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THE YEARS 1918-1921: THE RECOVERY OF POLISH INDEPENDENCE IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

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The article highlights Poland's foreign policy in 1918-1921 and emphasizes that the key role in the restoration of independent Poland was played by Józef Piłsudski, a moderate socialist leader of the independent forces of Poland, and the conservative Polish National Committee in Paris led by Roman Dmowski. At the beginning of 1919, a new Polish government was formed, which included members of both these political parties. The decision on Poland's western borders was made at the Paris Conference. The new Bolshevik Russia and its imperialism became the most terrible threat to the newly created Polish state, as it was demonstrated in 1920 during the Polish-Bolshevik war. The idea of a friendly Ukrainian independent state in the East was not achieved, despite efforts in this direction. Another threat was associated with German revisionism. However, Poland defended its independence, and new borders of the country were established. Relations with other neighbours, Czechoslovakia and Lithuania, were strained due to border disputes. The exceptions were Romania and Latvia.

Keywords: Poland, independence, Polish-Bolshevik war, Polish foreign policy, Polish borders

Introduction. On November 11th, 1918 the birth of an independent state, the Republic of Poland, took place in Warsaw, the old Polish capital. This event had been made possible the previous day, when the most important and dynamic leader of the Polish independence movement, Józef Piłsudski, freshly released from a German prison in Magdeburg, arrived in the city. He was a moderate socialist but, above all, a man whose overriding goal was the independence of his homeland. On November 11th, he was given military command and, on the 14th civil power, whereupon he declared himself the Provisional Head of State until the convocation of Parliament¹. The year 1918 should be seen as part of the great process of establishing the Versailles system, which started at the end of that year but lasted some years more, practically until 1921. In 1918, Poland recovered its independence. This occurred 123 years after the final partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Republic as carried out by the neighboring absolutist states: Russia, which took the biggest part of Polish territory, Austria, and Prussia. But independence also came 146 years after the first partition of the *Res Publica*. So many years without the possibility of normal development and so many years of foreign exploitation. The main problem for the 20 million Poles under partition was that Russia, the tsarist despotic regime, with its generally lower level of economy and material culture, was vitally interested in maintaining Poland's non-existence. On the other hand, German chauvinism played its role in the Prussian part, but the economic level of Poles there was high and during those long years they were able to use to their advantage the formal state of law.

The purpose of the study is to highlight the restoration of Poland's independence in the international context during 1918-1921.

¹ Wandycz, P.S. (2001). *The Price of Freedom. A History of East Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present*. London; New York: Routledge, 199; Zamoyski, A. (2009). *Warsaw 1920. Lenin's Failed Conquest of Europe*. London: Harper Press, 292.

Basic definitions and terms. From the middle of the 19th century Poles enjoyed the most favorable conditions in Austria and then in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The development of Polish culture was possible there, the participation of Poles in the main circles of the monarchy was high, but economic stagnation was a big challenge.

In 1795, the Polish-Lithuanian noblemen's republic was destroyed mainly by the Russian army. Independence came in 1918 because of WWI, the first universal war in the history of humanity, when the Poles were trying to profit from the differences between the three invaders. Some of them like those who were part of National Democracy a conservative movement were closer to seeking solutions in cooperation with Russia and were against the central states. Some other politicians, like Piłsudski, wanted to prepare conditions for creating a Reborn state in the lands of the weakest power – Austria-Hungary.

The Polish leader started that war on the side of the Austrians. When conflict broke out in 1914, he led a military campaign with his supporters against Russia, trying to launch a new uprising – but without any success. The aim of Piłsudski was full independence by organizing the military effort of the Poles. He was the first to understand that his countrymen were obliged to show that they were not about to wait for the decisions of the victors in the war without any military effort. So in September 1914 he created a secret Polish Military Organization (POW) to fight for independence against Russia. During the war POW pursued intelligence operations and military training, waiting for the proper moment to act militarily. POW was the first Polish military organization not controlled by the foreign countries. Some other Poles saw possibilities for achieving vast autonomy in alliance with Vienna – these were the activists of the Supreme National Committee, established in Cracow (Kraków) in August 1914, and which led the Polish Legions in which Piłsudski was also involved².

These units fought bravely against Russia, and in 1915 they numbered nearly 20 thousand Poles. In 1916, a crisis inside the Legions occurred when Piłsudski resigned as a protest against the central powers' policy of not recognizing the Legions as a Polish force fighting for independence. When in July 1917, the Polish leader and his soldiers refused to swear an oath of fidelity to the central powers, the Legions were disarmed, and its soldiers were interned or incorporated into the Austro-Hungarian army. Piłsudski was arrested and sent to the prison in Magdeburg. It helped him not to be considered a loyal ally of the central countries.

Poland's situation in 1918-1921 and its foreign policy. The situation was complicated. Paradoxically, in the summer of 1915 the main power in Polish lands was Germany, which occupied the Russian part of Poland, causing great hardship till the end of the war. This was preceded by the massive and arbitrary evacuation of people, industries, and capital by the Russians. The Polish lands witnessed vast destruction during the war and Polish soldiers greatly suffered via their mass-participation in the three armies. Very often they were fighting against their own countrymen and thus were dying and being buried as Russian, German, or Austrian officers and soldiers. Half a million Poles perished in these three armies.

The three empires were intent on recruiting more and more Poles. So they used certain ploys and promised in a very vague and general manner the restoration of Poland. One of these manipulations was the act of November 5th, 1916 in the name of the German and Austrian emperors. The creation of the Kingdom of Poland was announced. It was to be formed by the lands controlled up to the outbreak of the war with Russia. This act was quite important as the first sign of a lack of solidarity between these three countries in Polish matters. It was also a reaction to the crisis of the Polish Legions in July. The Russian answer came on December 25th. The tsar announced plans to create a free Poland, composed by lands controlled until 1914 by Russia, Prussia, and Austria-Hungary. In January 1917, the Polish Provisional Council of State was created by the Germans and

² Ibidem.

lasted till August. At the beginning of that year, the President of the United States, Thomas Woodrow Wilson, called for a united and independent Poland, something he repeated in January of the next year. In March 1917, the tsar abdicated, but the Provisional Russian Government maintained the vision of a free Polish state, giving permission to create Polish military formations in Russia³.

Germany also allowed the creation of Polish military forces. In June, Paris gave the green light to create a Polish Army in France and in August a Polish National Committee was created in Paris, which in the near future became for the Entente an official representative of the Polish nation, also responsible for the protection of Poles abroad. In September, the Committee was recognized by France, in October by the United Kingdom and Italy, and in December by the USA.

Meanwhile, in September 1917, Germans and Austrians created in the lands they occupied a Regency Council of the Kingdom of Poland, which had little power, but was the first real Polish authority with its own government. The situation changed dramatically in November with the Bolshevik coup d'état against the democratic government in Russia. The Bolshevik dictatorship soon unleashed its unbridled terror and the situation in the East became completely unpredictable. The peace of Brest in March 1918 was very dangerous for Poland as the Bolsheviks agreed to borders in the West as in the mid-17th century, and as a result the Polish cause became an internal German matter. In August, the Russians declared the cancellation of the partitions of Poland but this was a tactical trick, which became clear very soon⁴.

In October 1918, the Regency Council maintained that its goal was the full independence of Poland. On the 26th of that month the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs was created. In October – with the visible collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire – the Polish institutions in Western Galicia (Galicja) and in Cieszyn Silesia (Teschen Silesia, Śląsk Cieszyński) started to control those territories in the name of Poland. On November 6th and 7th a provisional Government of the Polish Popular Republic was created in Lublin by Polish socialists who were supporters of independence. Along with the leftist character of the governments appointed later on by Piłsudski, after the recovery of the independence, this was very crucial, as it was a mortal blow against Bolshevik agitation in Poland. On November 11th, the same day when the Regency Council handed over military power to Piłsudski, the Entente and Germany signed an armistice in Compiègne⁵.

The circumstances for Poland were very favorable, and for the first time in many years. The simultaneous disaster of the three black eagles – as the occupiers were called in Poland – i.e., the defeat of the central states and a radical change of government in Russia, all happened even though these countries began the war on opposite sides. Thus there was a collapse of three empires, and especially Russia, which was the most important factor as the tsarist state was a part of the Entente. To have Sankt Petersburg as one of the winners of WWI would have been a very negative factor for Polish aspirations. But in 1918 there was a political vacuum in all three parts of Poland, one which was to be filled up by the Entente, the USA, the remains of the former powers in Central-Eastern Europe, and new or old aspirations of the nations to have their own states. In the short term this was a very positive and profitable situation for Poland as there was no danger of having one of these three occupiers of Polish territory as a winning and victorious power at the peace conference.

In November 1918, a new Polish Government controlled Warsaw and the central part of Poland. The new state had practically no fixed borders. As it happened, they were to be shaped in a very difficult and chaotic international situation. The main goal was to

³ Wandycz, P.S. (2001). *The Price of Freedom. A History of East Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present*. 199.

⁴ Wandycz, P.S. (1996). *The Lands of Partitioned Poland, 1795–1918*. Seattle; London: University of Washington Press.

⁵ Ibidem.

defend and consolidate independence, to fight with combined diplomatic and military means to have proper borders and to obtain for Poland its place in a new European order. But Polish lands were ruined, and industry was destroyed. There was massive unemployment and massive immigration abroad. Hunger was something obvious. The disastrous consequences of the war as a part of the Eastern front and as a result of the occupations were glaring. We should add to this the threat of the prisoners of war which were liberated (especially Russians), as this was creating a danger to the public order. The collapse of the three powers that had destroyed the noblemen's republic at the end of the 18th century did not mean that there was no threat to Poland's independence⁶.

The main danger was the expansion of White or Bolshevik Russia from the East and of a new Germany from the West. Both Russia and Germany were traditionally very interested in the non-existence of a Polish state. That threat became real in 1920 from the East. The two imperialist powers in their new forms were temporarily weak because of military defeats and internal fights. That is why almost 20 years of a relative calm passed. And in September 1939 these two states carried out their aim – they attacked Poland in a coordinated manner. In turn, the Western powers, Great Britain and France, which gave their guaranties to Polish sovereignty, did not fulfill their obligations. This caused Poland to lose its independence again – for 50 years, till 1989.

But coming back, at the end of 1918, the main issue was that the small territory controlled by the Warsaw Government was surrounded from the West, North and East by German troops of the Ober-Ost, a formation half a million soldiers strong and based in Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic States, and Polish Podlaquia (Podlasie). The Germans wanted to evacuate these troops through central Poland. The primary goal of Polish diplomacy and its principal purpose was to get rid of the German troops, but not through the Polish lands. It was also important to stop their misconduct and robbery, even some clashes against Poles, and to control the lands abandoned by Germans while not allowing the Bolsheviks to fill the vacuum.

Another problem was the double representation of the Polish nation, as it often happens in such situations when there is no state and not only one political group wants to be the leader. The first center was the Polish Government in Warsaw, which was formed by the people of Piłsudski, someone very popular as the leader of Polish Legions⁷.

It controlled a part of Polish lands with Warsaw included. It had at its disposal a small number of foreign representations of the former Regency Council. At the beginning the Warsaw Government was ignored by the Entente and was considered pro-German when in November-December 1918 the German envoy was practically the only foreign diplomat in Warsaw. On November 16th, Piłsudski notified the governments of all countries involved in the war (and neutrals, as well) of the restoration of an independent and sovereign Poland. The next day the Polish Foreign Minister informed his counterparts from Great Britain, France, the USA, Italy, Japan, and Portugal (it was a short and not very well-aimed list) about this notification of Piłsudski and asked them to send their official representatives to Warsaw. But the response was dead silence⁸.

The second center of foreign policy was the Polish National Committee considered the representative of Polish interests in the West with its own voluntary armed force, but controlled by the French, i.e., the Blue Army created in France in June 1917 with 70 thousand Poles. The leader of the Committee was Roman Dmowski, along with the representative in the USA – namely, the world-famous pianist and composer Ignacy Jan Paderewski, who probably convinced President Wilson to call for the restoration of an

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ Ciechanowski, J.S. (2005). *Lt-Col. Jan Kowalewski's Mission in Portugal*. In T. Stirling, D. Nałęcz, T. Dubicki (Eds.), *Intelligence Co-operation Between Poland and Great Britain During World War II*, v. 1, *The Report of the Anglo-Polish Historical Committee*. London–Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell.

independent Polish state in his famous 14 points. The Committee had a privileged position among Entente powers and disposed of representations in its main capitals. It was financed via a special credit by Paris and less by London and because of this it depended on those powers. The Committee was very close to Paris. There was less understanding with London because of the attacks against that Polish organization. The advantage of the Committee was that it had always supported the Entente. So there was an urgent need of cooperation between the Warsaw Government and Paris Committee. The newly created state desired not only a consolidation of state power, but also a creation of a single center for foreign policy. Only then would it be possible to commence normal diplomatic relations. Cooperation was not easy because of political differences and contradictory goals, and also because of some communication problems. Finally, as a result of an initial agreement in December 1918, some representatives of the Government entered the Committee in Paris. The dualism was eliminated between January and April 1919, but very harmful situations for Polish interests occurred in that time, ones that created the impression of chaos⁹.

A compromise was needed before the Paris conference, which started on January 12th, 1919. Few days later a Government led by Paderewski was created, but rough negotiations about the spheres of influence and personalities lasted very long. The delegation to Paris, led by Paderewski (who – as other prime ministers – spent the majority of his time there) and Dmowski, was mainly controlled by members of the Polish National Committee, also as a result of French pressure. So it was possible to defend the Polish cause during the conference, although the agreement came very late. In that situation the recognition of Poland as a state occurred at the end of January 1919, more than two months after the declaration of independence. The Polish Government was recognized first by the USA, on January 30th, 1919, and then the Entente powers – by France on February 24th, by Great Britain February 25th, and by Italy on February 27th. This was followed by other countries. Now there was no obstacle to establish normal diplomatic relations with Poland. Until May 1919 the outposts of the Polish National Committee were gradually subordinated to the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was shaped by activists of the Committee, supporters of Piłsudski, employees of the State Department of the Regency Council, and in a small amount – by former Polish diplomats in Austro-Hungarian foreign service, especially in consular matters. At the beginning there were mostly Polish aristocrats and landowners in the foreign service, but later this changed. In April 1919, the Polish National Committee was dissolved. Both sides were conscious that the most important decisions about Poland's political future were to be taken by voters during the first elections. But to hold them, first there was the need to establish security and stable borders.

The ideas on where to set Poland's borders were related to the boundaries of the Polish-Lithuanian Republic before its first partition in 1772, but it was obvious that the appearance and strengthening of modern national movements in Ukraine and Lithuania, less in Belarus, were also to be taken into consideration. There were two general concepts. The first, supported by Piłsudski, was to establish a federation of Poland with nations such as Lithuania, Ukraine, and Belarus, with their right to self-determination. These nations were to serve as Polish allies and as a buffer between Poland and Bolshevik Russia. This idea had no success mainly because the majority of the forces in those new states were not interested in such cooperation and – except Lithuania – they had no strength to maintain their independence (as Ukraine) or create a proper and strong national movement, as in Belarus. Piłsudski therefore slowly accepted, with certain reservations, the "incorporative" conception, mainly supported by the National Democrats. But Piłsudski wanted to gather inside the borders as many Poles as possible, whereas the conservatives were opting only for territories with an ethnic Polish majority, with more or less the borders of the second partition of Poland, and they didn't want to have too many alien national elements inside

⁹ Ibidem.

the state. Generally, in such a situation, Piłsudski, as the Head of the Polish state, decided to be passive but firm in the West and dynamic and creative in the East, pursuing there, a policy of *fait accompli*. In that aim, a strong and efficient army with high morale was necessary. The situation was improved when between April and June 1919 the Polish Army in France returned to Poland, along with tens of thousands of Polish prisoners of war from France, Italy, and Great Britain¹⁰.

But the Polish independent state was still in dire danger. Poland was surrounded almost completely by hostile powers having contradictory interests. The geopolitical position was as usual ill-fated, with two great enemies – one in the East, the other to the West – and practically no natural borders with them.

Poland's relations with its neighbors and other powers. Germany and the Entente. In 1918, Poland was surrounded by German troops and there was a real threat of war in Great Poland (Wielkopolska – the oldest region of the country, centered on Poznań) and in Silesia (Śląsk), two regions of the Prussian partition, where the independence aspirations of Poles were very strong. Also the Poles from Pomerania (Pomorze) – the third part – wanted to be back to Poland. Warsaw, of course, supported the reintegration of the Prussian partition with the homeland. Germany was conducting a very fierce anti-Polish propaganda war.

On December 27th, 1918 a Polish uprising started in Great Poland as a result of German provocations and the visit of Paderewski. There was a revolt in Germany then, but in January 1919, the German Government assumed the offensive¹¹. The Entente obliged the Germans to an armistice in Trier, also on the Polish front. In February an agreement was signed to evacuate German troops from the East not through Poland. But the danger was still real. There was a 350-thousand strong German army near the Polish border and rumors spread of plans to create a formally independent German Oststaat (Eastern State).

The Entente was the main power to decide the future of Europe, especially towards the central states and their satellites. France – a traditional Polish ally, especially from Napoleonic times – was looking for a system to limit the potential German threat. The challenge for Poland was the very close relation of Paris with the interests of White Russia, which could cause great danger for the Polish borders in the East as the White Russians were generally accepting only the borders of the so-called Kingdom of Poland, created and controlled by Sankt Petersburg in 1815.

But when Bolshevik power was consolidated, Poland (as the main pillar of the countries of the region) became for Paris a barrier to German expansion in the East and a sanitary cordon against the Bolsheviks. In February 1921, a defensive alliance was established between Paris and Warsaw, but practically only in the case of a German attack. On the other hand, France tried to have a very influential position in the Polish economy, fighting in these first years against Polish-German economic cooperation.

In the case of the United Kingdom it very soon became obvious that looking for balance meant supporting German interests as much as possible, as a counterweight to the French position. Prime Minister David Lloyd George was openly the main enemy of Polish interests. He helped to create the concept of the Curzon line, which was the result, among other matters, of the absurd conviction that Ukrainians and Belarusians were Russians. So the British plan was to have a small Poland. During the peace conference Warsaw was even forced to accept certain German financial obligations as a part of the territory controlled by the central powers during the war. The negative British policy towards Poland was also clear during the Bolshevik invasion of Poland in the summer of 1920.

The United Kingdom forced Warsaw to accept disadvantageous solutions regarding Cieszyn Silesia and Gdańsk (Danzig). The USA helped Poland a lot via the declarations of President Wilson, but soon Polish interests enjoyed lesser American support, as

¹⁰ Wandycz, P.S. (1990). "Poland's Place in Europe in the Concepts of Piłsudski and Dmowski". *EEPS. East European Politics and Societies*, 4(3), 451-456.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

Washington normally sided with London's ideas about Poland. Besides, the Entente and especially the United Kingdom were very unfavorable toward the majority of Polish military efforts in the East, but after the Bolsheviks' defeat of the White Russians and Ukrainians, Paris and London accepted Polish control of territories up to the Zbrucz river, which later became the border between Poland and the Soviet Union¹².

Poland was one of 27 allied and associated countries that participated in the peace conference. The Polish position was that of a state with "limited interests". Polish diplomats, scientists, experts, and activists exerted great efforts to defend Polish positions. The results of the conference were not positive, mostly because of the policy of Lloyd George with the passive attitude of France. Poland was given by the Versailles Treaty (June 28th, 1919) a part of Great Poland and of Pomerania, but not Gdańsk, which became a free city. Access to the Baltic Sea was very narrow and dangerous because it passed through two parts of the German state.

Plebiscites were held in lands disputed between Poland and Germany. They were not positive because of German tricks and the very difficult situation of Poland when voting took place. But in Upper Silesia three Polish uprisings helped to get an important part of that land. Poland was also obliged (as was Romania, but not Germany, where there was a big Polish minority) to accept a national minorities protection treaty, which was a clear interference of the powers in Polish internal matters.

But generally, thanks to the Paris conference and Versailles Treaty, the independence of Poland was recognized once again. Practically, this spelled the end of the threat of German aggression for many years. But Poland was not a "child or bastard of the Versailles Treaty" (as Vyacheslav Molotov, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, declared in 1939), because the state had been created and defended by the Poles before. And because Poles were fighting during the war for their independence in the Polish Blue Army in France, and also in the Polish Legions. The Polish attitude towards the treaty was critical, but during the following years Warsaw defended it as a pillar of European and world security¹³.

Russia and Ukraine. Poland was not interested in the victory of the White Russians. So, in spite of pressure from the Entente, Warsaw offered no real help for those forces. On the other hand, very soon it was obvious that the Bolsheviks would continue the imperialist expansion of tsarist Russia, hoping to make communist the biggest part of Europe as possible. The main aim, of course, was to join together the Russian and German proletarian revolution. For Piłsudski, in the short term, Bolshevik Russia was not as dangerous as White Russia, even though he understood the significance of its threat to Western civilization. A massive and unprecedented terror and economic disaster, which the new rulers of Russia were causing inside and outside their zones of control, belonged to the first symptoms of this danger.

At the end of 1918 the Soviet Executive Committee declared the spreading of the proletarian revolution to Ukraine, Poland, the Baltic States, and Finland as its goal. The Bolshevik authorities were also declaring their supposed right to represent workers' interests all over the world and were forming Polish revolutionary military formations. Because of that and thanks to other signs and events, Piłsudski was convinced that war with Moscow was inevitable. Thus, relations between the two countries started very badly with the closing of the Polish representation of the Regency Council in Moscow and Petrograd and the detention of its personnel in November 1918 when Polish independence was declared.

¹²Krasuski, J. (2009). *Polska-Niemcy. Stosunki polityczne od zarania po czasy najnowsze*. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich – Wydawnictwo, 216-260; Ciałowicz, J. (1970). *Polsko-francuski sojusz wojskowy 1921–1939*. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 27-76; Nowak-Kiełbikowa, M. (1975). *Polska-Wielka Brytania w latach 1918–1923. Kształtowanie się stosunków politycznych*. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 23-297.

¹³ Ibidem.

Militarily, Poland was not passive. First, Polish troops intended to occupy territories left by the Germans in Lithuania and Belarus. In April 1919, Vilnius (Wilno) was conquered. But there were also negotiations and the decision of Piłsudski not to conduct military actions against the Bolsheviks when they were fighting General Anton Denikin's army.

Another crucial issue was the contradictory territorial interests of Poland and Ukraine, although it was hoped an agreement could be reached. In November 1918, Ukrainian forces – helped by Ukrainian units of the Austro-Hungarian army – attacked Lvov (Lviv, Lwów), then a city with a Polish majority (86%). The conflict started because it was very difficult to reconcile the claims of the Poles, who generally had a majority in the cities in Eastern Galicia, and Ukrainians, who had a majority outside the cities of the country. As Polish politicians could not benefit from the ethnographic situation, they were presenting the importance of Polish culture in disputed lands. And their Ukrainian counterparts were presenting a right to self-determination. It was not easy to agree on a common past and present; also, because both sides were internally divided in various aspects, there was a different scale of popularity of communism among Poles and Ukrainians. The war between Poland and the Western Ukrainian Popular Republic broke, as Poles wanted to control Eastern Galicia and a part of Volynia. In October 1919, an armistice was agreed with a demarcation line on the river Zbrucz¹⁴.

After the signing of the Versailles Treaty, Poland was able to concentrate its efforts in the East. At the beginning of 1920 she helped Latvia against the Bolsheviks. At that time Moscow returned to the idea of an European revolution, suspended at the beginning of 1919 because of the difficult internal situation caused by the civil war. On the one hand, there were general Bolshevik peace offers, on the other hand, in February 1920 Lenin gave an order to plan a great offensive against Poland. Piłsudski decided to attack in Ukraine to help to establish the Government of the Ukraine Popular Republic under Chief Ataman Symon Petliura. The plan of the Polish leader was to help to free Ukraine and not to conduct an imperialist and adventurous action, as he was accused by Lloyd George and communists. In April 1920, Poland signed a treaty of political alliance and a military agreement with Petliura, who accepted Polish border claims. A joint offensive started, which ended with the capture of Kiev in May. But the front was stabilized and Moscow soon started to recapture territories.

In July 1920, the Bolsheviks launched a great offensive that was very dangerous to Poland, which was invaded and the Red Army was approaching Warsaw. The terms of a possible armistice presented by Moscow had as its main aim the creation of a Polish satellite of the Bolsheviks, with 50 thousand soldiers in the army, a workers' militia, amnesty for political prisoners, and cancellation of armament production. In the summer of 1920, Poland was almost entirely isolated. Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky claimed that over the "dead body of White Poland" leads the way to worldwide conflagration. Germany, Czechoslovakia and Lithuania were neutral but practically hostile, having prohibited the transfer and shipment of arms and munitions to Poland. In Gdańsk a strike of German dockers was organized. The Bolshevik-oriented workers, also socialists, were helping also in other countries to stop help for Poland. The only material aid, not a huge one, mainly from France, Hungary, and Italy, came through Romania, which maintained friendly neutrality. The quiet border with the latter country was an important factor and was the only line of communication with the West.

Poland was fighting practically without any real military help from the West. Between the 12th and 15th of August the decisive battle for Warsaw took place. The Polish army led by Piłsudski achieved a great victory, followed by a panicked Bolshevik retreat. The most crucial factor in that victory is still not very well known – namely, that Poles were reading Russian ciphers. This was possible thanks to the young lieutenant Jan Kowalewski,

¹⁴ Ibidem.

later – a military attaché to Moscow and then Bucharest, and during WWII a representative of the Polish authorities in Lisbon, where he conducted important talks with the goal of winning Romania, Hungary, and Italy to the allied side¹⁵. Another myth appeared in the Western countries, especially in France, that the Polish victory was a merit of the French General Maurice Weygand, what was completely false, but this argument was used by enemies of Poland, mainly communists, to explain that it was a success of the Entente and not of the hated by them White Poland.

In October 1920, an armistice was signed between Warsaw and Moscow and negotiations started in Riga that was concluded in March 1921 with a peace treaty with the Russian and Ukrainian Soviet Republics. There was no political and military possibility to maintain the idea of a federation on the Soviet border. The oriental boundaries of the Second Republic of Poland, with Wilno, Grodno, and Lwów inside, were the result of the military efforts of the Polish army and not because of the decisions of the great Western powers¹⁶.

Romania was one of only two neighbors practically without any conflicts with Poland. There was a Soviet and German threat for both parties. The Soviets and White Russians were against Romanian rule in Bukovina and Besarabia. Thus, both Poland and Romania wanted the Versailles system to be consolidated as they were its beneficiaries. Both were afraid of the revisionist activities of the countries which had lost territories to them, even if the list of that states was in a great part different, as Warsaw and Bucharest had mostly quite different directions of interest. Both could count only on France, which wanted to have them as part of its eastern alliances to be a barrier between Germany and the Soviet Russia.

Poland obtained Romanian support in the war against Ukraine in Eastern Galicia (because of Bukovina). The idea of both sides was to establish a common border, even if sometimes the ways in which it was to be achieved were seen in a different manner. Bucharest and Warsaw were against a Slavic direct corridor between Czechoslovakia and Russia in Eastern Galicia. But there were also small differences. Romania was not interested in Polish efforts to create closer relations between Bucharest and Budapest, which was based on Poland's traditional friendship with Hungary, even if the latter two countries had such differing attitudes toward the Versailles system. On the other hand, Poland was not interested in joining the Little Entente, mainly because of its conflict with Prague.

Also the idea of a political and military alliance appeared very soon, in 1919, but Poland was not a very attractive partner, being involved in many conflicts. When the situation started to be clear, in March 1921 such a defensive alliance with Romania towards Soviet threat was signed. The alliance of Warsaw and Bucharest became one of the important elements of the Polish foreign policy, even if it was, for both sides, mainly a function of the relations with big powers¹⁷.

Czechoslovakia and Poland had a border conflict because of Cieszyn Silesia. This time Warsaw decided to present ethnographically based claims and not historical ones. The Poles demanded this land because of the clear Polish majority there. The Czechs presented historical and economic arguments, supported by France in a secret agreement in September 1918. Prague did not recognize a compromise made by the local Polish and Czech authorities in 1918. In January the following year, the Czech army attacked this territory. In July 1920, Prague received a decision from the Entente powers to give them the major industrial part of the disputed region inhabited by 100 thousand Poles. This

¹⁵ Ciechanowski, J.S. (2005). *Lt-Col. Jan Kowalewski's Mission in Portugal*. 518-531.

¹⁶ Materski, W. (1994). *Tarcza Europy. Stosunki polsko-sowieckie 1918-1939*. Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 10-98; Pisuliński, J. (2013), *Nie tylko Petlura. Kwestia ukraińska w polskiej polityce zagranicznej w latach 1918-1923*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika.

¹⁷ Walczak, H. (2008). *Sojusz z Rumunią w polskiej polityce zagranicznej w latach 1918-1931*. Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 25-158.

happened when the Red Army was not far from Warsaw; thus the Polish Government was obliged to accept that decision¹⁸.

Lithuania historically comprised a territory much wider than only ethnographic Lithuania. Poland wanted to control the region of Wilno, where the Poles were in the vast majority. Lithuania claimed to have quite a large territory, even where the Lithuanians were only one-third part of the population. The Lithuanians rejected the proposals of a federation with Poland, fearing domination by the Poles. They enjoyed the great support of the United Kingdom. Besides, Piłsudski was a Pole from Lithuania. Trying not to provoke the open anger of the Entente, in October 1920 he organized a simulated rebellion of a part of Polish troops which occupied Wilno and created a theoretically independent state, the so-called Central Lithuania, which in 1922 declared the incorporation of the region of Wilno to Poland¹⁹.

The Polish plan in 1920 to have closer ties with other Baltic states (Latvia, another neighbor practically without any bilateral conflicts; Estonia, and Finland) also had no positive effects overall, in spite of some friendly gestures²⁰.

Conclusions. The international situation in 1918 and during the following years was very advantageous for Poland and its independence, though this does not mean there was no mortal threat to the existence of the state. Such a danger appeared in all too real form in 1920 with the Bolsheviks – and it reappeared in 1939 with Nazi Germany and the Stalinist Soviet Union. Once again, and for many years, Poland was not allowed to develop as she wished.

There was a lot of chaos, blind ambition, mistakes; lack of coordination, but generally during the years 1918–1921 Poland achieved a huge success. This was a result of the contribution of the Polish elites – among them politicians, military men, diplomats, and intellectuals – and of society as a whole, which massively supported the cause of national freedom. The main danger in those first years – the Bolsheviks – was stopped by the Polish army and only by the Polish army. Potential security and the borders were established. It was not a small, seasonal state, but boasted more than 380 thousand km² of surface and around 27 million inhabitants, but with a significant amount of national minorities. Over almost 20 years of independence, the development of Poland's lands depended mainly on its inhabitants.

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¹⁸ Szklarska-Lohmannowa, A. (1967). *Polsko-czechosłowackie stosunki dyplomatyczne w latach 1918-1925*. Wrocław; Warszawa; Kraków: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich, 13-88; Wandycz, P.S. (1962). *France and Her Eastern Allies 1919-1925. French-Czechoslovak-Polish Relations from the Paris Peace Conference to Locarno*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 49-103, 135-257.

¹⁹ Łossowski, P. (1997). *Stosunki polsko-litewskie 1921-1939*. Warszawa: Instytut Historii PAN, Mazowiecka Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczno-Pedagogiczna w Łowiczu, 9-21.

²⁰ Łossowski, P. (1992). *Stosunki polsko-estońskie 1918-1939*. Gdańsk: Instytut Bałtycki, 9-30; Łossowski, P. (1990). *Łotwa nasz sąsiad. Stosunki polsko-łotewskie w latach 1918-1939*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Mozaika, 5-24; Pullat, R. (1998). *Stosunki polsko-fińskie w okresie międzywojennym*. Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytm, 13-62, 131-134, 187-188.

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1918-1921 роки: відновлення незалежності Польщі у міжнародному контексті

У статті висвітлено виклики зовнішньої політики Польщі в 1918-1921 рр. У листопаді 1918 р. відбулося народження незалежної Республіки Польща. Це сталося через 123 роки після остаточного поділу Польсько-Литовської Республіки Росією, Пруссією та Австрією. Ключову роль відіграли Юзеф Пілсудський, поміркований соціалістичний лідер незалежних сил Польщі, і консервативний Польський національний комітет у Парижі на чолі з Романом Дмовським. У 1917 р.

ця установа стала для Антанті офіційним представником польського народу. Польські військові сили були створені обома групами. Під час Першої світової війни польські землі були спустошені. На початку 1919 року було створено новий польський уряд, до якого увійшли члени обох цих політичних партій. Рішення про польські західні кордони було прийнято на Паризькій конференції. На Сході, після радикальної зміни уряду в Росії, Польща уникла зустрічі з Санкт-Петербургом як одна з переможниць Першої світової війни. І все ж нова більшовицька Росія та її імперіалізм стали найстрашнішою загрозою для новоствореної польської держави, як це було продемонстровано в 1920 році під час польсько-більшовицької війни. Ідея дружньої Української незалежної держави на Сході не була досягнута, незважаючи на зусилля в цьому напрямку. Інша загроза була пов'язана з німецьким ревізіонізмом. Проте Польща відстояла свою незалежність, і нові кордони країни були встановлені. Відносини з іншими сусідами, Чехословаччиною та Литвою, були напруженими, точніше, через прикордонні суперечки. Винятком стали Румунія та Латвія. Найважливішим елементом безпеки Польської держави був союз із Францією. Незалежна Польща проіснувала лише 20 років до вересня 1939 р., коли Німеччина та СРСР скоординовано напали на Польщу та розділили її територію.

Ключові слова: Польща, незалежність, польсько-більшовицька війна, польська зовнішня політика, польські кордони

secondly, interaction networks of states that are regional leaders in their regions. These changes will most likely be reflected in new regional currencies and the weakening of the global influence of the US dollar.

Keywords: *globalization, glocalization, global democracy, global autocracy, world system of international security*