Piotrków, Piłkule, Łañcut, Wadowice, and Kalisz. Besides that, government officials and chief officers of the military ministry and the General Staff of the UPR Army were placed on civilian status in the city of Częstochowa.⁴⁸

Trying to unite all the centres of Ukrainian emigration in Poland, the Chairman of the UPR Directorate signed on 9 January 1921 a *Law on the Council of the Republic (Zakon pro Radu Respubliky / Закон про Раду Республіки)* approved by the UPR Council of People's Ministers, where the Council is defined as the provisional supreme body of peoples' power with full authority. This decision was vitally important because by the end of 1920, almost all the UPR Army and the UPR State Centre were in Poland without sufficient material and financial means. Living in camps, interned Ukrainian soldiers urgently needed full assistance, and only collaboration between all the Ukrainian political emigration centres in Poland and all conscious Ukrainian emigrants in the struggle for the restoration of the national independence might it be possible to resist Bolshevik Russia.

At first, the Polish authorities approved the convening of the Republic Council, which started up in Tarnów, on 4 January 1921, because at that time the relations between Poland and Bolshevik Russia were uncertain. Though preliminary agreements had been signed in October 1920, the Polish party did not exclude the opportunity to use the interned UPR Army members during the armed resistance against Moscow in the event of a collapse in the negotiation process. Therefore, the UPR state institutions and ministries legally stayed in Tarnów, almost completely occupying the main local hotel "Bristol".

In his speech, while opening the first session of the Republic Council, Petlura drew the attention of the Council delegates and the UPR government members to the urgent need to support the Ukrainian soldiers interned in Poland:

[...] our first thought, our first thorough business is the care of the army. The primary task is to preserve its unity, protect against extraneous harmful influences, provide it with food, and [...] satisfy cultural and educational needs so that the army may be morally and physically fit. It is necessary to carry out its reorganization [...] we have to revise all the military system [...]. When we do, we will have a strong apparatus for the management of military affairs, we will have a ready corps for the future great Ukrainian Army.⁴⁹

47 Ibid.: sig. f. 1075, op. 4, spr. 28, fol. 159.

48 Hunchak 1984, pp. 421, 427.

49 "[...] перша наша думка, перша найпильніша справа наша – це турбота про армію. Перше завдання – зберегти її єдність, захистити її від сторонніх шкідливих впливів, забезпечити її харчування і [...] культурно-освітні потреби, щоб вона була морально і фізично здорова.

Nevertheless, the legal existence of the UPR State Centre and the Council of Republic did not last long because, after the Polish-Soviet Riga Treaty in March 1921, the activities of the UPR government have been subjected to certain restrictions (due to the ban on the stay of anti-Bolshevik organizations or paramilitary units on the territory of Poland). But it did not stop Petlura from visiting camps of the interned UPR Army soldiers; he did so twice – in April and May 1921 – thus encouraging and inspiring the interned.

At that time the UPR State Centre conducted active organizational work to continue its struggle against Bolshevik Moscow. For this purpose, already in February 1921, the State Centre created a secret Partisan Rebel headquarters under the main command of the UPR Troops. The headquarters served as a mobilising factor for all the interned UPR Army and received a maximum of possible resources from the government. The existence of the Headquarters also became a vivid signal for the Polish authorities that Poland's ally – the UPR – continued the fight against bolshevism, and its liquidation did not mean a complete surrender to Red Moscow.⁵⁰

The unfortunate course of the Second Winter Campaign (raid) of the UPR Rebel Army in the autumn of 1921, which ended with the encirclement and capturing of the remaining of the Volhynia group of rebellions (359 of them were shot in the town of Bazar), increased political pressure from Bolshevik Russia on Poland, which continued to retain interned Ukrainian military units and UPR State Centre structures in exile. As a concession, in November 1921 Warsaw was forced to expel the former commander of the UPR Acting Army, General Omelianovych-Pavlenko, and the Chief of the Ukrainian military liquidation commission, General Viktor Zelinskyj. In order to remain in Poland, the Chairman of the UPR Directorate Petlura left Tarnów and switched to an underground position, secretly living in Warsaw.

State institutions of the UPR had to switch to a semi-legal position, thus being limited in their powers to conduct political affairs in Poland. Official representation of Ukrainian political emigration to the Polish State, after the UPR Diplomatic mission was liquidated in Warsaw, belonged to the Ukrainian Central Committee of Public Assistance headed by Andrij Lukashevych. The Ukrainian Military Liquidation Commission headed by Colonel Oleksandr Danylchuk took care of the interests of the interned UPR Army in Poland. Despite all these restrictions, Petlura continued state and organisation work, looked after the needs of the interned army, and intensified correspondence. The opinion he

Треба обов'язково провести реорганізацію її [...] треба переглянути всю систему нашої військової справи [...]. Коли це зробим, то будемо мати міцний апарат для керування військовою справою, будемо мати готові кадри для майбутньої великої Української Армії." CDAVO Ukrainy: sig. f. 1078, op. 2, spr. 198, fol. 22.

50 Sribnyak 2001, pp. 107–120; idem 2020 (1), pp. 492–507.

expressed in a letter to the UPR government Prime Minister Andrij Livytskyi, on 14 May 1922, is as relevant today as ever before:

The biggest obstacle to recognizing Ukraine's sovereignty is the hypnosis of the name "Russia" itself. This hypnosis needs to be dispelled, especially in America (its Northern States) and in France. The issue of Russia's disintegration should be presented as an issue of peace for the whole world, as the issue of European equilibrium and real material profit for the countries established in the boundaries set after the Versailles Treaty.⁵¹

From 1922 to 1923, Bolshevik intelligence agents tried to track down Petlura's location in Poland, to accuse Poland of failing to fulfil its obligations and to have grounds for increasing political pressure. Petlura realised that in this situation he could not stay in Poland any longer, and at the end of 1923, he decided to leave the country. In late December, he went to Hungary through Vienna. In the spring of 1924, Petlura moved to Zurich, then to Geneva, awaiting permission to enter France. Only in October 1924 did he finally receive a French visa and settled in Paris, where he continued his political activity, defending the interests of the UPR and uniting Ukrainian emigrants in France. With this aim, he made every effort to create a publishing house for UPR emigration, which could serve the purpose of developing a "programme of state-building" and conduct "certain systematic work towards the creation of Ukrainian state ideology".⁵²

The first issue of *Tryzub* [Тризуб; Trident], a weekly edition about politics, culture, art, and public life was published on 15 October 1925. The front page presented an article by Petlura, where the fundamental grounds of the UPR political emigration were formulated:

We consciously stand under the sign of Trident, as a symbol of Ukrainian statehood [...]. In Ukrainian statehood we trust, Ukrainian statehood we profess and believe in its imminence. For us, it is a certain reality of life because we bear its idea in our hearts. After all, all our life is filled with its spirit and needs [...]. Our ideological work will consist in unfolding and defining the idea of Ukrainian statehood.⁵³

51 "[...] найбільшою перешкодою для визнання суверенності України є гіпноз самого імені Росія. Цей гіпноз треба розв'язати, особливо в Америці (Північні Штати) та Франції. Справу поділу Росії треба поставити як справу покою цілого світу, як справу європейської рівноваги та реально-матеріальної вигоди держав, у тій конфігурації їх, що уклалась після Версальського трактату." Serhiychuk 1996, p. 118.

52 "[...] певної систематичної праці в напрямку створення української державної ідеології", Petlura 1956, p. 446.

53 "Ми свідомо виступаємо під знаком Тризуба, як символа української державності [...]. в українську державність ми віруємо, українську державність ми ісповідуємо, - в її неминучості ми переконані. Для нас вона є до певної міри живою реальністю, бо ідею її ми носимо в серці, бо її духом, потребами овіяне все життя [...]. Наша ідеологічна праця полягатиме в розгорненню й обґрунтуванню ідеї української державності." Idem 1925, pp. 1-3.

Petlura's attempts to consolidate Ukrainian political emigration and direct it towards a sustained and uncompromising fight against Bolshevism attracted the attention of the Soviet secret services, and their agents managed to collect enough information, including in the personal circle of Chief Otaman.⁵⁴ This was fatal for Petlura, on 25 May 1926, he was shot by Samuel (Sholem) Schwartzbard who had proven connections with Bolshevik agents in Paris and pretended to be an avenger of the Jewish pogroms for which Moscow groundlessly pointed the guilt at Petlura. Although, instead of spreading disbelief in the circles of Ukrainian emigrants, the death of Petlura became an impetus for their unity and integrity around the name of the Chief Otaman. His work was continued by Andrij Levytskyi, who took over the duties of the Chief Otaman and Chairman of the UPR Directorate (UPR president), thus heading the State Centre in exile.

Conclusions

From its inception, the UPR Directorate, having come to power in the wake of a national uprising against Hetman Pavlo Skoropadskyj, had to face some extremely complicated challenges both in internal and external politics. Some of the issues were resolved successfully – for instance, the legitimization of power (by convening the Labour Congress), uniting all the Ukrainian lands into one state body (*via* Act of Union), and also the formation of government and administrative structures in the Ukrainian cities. But Bolshevik Russia's aggression considerably undermined those achievements and forced the UPR government to evacuate from Kyiv. Since February 1919, the UPR Directorate headed by Petlura resisted the Bolshevik offensive with all their might, thus forming a national regular Ukrainian army. A considerably smaller section of UPR troops were deployed westwards to support the Ukrainian Galician Army in the battle with Poland. The failure of the united Ukrainian troops to withstand the Bolsheviks on the one hand, and the retreat of the UGA under the pressure of the Polish Army on the other, positively contributed to regrouping the Ukrainian forces, who managed to conduct quite a successful offensive in the direction of Kyiv and Odessa in the summer of 1919.

The "Russian castling", whereby "red" Russia was temporarily replaced by the "whites" (Volunteer Army of General Denikin) who fought alongside the Bolsheviks against the UPR even despite the perspective of self-destruction, crushed the plans of the UPR Directorate to gain a foothold on the Naddniprianshchyna (Ukrainian territories over the Dnipro river). The worst in that situation was the Entente's blockade of the UPR, which supported "white" Russia and did not

54 Sribnyak 2018 (1), pp. 6–13.

allow the UPR to buy weapons, ammunition, and medicines in Europe. As a result, in late November 1919, the UPR Army was in a disastrous state, unable to hold the regular front against the opposing forces. And only due to the decisive actions of Petlura and his government was it possible to save the core of the army, and those who were combat-ready went on the First Winter Campaign to continue fighting for the statehood of Ukraine. The key to its continuation was the political and military rapprochement with Poland embodied in the Warsaw Agreement in April 1920. Its signing, along with the secret Polish-Ukrainian military collaboration, enabled the UPR Army to continue its development as a reliable stronghold and basis for the state.

The aforementioned agreement was to be the greatest achievement of UPR Directorate Chairman Petlura in the field of external politics, and, at the same time, it was his sole decision as all other members resigned from the Directorate. Nonetheless, this circumstance did not affect Petlura's policy. He firmly held the flag of Ukrainian statehood, inspiring the low-spirited and disbelieved, giving strength and confidence to all the national state elements of Ukrainian society. The Chairman of the UPR Directorate did not betray his principles even after the military defeat of the UPR Army in the battle against Bolsheviks in September 1920. He made every effort to organize an all-Ukrainian resistance movement regulated by the Partisan and Rebellion Headquarters under the Chief Command of the UPR Troops. Though all attempts made by these headquarters to organize urban underground and partisan units had little effect, and the raid conducted by three rebellion groups did not lead to a general armed uprising in Ukraine, the mere fact that armed struggle continued under the UPR flag and that secret national underground resistance existed until 1924 had tremendous meaning. This struggle stood as stark proof of the nation's potential and manifested its drive towards independence and statehood.

In connection with the above, we should pay particular attention to the anti-Bolshevik approach of the UPR Directorate's external policy and namely, the Directorate's Chairman, Petlura. This aspect remained significant from the very beginning of Soviet Russia's war against Ukraine. Only by having occupied Ukrainian lands and feeding the hungry proletariat with requisitioned Ukrainian crops could the Bolsheviks have had any chance of holding on to power. A historical parallel to the present is inevitable: independent Ukraine in a deadly conflict with the Russian Federation, whose criminal leader (Vladimir Putin) sanctioned a full-scale war to occupy Ukraine and physically destroy the Ukrainian people. But in modern times to repeat the century-year old *Blitzkrieg* and conquer Ukraine is an impossible task, since now Ukraine enjoys almost unanimous support from the European Union, the United Kingdom, and the USA – support, that the UPR lacked in its time, leaving it unable to adequately supply its army in the autumn of 1919.

Another significant difference is that in 2022, Ukrainians are demonstrating their readiness to take up arms for their motherland *en masse*, unlike a hundred years ago. Then, only a small number of idealistic Ukrainians joined the military defence of the UPR in 1919, but the vast majority of Ukrainian peasants and workers were committed to the principle that “it is none of my business”, which the Bolsheviks exploited. This time, a greater number of Ukrainian citizens have declared allegiance to the Ukrainian flag and have taken up arms to defeat Russia definitively, eroding its military and political status, and, under favourable conditions, to prepare and contribute to the division of the modern Russian Federation into separate state entities. This is the end that befits Putin’s Russia of today, the country against which UPR Directorate Chairman Petlura fought consistently and persistently.

[Translated by Liubov Pikulia]

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Maksym Potapenko

Ukrainian Statehood as Seen by Polish Political Forces in Dnieper Ukraine in 1917 and 1918

Abstract

The article focuses on the study of the attitude of political forces representing the Polish national minority in Ukraine to the processes of state building in the period of the Ukrainian People's Republic and the Ukrainian state (Hetmanate of Pavlo Skoropadsky). Particular attention is paid to the attitude of these political forces to the issue of Ukraine's independence. There were high hopes for the protection of the rights of national minorities in Dnieper Ukraine, as well as the development of Ukrainian-Polish diplomatic relations. The thesis that most Polish political parties considered independent Ukraine as an important factor in the transformation of Russia's post-imperial space has been substantiated.

Keywords: Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921; Polish national minority; “Ukrainian question”; Polish Executive Committee in Rus’; Roman Knoll

Introduction

The short period between 1917 and 1918 played an important role in the history of Central and Eastern Europe. These two years saw the end of World War I, on the one hand, and the beginning of the revolution, on the other. It was then that Ukrainians gained their first experience of nation building. Given the multi-ethnic character of Ukrainian society, the attitudes of non-Ukrainian ethnic groups, above all Russians, Jews, and Poles, towards Ukrainian statehood are important. During and after the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921, a significant number left Ukraine and significantly influenced its image abroad. In this article, we will try to investigate the attitude of Poles in Ukraine to the processes of nation building on the eve and during the Ukrainian People's Republic and the Ukrainian state. Consequently, chronologically, our study will be limited to March 1917–December 1918. It should be noted that this topic is not widely covered in

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historiography. Until now, the most thorough study remains the works of the Polish historian Henryk Jabłoński, written and published in the 30s–40s of the 20th century.¹

Community

Given the lack of precise statistical data, the question of the number of Poles living in Dnieper Ukraine in 1917 and early 1918 remains open. According to our rough estimates, their community numbered just under one million people. It was made up of Poles from among the permanent inhabitants of the region, who were concentrated mainly within the three provinces of Right-Bank Ukraine – the former crusades of the *Rzeczpospolita*. Their total number reached at least 600,000 people. During World War I, the number of Poles grew rapidly by 200,000 to 300,000, mainly on account of the influx of refugees from the Kingdom of Poland and Poles serving in the Russian Army. The territorial distribution of these temporary population groups was not even. Thus, refugees were mainly concentrated in the provinces of Left-Bank and Southern Ukraine, while servicemen were concentrated in the front-line areas of Right-Bank and Southern Ukraine.²

In the great variety of social phenomena peculiar to the Polish people of Dnieper Ukraine, two important characteristic features should be distinguished in relation to the period under study: a) elite socio-professional characteristics, b) deterioration of the material and financial situation. Moreover, under conditions of war and revolution, the first characteristic largely predetermined the second. One of the most important features of elitism was a high literacy rate. According to the census of 1897, 37–38% of the Polish-speaking population of the region was educated. At the same time, the similar figure among the Russian and Ukrainian-speaking population was 32% and 12% respectively. The highest literacy rate (63%) of the Polish-speaking population was recorded in Odessa.³ Also of note is the high level of belonging to the nobility. Altogether in Dnieper Ukraine, about 20% of the Poles were nobility. Among them, 83% were hereditary noblemen. The highest proportion of nobles was recorded among the Poles of the Chernihiv (45%) and Kharkiv (35%) provinces.⁴ Ownership of prestigious property was also characteristic of the Poles. For example, a relatively small group of Polish landlords, as of 1909, concentrated in their hands over 40% of all private

1 Jabłoński 1948.

2 Central'nij deržavnij arhiv viših organiv vladi i upravlinnâ Ukraïni: *Ministerstvo pol's'kih sprav Ukraïns'koï deržavi*, sig. f. 2225, op. 1, spr. 21, fol. 4; Łukawski 1981, p. 128.

3 Lisevič 1997, p. 9; Macuzato 2000, pp. 136–137.

4 Paliënko 1998.

land in the Right-Bank Ukraine. Poles also owned most local industrial establishments, whose profits comprised over 1/3 of total gross profits.⁵ As of 1917, about a quarter of all property owners who rented out real estate in Kyiv were also Polish.⁶ A final important feature of the Polish elitism was their concentration in the cities. During the years 1897–1917, the proportion of Poles living in cities reached at least 25%. The Polish population of the industrial south of Ukraine was the most urbanised. Thus, according to the already mentioned census of 1897, in Kharkiv province, almost 80% of the Poles were city dwellers. From the time of the census to the beginning of the World War I, the number of Poles in Ekaterinoslav increased from 3,400 thousand to 10,000. That is, with the general trend towards a doubling of the urban population during this period, the number of Polish city dwellers tripled.⁷

Having good starting social characteristics, the Polish nation suffered tangible property losses with the outbreak of the World War I, and especially the Ukrainian Revolution. First, from the outbreak of hostilities on the Eastern Front, it was impossible for a large part of the Polish estates in the front-line zone to function normally. In the autumn of 1915, a considerable part of them were chaotically and hastily evacuated and destroyed. Secondly, the Ukrainian provinces in 1915 and 1916 became one of the main regions for the accommodation of Polish refugees. Their mobility and weak integration into local social structures complicated the issues of their material and financial maintenance. In the following years, 1917–1918, it became episodic and frankly insufficient. Thirdly, in the summer of 1917 – autumn of 1918, several waves of pogroms on manor estates swept across Ukraine. The main economic and largely political resource of the Poles – the landed estates in the provinces of the Right-Bank Ukraine – suffered the most. Fourthly, the Poles concentrated in the cities suffered particularly from the main economic hardships of the times of the revolution – shortages, inflation and the high cost of necessities. All this encouraged Poles to leave for the Kingdom of Poland. Despite the extremely complicated procedures for obtaining documents and the difficulties of travelling, at least 50,000 people travelled to the Kingdom of Poland between the end of 1917 and the end of 1918.

These social peculiarities of the Polish population of Dnieper Ukraine created favourable conditions for the formation and intensification of their national feelings. The latter gained political weight, given the repeated declarations by Germany and Austria-Hungary, on the one hand, and Russia, on the other, to restore Poland's independence. The processes of national consciousness and consolidation of Poles on the territory of Dnieper Ukraine had its own specific

5 Epsztein 2008, p. 28; Weryha-Darowski 1919, pp. 51–52.

6 Krawchenko 1990, p. 105.

7 Paliënko 1998.

and important feature: during the war and revolution, this region became a platform for close contacts between the inhabitants of *Kresy* (outskirts of the former *Rzeczpospolita*), refugees from the Kingdom of Poland, hostages and prisoners of war from Galicia. These contacts played a decisive role in spreading the idea of *trójzaborowości*, i. e. the unity of the Polish people and Polish lands, which from the end of the 18th century were part of Russia, Austria-Hungary and Germany.

The Roman Catholic Church, social organisations, and educational institutions played a key role in the national consolidation of the Poles during March 1917 to April 1918. All three named entities were developing extremely vigorously and spreading their influence on the Polish population of the region, primarily thanks to the democratic transformations proclaimed by the Russian Provisional Government of Russia in March and April 1917.

The Roman Catholic Church expanded its sphere of influence in two ways: by developing the Church structure and intensifying the participation of the priests in secular life. New parishes were created, churches were restored or rebuilt, and work was carried out to restore the Kamyanets diocese. In addition, the bishop of the Lutsk-Zhytomyr diocese Ignacy Dub-Dubowski urged the ministers of the church “to undertake with fervor important public work” among the Poles and encouraged them to take part in the activity of the newly created Polish Christian-Democratic Union in Rus’ and other public, trade union, and educational institutions which were established in the summer of 1917.⁸

There were radical structural changes among civil society organisations, which helped to strengthen their popularity among different sections of the Polish population. Alongside charitable organisations (the Central Civic Committee of the Kingdom of Poland, the Polish War Victim Aid Society), new cultural-educational, youth, women’s and professional organisations emerged or became active. Unlike the former, they had no state support and relied solely on public initiative. Testimony of its potential is the fact that in March to June 1917 alone, the number of Polish social organisations and their regional branches grew from 30 to 230.⁹ Alongside the urban cells, rural ones were created, and representation was strengthened far behind the traditional Polish eastern lands, to the Left Bank and the south of Ukraine. Worthy of attention is the high number of members in the public organisations. The constituent congress of the Society of People Working in Agriculture and the Agricultural Industry in June 1917 was attended by 700 representatives.¹⁰ According to rough estimates, the number of Harzers

8 Rubl’ova 2004, p. 1004; Piela 1998, p. 61.

9 *Zjazd polski na Rusi w Kijowie* 1917.

10 *Na kresach* 1917.

grew from 2,000 to no less than 4,000 people during August to December 1917.¹¹ At the congress of Polish organisations in the Chernihiv province in October 1917, there were delegates from 24 organisations, which together had about 3,000 members, while there were about 25,000 Poles living in the whole province.¹²

Still, the greatest advances were made in education. The total number of primary, secondary and higher Polish educational institutions during March 1917 to April 1918 rose from 287 to over 1,350 and the number of pupils and students from 15,900 to nearly 87,000.¹³ Overall, the activity of this huge and diverse educational network played an extremely important role in the process of national consolidation of the local Poles and was the embodiment of the unity of the Polish people. A large part of these educational institutions was supported by donations from *Kresowians*, mainly landlords; a considerable percentage of pupils and students were refugees from the Kingdom of Poland; and in some schools the teaching staff was entirely dominated by Polish prisoners of war in the Austrian Army.¹⁴

Political Forces

Consolidated and mobilised around national slogans, the Polish population of Dnieper Ukraine was a powerful resource for the deployment of independent political action, particularly relevant given the numerous electoral processes (for city councils, *zemstvos*, All-Russian and Ukrainian Constituent Assemblies) and the prospects for participation in the new revolutionary power. Overall, the spectrum of Polish political parties in Dnieper Ukraine during the period under study was extremely broad. The nationalist camp (*National Democrats, Endeks*) was represented by a network of national and socio-political clubs, the informal focal point of which was the National League centre in Kyiv, headed by Joachim Bartoszewicz.¹⁵ At the end of June 1917, the Democratic Camp (*Piłsudczyks*) formed a single party organisation, the Polish Democratic Centre in Ukraine (*Polska Centrala Demokratyczna na Ukrainie, PDC*), led by Eugeniusz Starczewski and Stanisław Stempowski.¹⁶ The socialist camp, after unsuccessful at-

11 Wykaz środowisk i drużyn harcerek 1917; Siedlaczek 1936, p. 46.

12 *Ze Zjazdu Delegatów Organizacji Polskich* 1917.

13 Deržavnij arhiv Kiïvs'koï oblasti: *Pol's'ki legioni*, sig. f. 1787, op. 7, spr. 1, fols. 1–119; Korniecki 1937.

14 Deržavnij arhiv Kiïvs'koï oblasti: *Pol's'ki legioni*, sig. f. 1787, op. 7, spr. 37, fols. 3–4; *Życie na kresach* 1918.

15 Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich (Dział Rękopisów) (hereinafter: ZNOss): Zieliński: *Liga Narodowa na Rusi 1890–1920*, sig. 13202/2, p. 19.

16 Biblioteka Narodowa (Zakład Rękopisów): Szarzyński: *Polski Związek Polityczny na Rusi (1914–1921)*, sig. 8746.

tempts to create a single Polish Socialist Union, concentrated from August to September 1917 on the development of independent party structures of the Polish Socialist Party – Revolutionary Faction (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna – Frakcja Rewolucyjna*, PPS–RF) (Henryk Józewski, Kazimierz Domosławski), Polish Socialist Party – Left (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna – Lewica*, PPS–L) (Witold Matuszewski, Teodor Duracz) and the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (*Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy*, SDKPL) (Ipolit Fialek). Finally, the conservative camp was represented by the Party of National Labour in Rus' (Franciszek Pułaski), created in June 1917.¹⁷ The 3rd Polish Congress in Rus' (Kyiv, 18–24 June 1917) played a key role in the development of inter-party relations. Its course showed that there was acute conflict and competition between the two leaders of Polish political representation: the National Democrats and the Piłsudczyks. Their ideological projects were locally specific because of problems of communication with the party centres in Warsaw, Cracow, and Moscow. The National Democrats insisted that an independent Poland, under the aegis of the Entente, should emerge after the end of the World War. The Piłsudczyks believed that the embryo of an independent Poland could be the Kingdom of Poland, occupied by the Germans and Austrians. In fact, until the end of 1918, the National Democrats had not lost their leading role in the social and political life of Poles in Ukraine. Nevertheless, the influence of the Piłsudczyks, allied with the Conservatives and part of the Socialists, was strengthened. The close cooperation between all these political parties and civic organisations strengthened their influence among the Polish population. For example, the largest Kyiv cells of the Endeks and Piłsudczyks together numbered at least 600 people.¹⁸ The Polish Socialist Union had about 5,000 members in the Ukrainian provinces alone at the time of the collapse.¹⁹ This number of members was considerable compared with that of many all-Russian and Ukrainian parties.

Evidence that Polish political parties had strong electoral resources can be seen in the results of the election campaigns mentioned above. Particularly successful for the Poles were the elections to the city councils. In many of them, they managed to form large and workable factions. For instance, in the elections to the Zhitomir Duma in the summer of 1917, the Polish list of candidates won 17 out of 98 seats, yielding only to the list of Social Revolutionaries, which won 20 seats.²⁰ In the Kyiv City Duma, the Polish Circle proved to be the most disciplined faction. By the autumn of 1918, its members participated in more than

17 Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie (hereinafter: AAN): *Rada polska zjednoczenia międzypartyjnego*, sig. 10, fol. 40a.

18 Miodowski 1998, p. 22; Verax 1917.

19 Najdus 1967, p. 178.

20 *Z Żytomierza* 1917.

70% of meetings.²¹ The results of the elections to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly also bear witness to the political mobilisation of Poles in Dnieper Ukraine. Thanks to the high electoral activity of Poles from the Polish Provincial List of the Kyiv, Podolsk and Volyn provinces, two deputies were elected – Jan Lipkowski and Joachim Bartoszewicz.²² This was particularly successful given that no Poles were elected from the electoral lists of the neighbouring three Belarusian governorates: Minsk, Mogilev and Vitebsk. In total, they received only 63,000 votes, slightly more than the Polish provincial list received in the Volyn province alone.

The combination in the consciousness of the majority of Poles in Dnieper Ukraine of feelings of national separateness and simultaneously of natives and minority put on the agenda the question of the organisation of national self-government. Its consideration in the context of acute political contradictions led to the simultaneous implementation of two competing projects of Polish autonomy – “internal” and national-cultural. The development of the “internal autonomy” was the responsibility of the Polish Executive Committee in Rus’ (*Polski Komitet Wykonawczy na Rusi*, PEC), created on 6 March 1917, which was under the control of the National Democrats. The concept it implemented was intended to give the Poles in Ukraine exclusive and wide-ranging self-government with minimal interference from the state. The concept of national-cultural autonomy envisaged much more modest tasks, satisfying the cultural-educational needs of the Poles within the limits permitted by the highest Ukrainian authorities. It was only after 15 July 1917, when a vice-secretariat for Polish affairs was created within the General Secretariat of Nationalities Affairs, which after several reorganisations was transformed into the Ministry of Polish Affairs of the Ukrainian People’s Republic. Positions in it were filled only by representatives of those parties that had their deputies in the Central Rada (three socialist parties and the PDC). The greatest influence on the activities of the Ministry of Polish Affairs was wielded by the Piłsudczyks.²³

The existence of two competing institutions of national self-government, fundamental differences in defining its boundaries, and the projection of a political struggle on their activities, all hindered the development of Polish national self-government on the territory of Dnieper Ukraine. The PEC had wide representation on the ground and authority among the Polish people; the Ministry of Polish Affairs relied on an official mandate from the Ukrainian government and budgetary funding. Nevertheless, these two resources could not be combined. One of the PEC major achievements was to devise a mechanism and start in-

21 Harčenko 1999, p. 51.

22 *Na kresach* 1917 (2).

23 Jabłoński 1948, pp. 26–58.

roducing a national tax. The biggest achievement of the Ministry of Polish Affairs was the fairly substantial transfer of Polish educational institutions to the state and their financing from the budget of the Ukrainian People's Republic. Obviously, it is not necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of institutions which were at an organisational stage and had barely begun practical operations. Still, it should be stressed that compared to the Jewish and Russian self-governing institutions, they were quite proactive and effective. The activities of the PEC and the Ministry of Polish Affairs had one very important consequence – the spread among the Poles of the awareness of their national minority status.

Points of Tension

In the totality of the complex and dynamic social processes of the revolutionary era, two interrelated episodes stand out as sources of conflict in Ukrainian-Polish relations. These are the pogroms on the estates of Polish landlords and the formation of Polish Army units.

The agrarian question played a key role in the development of revolutionary processes on the territory of Dnieper Ukraine. It was particularly acute in the provinces of Right-Bank Ukraine. On the one hand, it was a region where large landed estates, concentrated under Polish rule, had a strong foothold. On the other hand, it was a front-line area with a high concentration of demoralised and enlarged military units. Taken together, these two factors were responsible for the rapid radicalisation of peasant sentiment.

Already in July 1917, the peasants switched from boycotting agricultural work with demands for higher wages to pogroms on their estates. In Kamenets district of Podolia province alone, during 19 July to 21 November 1917, 50 estates were ransacked, of which about 40 belonged to Poles. In 35 cases, the scale of the losses was estimated by the chief of the district militia as follows: “[destroyed and plundered] dwellings and outbuildings, living and dead stock, all furniture and all bread”.²⁴ Attempts by the Central Rada to introduce agrarian reforms in the autumn of 1917 only stimulated the disorder and radicalised their nature. At the beginning of 1918, of 110 estates in Uman district, Kyiv province, only nine were not affected by uprisings. In 15 cases, the uprising resulted in the destruction of all dwellings and farm buildings, and in 35 – in partial destruction. In all other cases, the property and crops were looted and destroyed.²⁵ By the end of March

24 “[зруйновано та пограбовано] помешкання та господарські будівлі, живий та мертвий реманент, всі меблі і весь хліб” [all translations of quotations by Yevhen Plotnikov], Stroński 2006, pp. 360–362.

25 AAN: *Biuro prac kongresowych przy Ministerstwie Spraw Zagranicznych*, sig. 134, fol. 5.

1918, 85% of the Polish estates in the provinces of Right-Bank Ukraine had been ransacked.²⁶

Despite this, uprisings are usually presented in research not only as a manifestation, but as the quintessence of the Ukrainian-Polish conflict – the confrontation of barbarism and civilisation, anarchy and order. In our view, this approach is a simplification which distorts the understanding of the essence of the uprisings. They should be seen as manifestations of social, not national conflict. It is worth bearing in mind that the uprisings took place throughout the entire Dnieper region of Ukraine and that their victims were not only Polish landlords. The intensity of the uprisings was determined by tensions between landlords and peasants, primarily by neglected land disputes. There were cases of uprisings of “Polish yards” in “Polish villages”. At the same time, on the territory of the Right-bank Ukraine, there were Polish estates which were not subjected to uprisings until 1920–1921. Usually, their owners maintained good relations with the local peasants and could count on their support. The most radical uprisings involving arson and murder usually involved deserters, who widely practised blackmailing and coercing peasants into insurrections. They may also have been preceded by equally bloody acts of “village pacification” by Don Cossacks or Polish military units. Undoubtedly, the insurrections were a bloody page in the life of the Poles of Dnieper Ukraine. But shifting the responsibility for writing it onto the Ukrainian peasantry, or even the Ukrainian national movement, is not worthwhile. The insurrections had a significant impact on Polish socio-political thought in the Ukrainian provinces – anger and despair very quickly turned into an awareness of the need for extensive agrarian reforms.

Between November 1917 and June 1918, in a context of agrarian conflict between the Polish landlords and the Ukrainian peasants of the Right-bank Ukraine, the 2nd and 3rd Polish military corps were being formed. They consisted of about 10,000 men, from both Russian and Austrian armies, and civilians.²⁷ The main role here was played not so much by the initiatives of the High Military Command, which expected from nationalisation of military units to increase the general fighting efficiency of the army, as by the activity of the Union of Military Poles. From April 1917 onwards, its cells (of which there were about 20 in the Ukrainian provinces alone) began to work actively to unite the Polish military and to spread among the Poles the idea of forming Polish national units in the Russian Army.²⁸

Those military formations were widely supported by the local Polish population. The wealthy strata of the population provided considerable financial and

26 Gud' 2011, p. 297.

27 Papakin 2012, pp. 37–59; Bagiński 1921, pp. 348–370.

28 *Adresy Związków Wojskowych Polaków 1917.*

material support. Various social organisations helped with the work of concentration camps, hospitals, and the like. The Polish political parties and national self-government bodies were involved in various legal matters and assisted in negotiations with the governments of the Ukrainian People's Republic, and later the Ukrainian state, and the Kingdom of Poland. The active participation of Polish military formations in the struggle against Bolshevik aggression contributed to the establishment of a dialogue with the Ministry of Military Affairs of the Ukrainian People's Republic. However, this was not fully realised due to the involvement of Polish military formations, mainly units of the 3rd Corps stationed in the Podolia province, in the agrarian conflict between the landlords and the peasantry. The Polish Army undertook to defend the interests of the Polish landlords, but the methods of this defence were excessively bloody. The legionnaires resorted to burning and shelling of villages, shootings, and the imposition of contributions and requisitions. Heavy fighting between peasants (up to 6,000 people) and legionaries (about 1,500) between 14–17 April 1918 in Nemiroff and its surroundings was the culmination of that confrontation.²⁹ Negative consequences for the Polish forces in Ukraine were not only the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, but also the arrival of the occupying German and Austrian troops. The latter were concerned about the Legionnaires' collaboration with Entente countries and the presence in their ranks of fugitives from the Austrian Army. As a result of strained relations with the Ukrainian and occupation authorities, the Polish troops in Ukraine were disarmed, which lasted from April to June 1918.

Ukrainian Projects

All the above sketches out in general terms the context against which the attitudes of various Polish political forces to Ukrainian statehood were formed and evolved.

In the conditions of the revolution, the Poles were one of the first among other ethnic communities of Dnieper Ukraine to begin developing a new position on the "Ukrainian question". At the beginning of the revolution, all national movements were perceived and rebuilt by its participants as monolithic and internally consolidated. Therefore, during March – June 1917, the disparate and competing Polish political forces built relations with the local authorities and other national movements through the PEC, a body of nationwide representation. They regarded the Central Rada as a similar governing body of the Ukrainian national movement. Instruction No. 1 of the PEC, on 8 March 1917, stated that:

29 Stempowski 1973, pp. 109–110.

The slogan of a free Ukraine, openly proclaimed by the Ukrainian people, must find a favourable response in the hearts of the Poles. This does not mean that Poles must take over the cause of Ukrainism or renounce their Polish face and nationality. Poles can and must, together with others, work sincerely for the good of free Ukraine.³⁰

It was further stressed that Poles, as free citizens and “one of the creative factors in this land”,³¹ must take an active part in the work of local authorities through the mediation of delegates from the PEC.³²

On 18 March 1917, the first direct appeal of the PEC was made public to the Central Rada. The author of the text was the sincere Ukrainianophile Joachim Wołoszynowski.³³ On a wave of rising patriotic sentiments among the Polish population of Ukrainian provinces, provoked by the announcement of the Provisional Government of Russia on 15 March on the restoration of Poland’s independence, he assured the Ukrainians on behalf of the entire Polish nation of the necessity of mutual understanding and cooperation between the two brotherly peoples. On the next day, Joachim Bartoszewicz, chairman of the PEC, proclaimed a similar greeting for the Ukrainian national march, but already on behalf of only the local Polish population of the Dnieper region.³⁴ These first two declarations of the PEC were not more or less explicit but were generally successful in the task of establishing contact with the Central Rada.

On 31 March the latter sent its response, which outlined in the form of an ultimatum the conditions for mutual understanding. It proclaimed that “the Ukrainian Central Rada recognises all civil and political rights of all national minorities living in Ukraine and recognises the Ukrainian people as the master of the Ukrainian land”.³⁵ It is worth noting that both previous appeals of the PEC to the Central Rada did not call the Poles of the Dnieper region a national minority, since this status provided guarantees only regarding educational and cultural, rather than more pressing economic rights. Still, the PEC agreed to the demands put forward by the Ukrainian side and continued the dialogue. On 6–8 April 1917, the Ukrainian National Congress was convened. The Ukrainian National Congress was attended by Joachim Wołoszynowski, Włodzimierz Dzieduszycki and

30 “Hasło wolnej Ukrainy, przez naród ukraiński jawnie dziś stawione, życzliwy oddźwięk w sercach Polaków znaleźć powinno. Z tego nie wynika, ażeby Polacy mieli ująć w swoje ręce sprawę ukrainizmu, lub żeby mieli wyrzekać się swego polskiego oblicza i narodowości. Polacy jako Polacy mogą i mają szczerze wraz z innymi dla dobra wolnej Ukrainy pracować.” *Zjazd polski na Rusi w Kijowie* 1917, p. 9.

31 “[...] jeden z twórczych czynników w tym kraju”, *ibid.*

32 *Ibid.*

33 ZNOss: Bartoszewicz: *Mój ojciec*, sig. 15611/2, p. 279.

34 *Zjazd polski na Rusi w Kijowie* 1917, pp. 11–12.

35 “Ukraińska Rada Centralna przyznaje wszystkie prawa obywatelskie i polityczne wszystkim mniejszościom narodowym, które zaludniają naszą Ukrainę i uznają naród ukraiński gospodarzem ziemi ukraińskiej”, *ibid.*

Stanisław Jezerski, delegates of the PEC. The latter spoke in support of the Central Rada's demand for Ukrainian national-territorial autonomy. At the same time, he warned congress participants against putting forward radical projects to solve the "Ukrainian question". Those that "divide and break the forces", and therefore could weaken the Russian Army against the Austro-German forces.³⁶ This remark by Stanisław Jezerski was not accidental. The fact is that the Polish movement perceived the Ukrainian movement as anti-Russian, which suffered greatly from the oppression of the already defeated imperial administration and now has the most pronounced centrifugal character. For example, Waclaw Glinka, a prominent figure in the Polish conservative movement, wrote in his diary on 19 April 1917 that, in one of his private conversations, he was persuaded that "Ukraine wants to break off its union with the Great Russia" and become part of a federation, which should be formed within the Austro-Hungarian Empire.³⁷ Similar were the impressions of the famous PPS–RF and Polish Military Organisation, Henryk Józewski, who in June 1917 returned to Kyiv from more than a year and a half of exile in Saratov. In his memoirs, he records the unexpected but welcome "explosion of Ukraine", the real miracle of the lightning transformation of the South-Western region into Ukraine.³⁸

An important indication of Polish support for the Ukrainian movement was their reaction to the proclamation on 10 June 1917 of the 1st Universal. The first act of constitutional significance marked the Central Rada's move towards the immediate self-construction of Ukrainian national-territorial autonomy. But it also contained a potential threat to the Polish population of the Dnieper region. Along with declarations of aspirations for concord with the "democracy of non-Ukrainian peoples", it formulated a thesis about the need to liquidate landed estates and place them at the disposal of the Ukrainian people. Despite this, the PEC welcomed the proclamation and the Universal and decided to "enter into closer contact with the Ukrainian Central Rada".³⁹ As Henryk Jabłoński aptly points out, these first contacts between the PEC and the Central Rada in March and mid-June 1917 had a distinctly friendly character, and from the texts of their addresses themselves it is difficult to guess that "Ukrainian socialists were speaking on one side and representatives of the Polish bourgeoisie and landlord circles on the other".⁴⁰ In the summer of 1917, the Polish political parties began to

36 Ibid.; *Polacy na Ukrainie 1917*, pp. 28–29.

37 "Ukraina chce zerwać unię z Wielką Rosją", Glinka 1928, p. 217.

38 Józewski 1982 (1), p. 18; idem 1982 (2), p. 104–105.

39 "[...] wejść w bliższy kontakt z Centr. Radą Ukraińską", *Zjazd polski na Rusi w Kijowie 1917*, p. 13.

40 "[...] z jednej strony głos zabierają ukraińscy socjaliści, z drugiej przedstawiciele polskiego mieszczaństwa i sfer ziemiańskich", Jabłoński 1948, p. 32.

develop their own distinctive visions of the future of Ukrainian statehood in the context of deepening contradictions.

The Piłsudczyks were the first to take this path. On 11 June 1917, one of their organisations – the Polish democratically independent group led by Jan Ursyn-Zamaraew, published its programme. It outlined the need for state independence for Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus, which, together with Poland, should form a federation or confederation.⁴¹ Subsequently, the idea of the independent Ukraine was included in the programme documents of the PDC and was seen as a guarantor for the revival of the Russian Empire. In addition, the Piłsudczyks were convinced that the new independent Ukrainian state on the ruins of the Russian Empire would weaken the role of Eastern Galicia as the centre of the Ukrainian national movement.⁴² In September 1917, the Piłsudczyk representative Roman Knoll refused to participate in the Congress of the enslaved peoples of Russia, which was organised by the Central Rada. He justified this step by the fact that his political party was not satisfied with the federalist programme of the congress, and any projects of the Federation of Russia were attempts to preserve “imperial centralism”.⁴³ During the 2nd Polish Democratic Congress (Petrograd, 6–12 October 1917), Roman Knoll focused his report on Eastern politics, in which Ukraine was to play a special role, protecting Poland from the Russian imperial encroachments.⁴⁴ Subsequently, in a letter to the Regent Council of the Kingdom of Poland dated 1 December 1917, he stressed that the Piłsudczyks of Dnieper Ukraine considered the 3rd Universal of Central Rada to be a legal act of creating an independent Ukrainian state and insisted that its territorial claims in the East and South be satisfied to the maximum extent possible. All this should have prevented Russia’s “anti-Polish intrigue” in the future.⁴⁵ In view of this, the Piłsudczyks congratulated the 4th Universal of the Central Rada, which proclaimed the independence of the Ukrainian People’s Republic. The Austro-German occupation of Ukraine, the overthrow of the Central Rada and the coming to power of hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky in the spring of 1918 were not factors that drove the Piłsudczyks to abandon their support for the independence of Ukraine. Moreover, the idea of a German-Polish-Ukrainian union was discussed among them by Eugeniusz Starczewski.⁴⁶ The Piłsudczyks from Dnieper Ukraine were also the initiators of the establishment of diplomatic relations

41 *Grupa Demokratyczno-Niepodległościowa* 1917.

42 Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe: Knoll: *Relacja ustna*, sig. 400.2832, fols. 4–5.

43 Mlinovec’kij 1970, p. 24.

44 Bartoszewicz 2005, p. 14.

45 AAN: *Akta Romana Knolla*, sig. 1, fols. 5–7.

46 Zięba 2003–2004, pp. 281–282; *Polacy na Ukrainie* 1918.

between Ukraine and Poland and the arrival in Kyiv in October 1918 of the Polish Royal diplomatic mission of Stanisław Wańkowicz.⁴⁷

Among the National Democrats, since the summer of 1917, there has also been a growing attention to the question of Ukrainian national statehood. Their leader Roman Dmowski, in a letter to Joachim Bartoszewicz on 19 July 1917, noted: “We are witnesses to the raising of the most difficult question that Europe has seen – the Ukrainian question... This question is of paramount importance for our national future.”⁴⁸ The National Democrats did not win any seats in the Central Rada but continued to support the “state efforts of the Ukrainian people”. They continued to stress the need for compromise between the Central Rada and the Provisional Government of Russia because a solution to the national question in Russia was to preserve the fighting ability of the Russian Army on the Eastern Front and to bring the defeat of Germany closer. This militaristic aspect of the Polish nationalists’ favourable attitude towards the “Ukrainian question” became particularly tangible after the Bolsheviks came to power in Petrograd, as they immediately set about disarming and demoralising the Russian Army. Proclaimed shortly thereafter, the Ukrainian People’s Republic became the Entente’s most anticipated ally in preserving the Eastern Front. Joachim Bartoszewicz, who was in addition a confidant of the head of the French diplomatic mission in the Ukrainian People’s Republic, General Georges Tabouis, tried to persuade the leadership of the Ukrainian People’s Republic to negotiate with representatives of the Entente’s diplomatic missions. He and his colleagues praised the Ukrainians for their successful state-building (establishing national authorities and military units) and recognised the independence of the Ukrainian People’s Republic.⁴⁹ The Bolshevik Army’s onslaught on Kyiv at the turn of 1917 and 1918 compelled the leadership of the Ukrainian People’s Republic to make a peace treaty with Germany and its allies. For the National Democrats, this was a great defeat, which they looked on with sadness, for they had “lost a potential ally in the fight against the Germans for our freedom and independence”.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the National Democrats still hoped that an independent Ukraine could be an ally. In early May 1918, Joachim Bartoszewicz had a meeting with Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky. During this meeting, the Hetman “revealed his cards” and stated that he was a secret supporter of the En-

47 Derev’anko 2002, p. 70.

48 “Jesteśmy świadkami wysunięcia na porządek dzienny najtrudniejszej bodaj kwestii, jaką Europa widziała – kwestii ukraińskiej... A kwestia ta pierwszorzędnego znaczenia dla naszej przyszłości narodowej.” ZNOss: Bartoszewicz: *Mój ojciec*, sig. 15611/2, pp. 366–367.

49 AAN: *Rada Polska Zjednoczenia Międzypartyjnego*, sig. 10, fol. 87.

50 “[...] traciłmy ewentualnego sojusznika w walce z Niemcami o naszą wolność i niepodległość”, Skrzyński 2021, p. 215.

tente.⁵¹ However, this meeting had no consequences – the hetman remained in the fairway of German eastern politics, and the Polish National Democrats were forced to renounce forever their favourable attitude towards the Ukrainian national movement and the Ukrainian state. On 27 May 1918, Roman Dmowski declared that Ukraine must remain part of Russia, for it “cannot be annexed to us [Poland], and an independent Ukrainian state would expose us to the loss of Eastern Galicia.”⁵² It is likely that the basis for such statements was correspondence with Joachim Bartoszewicz. In the autumn, the National Democrats generally claimed that “there are no Ukrainians in Ukraine” and that they had never had any contact with their political leadership.⁵³

The other Polish political forces – socialists and conservatives – did not have an independent vision of the “Ukrainian question” and borrowed the ideas of their political allies. The PPS–RF and the Party of National Labour in Rus’ leaned towards the views of the Piłsudczyk. The PPS–L and SDKPL were inclined to cooperate with the Bolsheviks and therefore borrowed their vision of a solution to the “Ukrainian question”. It justified the “proletarian unity” of Ukraine and Russia and regarded state-building during the Ukrainian People’s Republic and the Ukrainian state as a manifestation of “bourgeois nationalism”. The anti-Ukrainian appeals from this part of the Polish Socialists were heard especially loudly during the Bolshevik Russia’s war against the Ukrainian People’s Republic in December 1917 – February 1918. For example, at the All-Russian Conference of the PPS–L (Kharkov, 20–22 December 1917), a resolution was adopted to the effect that “the struggle against the policy of the Central Rada, which draws its strength from nationalist slogans, must be the main task of the moment”.⁵⁴

Conclusions

The Polish national minority was a mobilised and influential actor in the socio-political life of Dnieper Ukraine throughout 1917–1918. In their political representation, the main role belonged to two competing parties, the National Democrats and the Piłsudczyks. Both political forces evolved throughout 1917 from the idea of Ukrainian autonomy within Russia to the idea of an independent Ukrainian state. This was not prevented by the ongoing conflicts in

51 ZNOss: Bartoszewicz: *Mój ojciec*, sig. 15611/2, pp. 440–441.

52 “[...] z nami połączona być nie może, a niepodległe państwo ukraińskie narażało by nas na stratę Galicji wschodniej”, Jabłonowski / Cisowska-Hydzik 2007, p. 389.

53 “[...] na Ukrainie nie ma Ukraińców”, *ibid.*, p. 524.

54 “[...] walka z polityką Centralnej Rady, która czerpie siłę z hasel nacjonalistycznych – musi być głównym zadaniem chwili”, AAN: *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna – Lewica*, sig. 14/VIII–6, fol. 52.

Ukrainian-Polish relations (over land and weapons). However, the entry of Ukraine into the orbit of German influence after the Brest-Litovsk Treaty shattered this unanimity of Polish political forces. The Piłsudczyks remained consistent supporters of Ukraine's independence. The National Democrats suddenly and without proper arguments began to argue that Ukraine was part of Russia. For both political forces, the "Ukrainian question" was important, for the international status of a restored independent Poland and its borders depended to a large extent on it.

[Translated by: Yevhen Plotnikov]

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The Establishment of the West Ukrainian People's Republic and the 1918–1919 Polish-Ukrainian War in the Context of the Aspirations of Galician Ukrainians Towards Independence

Abstract

Proclaimed by the Ukrainians in the autumn of 1918, the West Ukrainian People's Republic (WUPR) was established in Eastern Galicia. For the Polish side, giving up these areas was unimaginable – in particular, handing Lviv to the Ukrainians, the majority of whose inhabitants were Poles. Therefore, in November 1918, the Polish-Ukrainian war erupted in the disputed territories, which ended in the summer of 1919 with Polish victory. However, the WUPR authorities remained active until 1923.

Keywords: Eastern Galicia; Galician Army; Polish-Ukrainian war 1918–1919; West Ukrainian People's Republic

Introduction

After the end of the World War I, hitherto oppressed nations strove for their own statehood on the ruins of the Russian Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy. Usually, the borders of the new states were formed during the heat of combat. One area of contention was also the ethnically mixed region of Eastern Galicia. Here, the state interests of two neighboring nations – Polish and Ukrainian – clashed. Both proclaimed the creation of their own states in the autumn of 1918. The West Ukrainian People's Republic (*Zahidnoukraińs'ka Narodna Respublika* / *Західноукраїнська Народна Республіка*, WUPR) was established in the territory of Eastern Galicia, and its capital was to be Lviv. For the Polish side, giving up these areas was unimaginable let alone handing the Ukrainians the capital of Galicia, the majority of whose inhabitants were Poles. In this situation, the conflict could only be resolved by taking up arms.¹

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1 More on the 1918–1919 Polish-Ukrainian war, cf.: Mączyński 1921; Sopotnicki 1921; Hupert 1928; Kutschabsky 1934; Ārosłavin 1956; Dąbkowski 1985; Łukomski / Partacz / Polak 1994; Litvin / Naumenko 1995; Klimecki 2000 (2); Makarčuk 1997; Veriga 1998; Kozłowski 1999; Litvin 1998.

In the Habsburg Monarchy

Before the World War I, Ukrainians did not have their own state, although their national consciousness was gaining traction and more movements emerged seeking an independent existence. The vast majority of the population of Ukrainian nationality were split between two states: the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and the Russian Empire. In both of these countries, Ukrainians were mainly peasants and used a similar language, but decades of isolation and different developmental circumstances meant that these two groups under discussion here were quite distinct. Ukrainians in Austro-Hungary had a much more refined sense of their own nationality, were better educated and enjoyed thriving social organizations, while at the beginning of the 20th century among their kinsmen in Russia, these features were only just starting to emerge. The relative freedom of national life in the Habsburg monarchy undoubtedly contributed to this. Matters of religion were also of great importance. The Ukrainians in Austro-Hungary were mostly Greek Catholics, and this denomination was slowly taking on the character of a national church, offering a sense of separateness, and the clergy were native and interested in developing a sense of nationhood among the faithful. The majority of Ukrainians living in the Russian Empire were Orthodox and were members of the Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. The clergy of this Church were very closely tied to the state authorities and absolutely disapproved of any deviations (including nationalistic) among the faithful.

The Habsburg monarchy was a multinational country. A 1910 census revealed that approximately 50,207,000 people lived in this country of 676,616 square kilometers.² The most numerous national groups were Germans and Hungarians, while there were also relatively large groups of Czechs, Poles, Ukrainians and Romanians. Almost 4,000,000 Ukrainians were referred to in official documents as Ruthenians in Austria-Hungary, which constituted about 8% of the total population. They lived mainly in the eastern part of Galicia, Bukovina and Zakarpattia. Before the outbreak of the World War I, Galicia was inhabited by about 8 million people, over 40% of whom spoke Ukrainian as their national tongue. In Bukovina, with a population of around 800,000 at that time, Ukrainians accounted for over 38%, while in Zakarpattia they numbered over 470,000.³

With the outbreak of the World War I, the Ukrainian population found themselves on either side of the front. Ukrainians, citizens of both Russia and

2 Batowski 1965, p. 14.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 15–20. A comprehensive description of Galicia and its people at that time cf. Klimecki 2000 (2), pp. 14–23; also on the mobilization possibilities of Eastern Galicia cf. Krotofil 2002 (1).

Austria-Hungary, found themselves among the ranks of opposing armies. Forced to participate in direct combat against one another, this contributed to a host of tragic situations. However, this prolonged, devastating war made the Ukrainians (and the Poles likewise) an increasingly valuable source of recruits for both partitioning states. This matter was so important that it prompted the authorities to consider various options regarding political maneuvers that might motivate particular nations to support the idea of fighting on behalf of certain states. Overall, 1,383,789 people were mobilized during the war in Austrian military districts including Galicia and Bukovina.⁴ Taking into account the census data from 1910, according to which the area was inhabited by 8,825,773 people, it can be calculated that 15.7% of the total population was mobilized. Assuming the percentage was similar for Ukrainians living in Galicia and Bukovina, about 626,000 can be estimated to have been drafted into the army. To this number should be added mobilized Ukrainians living in Zakarpattia (assuming identical percentages, approximately 74,000 people). The above calculations indicate that around 700,000 Ukrainians could have served in the Austro-Hungarian Army during the World War I.

The Legion of Ukrainian Sich Riflemen (*Ukraïns'kì sičovi stril'ci* / *Українські січові стрільці*, USR) is worthy of particular attention. This was a voluntary military formation created (like the Polish Legions) in 1914 alongside the Austro-Hungarian Army. During the World War I, the soldiers of the USR Legion won fame for their bravery and skill in combat. These troops were largely composed of young Ukrainian men characterized by high morale and a sharp national conscience. The legion placed great emphasis on political and educational work and therefore forged Ukrainian intellectual and military staff.⁵ The Ukrainian Legion took part in the Great War, and then fought in the Polish-Ukrainian war and other stages of the Ukrainian struggle for national liberation in 1918–1920.⁶

Even before the World War I, Ukrainians in Austro-Hungary attempted some forms of political activity. The Habsburg monarchy featured a whole spectrum of Ukrainian political parties, from extremely conservative to extreme leftist. However, the vast majority imagined a future Ukraine in close rapport with the Habsburgs. The existence of Ukrainian Parliamentary Representation (*Ukraïns'ka parlamentarna reprezentaciâ* / *Українська парламентарна репрезентація*) in Vienna was not without significance. After the outbreak of the war, the Ukrainians swore loyalty to monarch and state, and they expected a reward for their loyalty in the form of wide-reaching autonomy for a future sovereign country

4 Zgórnjak 1988, p. 242.

5 For more on the Legion of Ukrainian Sich Riflemen cf.: Dumîn 1936; Girnák 1955; Ripec'kij 1995, pp. 54–216; Krotofil 2002 (3), p. 17–25; Lazarovič 2005; Monolatij 2008; Kozubel 2015.

6 For more cf.: Krotofil 2002 (3), pp. 24–25; idem 2009, pp. 183–191; Kozubel 2015, pp. 165–293.

established in the eastern part of Galicia and the territories conquered in Russia. Such an approach found expression in the creation of the Main Ukrainian Council (*Holovna Ukraïns'ka Rada / Головна Українська Рада*) in August 1914, whose purpose was to represent Ukrainian interests concerning the monarchy with total loyalty and commitment to supporting military operations.⁷ The council consisted of representatives of various Ukrainian political groups. The most significant manifestation of the Council's activity was the organization and dispatch of the aforementioned USR Legion to the front. At the same time (1914), the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (*Soûz vizvolennâ Ukraïni / Союз визволення України*) was established in Austria-Hungary, mainly comprising representatives of Ukrainian emigrants from the territory of the Russian Empire. This union was intended to act for the liberation (through the Central Powers) of the territories of Russia inhabited by Ukrainians.⁸

The Ukrainians stepped up their game in May 1915. At that time, the Main Ukrainian Council, together with the activists of the Ukrainian Liberation Union and with Ukrainian representatives from Bukovina, joined forces to create the General Ukrainian Council (*Zahal'na ukraïns'ka rada / Загальна українська рада*).⁹ This was to facilitate and coordinate the activities of Ukrainian politicians and the Habsburg monarchy. As early as September 1916 the Ukrainians were convinced that their policy was yielding results. At that time, they expected the swift separation of Eastern Galicia along with the annexation of a large part of Volhynia, and the creation of an autonomous sovereign country within the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.¹⁰ In this context, the announcement of the Act of 5 November 1916, declaring the emergence of a future Polish statehood in territories seized from Russia, came as a shock to Ukrainian independence activists. The impact was all the stronger as they had not expected this at all. It is also worth emphasizing that with the decision issued on 4 November 1916, Emperor Franz Joseph significantly bolstered the autonomy of the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria, rendering it virtually independent to all intents and purposes. Obviously, Poles would play the dominant role in Galicia, and the coincidence of this decision with the announcement of the 5th of November Act was by no means accidental.¹¹

In light of the situation at hand, the General Ukrainian Council dissolved in protest against the actions of the authorities. From then on, its role was adopted by the Ukrainian Parliamentary Representation, whose members met on 7 No-

7 Chojnowski / Bruski 2006, pp. 18–20.

8 For more on the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine cf.: Sribniak 1999, pp. 20–158.

9 Soldatenko 2014, p. 99.

10 Ibid., p. 100.

11 Karpinec' 2005, p. 78.

vember 1916 at a joint session in Vienna.¹² In view of the criticism of its current leadership with Kost Levyt'skyi at the helm, he duly resigned. Yulian Romanchuk became the Ukrainian parliamentarians' new chairman, and Yevhen Petrushevych, who later became the president of the WUPR (*upovnovaženij Diktator ZUNR / уповноважений Диктатор ЗУНР*), played an increasingly significant role as his right hand man.¹³ However, the Ukrainian parliamentarians' protests concerned the decision to extend the autonomy of Galicia rather than the 5 November Act. On the other hand, the Ukrainian press in Austro-Hungary protested vigorously against the actions taken by the authorities. For the first time, Ukrainian newspapers published texts that broke with previous loyalty and spoke of full independence for Ukrainians.¹⁴

The 5 November Act was taken badly by the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen, and especially by their officers. War failures had badly damaged the soldiers' morale. Information about the declaration of the creation of a Polish state and an autonomous Galicia under Polish influence only worsened these sentiments. The disbanding of the Legion was seriously considered, but eventually these plans were rejected.¹⁵

The Act of 5 November 1916 came as a shock to Ukrainian independence activists. The Austro-Hungarian Ukrainians, loyal to the Habsburgs, felt particularly deceived and disregarded, and their entire policy thus far appeared to be completely misguided. However, this shockwave and breakdown of Ukrainian politics turned out to be temporary. Sometime later, a similar shock for Polish independence circles was caused by the Brest Treaty signed in February 1918 between the Central Powers and the Ukrainian People's Republic (*Ukraïns'ka Narodna Respublika / Українська Народна Республіка*, UPR).¹⁶ This agreement designated the Chełm region and part of Podlasie, *inter alia*, as part of the Ukrainian state, something which the Poles could not come to terms with. However, both the Act of 5 November 1916 and the Treaty of Brest of February 1918 turned out to be mere political gestures with no real or lasting consequences. Ukrainian politicians and independence activists in the Habsburg monarchy remained loyal to the emperor until the end of the war. This approach meant that after the collapse of the state, they could no longer count on any protectorate of the authorities. On the other hand, in the international arena, they were perceived as loyal to the Central Powers, and therefore the victorious

12 Kuraëv 2009, p. 158.

13 Chojnowski / Bruski 2006, p. 25.

14 Karpinec' 2005, p. 78; Kuraëv 2009, pp. 157–158; Soldatenko 2014, p. 100.

15 Kozubel 2015, p. 112.

16 For more on the Ukrainian People's Republic at that time and the Treaty of Brest of 9.02. 1918, cf.: Golubko 1997; Hrycak 2000, pp. 124–133; Gaj-Nižnik 2010.

Entente states were not willing to offer them any support for their independence aspirations.

The Polish-Ukrainian War

By the second half of 1918, it had already become apparent that the Central Powers would be defeated in the Great War. Ukrainian politicians in Galicia realized that in the face of the inevitable collapse of Austria-Hungary, the Poles would be the main opponent of their independence aspirations. A Ukrainian civil and military underground was already up and running in August 1918. The clandestine Central Military Committee (*Central'nij Vijs'kovij Komitet / Центральний Військовий Комітет*) was formed, which began preparations for the struggle for independence. These actions were supported by USR officers. Efforts were even initiated to transfer the formation located in northern Bukovina to Lviv. However, the Austrian authorities, fearing a Polish-Ukrainian armed confrontation, did not agree to this. The strong sway that Polish politicians held in Vienna was probably not without significance for this decision.¹⁷

On 18 October 1918, several hundred Ukrainian political activists gathered in Lviv. They were Ukrainian members of the Viennese parliament and national parliaments, students and journalists as well as representatives of political parties, local Ukrainian communities and the clergy. They formed the Ukrainian National Council (*Ukrains'ka Nacional'na Rada / Українська Національна Рада*). The next day, the Council declared itself a constituent assembly and proclaimed a Ukrainian state in territories of the Habsburg monarchy defined as ethnically Ukrainian (mainly Eastern Galicia).¹⁸ These actions, although completely transparent, were completely ignored and disregarded by the Poles.

On the night of 31 October to 1 November 1918, Ukrainian troops seized control of some strategic points in Lviv. The Polish inhabitants of the city were completely taken by surprise but had no intention of submitting to the new authorities, and on 1 November fighting broke out in Lviv, which turned into the Polish-Ukrainian war that lasted until July 1919. In the first days of November, the Ukrainians managed to control the entire area of Eastern Galicia up to the San River. A Ukrainian civil and military administration began to operate in the conquered territories. On 9 November 1918, the Ukrainian National Council established a government – the Provisional State Secretariat headed by Kost Levytskyi – and on 13 November it passed a legal act which would provide the basis for the functioning of the new state. This was the *Temporary Basic Law on*

17 Klimecki / Karpus 2018, p. 39.

18 Klimecki 2000 (2), pp. 46–50.

*the State Independence of Ukrainian Lands of the Former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (Timčasovij osnovij zakon pro deržavnu samostijnist' ukraïns'kih zemel' buvšoi avstro-ugors'koï monarhii / Тимчасовий основий закон про державну самостійність українських земель бувишї австро-угорської монархії).*¹⁹ The act specifies the name of the country as the West Ukrainian People's Republic. At the same time, the Interim Secretariat was renamed the WUPR State Secretariat (*Deržavnij sekretariat ZUNR / Державний секретаріат ЗУНР*).

At the beginning of the Polish-Ukrainian war, neither side had a regular army. Both Poles and Ukrainians organized their armed forces on the basis of Austro-Hungarian reserve battalions, so-called cadres. They were formed locally, so most of the soldiers serving in them represented the dominant national group of a given territory. Therefore, in Eastern Galicia, a significant percentage of the reserve battalions were Ukrainians, while in Western Galicia they were Poles.²⁰ However, the Ukrainians failed to acquire the expected number of troops, as most of the soldiers from the Imperial-Royal army wanted to return home as soon as possible.²¹

The WUPR authorities counted on soldiers of the USR legion joining the armed struggle in the capital of Galicia. In October 1918, the legion was stationed in Bukovina and numbered about 1,300 soldiers ready for combat.²² Had Ukrainian regular units with high morale, well-equipped and with considerable combat experience taken part in the fight in Lviv in the first days of November, this could have turned out disastrously for the Polish side. However, despite the fact that the Ukrainians had made efforts to transport the legion to Lviv earlier, its arrival was delayed and the first USR units only arrived in the capital on the afternoon of 3 November.²³

In total, at the beginning of the fighting, the Ukrainian command had around 1,500 soldiers in Lviv.²⁴ During the first few days of November, the Ukrainian forces in the city expanded slightly. Finally, the USR (about 700 soldiers combat-ready) and some volunteer units organized in Zolochiv, Kamionka Strumilova and Rava Ruska arrived in the city. Hnat Stefaniv estimated that on 11 November 1918, about 2,300 Ukrainian soldiers were fighting in Lviv.²⁵ On the final day of

19 Gaj-Nižnik 2010, pp. 202–203.

20 Cf.: Zgórnjak 1988; Krotofil 2002 (3), pp. 27–30.

21 Central'nij deržavnij istoričnij arhiv Ukraïni, m. L'viv (hereinafter: CDIAL): sig. f. 361, op. 1, sp. 163: *Spogadi polkovnika Gnata Stefaniva / Спогади полковника Гната Стефаніва*.

22 Kozubel 2015, pp. 172–177.

23 Klimecki 2000 (2), p. 86.

24 Ibid., p. 62.

25 CDIAL: sig. f. 361, op. 1, sp. 163: *Spogadi polkovnika Gnata Stefaniva / Спогади полковника Гната Стефаніва*.

combat in Lviv (21 November 1918), the Ukrainians had 161 officers and 4,517 soldiers in the city, of whom 120 officers and 3,185 soldiers were fit for combat. Meanwhile, the Poles had sub-units at their disposal with a total of approx. 6,700 soldiers.²⁶ The armed forces of both sides were improvised throughout the entire period of fighting in the capital of Galicia. However, attempts were made to make the troops regular.²⁷

In the occupied territories, the Ukrainians almost immediately began to exert all their efforts to create an armed force – the Galician Army (*Halic'ka armîâ / Галицька армія*, GA).²⁸ Initially, Ukrainian troops in the field were enlisted on a volunteer basis. They were often improvised groups with the strength of a platoon or company at most.²⁹

On 13 November, the Ukrainian authorities announced the mobilization of all men born between 1883–1900 who had previously served in the Austro-Hungarian Army. People of Ukrainian nationality were drafted, but there were cases of Poles being coerced to join the ranks. Germans and Jews living in Eastern Galicia also volunteered for the GA. Later, there was even a Jewish unit.³⁰ The military units were created territorially.

In addition to the fighting in the capital of Galicia, fierce battles took place between the Poles and Ukrainians in the area of Przemyśl, Rava Ruska and Khyriv. By the end of November, Lviv was the easternmost Polish center of resistance, connected with the rest of the forces by just a railway line exposed to enemy attacks. The Polish-Ukrainian clashes turned into a mobile war, sometimes in the form of partisan fighting. Here a huge role was played by the initiative shown by commanders, knowledge of the area and the soldiers' persistence.³¹ On the night of 21–22 November 1918, the Ukrainians left Lviv due to the ongoing military situation. From then on, until the end of April 1919, the GA besieged the city.³²

26 Šankovs'kij 1999, pp. 48–49.

27 Central'nij deržavnij arhiv viših organiv vladi ta upravlinnâ Ukraïni (hereinafter: CDAVO): sig. f. 2188, op. 1, sp. 1, fol. 3: *Nakaz Golovnoï Komandi*.

28 For more on the organization of the Galician Army cf.: Šankovs'kij 1999; Litvin 1998, pp. 107–197; Krotofil 2001, pp. 523–535; idem 2002 (1); idem 2002 (2); idem 2002 (3); idem 2003; Ćmir / Pinak / Mužiĉuk 2008.

29 Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe w Warszawie (hereinafter: CAW): sig. I.400.2235: *Relacja kpt. Franciszka Busza*.

30 Rossijskij gosudarstvennyj voennyj arhiv (Centr hraneniâ istoriko-dokumental'nyh kollekcij) (hereinafter: RGVA): sig. f. 471, op. 2, d. 8, fol. 25: *Raport informacyjny polityczny NDWP z dnia 20.02.1919 r.*; CAW: sig. I.304.1.12: *Opracowanie*, p. 1; Åroslavin 1956, p. 136; Tinĉenko 2014, pp. 93–135.

31 Åroslavin 1956, p. 143.

32 For more on the combat operations of the Polish-Ukrainian war conducted until May 1919 cf.: Šuhevîĉ 1929; Omelânoviĉ-Pavlenko 1929; Hupert 1928; Krezub 1933; Łukomski / Partacz / Polak 1994; Litvin 1998, pp. 214–389; Kozłowski 1999; Klimecki 2000 (2), pp. 146–243.

The Ukrainian troops consisted mainly of infantry. The Ukrainian artillery batteries were relatively numerous and well-trained. Thanks to the seizure of military warehouses left behind in Eastern Galicia by the Austrians and the Germans, a significant quantity of weapons, ammunition and other equipment was available. Weapons were also obtained by disarming Austro-Hungarian troops returning from the Eastern front. The Ukrainian command failed to organize any major cavalry units, and they were sorely missed at the front. In December 1918, the GA numbered about 30,000 soldiers in total and about 15,000 combat-ready.³³ It is difficult to assess their combat value. The troops were largely voluntary, did not have a regular organizational structure and were only partially suitable for partisan warfare.³⁴ The USR were the major force to be reckoned with. As for the number of Polish troops, in December 1918 the combat status of the East Command was about 12,500 soldiers.

The Ukrainians faced many problems while forming their armed forces. The most serious was the dearth of officers – senior commanders in particular. Attempts were made to rectify this by accepting officers of non-Ukrainian nationality (usually Germans) who served in the former Austro-Hungarian Army. These officers who had fallen on hard times after the end of the World War tried to achieve some material security by joining the ranks of the Ukrainian Army. They were good professionals, but mostly did not identify themselves with the idea of Ukrainian statehood.³⁵

Another major problem was the lack of a military and armaments industry that could provide a steady supply for the army. Stocks were quickly depleted. Attempts were made to organize relatively regular deliveries from Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.³⁶ However, it was never enough to secure military operations. The only commodity that the WUPR could use to pay for weapons and ammunition was crude oil. Therefore, particularly fierce battles were fought for the control of the oil fields in Drohobych.³⁷

The WUPR's army command counted heavily on military assistance from the UPR. But despite the fact that in January 1919 both states solemnly proclaimed an *Act of Unification* (and from that point on, the WUPR adopted the Western Oblast of the Ukrainian People's Republic as its official name (*Zahìdna Oblast' Ukraïns'koï Narodnoï Respubliki* / *Західна Область Української Народної Республіки*, WOUPR), supplies from Dnieper Ukraine never amounted to very much. At the beginning of January 1919, the 1st Independent Koziatyn Brigade

33 Krotofil 2002 (3), p. 44.

34 Ibid.

35 Cf.: Klůčenko 1931 (2); idem 1931 (1).

36 More cf.: Lewandowski 1974, pp. 93–101.

37 RGVA: sig. f. 471, op. 2, d. 8, fol. 25: *Raport informacyjny polityczny NDWP z dnia 20.02.1919 r.*; CAW: sig. I.341.1.143: *Odpis pamietnika*.

(two infantry regiments, an artillery battery and a cavalry squadron – about 3,400 soldiers in total) arrived at GA's disposal.³⁸ However, the units sent were undisciplined, incomplete in terms of personnel and low in combat value. Later, the UPR would only offer material assistance.³⁹

From January to March 1919, the GA underwent thorough reorganization. The battle groups were transformed into brigades, and these were combined into three corps. Widespread mobilization expanded the number of units or a more regular nature. In mid-March 1919, the GA had over 37,000 combatants, and numbered nearly 53,000 in total.⁴⁰ The Polish Army also experienced a major overhaul and an increase in numbers. At the beginning of March 1919, approximately 25,000 combat-ready soldiers engaged in battles with the Ukrainians (with an overall total of 36,000 people).⁴¹ In March, both armies were comparable in terms of numbers and combat strength. However, while the Polish side had far greater resources and capabilities and constantly increasing ranks, the GA was slowly exhausting its possibilities for development.

The Polish-Ukrainian battles continued with wavering fortunes until May 1919. On 14 May, the Polish Army launched an offensive on the entire front. The GA was forced to retreat. Chaos reigned amidst the Ukrainian ranks. The situation was exacerbated by widespread dissatisfaction caused by the disasters suffered, the ineffectiveness of the command and deteriorating supplies. Lack of ammunition represented a huge problem for the GA, and in many cases effectively meant that they were unable to fight. As a result of desertions and combat losses, the GA dwindled significantly in size. Meanwhile, in June 1919 Gen. Mykhailo Omelanovych-Pavlenko, who had led the army since December 1918, was replaced by Gen. Oleksandr Grekov as commanding officer of the GA. He thoroughly reorganized the army and, taking advantage of a temporary lull in the Polish onslaught, began a counterattack known in historiography as the Chortkiv offensive.⁴² On 9 June 1919, the Ukrainian National Council decided to hand over full state and military control to Yevhen Petrushevych, making him president of the WOUPR. This was motivated by the gravity of the situation and the danger threatening the homeland.⁴³ The Chortkiv offensive, despite initial Ukrainian successes, was quickly thwarted by Polish troops. On 28 June 1919, the Polish

38 CDAVO: sig. f. 2188, op. 1, sp. 20, fol. 11: *Vidomostì pro pributtá*.

39 RGVA: sig. f. 471, op. 2, d. 1, fol. 6: *Raport informacyjny wojskowy Sztabu Generalnego WP z 25.01.1919 r.*; *ibid.*: sig. f. 471, op. 2, d. 2, fol. 31: *Raport informacyjny NDWP z 28.03.1919 r.*; CAW: sig. I.304.1.12.: *Opracowanie*, p. 3.

40 Krotofil 2002 (3), pp. 45–67.

41 Hupert 1928, p. 14.

42 For more on the Chortkiv offensive cf.: Hupert 1928, pp. 84–96; Šankovs'kij 1999, pp. 158–171; Litvin 1998, pp. 371–381; Kozłowski 1999, pp. 314–323; Klimecki 2000 (2), pp. 226–238; *idem* 2000 (1).

43 CDAVO: sig. f. 2192, op. 1, sp. 1, p. 13: *Rišenná Prezidiï*.

Army, adequately reinforced, began a counterattack. The GA corps were forced to retreat thus pushing the Ukrainians beyond the line of the Zbruch River. On 16 and 17 July, GA troops left Eastern Galicia.⁴⁴

In Dnieper Ukraine and in Exile

After crossing the Zbruch in July 1919, the West Ukrainian armed forces formally joined the army of the Ukrainian People's Republic, commanded by Supreme Commander Symon Petlura, but retained their own organizational structure and command. The political leadership was also separate – in Kamianets-Podilskyyi, the leader of the UPR, Symon Petlura, and the president of the WOUPR, Yevhen Petrushevych, acted side by side. Despite the aforementioned *Act of Unification* (*Akt Zluki / Акт Злуки*) of both Ukrainian state organisms announced in January 1919, in practice they retained complete political separateness. Also in the summer of 1919, the two leaders clearly differed in opinion as to the plans for further action: Petlura was inclined to make an agreement with Poland, even to join forces to fight the Bolsheviks, while Petrushevych saw the Poles as their gravest enemies.

The GA corps, head and shoulders above the Dnieper Ukraine troops, contributed to the success of the Ukrainian offensive that ended with the capture of Kyiv in August 1919. In the course of further battle, the GA troops, decimated by a typhus epidemic, deprived of medical, food and clothing supplies, lost their capacity to conduct any combat operations. In this situation, the GA went over to the Armed Forces of South Russia, Gen. Anton Denikin (white Russians), changing their name to the Ukrainian Galician Army (*Ukraïns'ka halic'ka armîâ / Українська галицька армія*, UGA). President Petrushevych retained the right to lead the army politically. The agreement stipulated that UGA troops would not be used to fight against Petlura's men.⁴⁵ The Dnieper Ukrainians considered the conclusion of an agreement between the Russians and the West Ukrainian Army as an act of national treason. It should be noted that, paradoxically, such a situation simplified a possible accord with Poland, with whom the UPR signed a ceasefire on 1 September 1919, recognizing the Zbruch River as the line of division between the two armies.⁴⁶ It was obvious that the condition for Polish-

44 CAW: sig. I.310.2.10: *Grupa gen. Bernard*; more on the displacement of the Western Ukrainian troops beyond the Zbruch River line and on the political circumstances accompanying the launch of the Polish offensive cf.: Hupert 1928, pp. 96–104; Klimecki 2000 (2), pp. 233–243; idem 2000 (1), pp. 146–172.

45 Ávorovs'kij 1929, pp. 13–17. The full text of the agreement between the representatives of the Galician Army and the representatives of Denikin cf. Ároslavin 1956, pp. 165–167.

46 Karpus 1999, p. 17.

Ukrainian cooperation would be that the UPR gave up claims to Eastern Galicia, which the Galician Ukrainians consistently disagreed with.

In November 1919, with catastrophe facing UPR troops, Symon Petlura finally decided to seek an agreement with Poland. Therefore, Yevhen Petrushevych, along with a group of Galician political activists, traveled through Romania to Vienna, where he tried to continue his political activities for the international recognition of Ukrainian statehood in Eastern Galicia. Meanwhile, the West Ukrainian troops were unable to fight and could only be used for propaganda. This was the case after the UGA's transition to the Bolshevik side in February 1920, caused by an attempt to save formations still unable to fight from annihilation. The Red Ukrainian Galician Army (*Červona ukraïns'ka halic'ka armîâ / Червона українська галицька армія*, RUGA) would be a convenient entity used by the Bolsheviks to facilitate propaganda related to the planned occupation of Eastern Galicia and the fight against the forces of Symon Petlura. The separation of the reorganized GA brigades among the Bolshevik divisions meant that the RUGA lost the capability to act as an independent operational union.

In December 1919, West Ukrainian politicians in Vienna announced the invalidity of the *Act of Unification* between the UPR and the WUPR, and in August 1920, Yevhen Petrushevych announced a WUPR government in exile. Its members and representatives undertook various initiatives in the international arena, appealing to the Entente countries to recognize WUPR independence. In March 1921, representatives of the Petrushevych government protested against the conclusion of the Treaty of Riga, which established the eastern border of the Second Polish Republic, leaving Eastern Galicia under Polish rule. Ultimately, the activities of the WUPR government in exile were dealt a final blow by the decision of the Council of Ambassadors of the Entente States of March 1923, finally recognizing the eastern borders of the Polish state.

Summary

After the World War I, both neighboring nations of Poland and Ukrainian stood in front of an opportunity to gain an independent state. The Poles succeeded while the Ukrainians did not. The reasons for this were divers, ranging between political, social and military. The territory of Eastern Galicia was so ethnically mixed that a compromise solution was practically off the table. In this context, a war broke out in which the Polish side turned out to be stronger. Many Galician Ukrainians did not wish to accept failure and throughout the interwar period they considered Eastern Galicia to be under Polish occupation. Such a stance induced more radical circles to take action against the Polish state, including terrorist activities (which also provoked Polish retaliation). On the other hand, it

seems that the independent existence of the WUPR was impossible under the political circumstances of the time. It can be assumed that if the territories of Eastern Galicia had not been included in the far from perfect yet not totalitarian Second Polish Republic, it would have been incorporated into Soviet Ukraine with all its consequences, including Soviet terror and genocide.

[Translated by Steve Jones]

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Entstehung belarussischer politischer Zentren und ihr Streben nach Anerkennung der Staatlichkeit von Belarus (1915–1921)¹

Abstract

Establishment of Belarusian Political Centres and Their Efforts to Recognise Statehood of Belarus (1915–1921)

During World War I, concepts of Belarusian statehood were either side of the Russian-German front. The possibilities of forming a federation with Lithuania, Poland or Russia – a confederation of four countries – were considered. In the years 1918–1921, the Belarusian independence camp proclaimed and unsuccessfully tried to gain international recognition of the Belarusian People’s Republic. The counter-project was one that was successfully completed – the concept of establishing the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic, which was established on the initiative of Belarusian communists with the support of Soviet Russia and fully pursued its political and ideological goals.

Keywords: Belarusian national movement; Belarusian idea of statehood; Treaty of Riga; Belarusian People’s Republic; Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic

Einleitung

Im zweiten Jahr des 1. Weltkrieges, im Herbst 1915, wurden die Gouvernements Grodno (mit der Stadt Grodno), Vilnius (mit der Stadt Vilnius) und ein Teil des Gouvernements Minsk von den Deutschen besetzt. Auf der Ostseite der russisch-deutschen Front blieben ein Teil des Gouvernements Minsk (mit der Stadt Minsk) sowie die Gouvernements Wizebsk und Mahiljou mit den Städten Wizebsk und Mahiljou. Die Kriegsfront durchschnitt belarussisches Territorium, was gegenseitige Kontakte zwischen den Einwohnern dieser Gebiete erschwerte, bis die durch die Haltung der bolschewistischen Delegation auf der Konferenz in Brest irritierten Deutschen nach Osten aufbrachen und Zentral- und Ostbelarus

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einnahmen (Februar 1918). Die einige Jahre dauernde Isolation belarussischer Aktivisten auf beiden Seiten der deutsch-russischen Front und die Arbeit unter veränderten politischen Bedingungen schufen einen neuen Kontext für die Nationalbewegung. Bei allen Unterschieden war jedoch das Streben nach der Integration belarussischer Gebiete ein gemeinsames Element. Für belarussische Territorien hielt man damals – aufgrund der überwiegenden Anzahl der Belarussen – vorwiegend fünf Gouvernements: Vilnius, Grodno, Minsk, Mahiljou und Wizebsk sowie Kreise aus den an sie angrenzenden Gouvernements Smolensk und Tschernihiw. Den Kontext für die sich auf litauisch-belarussischem Boden vollziehenden Veränderungen im nationalen Bereich bildeten die durch den Ausbruch des Krieges verursachte Erschütterung, die massenhafte Flucht aus den westlichen Gouvernements im Jahre 1915,² die deutsche Besetzung in Teilen von Litauen und Belarus, die Abdankung des Zaren Nikolaus II. und revolutionäre Umstürze in Russland, das Streben nach Bildung von Nationalstaaten in der Region und der polnisch-bolschewistische Krieg.

Das belarussische kulturpolitische Zentrum in Vilnius

Nach der Revolution des Jahres 1905 wurde Vilnius zum Hauptzentrum des Nationallebens der Belarussen. Ihr kulturelles und gesellschaftliches Leben konzentrierte sich um die Redaktion der Zeitung *Naša niva / Havaa Hiva* [*Unsere Flur*], der ersten Zeitschrift in belarussischer Sprache, die in den Jahren 1906–1915 herausgegeben wurde.³ Die Mitarbeiter der Zeitschrift waren vor allem Sozialisten, deren wichtigstes Ziel im Sozialbereich in der Lösung der Bauernfrage durch Einführung einer Agrarreform bestand. Man plante die Einschränkung des Großgrundbesitzes und die Aufteilung der Ländereien unter Personen, die keinen Grund besaßen oder Kleinbesitzer waren.⁴ Im Kultur- und Bildungsbereich kämpfte man vergeblich um die Einführung der belarussischen Sprache im Schulunterricht und in der Predigt in den orthodoxen und römisch-katholischen Kirchen in den von Belarussen bewohnten Gemeinden (dementsprechend orthodoxer oder katholischer Konfession).⁵ Um die Realisierung des Programms bemühte sich die 1906 gegründete Bela-

2 Nach offiziellen Angaben gab es am 14.02.1917 in Russland 3,2 Millionen Flüchtlinge aus Belarus. In den Jahren 1918–1924 kehrten rund 700.000 Menschen in ihre Häuser zurück; Skalaban 1992, S. 339.

3 Die heutzutage seit 1991 in Minsk erscheinende *Naša Niva* knüpft an die Tradition der Zeitschrift an, die bis 1913 herausgegeben wurde.

4 Sidarevič 2009, S. 39–40.

5 Michaluk 2015, S. 528–541.

russische Sozialistische Hramada⁶ (*Bielaruskaja Sacyjalistyčnaja Hramada / Беларуская сацыялістычная грамада*, BSH).⁷ Die Gemeinschaft der Vilniuser Belarussen leiteten die Sozialisten Gebrüder Ivan und Anton Łuckievič. Mit ihnen arbeitete Vaclaŭ Łastoŭski zusammen, der Autor des von den Belarussen gern gelesenen ersten Handbuches *Kartotkaja historyja Belarusi / Кароткая гісторыя Беларусі [Kurze Geschichte von Belarus]*, Vilnius 1910. Seine damaligen politischen Anschauungen näherten sich der christlichen Demokratie. Als 1915 eine große Anzahl von Flüchtlingen vor der heranrückenden deutschen Armee floh, verließen die genannten Aktivisten die Stadt nicht. In der Besatzungszeit bemühten sie sich darum, das Interesse deutscher Zivil- und Militärbehörden für die belarussische Frage zu wecken. Die drei genannten Personen waren Autoren erster, die belarussische Staatlichkeit betreffender Konzeptionen.

Bis zum 1. Weltkrieg waren Litauen und Belarus als geographisch-historische Landschaften durch ökonomische, kulturelle, historische und Familienbindungen eng miteinander verknüpft. Diese Beziehungen begannen in der mehrere Jahrhunderte dauernden Zeit der Zugehörigkeit dieser Gebiete zum Großfürstentum Litauen, das bis 1569 mit der Krone des Königreichs Polen einen gemeinsamen Staat – die *Rzeczpospolita* – bildete. Trotz der Teilungen Polens im 18. Jahrhundert und des Anschlusses von Litauen und Belarus an das Russische Kaiserreich blieben diese Verbindungen bestehen. In dieser langen Zeit (mit Ausnahme der Jahre 1772–1795, in denen die Teilungen der *Rzeczpospolita* vollzogen wurden) waren diese Gebiete durch keine Staatsgrenzen getrennt. Die Idee, Litauen und Belarus durch Staatsgrenzen zu teilen, war ein völlig neuer und Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts kaum vorstellbarer Gedanke.

Vor dem 1. Weltkrieg vertraten die Brüder Łuckievič eine Landesideologie, die durch den Kreis von Vilniuser Demokraten entworfen worden war.⁸ Sie setzte eine enge Mitwirkung der Nationen des ehemaligen Großfürstentums Litauen (Litauer, Polen, Belarussen, Juden) und politische Autonomie dieser Gebiete in den Grenzen des russischen Staates voraus. Unter deutscher Besatzung knüpften die Łuckievič an die Landeskonzeption an und erwogen – eher theoretisch – zwei Konzeptionen für die Zukunft von Belarus und Litauen, in denen beide Länder eng miteinander verbundene Organismen darstellten. Der erste, 1915 ausgearbeitete Entwurf sah die Restitution des Großfürstentums Litauen unter deutscher Hegemonie vor.⁹ Im zweiten Projekt wurde die Bildung einer Konföderation von vier Staaten: Litauen, Lettland, Belarus und der Ukraine erwogen.¹⁰ Auf diese

6 Hramada bedeutet Bund.

7 Rudovič 1993, S. 410–413.

8 Smaliančuk 1996, S. 48–52.

9 Karp 1994, S. 414.

10 Luckievič 1990, S. 6–7.

Weise wollte man ein politisches und ökonomisches Gegengewicht zu Polen und Russland erzielen. 1916 brachte Vaclaŭ Łastoŭski, der damals schon politischer Konkurrent der Łuckievič war, die Idee auf, eine unabhängige belarussische Republik in den sogenannten ethnographischen Grenzen, d. h. auf den auf beiden Seiten der russisch-deutschen Front gelegenen Gebieten zu erschaffen, was dem Programm des Bundes für Unabhängigkeit und Unteilbarkeit von Belarus [*Suviaž niezaliežnasci i niepadzielnasci Bielarusi / Сувязь незалежнасці і непадзельнасці Беларусі*] entsprach, dem er angehörte.¹¹ Diese Konzeption wurde jedoch von den Brüdern Łuckievič torpediert, die sich einer wesentlich größeren Autorität im belarussischen Milieu erfreuten.¹²

Das Wirken der Belarussen in Minsk und Ausrufung der Belarussischen Volksrepublik

Das Agieren der Belarussen in Vilnius wurde durch die Behörden von Ober Ost gehemmt. Die wichtigsten politischen und weltanschaulichen Veränderungen erfolgten auf der russischen Seite der Front – in Minsk und Mahiljou. Die Hauptrolle spielten dabei die Vertreter der jungen Generation belarussischer Aktivisten, die sich der belarussischen Nationalbewegung nach der Februarrevolution anschlossen. Die Konsolidierung des belarussischen politischen Umfelds schritt jedoch viel langsamer voran, als dies bei den anderen Nationen der Region der Fall war.¹³ Die Tätigkeit erschwerten verschärfte Maßnahmen, die aus der Nähe der russisch-deutschen Front resultierten. Der östliche Teil von Belarus und ein Teil von Zentralbelarus wurden zu einer hochmilitarisierten Zone an der Front, die der Organisationsstruktur des Westbezirkes und der Front angehörte. Es strömten zahlreiche Militärtruppen aus verschiedenen russischen Garnisonen dorthin, wie auch russische Zivilisten, die für das Heer arbeiteten.¹⁴ In Mahiljou nahm der Generalstab der Führung russischer Streitkräfte sein Quartier. Dort entstand auch 1917 das Belarussische Komitee von Mahiljou (*Mahilioŭski Bielaruski kamiet / Магілёўскі Беларускае каміят*), das unter den Belarussen im Militärdienst wirkte. Es entwickelte sich zu einem wichtigen Zentrum des belarussischen politischen Lebens.¹⁵ Die allgemeine Situation spiegelte sich im Militär wider, das an den sich vollziehenden Veränderungen und der politischen Rivalität aktiv teilnahm. Die nationale Zugehörigkeit manifestierte man durch

11 Bielaruski dziaŭzaŭny archiŭ-muziej litaratury i mastactva: Sign. f. 3, op. 1, sp. 256, Bl. 29–30.

12 Sidarievič 2001, S. 439.

13 Zu den Ursachen dieses Phänomens siehe: Michaluk 2021, S. 219–242.

14 Łatyszczek 1996, S. 37.

15 Ahiejeŭ 2017.

Nationalschleifen und Bildung von Nationalvereinen, was von den Militärbehörden genehmigt wurde. Am 15. Mai 1917 entstand in Minsk die Belarussische Militärorganisation (*Bielaruskaja vajsakovaja arhanizacyja* / *Беларуская вайсковая арганізацыя*), und im Sommer 1917 wurden Organisationen und Vereine der Belarussen im Militärdienst an der West-, Südwest- und Rumänischen Front sowie im Kaukasus gegründet.¹⁶ Nach dem Oktoberumsturz von 1917 versuchte das bolschewistische Exekutivkomitee für den Westbezirk und die Front die Zone an der Front zu kontrollieren. Seine Mitglieder sprachen sich mehrheitlich für die völlige Inkorporation von Belarus nach Russland aus oder höchstens dafür, dass aus Belarus ein Bezirk im russischen Staat gebildet werde.¹⁷ Man bekämpfte die politischen Ansprüche der Belarussen, die man für separatistische Aktivitäten hielt, die die russische Einheit gefährdeten und die den Ideen der bolschewistischen Revolution, deren Grundlage der Internationalismus bildete, zuwiderliefen. Die Veranstaltung der Allbelarussischen Versammlung in Minsk im Dezember 1917 vor den Augen bolschewistischer Soldaten nahm sich also wie ein ihnen hingeworfener Fehdehandschuh aus. Während des Treffens wurden in Bezug auf die politische Zukunft von Belarus vier Varianten erörtert: 1. Bildung einer demokratischen Republik in Föderation mit Russland; 2. Erteilung politischer Autonomie mit eigener Verwaltung und einem Landesnationalrat; 3. Bildung eines belarussischen Bezirkes mit kultureller Autonomie im Rahmen des russischen Staates; 4. völlige Inkorporation und Verschmelzung mit Russland.¹⁸ Der größten Unterstützung der belarussischen Nationalorganisationen erfreute sich die erste Konzeption.¹⁹ Niemand auf dieser Versammlung fand den Mut, noch eine Lösung vorzuschlagen, d. h. die Bildung von Belarus als eines souveränen, von Russland unabhängigen Staates, obwohl manche – wie sie es später in ihren Erinnerungen beschreiben werden – (u. a. Kanstancin Jezavitaŭ, Jazep Varonka) diese Absicht hegten.²⁰ Erst die brutale Zerstreuung der Versammlung durch die Bolschewisten vom Exekutivkomitee für den Westbezirk und die Front (die allerdings ohne Kenntnis der bolschewistischen Zentralbehörden erfolgte) und Befürchtungen, dass die Gespräche auf der Friedenskonferenz in Brest mit einem für Belarus ungünstigen Ergebnis enden würden, führten dazu, dass die Organisation des Unabhängigkeitslagers optimiert wurde.

16 Łatyszczek 1996, S. 45–46.

17 Rudovič 2017, S. 32.

18 Jezavitaŭ 1993, S. 25–28.

19 Dafür sprachen sich aus u. a. die Delegierten der BSH, des Belarussischen Militärkomitees der Petersburger Garnison, des Belarussischen Matrosenkomitees der Ostseeflotte, des Belarussischen Komitees der Kriegsflüchtlinge und der Belarussischen Kultur-, Bildungs- und Verlagsgesellschaft *Zahljanie sonca i ŭ naša akonca* / *Загляне сонца і ў наша аконца* [Auch in unsere Fenster wird mal die Sonne scheinen] aus; *Bieloruskaja Rada* 1917.

20 Jezavitaŭ 1933, S. 25–28; Kančer 1919; Varonka 1920.

Sein Leiter wurde, ganz unerwartet, ein Vertreter der jungen Generation, der Publizist und gescheiterte Jurastudent Jazep Waronka. Er schloss sich der BSH nach der Februarrevolution von 1917 an. Am 21. Februar 1918 berief er das Volkssekretariat, das sich zur provisorischen Regierung in Belarus erklärte und diese Funktion bis zur Einberufung einer Konstituierenden Versammlung erfüllen sollte. Der Rat der Allbelarussischen Versammlung verwandelte sich in den Rat der Republik. Dies geschah in Minsk zu dem Zeitpunkt, als die bolschewistischen Truppen die Stadt verließen, und – was wesentlich ist – bevor die Stadt vom deutschen Militär besetzt wurde, das nach dem Scheitern der Friedensverhandlungen in Brest nach Osten vordrang. Am 9. März 1918 wurde die Entstehung der Belarussischen Volksrepublik (BNR) im Rahmen der Föderation mit Russland ausgerufen.

Nachdem die Frontlinie nach Osten gerückt war, wurde es möglich, dass die Aktivisten des Belarussischen Rates von Vilnius (BRV), eines Organs, das die belarussische Bevölkerung vor der deutschen Leitung von Ober Ost offiziell vertrat, nach Minsk kamen. Der Rat koordinierte auch die belarussische Tätigkeit. An der Spitze der BRV stand Anton Łuckievič. Er und sein Bruder Ivan waren bei der Versammlung am 25. März 1918 anwesend, auf der die Unabhängigkeit der BNR proklamiert wurde. Es sollte unterstrichen werden, dass es sich dabei um eine gemeinsame Entscheidung von Vertretern mehrerer Zentren handelte, die während des Krieges getrennt wirkten, und dass daran zwei Generationen belarussischer Aktivisten beteiligt waren. Nach der sozialpolitischen Anschauung waren es Sozialisten. Damals wurde auch der Bruch aller politischen Beziehungen zu Russland angekündigt, was jedoch auf Unzufriedenheit der prussisch eingestellten Teilnehmer des Treffens stieß (die dagegen stimmten) und der sozialistischen jüdischen Parteien, die sich der Stimme enthielten.²¹ Einige Wochen später verließen ihre Vertreter den Rat der Republik als Zeichen des Protests gegen den Bruch mit Russland.²²

Das von der BNR beanspruchte Gebiet umfasste die Gouvernements: Grodno, Vilnius, Minsk, Mahiljou, Wizebsk, Smolensk, Tschernihiw und Kreise aus den benachbarten Gouvernements mit einem großen belarussischen Bevölkerungsanteil.²³ Die Konzeption der belarussischen Grenzen, die nicht nur ethnische Kriterien, sondern auch wirtschaftliche und strategische Bedürfnisse berücksichtigte, wurde in den späteren Monaten des Jahres 1918 ausgeformt und kam auf der *Landkarte der Belarussischen Volksrepublik* zum Ausdruck, die 1918 für

21 Nacyjonałny archiў Respubliki Bielaruś (im Folgenden: NARB): Sign. f. 325, op. 1, sp. 21, Bl. 118–119: *Rada BNR, Siessija II, zasiedanije 3, 24. 03. 1918 / Рада БНР, Сессія II, засяданне 3, 24. 03. 1918.*

22 Hierasimova 2000, S. 32.

23 Šupa 1998/1/1, S. 62–63, Nr. 130: *III Ustaŭnaja Hramata Rady Bielaruskaj Narodnaj Respubliki / III Устаўная Грамата Рады Беларускай Народнай Рэспублікі.*

den Friedenskongress zu Paris vorbereitet wurde.²⁴ In der Zeit von der Proklamation der BNR bis zum Vertrag von Riga im Jahre 1921, der die Hoffnungen der belarussischen Eliten und der Belarussen auf einen eigenen Staat endgültig zerstörte, wurden fünf Regierungen der BNR berufen. 1918 bekleideten das Amt des Regierungschefs Jazep Waronka, Roman Skirmunt, Ivan Sierada und seit dem Herbst dieses Jahres bis zum Februar 1920 Anton Łuckievič. Im Dezember 1918 kam es im Unabhängigkeitslager zu einem Konflikt, und ein Teil der Aktivisten wählte eine neue Regierung mit Vacłaŭ Łastoŭski an der Spitze. Das Amt des Premierministers bekleidete er bis zum März 1923. Einige Monate lang kann man also von zwei Regierungen sprechen. Diese Periode ging zu Ende, als Anton Łuckievič zurücktrat. Von 1923 bis 1925 war Aliaksandar Čvikievič Regierungschef der BNR.

Die deutschen Behörden von Ober Ost zeigten kein Interesse an der Proklamation der BNR. Das Volkssekretariat betrachteten sie ausschließlich als eine nationale und nicht als eine politische Vertretung. Sie weigerten sich, die Unabhängigkeit der BNR anzuerkennen, und um ihre Position zu erklären, verschanzten sie sich hinter dem am 3. März 1918 mit Sowjetrussland unterschriebenen Vertrag. Einer der darin enthaltenen Beschlüsse besagte, dass Deutschland keine neuen Staaten anerkenne, die auf den von Deutschen besetzten Gebieten der ehemaligen russischen Monarchie entstehen. Die Besuche einer belarussischen Delegation (Aliaksandar Čvikievič, Prof. Mitrafan Dovnar-Zapolski, Dr. Pavel Trepovič) bei dem deutschen Botschafter in Kiew Alfons Mumm von Schwarzenstein und dem Botschafter von Österreich-Ungarn Johann von Forgách endeten also in einem Fiasko.²⁵ Reichskanzler Georg von Hertling erklärte, dass Berlin Belarus für einen Bestandteil Sowjetrusslands halte und ohne die Einwilligung von Wladimir Lenin nicht imstande sei, die BNR anzuerkennen.²⁶ Die Konsequenz davon war, dass man dem Volkssekretariat der BNR die Erlaubnis verweigerte, ein belarussisches Heer zu bilden (wie es im Falle von Litauen und der Ukraine geschah).²⁷

Die staatsbezogenen Pläne belarussischer Sozialisten wurden auch von polnischen Gutsbesitzern aus Belarus ignoriert. Sie zählten eher auf die Unterstützung der polnischen Militärkräfte, die Ausdehnung der polnischen Verwaltung auf die belarussischen Gebiete und den Schutz gegen die Bolschewisten sowie die um sich greifende Anarchie auf dem Lande. Der nationale Faktor wurde dabei immer wesentlicher – den Gutshof und das Land trennte nicht nur eine soziale, sondern auch eine nationale Kluft, was angesichts des Revolutions- und Kriegs-

24 *Karta Bieloruskoj Narodnoj Riespubluku / Карта Белорусской Народной Республики = Carte de la Republique Democratique Blanche Ruthenienne*. 1918; siehe Abb. 1 am Ende des Beitrages.

25 Šupa 1998/1/1, S. 125–128, Nr. 290: *Копія тэтарыялу / Копія мэмарыялу*.

26 Varonka 1920, S. 11.

27 Zur Rolle Deutschlands beim Aufbau ukrainischer Staatlichkeit siehe: Luschnat-Ziegler 2021.

chaos eine große Bedeutung hatte. Die polnischen Bewohner der litauisch-belarussischen Territorien gründeten in vielen Ortschaften polnische Nationalräte und das Komitee für Verteidigung der Ostgebiete (*Komitet Obrony Kresów*). Polnische Institutionen und Organisationen setzten sich für den Anschluss dieser Gebiete an Polen ein und finanzierten Abteilungen der polnischen Selbstverteidigung und polnische Militärformationen, darunter die Litauisch-Belarussische Division unter der Leitung von General Waław Iwaszkiewicz.²⁸ Obwohl die Rückkehr zu den Grenzen der *Rzeczpospolita* von 1772 in politischer Hinsicht schon völlig unreal war, trug dieser Umstand nicht dazu bei, dass Polen die belarussischen Unabhängigkeitsbestrebungen befürwortete.²⁹ Auf die Proklamation der BNR antworteten nur die Demokraten vom Polnischen Bund des Minsker Bodens (*Polski Związek Ziemi Mińskiej*) positiv, die jedoch verlangten, dass ihnen eine verhältnismäßig große Anzahl von Sitzen im Belarussischen Rat zugeteilt werde und die Zusicherung forderten, dass sich der Rat in seiner Tätigkeit auf die Weststaaten (also auch auf Polen³⁰) ausrichte. Der Landadel fürchtete, dass sich hinter der Idee der belarussischen Staatlichkeit revolutionäre Umwälzungen verbergen könnten, die die Grundlagen seines wirtschaftlichen Lebens erschüttern würden. Andererseits sollte man betonen, dass das in den Drei Verfassungsgesetzen dargestellte Programm diese Befürchtungen völlig rechtfertigte. Mit der Idee der BNR-Staatlichkeit ging ein radikales soziales Programm einher, das eine Nationalisierung des Grundbesitzes ohne Entschädigung vorsah. Die Einengung der gesellschaftlichen Basis ausschließlich auf Bauern und niedere Schichten und die Verdrängung der besitzenden Gruppen (darunter des polnischen Landadels) an den Rand des öffentlichen Lebens halte ich für einen der größten Fehler des belarussischen Unabhängigkeitslagers. Die belarussischen Sozialisten schreckten sogar jene wenigen Gutsbesitzer ab, die mit der Idee des belarussischen Staates sympathisierten (u. a. Roman Skirmunt, Magdalena Radziwiłł).

Die Tatsache, dass keine Regierung der BNR das belarussische Territorium unter Kontrolle hatte und trotz der unternommenen Bemühungen imstande war, Verwaltungsstrukturen zu bilden, ist u. a. auf das Fehlen eigener Militärformationen zurückzuführen.³¹ In dem Maße, wie sich das deutsche Heer Ende 1918 und Anfang 1919 zurückzog, strömten bolschewistische Truppen vom Osten und

28 Deruga 1969, S. 147, 150–154.

29 Tarasiuk 2004, S. 142.

30 Šupa 1998/1/1, S. 72, Nr. 167: *Varunki, na jakich Rada Połskaja Ziamli Mienskaj choća ūvajści ū sklad Rady BNR* / *Варункі, на якіх Рада Польская Зямлі Менскай хоца ўвайсьці ў склад Рады БНР*.

31 Ebd., S. 298–299, Nr. 1139: *Bielarуска-litoŭskija ūmovy ū Vільні, 15.11–8.12.1918* / *Беларуска-літоўскія ўмовы ў Вільні, 15.11–8.12.1918*; Luckievič 1991 (1), S. 215–222; ders. 1991 (2), S. 172.

polnische vom Westen in diese Gebiete. Die Formationen der beiden Staaten wurden von der belarussischen Bevölkerung als fremd wahrgenommen. Ihr Zusammenstoß Anfang 1919 führte zum polnisch-bolschewistischen Krieg. Während der Militäroperationen gingen die östlichen und zentralen Gebiete von Belarus von Hand zu Hand. Im August 1920, nach einer gelungenen Gegenoffensive von der Weichsel her geriet das polnische Heer östlich von Minsk ins Stocken und zog sich nach Westen zurück, wobei die Stadt unter russische Kontrolle gegeben wurde. Beide durch den Krieg erschöpften Seiten entschieden sich, Verhandlungen aufzunehmen, zunächst auf der Konferenz in Minsk, und später im neutraleren Riga.

Bemühungen um Anerkennung der BNR

Nach der Ausdehnung des von den Deutschen besetzten Territoriums nach Osten hin zählten die belarussischen Politiker darauf, dass das Unabhängigkeitsprojekt Unterstützung seitens des Deutschen Reiches findet. Deswegen richteten sie sich in einem ersten Schritt – wie bereits erwähnt – an den Zentralrat in Kiew und die Regierung der Ukrainischen Volksrepublik.³² Die Situation der Ukraine, die die Anerkennung durch Deutschland und Österreich-Ungarn sowie durch andere Zentralstaaten erlangt hatte, nahm sich aus der Perspektive von Minsk wie ein Erfolg aus und regte dazu an, diesem Beispiel zu folgen. Man setzte seine Hoffnungen darauf, dass die BRN von der Regierung der Ukrainischen Volksrepublik (UNR) anerkannt werde, und auch darauf, dass man durch die Vermittlung der ukrainischen Regierung die Unterstützung Deutschlands erlange. Vor Ort stellte sich aber heraus, wie fragil die Grundlagen der ukrainischen Staatlichkeit waren. Weder die Regierung der UNR noch Hetmann Pawlo Skoropadskij konnten Belarus ohne deutsche Einwilligung offen anerkennen, sie konnten es sich aber auch nicht erlauben, die belarussischen Politiker zu enttäuschen. Von ihrem Standpunkt aus war es viel vorteilhafter, im Norden Belarus zum Nachbarn zu haben als Russland oder Polen. Sympathie für die Unabhängigkeitsideen der belarussischen Staatlichkeit drückte man daher in solchen Formen aus wie zum Beispiel durch die Aufnahme von Gesprächen über die Festlegung der belarussisch-ukrainischen Grenze in Kiew im April 1918, die Einwilligung in die Aufnahme konsularischer Beziehungen, die Skoropadskij im September 1918 erteilte, und vor allem durch die Gewährung einer finanziellen Anleihe. Diese ermöglichte die Organisation der diplomatischen Missionen der BNR in Deutsch-

32 Mehr dazu: Michaluk 2004, S. 107–114.

land, Lettland und in der Tschechoslowakei und den Aufenthalt einer Delegation der BNR in Paris im Frühling des Jahres 1919.³³

Die Vertreter aller sich neu konstituierenden Staaten waren sich dessen bewusst, dass das Ende des Weltkrieges eine neue Weltordnung herbeiführen und dass ihr Überdauern von der Unterstützung seitens der Regierungen der Siegerstaaten abhängen werde. Die Friedensverhandlungen wurden 1919 in Paris aufgenommen, wohin sich auch die belarussische Delegation begab, die es sich zum Ziel setzte, die Anerkennung von Belarus im Rahmen der im 3. Verfassungsgesetz vom 25. März 1918 vorgeschlagenen Grenzen zu erlangen. Man glaubte naiv, dass sich die Entscheidungsträger nach dem Recht der Nationen auf Selbstbestimmung, dem ethnischen Kriterium und dem Wohlwollen den nach der Unabhängigkeit strebenden Völkern Osteuropas gegenüber richten würden.

Ähnlich wie viele andere Delegationen, die im Zusammenhang mit der Friedenskonferenz nach Paris kamen, nahm die belarussische Delegation nicht unmittelbar an den Verhandlungen teil. Agieren durfte sie (so wie auch die litauische Delegation) aufgrund des 12. Konferenzpunktes, der besagte, dass es notwendig sei, alle Denkschriften und Petitionen zu sammeln und zu klassifizieren. Die belarussischen Delegierten knüpften Kontakte zur Presse und stellten die Ziele und Hoffnungen ihrer Regierungen vor, führten Couloirgespräche, suchten politische und finanzielle Unterstützung. Die belarussische Delegation stand eher abseits, denn sie fand bei keinem der Staaten mit entscheidender Stimme Unterstützung. Belarus lag in Frankreichs Einflussphäre, und die Mehrheit der französischen Politiker war von der Notwendigkeit überzeugt, Alexander Koltshaks Regierung zu unterstützen und die ukrainischen und belarussischen Gebiete Russland anzuschließen. Die staatliche Souveränität von Belarus und der Ukraine wurde von den Franzosen überhaupt nicht in Erwägung gezogen. Angesichts dieser Lage bemühte sich die belarussische Delegation darum, in Verbindung mit den Delegationen, die neu entstehende Republiken vertraten (Abordnungen der Ukraine, Lettlands, Estlands, Georgiens, Aserbaidshans, der nordkaukasischen Bergrepublik) eine antirussische Front aufzubauen.³⁴

In Paris erfolgte auch ein Wendepunkt in den polnisch-belarussischen Verhältnissen. Der Litauische Staatsrat (*Taryba*) verwarf alle Föderationskonzeptionen. Am 16. Februar 1918 wurde die Litauische Republik proklamiert, die nicht nur Gebiete mit überwiegend litauischer Bevölkerung, sondern auch den südlichen Teil der Region Vilnius und die Region Grodno, wo der Anteil der belarussischen Bevölkerung überwog, umfassen sollte. Anspruch auf diese Ge-

33 Šupa 1998/1/1, S. 346–348, Nr. 1210: *Pratakol pasiedźańnia Rady Narodnych Ministraŭ BNR za 21.05.1919* / *Пратакол паседжанья Рады Народных Міністраў БНР за 21.05.1919*.

34 Ebd., S. 631–636, Nr. 1788: *Spravazdača MZS BHP za 1919 h. skladzienaja ministram Antonam Luckievičam* / *Справздача МЗС БНР за 1919 г. складзеная міністрам Антонам Луцкевічам 28.01.1920*.

bierte erhoben nicht nur die Belarussen, sondern auch die Polen. Eine Schlüsselrolle kam in diesem Konflikt der drei Nationen auch Vilnius, der historischen Hauptstadt des Großfürstentums Litauen, zu, auf dessen Staatstradition sich sowohl die Litauer als auch die Belarussen beriefen. Während im Kreis Vilnius die belarussische Bevölkerung dominierte,³⁵ war der Prozentanteil der Belarussen und der Litauer in der Stadt Vilnius gering; dort überwogen polnische und jüdische Bewohner. Die Nationalverhältnisse einerseits, historische Gründe andererseits machten diese Stadt zum Kernobjekt des Streites zwischen Polen, Litauern und Belarussen und wirkten sich wesentlich auf die belarussisch-litauischen und polnisch-litauischen Verhältnisse aus.³⁶ Die Bestrebungen, einen Staat im Rahmen nicht nur der ethnografischen, sondern auch der historischen Grenzen zu bilden, machte es notwendig, auf die nicht-litauischen Bewohner dieser Gebiete Rücksicht zu nehmen. Im November 1918 kam es zu Gesprächen zwischen dem Belarussischen Rat von Vilnius³⁷ und dem Litauischen Staatsrat. Die Belarussen strebten die Bildung eines gemeinsamen belarussisch-litauischen Staates an, unvorsichtigerweise willigten sie jedoch in Bedingungen ein, die ihnen wenig nutzten. Sie erlangten zum Beispiel vom Ministerium für Belarussische Angelegenheiten der Regierung Litauens einige Sitze im Litauischen Staatsrat und die Versicherung, dass der belarussischen Bevölkerung alle Rechte gewährt würden, die den nationalen Minderheiten zustehen.³⁸ Bereits eine Woche nach Unterzeichnung des litauisch-belarussischen Abkommens, die am 15. November 1918 erfolgt war, versuchte der Belarussische Rat von Vilnius, davon zurückzutreten.³⁹ Die Unaufmerksamkeit der Belarussen kam sie außergewöhnlich teuer zu stehen, da die litauische Delegation die auf der Konferenz in Paris geschlossene Vereinbarung nutzte, indem sie nachwies, dass die belarussische Bevölkerung der Regionen Vilnius und Grodno mit der Einverleibung dieser Territorien in die Litauische Republik einverstanden sei. Die Denkschrift an die Mitglieder der Friedenskonferenz im Juni 1919 in dieser Angelegenheit verfasste darüber hinaus ein Belaruse, Daminik Siemaška, ein Mitglied des BRV, der der litau-

35 Aus den offiziellen Angaben der 1897 nach dem Sprachkriterium durchgeführten Zählung der Bevölkerung des Russischen Imperiums geht hervor, dass Vilnius mitsamt dem Kreis Vilnius 363.313 Einwohner zählte, darunter 77.224 Personen, die Jiddisch, 93.858, die Belarussisch, 76.030, die Litauisch, 73.088, die Polnisch sprachen; *Pervaja vseobščaja perepis* 1904, S. 2–3.

36 Mehr zu diesem Thema siehe: Januszewska-Jurkiewicz 2011; Mačiulis / Staliūnas 2015.

37 Das Organ wurde 1918 in Vilnius im deutschen Besatzungsgebiet als Nationalvertretung gegründet und hatte anfänglich dieselben Kompetenzen wie der Litauische Staatsrat.

38 Gimžauskas 2003, S. 86–87; Varonka 1919, S. 1.

39 Šupa 1998/1/1, S. 298, Nr. 1139: *Bielaruska-litoŭskija ŭmowy ŭ Vільni / Беларуська-літоўскія ўмовы ў Вільні*, 15. 11–08. 12. 1918.

schen Delegation angehörte.⁴⁰ Er agierte vollkommen im Interesse der Regierung der Litauischen Republik.⁴¹ Er schwieg die Existenz der BNR-Regierung und ihre Ansprüche auf die beiden Regionen tot. Siemaškas Auftritt stieß also nicht nur auf den Protest der belarussischen Delegation in Paris, sondern auch derjenigen Belarussen, die dem Litauischen Staatsrat angehörten.⁴²

Ende Juni 1919 hatte Łuckievič den Eindruck, dass die Mitglieder der russischen Delegation, die die Regierung Koltschaks vertrat, und die der polnischen Abordnung seine Haltung gegenüber der Frage der Bindung von Belarus an Polen oder an ein demokratisches Russland ausloteten.⁴³ Das verschaffte ihm das Gefühl, dass die Wahl eines Verbündeten, der – unter bestimmten Bedingungen und Kompromissen seitens der BNR-Regierung – Belarus die Staatlichkeit in den weitesten Grenzen garantieren würde, noch möglich sei.⁴⁴ Damals entstanden auch Łuckievič Analysen in Bezug auf die Bedingungen, die erfüllt werden müssten, damit sich Belarus mit Russland oder Polen verbinde. Sie entstanden fast zu gleicher Zeit im Juni und Juli 1919. Bei der die Möglichkeit der Unterstützung durch die Regierung Koltschaks betreffenden Analyse erörterte Łuckievič zwei Varianten. Beide waren auf ein demokratisches Russland und die Bedingungen, unter denen es eine Föderation mit den benachbarten Nationen bilden würde, bezogen.⁴⁵ Die erste Variante setzte voraus, dass Russland die Gebiete mit überwiegend russischer Bevölkerung und Sibirien umfassen würde, und die Nationalstaaten, die am Rande des ehemaligen Imperiums proklamiert würden, einen Föderationsbund mit Russland nach dem Prinzip gegenseitiger Gleichheit aller Mitglieder eingehen würden. Die Regierungen dieser Staaten wären voneinander und von Russland unabhängig, der russische Staat sollte dieselben Rechte wie die übrigen Partner haben. Die zweite Variante sah die

40 Ebd., S. 352–353, Nr. 1220: *Memarandum u spravie bielarusaj u Litoŭskaj Dziaržavie, padadzienu Daminičkam Siemaškam Mironaj kanfierencyi ŭ Paryžu / Мэмарандум у справе беларусаў у Літоўскай Дзяржаве, пададзены Дамінікам Сямашкам Мірнай канферэнцыі ў Парыжы.*

41 Błaszczak 2017, S. 145–147.

42 Šupa 1998/1/1, S. 367–368, Nr. 1251: *List Piatra Krečėŭskaha Vasiliu Zacharku za 28. 06. 1919 / Ліст Пятра Крэчэўскага Васілю Захарку за 28. 06. 1919; ebd., S. 373–374, Nr. 1262: Zajava Bielaruskaha Pradstajnicтва ŭ Litoŭskaj Tarybie Staršyni Rady Ministraŭ Litoŭskaj Respubliki za 2. 07. 1919 / Заява Беларускага Прадстаўніцтва ў Літоўскай Тарыбе Старшыні Рады Міністраў Літоўскай Рэспублікі за 2. 07. 1919.*

43 Ebd., S. 370, Nr. 1256: *Natatki A. Łuckieviča (Paryž) za 30. 06. 1919 / Нататкі А. Луцкевіча (Парыж) за 30. 06. 1919.*

44 Lažko 2006, S. 71: [Brief von A. Łuckievič vom 9. 07. 1919 an einen unbekanntem Adressaten, Paris]; ebd., S. 77: [Brief von A. Łuckievič vom 24. 08. 1919 an einen unbekanntem Adressaten, Paris].

45 Šupa 1998/1/1, S. 356–358, Nr. 1228: *Metaryjal ab staŭlieŭni bielarusaj da mahčymaje federacyi na Ŭschodzie Eŭropy / Мэмарыял аб стаўленні беларусаў да магчымае фэдэрацыі на Ŭсходзе Эўропы.*

Erschaffung einer zentralen russischen Regierung vor, die den Staat nach außen hin vertreten sollte, die Regierungen der übrigen Föderationsmitglieder würden demgegenüber über Autonomie verfügen und über die inneren Angelegenheiten ihres Staates entscheiden. Łuckievič vertrat die Ansicht, dass die erste Konzeption für Belarus nützlicher wäre, unter der Bedingung, dass außer Belarus auch Litauen, Lettland und die Ukraine der Föderation beitreten würden. Alle diese Republiken sollten Zugang zu den Seehäfen haben, die auch für Belarus offen wären.⁴⁶

Jegliche Bewegungen der russischen Delegation in Bezug auf die belarussische waren eher ein Spiel gegen territoriale Ansprüche Polens, was Anton Łuckievič richtig interpretierte. Ihre Mitglieder Sergej Sazonov, Boris Savinkov, Vasily Maklakov und Nikolai Tschaikowskij strebten ein größtmögliches russisches Territorium an, das im Westen alle ehemaligen Gebiete des Imperiums (ohne das Königreich Polen) umfassen sollte. Das Fehlen eines Vorschlags seitens der Koltschak-Regierung an die Politiker der BNR erleichterte es den Offizieren aus der 2. Nachrichtenabteilung des Generalstabs des Polnischen Heeres, ein Treffen Łuckievičs mit dem Ministerpräsidenten Polens Ignacy Paderewski zu arrangieren. Vermittler waren Jauhen Ładnoŭ, Mitglied der belarussischen Delegation, der für die Zusammenarbeit mit der 2. Abteilung angeworben worden war, und Eugene de Vulitch, der vorher Mitglied der französischen militärischen Mission in Odessa war und die dortige belarussische Gemeinschaft kannte.⁴⁷ Die Aktion wurde so gut durchgeführt, dass Łuckievič davon überzeugt war, dass es auf seine Initiative geschah, als er dem polnischen Ministerpräsidenten den Vorschlag unterbreitete, eine gemeinsame Front gegen Russland zu bilden.⁴⁸ In dem Gespräch wurde das Motiv eines engeren Bündnisses von Belarus und Polen behandelt.⁴⁹ Die Nachlese dieses Treffens war das Projekt einer Föderation der Belarussischen Volksrepublik und Polens, das von Łuckievič im Juni 1919 ausgearbeitet wurde.⁵⁰ Die wichtigsten Annahmen des Projekts basierten auf gegenseitiger Gleichrangigkeit von Polen und Belarus, auf der Bildung voneinander unabhängiger Exekutivorgane und dem Plan, dass in die Föderation mit Polen nicht nur derjenige Teil von Belarus eingehen sollte, der vom Polnischen Heer bereits besetzt worden war, sondern auch die östlichen Gebiete von Belarus, die sich weiterhin unter sowjetischer Verwaltung befanden.⁵¹ Der Bund sollte eng sein: ein gemeinsamer Bundesrat und eine gemeinsame Außenpolitik, zwei Ar-

46 Ebd.

47 Ebd., S. 542–543, Nr. 1576: *Sklad supracouŭnikaŭ MZS BNR / Склад супрацоўнікаў МЗС БНР*.

48 Czarniakiewicz 2008, S. 58.

49 Lažko 2001, S. 117; Sidarevič 2003, S. 203–204.

50 Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie (im Folgenden: AAN): *Archiwum Ignacego Jana Paderewskiego*, Sign. 948.

51 Luckievič 2003, S. 203–204.

meen – eine polnische und eine belarussische unter gemeinsamer Militärführung –, ein Zollabkommen für den freien Warenverkehr, ungehinderter Transit und eine einheitliche Handelspolitik. Auf dem Gebiet beider Staaten würden gleiche nationale Rechte für ihre Bürger – Belarussen und Polen – gelten. Ein ergänzender Vertrag verpflichtete die polnische Regierung zur Militärhilfe für die BNR bei der Befreiung der belarussischen Gebiete von fremden (d. h. bolschewistischen) Truppen sowie zur Hilfe bei der Organisation belarussischer Militärformationen und Strukturen belarussischer Verwaltung. Beide Seiten sollten sich verpflichten, sich gegenseitig bei der Lösung von Grenzkonflikten mit den Nachbarn zu unterstützen. Die Grundlage für die Abgrenzung von Polen und Belarus sollten das ethnische Kriterium und die Berücksichtigung lokaler ökonomischer Bedürfnisse sein, und bei besonders komplizierten Fällen eine Volksabstimmung.⁵²

Łuckievičs Projekt der Föderation von Belarus und Polen erblickte nie das Tageslicht und wurde in Paderewskis Archiv vergraben. In dieser Zeit war nicht der Premierminister, sondern der Staatschef Józef Piłsudski die zentrale Gestalt der polnischen Ostpolitik. Er versuchte die Belarussen für den Kampf gegen Sowjetrußland zu gewinnen, ohne ihnen viel zu versprechen. Dem Ministerpräsidenten und den Mitgliedern der BNR-Regierung gegenüber verhielt er sich reserviert, was verursachte, dass die einige Male geführten Gespräche Łuckievičs mit Piłsudski dem Ministerpräsidenten der BNR nur Enttäuschung und das Gefühl der Vereinsamung mit sich brachten.⁵³ Piłsudski hatte nicht vor, die Regierung der BNR zu unterstützen, und ihre Tätigkeit war nicht in seinem Sinne. Er hatte die Absicht, die Regionen Vilnius und Grodno Polen einzuverleiben, und eine eventuelle Föderation sollte nur (das von den Bolschewisten besetzte) Ostbelarus betreffen. Sogar wenn die polnischen Sozialisten die Möglichkeit der Bildung eines belarussischen Marionettenstaates in Betracht zogen, wurden diese Pläne von der Nationaldemokratie unter der Führung von Roman Dmowski durchkreuzt. Die Mitglieder dieser Partei negierten die nationale Selbstständigkeit der Belarussen, betrachteten sie nicht als Gesprächspartner und strebten unmittelbare Vereinbarungen mit Rußland an. Die Nationaldemokraten waren entschlossen, Polen nur diejenigen Gebiete anzugliedern, auf denen eine Polonisierung oder zumindest eine Assimilation in die polnische Kultur möglich erschien. Für solche hielten sie die ehemaligen Gouvernements Grodno und Vilnius mit einer großen Anzahl von Angehörigen der römisch-katholischen Konfession.⁵⁴ Dabei ignorierten sie vollkommen die Tatsache, dass

52 AAN: *Archiwum Ignacego Jana Paderewskiego*, Sign. 948.

53 Sidarevič 2003, S. 177–221.

54 1897 waren es 415.295 römische Katholiken und 935.849 Orthodoxe. Zur Aufstellung der Daten der Volkszählung aus dem Jahre 1897 siehe: Mironowicz / Tokć / Radzik 2005, S. 16,

die Belarussen eine große Gruppe unter ihnen bildeten. Eine beachtliche Prozentanzahl machten in diesen Gebieten auch die orthodoxen Belarussen aus.⁵⁵ Allgemein muss man jedoch feststellen, dass sich sowohl die Sozialisten als auch die Nationaldemokraten die Regionen Vilnius und Grodno innerhalb der polnischen Grenzen vorstellten.

Ein gesteigertes Interesse der polnischen Seite an der belarussischen Frage kam während der bolschewistischen Offensive im Sommer 1920 auf. In dieser Zeit war das belarussische Unabhängigkeitslager schon seit einigen Monaten zerrüttet und geteilt. Im Dezember 1919 kam es während der Versammlung der Mitglieder des BNR-Rates in Minsk zum Bruch, der von den belarussischen Sozialrevolutionären, die von russischen Bolschewisten dazu inspiriert worden waren, hervorgerufen wurde.⁵⁶ Auf der Sitzung wurde eine zur BNR konkurrierende Regierung unter der Leitung von Łastoŭski und ein neuer Rat der BNR berufen, die parallel zu den bisherigen Organen bis zum Februar 1920, als Premierminister Łuckievič zurücktrat, amtierten.⁵⁷ Łastoŭskis Regierung arbeitete von Lettland und der Litauischen Republik aus, in Warschau fungierte der bisherige Rat der BNR unter dem Namen Oberster Rat der BNR unter der Leitung von Ivan Sierada.⁵⁸

Unter dem roten Stern: die Belarussische Sozialistische Sowjetrepublik

Ein Zentrum für die belarussische Tätigkeit formierte sich auch an der Seite der Bolschewisten. Im September 1917 traten aus der Belarussischen Sozialistischen Hramada Arbeiter aus, die die Belarussische Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei

Tab. 8. Die Anzahl der Orthodoxen stieg bis Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts, danach sank sie aufgrund zeitweiliger Migration dieser Gruppe ins Innere Russlands.

55 Die konfessionelle Struktur der belarussischsprachigen Bevölkerung von 1897 im Gouvernement Vilnius: römische Katholiken 522.076, Orthodoxe 366.310, Juden 209, Altgläubige 1.548, Lutheraner 51, andere 1.709; im Gouvernement Grodno: römische Katholiken 213.623, Orthodoxe 490.211, Juden 398, Altgläubige 126, Lutheraner 124, andere 563; ebd., S. 17, Tab. 10.

56 Šupa 1998/1/1, S. 599, Nr. 1700: *List A. Luckieviča K. Jezavitamu za 13.01.1920 / Ліст А. Луцкевіча К. Езавітаму за 13.01.1920.*

57 Ebd., S. 688, Nr. 1900: *Pastanova staršyni Rady Narodnych Ministraŭ BNR Antona Luckieviča Varšava za 25.02.1920 (vuch. №71) / Пастанова старшыні Рады Народных Міністраў БНР Антона Луцкевіча Варшава за 25.02.1920 (вых. №71);* ebd., S. 688–689, Nr. 1901: *Pastanova staršyni Rady Narodnych Ministraŭ BNR Antona Luckieviča Varšava za 25.02.1920 (vuch. №72) / Пастанова старшыні Рады Народных Міністраў БНР Антона Луцкевіча Варшава за 25.02.1920 (вых. №72).*

58 Ebd., S. 534–535, Nr. 1561: *Pratakol nadzvychajnaga shodu Rady BHP za 13.12.1919 / Пратакол надзвычайнага сходу Рады БHP за 13.12.1919.*

mit bolschewistischem Charakter gründeten. Zu den Anführern der Partei gehörte u. a. Aliaksandr Čarviakoŭ, ein Aktivist mit kommunistischen Anschauungen, der sich aber für die Entfaltung der belarussischen Kultur und des belarussischen Bildungssystems einsetzte.⁵⁹ Im Dezember 1917 wurde auf Initiative des Belarussischen Kreiskomitees (BKK), das im Allrussischen Rat der Bauerndelegierten vertreten war, im Volkskommissariat für Nationalangelegenheiten der Russischen Sozialistischen Föderativen Sowjetrepublik (RSFSR) eine Belarussische Abteilung eingerichtet. Im Dezember 1917 war das BKK einer der Veranstalter der Allbelarussischen Versammlung. Die bolschewistischen Zentralbehörden hielten das für einen Akt der Willkür und des nationalen Separatismus und beschlossen, das BKK aufzulösen.⁶⁰ Im Februar 1918 bildete man demgegenüber am Volkssekretariat für Nationale Angelegenheiten der RSFSR das Belarussische Nationalkommissariat (BelNatkom), das von Čarviakoŭ⁶¹ geleitet wurde. Er stand an der Spitze einer Gruppe von kommunistischen Belarussen, die sich den Plänen der Inkorporation belarussischer Gebiete nach Sowjetrußland widersetzten und die Idee der Gründung einer belarussischen Republik als eines kommunistischen Staates postulierten, der eine Verbindung mit Russland (ohne Unabhängigkeitserklärung) bewahren würde. Sie sahen wohl nicht voraus, dass ihre Rolle in den leitenden Positionen im Staat sehr gering sein würde. Der Plan der Gründung der Belarussischen Sozialistischen Sowjetrepublik (BSSR) wurde von den russischen Bolschewisten spät, erst am 1. Januar 1919 akzeptiert. In diese Lösung willigten sie sehr ungern ein, da die Mehrheit von ihnen zur Einverleibung der belarussischen Gebiete durch Russland neigte. Eine solche Idee wäre überhaupt nicht aufgekommen, hätte es nicht die Proklamation der BNR, die Tätigkeit des belarussischen Unabhängigkeitslagers und die Befürchtungen gegeben, dass sich Belarus während der Verhandlungen mit Polen verbinden und der antisowjetischen Allianz anschließen würde.⁶²

Die Zusammensetzung der Provisorischen Arbeiter- und Bauernregierung der BSSR wurde in Abstimmung mit Stalin, der damals Sekretär für nationale Angelegenheiten der RSFSR war, festgelegt. Ungeachtet der Tatsache, dass die Regierung der BNR aus Sozialisten bestand und ein eher radikales Sozialprogramm vorlegte, wurde sie von den Vertretern der BSSR-Regierung gleich in der ersten Bekanntmachung für großbürgerlich erklärt und als Vertretung „belarussischer Grundbesitzer und Kapitalisten“ bezeichnet.⁶³ Dies sollte eine Propaganda-

59 Skalaban 1992, S. 409.

60 Turuk 1921, S. 101–105: *Dieklaracuja Bieloruskoho Oblastnoho Komutietia prу Vsierosujskom Sovietie Kriest'janskuch Dieputatov* / *Декларация Белорусского Областного Комитета пру Всероссийском Совете Крестьянских Депутатов.*

61 Rudovič 2017, S. 153.

62 Selemenev 2005, S. 20.

63 Ebd., S. 20; Lažko 2020, S. 27–29.

maßnahme sein. Die BSSR-Regierung setzte sich mehrheitlich aus Personen zusammen, die nie Familienbeziehungen zu den belarussischen Gebieten gehabt hatten. Die Immigranten besetzten die wichtigsten Kommissariate der BSSR: für Militärangelegenheiten, Verpflegung, Landwirtschaft, Innere Angelegenheiten, den Staatssicherheitsapparat. Die belarussischen Kommunisten mussten sich mit den Bildungssekretariaten, Sekretariaten für Sozialschutz, nationale Angelegenheiten und Gesundheit zufriedengeben. Die illusorische Selbstständigkeit der BSSR erwies sich jedoch als zu groß, da sie die Entfaltung des Nationallebens ermöglichte. Einige Wochen später, am 27. Februar 1919, entschied die Russische Kommunistische Partei (b) über den Zusammenschluss der BSSR und der Litauischen SSR zu einer Organisation, der Litauisch-Belarussischen SSR (LBSSR). Dies sollte die Bewohner beider Republiken vor der Zunahme nationaler Tendenzen schützen und zur Errichtung einer gemeinsamen Front für den Kampf gegen Polen beitragen.⁶⁴ Der Litauisch-Belarussischen SSR sollten die Gouvernements Minsk, Grodno, Vilnius, Kaunas und ein Teil des Gouvernements Suwalken angehören, und ihre Hauptstadt sollte Vilnius sein. An der Spitze der Regierung stand Vincas Mickievičius-Kapsukas, ein litauischer Journalist und der Vorsitzende der Kommunistischen Partei Litauens (*Lietuvos komunistų partija*). Er übernahm auch die Führung der Litauisch-Belarussischen Kommunistischen Partei, die in Folge der Vereinigung zweier kommunistischer Parteien – der belarussischen und litauischen – entstand.⁶⁵ Die LBSSR erwies sich aber als kurzlebig, denn bereits im Frühling 1919 besetzte das Polnische Heer Vilnius, und im Juni auch Minsk. Die Bolschewisten gaben jedoch die Idee der Gründung von Sowjetrepubliken auf nationaler Grundlage nicht mehr auf. Am 31. Juli 1920, vor dem Angriff auf Polen, wurde in Minsk die BSSR zum zweiten Mal proklamiert, wobei wieder der Strohmann Aliaksandar Čarviakoŭ an ihre Spitze gestellt wurde. Als Grenze zu Russland sollte die östliche Grenze des Gouvernements Minsk fungieren, das Schicksal der Grenzen im Westen hing demgegenüber vom Ergebnis des Krieges gegen Polen ab. Die Pläne, die BSSR im Rahmen der ethnischen Grenzen zu bilden, scheiterten jedoch, weil das Polnische Heer im August 1920 die Rote Armee nach Osten zurückwarf und Mitte Oktober Minsk einnahm. Das veränderte die Position Polens bei den polnisch-sowjetischen Verhandlungen, die bereits im August in Minsk begannen, als die Rote Armee eine erfolgreiche Offensive im Westen durchführte. Vereinbarungen zwischen Polen und Russland sollten über das weitere Schicksal der belarussischen Gebiete und der Belarussen entscheiden.

64 Waligóra 1938, S. 175: *Rezolucja o połączeniu Litwy z Białorusią*.

65 Selemenev 2005, S. 99.

Die Belarussen und die Konferenz in Riga

Ende September wurden die polnisch-sowjetischen Verhandlungen von Minsk in die Hauptstadt der Lettischen Republik Riga verlegt. Die polnische Seite vertrat Jan Dąbski, die sowjetische zunächst Karl Daniszewski (Kārlis Daniševskis), später Adolf Joffe. Die polnische Delegation setzte sich vorwiegend aus Vertretern der Nationaldemokratie zusammen. Sie standen der Föderationskonzeption und der Unabhängigkeit der Ukraine, die zu den Bestimmungen eines Vertrags zwischen Piłsudski und Petlura gehörten, ablehnend gegenüber. Der besagte Vertrag wurde im Frühling 1920 geschlossen, als sich Polen bemühte, Verbündete gegen Sowjetrußland zu gewinnen. Unter dem Einfluss der Nationaldemokraten zog die polnische Delegation ihre Unterstützung für die Ukrainische Volksrepublik zurück und erkannte dafür die Ukrainische Sozialistische Sowjetrepublik an, die am 24./25. Dezember 1917 von den Bolschewisten als Satellit Sowjetrußlands in Charkiw gegründet wurde. Obwohl die ukrainische Sowjetdelegation völlig nach dem Diktat Moskaus agierte, wurde sie in formaler Hinsicht zu einer Partei in den Verhandlungen, die den polnisch-bolschewistischen Krieg beendeten.

Die Konferenz in Riga, auf der sich das Schicksal der Belarussen entscheiden sollte, zog die Aufmerksamkeit aller belarussischen Zentren auf sich. Seit April 1920 weilte Premierminister Łastoŭski in der Hauptstadt Lettlands. Er hatte noch die Hoffnung, dass Sowjetrußland die Regierung der BNR und die von ihr vorgeschlagenen Grenzen anerkennen und mit ihm verhandeln würde.⁶⁶ Seine Aktivitäten erbrachten jedoch nicht die gewünschten Resultate, ähnlich wie seine Strategien in Bezug auf die polnische Delegation und die späteren empörten Proteste gegen die Teilung der belarussischen Gebiete, die an die polnische Delegation und die europäische öffentliche Meinung gerichtet waren.⁶⁷ Keine von den an den Verhandlungen teilnehmenden Parteien brauchte zu dieser Zeit die antibolschewistisch und antipolnisch orientierte Regierung Łastoŭskis. Die Anführer Sowjetrußlands, die die geringschätzig Haltung der polnischen Politiker der belarussischen Frage gegenüber beobachteten, sahen überhaupt keinen Grund dafür, dass Čarviakoŭ an den Verhandlungen teilnahm, obwohl er der Sowjetdelegation als Experte angehörte.

66 Šupa 1998/1/1, S. 725–726, Nr. 2013: *Nota Rady Narodnych Ministaj BNR za 25.04.1920 narodnamu kamisaru mižnarodnych spravaŭ RSFSR z prapanovaju pryznać nezaliežnaść BNR u jaje etnagrafičnych miežach i prystupić da miŭnych pierahavoraŭ* / *Nota Rady Narodnych Ministaj BHP za 25.04.1920 narodnamu kamisaru mižnarodnych spravaŭ RSFSR z prapanovaju pryznać nezaležnasyč BHP u je etnagrafičnych mežach i prystupić da miŭnych peragavoraŭ.*

67 Šupa 1998/1/1, S. 918–923, 928–929, Nr. 2455–2458, 2467.

Unter den Mitgliedern der polnischen Delegation der Konferenz kannte sich Leon Wasilewski, ein Mitarbeiter Piłsudskis und Befürworter der Föderationskonzeption, in der belarussischen Frage am besten aus. Seine Idee war, Vilnius und Minsk mit Polen zu verbinden und möglichst viele Gebiete im Osten Polen einzuverleiben, was die freie Entfaltung der belarussischen Nationalbewegung gewährleisten sollte.⁶⁸ Es lag ihm jedoch weder an der Zusammenarbeit mit den Vertretern der BNR-Regierung von Łastoŭski, noch an der Zusammenarbeit mit der BSSR-Regierung von Čarviakoŭ, sondern an einem Dialog mit den Repräsentanten des propolnisch eingestellten Obersten Rates der BNR, dessen Mitglieder sich in Warschau aufhielten. Im Herbst versuchte das Umfeld des polnischen Staatschefs, dessen Föderationskonzepte eben in Riga zerbrachen, Mitglieder des Obersten Rates der BNR für Piłsudskis politische Pläne zu gewinnen.⁶⁹ Unter seinem Einfluss bereitete man im Herbst 1920 einen Plan für die Besetzung von Vilnius vor, das sich seit Ende August nach dem Rückzug der Roten Armee unter litauischer Verwaltung befand (Vilnius wurde kraft des Vertrags vom 12. Juli 1920 von Sowjetrußland an Litauen abgetreten). Aufgrund eines Fehlers des Ministers für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten wurde die Vilnius-Frage internationalisiert und nahm einen für Polen ungünstigen Verlauf. Piłsudski entschied sich daher, Vilnius durch Truppen des Polnischen Heeres, die sich angeblich gegen ihre eigene Regierung „aufgelehnt“ hatten, erobern zu lassen. Infolge dieser Aktion nahmen die Abteilungen der Litauisch-Belarussischen Division des Polnischen Heeres am 9. Oktober 1920 Vilnius ein. Die Stadt wurde für zwei Jahre die Hauptstadt eines Quasi-Staates mit dem Namen Mittellitauen (das 1922 Polen eingegliedert wurde). Der Oberste Rat der BNR, den man dazu zu überreden versuchte, die Einnahme von Vilnius durch das Polnische Heer zu unterstützen, distanzierte sich jedoch davon – mit Ausnahme von Waclaŭ Ivanoŭski (Wacław Iwanowski) und Branisłaŭ Taraškiewič (Bronisław Taraszkiewicz).⁷⁰ Außer dem Obersten Rat der BNR gab es in Warschau seit Herbst 1920 noch ein weiteres politisches Zentrum – das Belarussische Politische Komitee (*Bielaruski polityčny kamitet / Беларускі палітычны камітэт*) unter der Leitung von Viačaslaŭ Adamovič (dem Älteren) und Pawel Alaksiuk.⁷¹ Es war völlig auf die Zusammenarbeit mit Polen eingestellt. Seine Tätigkeit entfaltete es in Zusammenarbeit mit General Stanisłaŭ Bułak-Bałačovič (Stanisław Bułak-Bałačowicz), der nach einer kurzen Allianz mit der BNR-Regierung des Premierministers Anton Łuckiewič von der polnischen Regierung gewonnen wurde

68 Pietrzak 1998, S. 347–348.

69 Łatyszczek 1998, S. 291.

70 Ebd., S. 291.

71 Ebd., S. 289.

und zum Führungskommando der polnischen Streitkräfte übergang.⁷² Im November 1920, schon nach der Unterzeichnung des Präliminarvertrags durch die verhandelnden Seiten in Riga, unternahm Bułak-Bałačovič einen bewaffneten Feldzug gegen Sowjetrussland. In dem von ihm besetzten Mosyr in Ostpolesien berief er die nächste BNR-Regierung und stellte Wiatscheslau Adamovich an ihre Spitze. Diese Regierung war ein kurzlebiges Organ, da die Rote Armee die Militärabteilungen des Generals zerschlug, woraufhin sie sich zusammen mit den Mitgliedern der von ihm berufenen Regierung in die völlig vom Polnischen Heer kontrollierten Gebiete zurückzogen.⁷³ Man kann vermuten, dass auch diese Operationen von Piłsudski, der durch diesen letzten Akt seine Föderationskonzeption doch noch realisieren wollte, angetrieben wurden. Es war wohl kein Zufall, dass die Aktion von General Bułak-Bałačovič mit der Bildung von Mittellitauen zusammenfiel.⁷⁴ Weder die Berufung des Belarussischen Politischen Komitees noch die Eskapade General Bułak-Bałačovič fand Anerkennung des Obersten Rates der BNR, der darin nicht nur politische Konkurrenz, sondern auch den Versuch erblickte, ihn durch eine Organisation zu ersetzen, die sich den polnischen Politikern und der polnischen Staatsräson fügte.⁷⁵

Am 12. Oktober 1920 wurde der Präliminarvertrag zwischen Polen einerseits und Sowjetrussland andererseits abgeschlossen. In Artikel 1 des Präliminarvertrags erkannten Sowjetrussland und Polen die Existenz der Belarussischen Sowjetrepublik (sowie der Ukrainischen Sowjetrepublik) an. Um den Preis des Verzichts auf die Grenzziehung entlang der Curzon-Linie sah Polen von der Unterstützung der Ukrainischen Volksrepublik ab. Die polnische Delegation verzichtete auch auf Minsk. Das geschah unter dem Druck der ihr angehörenden Nationaldemokraten, die beabsichtigten, die Ausweitung der polnischen Grenze im Osten zu beschränken und die Anzahl der nationalen Minderheiten auf dem Gebiet des polnischen Staates zu verringern.⁷⁶ Der vereinbarte Verlauf der östlichen Grenze entsprach grundsätzlich der Grenzlinie des Russischen Zarenreiches und der *Rzeczpospolita*, die nach der 2. Teilung 1793 festgelegt worden war. Die vorgeschlagene Grenze trennte die belarussischen Gebiete in zwei Teile, verletzte die Jahrhunderte lang bestehenden Handels- und Verkehrsnetze, missachtete die Verbindung zwischen Stadtzentren und dem Land, zerschnitt sogar Bauernhöfe und trennte Familien.⁷⁷ Diese Entscheidung stieß auf Protest

72 Šupa 1998/1/1, S. 564, Nr. 1613: *Rapart šefa Vajskova-Dyplamatyčnaj Misii BNR K. Jezavitava A. Luckieviču za 27. 12. 1919* / *Ранарт изъфа Вайскова-Дыпламатычнай Мисіі БНР К. Езавітава А. Луцкевічу за 27. 12. 1919*; Jėkabsons 2011, S. 150.

73 Łatyszonek 1998, S. 291.

74 Hieś / Liachoŭski / Michniuk 2006, S. 15.

75 Ebd., S. 17.

76 Stankiewicz 1989, S. 173–174.

77 *Umowa o preliminarynym pokoju i rozejmie 1921.*

aller belarussischen Akteure – der BNR-Regierung von Łastoŭski, des Obersten Rates der BNR in Warschau, und sogar Čarviakoŭ, der von der Haltung der bolschewistischen Anführer, die in die Abtretung eines Teils belarussischen Gebietes an Polen einwilligten, enttäuscht war.⁷⁸ Man war sich darüber im Klaren, dass das Projekt der Bildung eines belarussischen Staates innerhalb der ethnischen Grenzen endgültig durchkreuzt wurde. Die Bildung der BSSR als eines Miniaturstaates, der sich lediglich aus sechs Kreisen zusammensetzte, stellte niemanden zufrieden.⁷⁹ Es war schmerzhaft für die belarussischen Politiker, dass die beiden verhandelnden Seiten sie völlig ignorierten und geringschätzig behandelten. Sie machten also darauf aufmerksam, dass die belarussischen Gebiete aufgeteilt wurden, ohne dass der Wille ihrer Bewohner in Betracht gezogen worden wäre.

Der Präliminarvertrag und die Besetzung von Vilnius trugen zur Annäherung zwischen der BNR-Regierung von Łastoŭski und der Regierung Litauens bei, die am 11. November 1920 ein Abkommen über Zusammenarbeit abschlossen, das gegen Polen gerichtet war. Als Gegenleistung für die Unterstützung der Bemühungen Litauens in Bezug auf die Stadt und die Region Vilnius erlangte die Regierung von Łastoŭski einen Zufluchtsort in Kaunas und das Versprechen gemeinsamen Wirkens auf internationaler Ebene.⁸⁰

Vom Rigaer Vertrag waren nicht nur belarussische Politiker und ein Teil der belarussischen Bevölkerung, sondern auch polnische Grundbesitzer enttäuscht, deren Güter nun auf der östlichen Seite der „Rigaer Grenze“ lagen. Für sie bedeutete das die Notwendigkeit, ihre Heimat unwiderruflich zu verlassen und sich innerhalb der polnischen Grenzen anzusiedeln. Das Verbleiben auf dem Gebiet des sowjetischen Staates, dessen System sich gegen die besitzenden Schichten richtete, war mit zu großem Risiko verbunden. Die Anwesenheit bolschewistischer Truppen im Osten und im Zentrum von Belarus und des Polnischen Heeres im Westen verhinderte Proteste seitens derjenigen belarussischen Einwohner, deren politisches Bewusstsein so weit entwickelt war, dass sie die aktuellen Ereignisse einschätzen konnten. Man sollte ferner bedenken, dass in Russland immer noch Kriegsflüchtlinge zurückblieben, die erst nach Ende der Kriegsoperationen in die Heimat zurückkehren konnten. Die im Herbst 1920 fallenden Entscheidungen riefen daher nur im Kreis Sluzk des Gouvernements Minsk einen gewissen Widerhall hervor, der laut den Beschlüssen des Vertrags der BSSR angehören sollte. Während der Verhandlungen der Rigaer Konferenz befand sich dieser Kreis in einer neutralen Zone, die weder vom Polnischen Heer noch von der Roten Armee kontrolliert wurde. Wesentlich ist auch die Information, dass

78 Łatyszczek 1998, S. 290.

79 Siehe Abb. 2 am Ende des Beitrages.

80 Šupa 1998/1/2, S. 943, Nr. 2476: *Dawiedka ab Uradzie BNR / Даведка аб Урадзе БНР*.

1915 nur 4,6 % der Bevölkerung diesen Kreis verließen, während z. B. im Kreis Brest des Gouvernements Grodno Kriegsflüchtlinge nicht weniger als 68 % ausmachten.⁸¹

Der Kreis Sluzk geriet in den 15 Kilometer langen Streifen, der polnische und bolschewistische Truppen trennte.⁸² Nach der Februarrevolution entfaltete das Belarussische Nationalkomitee (BNK) eine sehr rege bildungsbezogene, kulturelle und politische Tätigkeit, was zu einem großen Anstieg des Nationalbewusstseins führte.⁸³ Eine wichtige Rolle spielten dabei belarussische Sozialrevolutionäre. Am 4. November rief das BNK die Belarussische Versammlung des Kreises Sluzk zusammen, die nach anfänglichem Widerstand seitens der Sozialrevolutionäre den Obersten Rat der BNR anerkannte (dessen Mitglieder sich in Warschau aufhielten).⁸⁴ Der Rat des Kreises Sluzk, der während der Versammlung gewählt wurde, erließ am 21. November eine Deklaration, die die belarussische Bevölkerung zum Kampf um ein unabhängiges Belarus in den ethnografischen Grenzen aufrief. Dies führte zu einem einige Wochen andauernden antibolschewistischen Aufstand. Man begann auch mit der Mobilmachung des belarussischen Heeres. Zwei Regimenter der damals formierten 1. Sluzker Schützenbrigade nahmen an den Kämpfen gegen die Bolschewisten teil. Der Sluzker Aufstand wurde von General Bułak-Bałačovič unterstützt.⁸⁵ Alle antibolschewistischen Aktionen waren während der noch andauernden Verhandlungen für Polen nützlich. Die Sluzker Aufständischen kämpften vor allem um ein unabhängiges Belarus.⁸⁶ Den Absichten des BNK kam auch die Unzufriedenheit der belarussischen Bauernbevölkerung zugute, die bereits die Last der Requisition und der zwanghaften Einberufung in die Rote Armee, Morde und Raub durch die Bolschewiken erfahren hatte. Diese in diesem Kreis relativ wohlhabende Gruppe hatte triftige Gründe für die Befürchtung, dass im Falle der Besetzung des Kreises Sluzk durch die Bolschewisten solche Aktionen erneut auftreten könnten. Durch die Teilnahme am Sluzker Aufstand verteidigten die belarussischen Bauern ihr Recht auf Privateigentum und manifestierten ihren Unwillen dem bolschewistischen Programm gegenüber, insbesondere in Bezug auf privaten Landbesitz, der kaum zwei Generationen zuvor nach der Aufhebung der Leibeigenschaft unter großen Mühen erlangt worden war. Der Aufstand wurde innerhalb eines Monats von den bolschewistischen Truppen mit einer so großen Gewalt niedergeschlagen, dass die eben erst formierten belarussischen

81 AAN: *Akta Leona Wasilewskiego*, Sign. 40, Bl. 15: *Wyludnienie na Białorusi*.

82 Łatyszonek 1998, S. 291.

83 Hieś / Liachouški / Michniuk 2006, S. 13–14.

84 Karpus / Rezmer 1996, S. 74–75.

85 Ebd.; Łatyszonek 1996, S. 213.

86 Stuzynskaja 2012, S. 45–50.

Abteilungen überhaupt keine Chance hatten, an den Kämpfen teilzunehmen.⁸⁷ Die bewaffnete Manifestation entfachte jedoch bei einem Teil der Bevölkerung im Grenzgebiet den nationalen Geist und schuf eine Grundlage für die Aktionen der belarussischen bewaffneten Truppen der „Grünen Eiche“ an der Grenze zwischen Polen und Sowjetbelarus auf beiden Seiten der Rigaer Grenze. Nach dem Anschluss des Kreises Sluzk an Sowjetbelarus erfolgten Repressionen gegen diejenigen Aufstandsteilnehmer, die die Grenze zu Polen nicht überquert hatten.⁸⁸

Die Herbstverhandlungen in Riga betrachteten beide daran teilnehmenden Seiten und die Beobachter als eine Pause im polnisch-bolschewistischen Krieg, deswegen maß man den gefassten Beschlüssen kein großes Gewicht bei. Die Kriegshandlungen wurden jedoch nicht weiter fortgesetzt und die vorläufigen Vereinbarungen zwischen Sowjetrussland, der Sowjetukraine und Polen, darunter der oben erwähnte Verlauf der Grenze, wurden mit dem Vertrag vom 18. März 1921 bestätigt.

Schluss

Die Handlungen der belarussischen Elite zugunsten der Bildung eigener Staatlichkeit wichen von der Aktivität der Politiker anderer Nationen, die nach der Gründung demokratischer Republiken in den Randgebieten des ehemaligen russischen Staates strebten, nicht ab. Die Idee der Gründung der Belarussischen Volksrepublik scheiterte jedoch. Darüber entschied die Verflechtung von außergewöhnlich ungünstigen Faktoren, die eine Folge nicht nur schwieriger Kriegsbedingungen (Migration der belarussischen Bevölkerung ins Innere Russlands, Teilung des belarussischen Territoriums durch die Frontlinie), sondern auch vieler Versäumnisse und Prozesse der Vergangenheit (Verlust der Eliten, niedriger Bildungsgrad, Russifizierungs- und Polonisierungsprozesse, späte nationale Konsolidierung) waren. Keine westeuropäische Regierung beachtete die Ansprüche belarussischer Politiker, und die Existenz der belarussischen Nation war für westeuropäische Staaten eine große Überraschung. Viele russische und auch polnische Politiker wollten die nationalen Veränderungen, die an der Wende vom 19. zum 20. Jahrhundert erfolgten und in der Zeit des Krieges und der Revolution beschleunigt wurden, nicht akzeptieren. Anfänglich lehnten auch die Bolschewisten die politischen Ansprüche der Belarussen ab, letztendlich jedoch waren sie es eben, die sich entschieden, die belarussischen Interessen voll und ganz zu nutzen. Sie schufen und unterstützten das mit der

87 Karpus / Rezmer 1996, S. 77.

88 Stuzynskaja 2012, S. 107–118.

BNR konkurrierende Projekt der Gründung der BSSR unter ihrer eigenen Hegemonie. Die Organisation dieses Quasi-Staates sowie das Ergebnis der Rigaer Verhandlungen waren jedoch für die belarussischen Kommunisten genauso enttäuschend wie das Scheitern des nationalen Projektes (BNR). Unabhängig von den politischen Ansichten und dem gegenseitigen Verhältnis betrachteten alle belarussischen Akteure den Rigaer Vertrag als eine Teilung belarussischer Gebiete. In allen ihren Programmen stellten die belarussischen Organisationen und Parteien die Notwendigkeit der territorialen Integration an die erste Stelle. Diese wurde jedoch missachtet – den staatlichen Verträgen zuwider und unter Verletzung des internationalen Rechts –, als am 17. September 1939 Sowjetrußland in Polen einmarschierte. Die sowjetische Propaganda behauptete, dass die Truppen der Roten Armee diese Handlungen unternahmen, um die belarussische und ukrainische Bevölkerung vor den Folgen des Krieges zwischen Deutschland und Polen zu schützen. Die Entscheidung in dieser Frage fiel jedoch kraft des geheimen Molotow-Ribbentrop-Paktes, der am 28. August 1939, einige Tage vor dem Überfall von Nazideutschland auf Polen und dem Beginn des 2. Weltkrieges, geschlossen wurde. Das Ziel der Operation war es, der deutschen Militärführung die Erreichung der Kriegsziele zu erleichtern.

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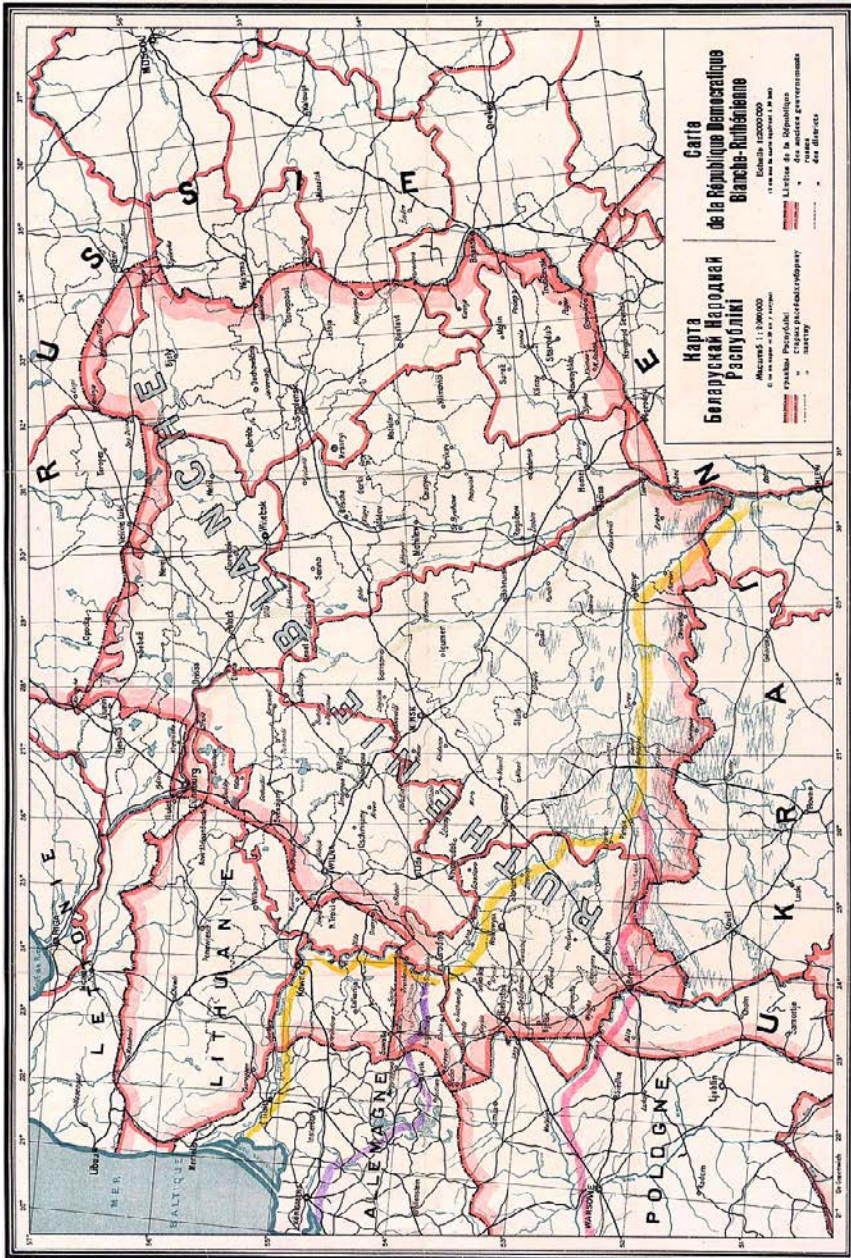


Abb. 1. Konzept der Grenzen der Belarussischen Volksrepublik, in: *Karta Bieloruskoj Narodnoj Rjespubluku / Карта Беларускай Народной Рэспублікі = Carte de la Republique Democratique Blanche Ruthenienne* [Karte der Belarussischen Volksrepublik], die 1918 für den Friedenskongress zu Paris vorbereitet wurde. Verfasser unbekannt, Wikimedia Commons.



Abb. 2. Belarussische Sozialistische Sowjetrepublik (Ende des Jahres 1938), *Belaruskaya: Kartannyy atlas SSSR, Glavnoye Upravleniye geodezii i kartografii pri SNK SSSR / Беларuskaya. Карманний атлас СССР, Главное Управление геодезии и картографии при СНК СССР*, Wikimedia Commons.

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