

## THE GREAT POWERS' POLICY TOWARDS THE CENTRAL-EASTERN EUROPE IN THE TIME OF THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE (1919) – THE NATURE OF THE GAME AND THE MOTIVES OF THE PLAYERS

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### **The diplomatic “battlefield” background of the game and the scale of complexity**

The Paris Peace Conference was convoked to end the World War I and to construct the new post-war Versailles order in Europe that was being shaped in the years 1918-1923. The Great Powers' leaders who gathered in Paris as well as the delegates of the smaller states who were doing their best to win the support of the former both were playing the political game motivated with the interests of their respective countries. Those interests sometimes crumpled into surprisingly complicated nodes. A number of them concerned the Central-Eastern European issues. That was the region where the scale of complexity was the largest one.

The fact that Russia which was the largest potential player in the region was torn apart by the civil war was an additional factor that complicated the entire situation and rendered the taking rational decisions by the conference even harder. The problem was that the Conference had been convoked to decide on the conditions of the peace treaty with the war enemies of the Allied and Associated Powers – i.e. with Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey and not to decide on the territory of the former ally of the Entente which the Russian Empire had been. The allies felt therefore to possess a mandate to decide the future of the territories of the defeated Germany and Austro-Hungary still they felt not being authorised to do the same as far as the territory of the allied Russia is concerned (Żurawski vel Grajewski, 2017, 31) - that kind of Russia which was expected to revived in “an ordered form” - the scenario the allies kept on hoping for till the end of 1919 (Juzwenko, 1973, 251, Żurawski vel Grajewski, 2017, 71.). The “white” Russia proved however not to be able to create a single and stable government which prevent the allied powers from recognizing any “White” military and political centre as a representative of Russia as such (PPC 1942, vol. I, 356-362) while the “red” one signed a separatist peace treaty with the Central Powers at Brest Litovsk (3.03.1918) (Dąbkowski, 1985, 84-86, Gruchała, 1984, 55; 1985, 574, N.N. 1923, 1) and just for that single reason (and there were numerous others) had not been invited to participate in the Paris Peace Conference. The “Whites” kept promising to keep Russia at war against the Central Powers, so they got the support of the allies against the “Reds” who were pretending to be pacifist at that time. The mentioned above separatist Brest Litovsk peace treaty allowed Germans to move some dozens of divisions that had been released from the eastern front to the French one. That resulted in two great German offensives in the west in the spring and summer 1918 sides (Zabecki, 2006, 408, Wiest, 2003, 203-214, Pajewski, 1991, 696-705) and in the second battle of Marne (Greenwood, 1998, 224, Neiberg, 2008, 217, Pajewski, 1991, 705-706). The human costs were incredible – more than 1.46 million of killed and wounded on both. France did not forgive the Bolsheviks that step. Communist ideology was of the secondary importance in that context. It was the release of the Kaizer's army to launch a powerful attack on Paris that shaped the attitude of the French Republic to the Bolshevik coup that was started by Lenin who had been transported from Switzerland to Finland by the German intelligence in April 1917 (Merridale, 2017, 400).

France was at war against Germany and anybody who “deserted” from a common line “should be shoot down”. The Bolsheviks excluded therefore Russia from the allied camp and

turned the country from France's ally into its enemy. This very fact opened before Poland and other peoples that had been enslaved by Russian Empire so far having been closed possibilities for gaining the support of the Entente. Some were able to use them, others for various reasons had not capacity or could not do it.

Since Russia had been already excluded from the allied camp the game was played among the United States, the British Empire, France and Italy (Japan was co-opted while Far East issues were discussed) and the countries defeated in the World War I among whom only Germany had a great power's potential. The chaos in Russia, the continuing wars in the borderlands of the fallen Romanov Empire and the struggle for the Habsburgs inheritance completed the situation. The „White” Russians kept on fighting the „Red” ones (Mawdsley, 2010, 430), the „White” Fins supported by Germans (von der Goltz) (Machalski, 1938, 482-486) were fighting the „Red” Fins who were supported by Russian Bolsheviks (Tepora and Roselius et al., 2014, 456), Estonians and Latvians were fighting Bolsheviks and the Baltic Germans who were supported by the Reich (Lieven and von der Goltz). They fought as well against the “White” Russian troops of general Pavel Bermondht Avalov who was fought by the Lithuanians too (Juzwenko, 1969, 771-580, Jėkabsons, 2017, 159-183). The Lithuanians fought the Poles (Łossowski, 1985, 83-196, Skaradziński, 1993, vol. 1, 218-222; vol. 2, 374-381, 394-405, Buchowski, 2009, 183) who were fighting the western Ukrainians (the Western Ukrainian People's Republic WUPR) in a serious struggle (Klimecki, 2000, 291, Skaradziński, 1993 vol. 1, 89-115, 226-236, Kozłowski, 1990, 311, Hupert, 1993, 107) and the Eastern ones (Ukrainian People's Republic – UPR) – rather in a passive way and finally allied with the latter to fight the „Red” Russians (Burski, 2004, 99-237, Дацків, 2015, 125-132, Deruga, 1970, 45-67, Legieć, 2002, 207, Palij, 1995, 391, Szandruk, 1935, 183-186, Skaradziński, 1993, vol. 2, 20-27). Apart of that Poles were fighting Germans (Czubiński, 2002, 360, Grzegorzek, 2016, 268, Ludyga-Laskowski, 1972) and Czechs (Kamiński, 2001, 476) while Ukrainians did the same to both Russias “red” and “whites”, Poland and Romania (Hrycak, 2000, 113-168) additionally suffering an internal confusion caused by the anarchic Makhno Army that operated in a Hulajpol region and was fighting everybody (Malet, 1982, 232). Romanians clashed with Hungarians who were simultaneously engaged against Czechoslovakia and Serbia (Balogh, 1975, 297-313, Pastor, 1976, 191). Serbia itself was being just enlarged and turned into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians since the two latter were seeking for the Belgrade's protection against the Italian claims to Istria and Dalmatia (Batowski, 1982, 206-209, 212-214, 220, 255-259) (the former territories of the Venice Republic incorporated to Austria in 1815). Further to the south Bulgaria was defeated for the second time in its third war having been fought within seven previous years (Borodziej and Górny, 2014, 47-77, Dymarski, 2010, 214-299, Rabka, 2010, 306; 2016, 288, Rubacha, 2004, 223-343, Znamierowska-Rakk, 2012, 287-295) and lost not only small pieces of land for Serbia but as well the Southern Dobruja just having been gained a year earlier and now gave back to Romania. It lost the Western Thrace for Greece too. (That latter meant the loss of the country's access to the Aegean Sea (PPC, vol. VIII, 1946, 56, Malinowski, 2006, 207-208). Greeks were fighting Turks and supported French in their interference in favour of the “White” Russians in Ukraine. The main decision-makers tried to discern the galimatias - Thomas Woodrow Wilson - US president, Georges Clemenceau - Prime Minister of France, David Lloyd George - Prime Minister of Great Britain and Vittorio Orlando - the Italian Prime Minister with the weakest position. Lloyd George confused Galicia or Silesia (Silesia) with Turkish Cilicia (Cilicia) and asked why the Poles claimed a piece of Anatolia (Biliński, 1925, 330-331). None of the great powers' leaders could distinguish Polish pronunciation from the Ukrainian one and guess by name who represents whom (Vytyvtskyi, whether Witwicki, Holubovych, or Hołubowicz, Tyshkevych or Tyszkiewicz, Sheptytskyi or Szeptycki etc.). So they asked surprised why both delegations (the Polish and the Ukrainian ones) demanded allied support in the war material for their respective countries so that their citizens armed by the allies could “take part in some quarrel in Lviv” fighting each other in a situation when the Bolshevik army of Vladimir Antonov's Owsijenka conquers Ukraine and marches towards Galicia (Mantoux, 1955, vol. I., 152, Żurawski vel Grajewski, 2017, 53, 137-138).

The Versailles order just having been born had two obvious enemies – Germany and Soviet Russia. Those who allied to them automatically lost the support of the Allied and Associated Powers. Those who fought them got that support - the more effective they were in that struggle

the stronger was the support they enjoyed from the allied Western Powers. Poland started to win that competition in mid-1919. It was clear for the leaders of the Great Powers gathered in Paris should have Owsiyenko's army cross the Carpathian Mountains "the Russian Bolsheviks will join their forces with the Hungarian ones" (PPC 1946, vol. V, 786-787, 793-794, Bierzanek and Kukułka, 1967, vol. II, 302-303, Romer, 1983, vol. IV, 127, Juzwenko, 1973, 145, Temperley, vol. I, 337, Żurawski vel Grajewski, 2017, 43-44, 47) – those from the Hungarian Soviet Republic that existed between March 21<sup>st</sup> and August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1919 (Pastor, 1988, 530). That perspective influenced the Conference point of view on the Polish-Ukrainian war of Lviv the more that Halichany (the Western Ukrainians) were buying weapon from the Hungarian communists paying them with crude oil extracted in the Boryslav-Drohobych oil basin that was under the WUPR control at that time (Stankiewicz and Piber, 1974, vol. II, 90, 96, 155, 277; Bierzanek and Kukułka, 1965, vol. I, 73, Bierzanek and Kukułka, 1967, vol. II, 219-220, 234, 279-280, 286-287; PPC 1947, vol. XII, 438; Bierzanek, 1964, 99; Deruga, 1969, p. 247; Dmowski, 1926, 394. Pączewski, 1921, 369; Ratyńska et al., 1957; Romer, 1983, 131-132; Zaks, 1969, 44-45). The Western Ukrainian cooperation with the Hungarian communists supplied Polish delegation in Paris with an excellent argument to promote the thesis on indispensability to occupy the region by Polish Army to prevent it. The WUPR suffered from a shortage of the Ukrainians – professional officers of the former k.u.k. Austro-Hungarian Army. Therefore, it was recruiting Austrians as contract officers to serve in HA (Halitska Armija – the Halich Army\* – the armed forces of the WUPR). While striving for the Entente support one could hardly make worse political step. Austrians were just Germans in the eyes of the allied leaders gathered in Paris (Dąbkowski, 1985, 125).

The conclusion of the truce between the WUPR and the Bolsheviks, that exsposed the northern wing of the Petlura (UPR) forces in Volhynia to the attack of the Red Army and the blow of the Halich Army against the Poles (Chortkiv offensive) (Kozubel, 2015, 239-252, Kozłowski 1990, 280-290, Łukomski, Partacz, Polak, 1994, 86-87, 226-233, Hupert, 1993, 84-96) who separated the "Red" Russia from Germany and from the "red" Hungary was an exact inverse of what the allies expected from the nations who were applying for their support.

Having no room for analyzing the details of this kind I only point on their existence using the examples mentioned above. Let us move to the considerations of the more general nature now – i.e. let us try to analyze the principal interests of the Great Powers, the interests that motivated their leaders while they were taking decisions on the political and military developments in our part of the continent.

## Geopolitical realities

**Great Britain** was the only power that won the World war I in an absolute way. It achieved all its war goals already by the virtue of the armistice signed in Compiègne on November 11th 1918: it had broken the threat of the hegemony of one of the continental power (Germany) in Europe (which does not mean it intended to replace the German hegemony with the French one); it had liquidated the threat having been created to its interests by the German naval armaments before 1914 (Joll and Martel, 2008, 117-118, Rüger, 2007, 337) (the *Kaiserliche Marine* had been given up to the British by the virtue of the armistice and was "self-destroyed" in Scapa Flow before the Paris Peace Conference decided on the German vessels distribution among the victorious allied powers. The Brits did not need German ships still they did not want to distribute them among French, Italians etc.) (Van der Vat, 2016, 320, Rojek, 1994, 42-48); the competition with Germany in colonies was over with the British full victory. Being situated on the other side of the English Channel and facing Germany that had been already deprived of their navy and their

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\* Halitska Armija (HA) is a correct name of the Armed Forces of WUPR. To call it Ukrayinska Halitska Armija (UHA) is a common mistake. HA was turned into UHA only when it had already joined the Denikin's Army (17.11.1919) and then was turned into Chervona Halitska Armija (ChHA), when it had joined the Bolsheviks (20.02.1920) however it is commonly called Chervona Ukrayinska Halitska Armija (ChUHA) in historiography (Dąbkowski, 1985, 143-149, Krotofil, 2002, 128, 132).

colonies the Brits felt to be absolutely safe. From London's point of view there was nothing more to be done except for preventing France to grow too much. They were however not in a position to hit France directly. It was clear Alsace and Lorraine had to be returned to the Republic. They could not strive for the unification of all the German speaking territories in a one state in spite of the fact the principle of the self determination of the peoples was high in the Woodrow Wilson's ranking of priorities and the voice of the United States could not be ignored. That were however the Italians who learned that true in a painful way while they were denied Dalmatia (the former Venice Republic territory) that had been promised them by France and Great Britain in London in 1915 while the Entente was striving for Italy to join the war on its side. These were the circumstances in which the idea of *vittoria mutilata* - "the crippled victory" was born (Procacci, 1983, 445-454) – the one that finally led Italy to fascism and to the alliance with Hitler a dozen of years later.

In 1919 it was clear for the British that to avoid the hegemony of one of the continental powers in Europe they had to change their policy. Till November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1918 it was Germany who had been the candidate for such a hegemonical position, since that day it was France. Great Britain allied with France fought war against Germany to prevent its hegemony in Europe still the Paris Peace Conference that ended that war was turned into a battlefield for the British diplomacy in which it was struggling to prevent the hegemony of France. Great Britain goal was to minimize the scale of the strengthening of the French position in the continental Europe – the phenomenon that was an unavoidable and natural result of the German defeat at war. London however was not able to play the game the result of which would be the strengthening of Germany. The British could not strive to unite Austria or German speaking Sudetenland to Germany in 1919. It would have been morally unacceptable for the public opinion of the victorious powers who just suffered four years of unprecedented sacrifices to defeat Germany. Britain was a democracy so such a policy would have been politically unthinkable too. Nobody would have accepted the territorial enlargement of Germany as a result of the war. The only thing the British diplomacy could do in order to achieve its traditional goal – the European balance of power - was to prevent the „excessive” diminution of the defeated enemy. It did it in fact, and it did it first of all at the cost of Poland – the newly emerging principal ally of France in Central Europe. These were the roots of the British unfriendly attitude to the majority of the Polish political goals in that time.

There were two possible principles that could be apply by the Paris Peace Conference while deciding about the territorial issues in Central-Eastern Europe – the historical one and the ethnic one. The historical principle if having been applied to Poland would have led to the further weakening of Germany since it would have meant the came back of Poland to her historical borders of 1772 with possible additional gains in Upper Silesia and Mazury. To avoid that result the ethnic principle was applied. Poland was denied Gdańsk (Danzig) and Piła as well as the northern Warmia. As far as Upper Silesia southern Warmia and Mazury were concerned the plebiscites were organized to decide their fate. The fate of Upper Silesia was finally decided however by three Polish subsequent uprisings in 1919, 1920 and 1921 (Ludyga-Laskowski, 1972, 460) that resulted in the partition of the province between Poland and Germany, while the plebiscites in Warmia and Mazury took place in the apogee of the Bolshevik offensive on Warsaw and in those circumstances brought German victory. The same (ethnic) principle if applied to the Czech lands would have led to the territorial enlargement of Germany. This is why the Paris Peace Conference decided to base its ruling in the Czech part of the Czechoslovak borders on the historical principal – the borders of the mediaeval Bohemian Kingdom – the lands of the Saint Vaclav's Crown. That solution led however to the Polish-Czech military conflict about Cieszyn Silesia inhabited mainly by the Poles still claimed on historical principle by the Czechs.

In general London while being afraid of the French hegemony was opposing the Polish claims and treated any substantial strengthening of Poland as in fact the strengthening of the French position in Europe. Paris did just the opposite – it supported anybody who had any territorial claims towards Germany.

France won the war – i.e. due to the Anglo-Saxon Powers support it had repelled the German invasion. It was however aware of its industrial and demographic inferiority vis a vis Germany. It remembered as well that having been defeated by Bismarck in 1870-1871 it was able to recreate its military might up to the level natural to its potential (smaller than the German one) and to come back to the great powers game in the next five years (however not to its previous po-

sition having been enjoyed before 1870 (Meysztowicz, 1974, 5-61) – the position of the leading military power in Europe – the position that had been inherited from previous epoch and based on the historical prestige that was verified negatively in result of the lost war). That historical experience of France led its decisionmakers to the conclusion that Germany if left alone while having at its disposal a potential superior to the French one would be able to threaten France with an effective revenge within next five years. The German position of the leading military power in Europe before 1914 unlikely the French before 1870 had real – tangible material basis and not the merely psychological one. France therefore needed an ally against Germany. The Anglo-Saxon Powers would have been the most effective ones still the French attempts to sustain the war-time alliance failed. Americans withdrawn from Europe both in a military and in a political sense and fell into isolationism that was broken not earlier than by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. The British – as it has been pointed out above – were deeply concerned with the possibility of the French domination over defeated and disarmed Germany. That tendency was strong in 1919 and was getting stronger in the next few years. In result Great Britain finally adopted the principle of *no more continental commitments* in 1924 (Harasimowicz, 1981, 59-66). In such circumstances France was desperately looking for an ally in the east.

## **Two competitions:**

### **Competition one – Who will be the most effective protector of the central European peoples against Bolsheviks?**

Those Central European peoples who were struggling for independence and who were situated north from the Carpathian Mountains (the post-Habsburg-Danube and the Balkans issues had another character and were combined with other challenges), underwent similar stages of the creation of their respective statehood. What differed them from one another was the time, the speed and the final outcome of the process. The very model of the process was nevertheless similar. First the German and the Austro-Hungarian armies kicked Russian troops out of a given territory, then the foundations of the civil administration and the national armed forces were being created within the system of the German-Austro-Hungarian protection, then the Central Powers lost the war in the west and the system of their protection collapsed in the east, then the Bolsheviks came and the peoples in question were forced to face their invasion. Poles were the most lucky ones and they had the longest time to get prepared. The German and Austro-Hungarian armies kicked out Russians from Poland as early as in mid-1915 (Klimecki, 1991, 62-121, Pajewski, 1991, 286-294, Zgórnjak, 1987, 155-186). Bolsheviks came only at the beginning of 1919 (Skaradziński, 1993, 197). Strong Polish elites supplied the country with numerous state-building staff and the time given to Poles proved to be long enough to enable the state civil and military structures having been built by them to harden. The Austro-Polish or German-Polish solutions of „the Polish question” that had been considered, had been used to promote the Polish interests and in a proper time politically confounded first in July 1917 when the First Brigade of the Polish Legions while obeying Piłsudski’s order refused to swear loyalty to the Central Powers and definitively by the rebellion of the Second Brigade of the Polish Legions at Rarańcza (15-16<sup>th</sup>, February 1918) (Parnaś, 1928, 96) at the moment of the greatest triumph of Germany - that is, at the news of the Brest Litovsk Treaty that had given the Chełm region to Ukraine. Poles exploited the system of the German protection to build what could be built within it and then rejected it in a spectacular way in the circumstances that left no room to accuse them for opportunism. Piłsudski was arrested by the Germans and imprisoned in the Magdeburg fortress and general Haller with weapon in his hand crossed the Austro-Hungarian lines fought the way for the Second Brigade to the Russian side of the frontline and then via Murmansk went to France to create the 100 thousands men volunteer Blue Army to fight on the French side (Giętkowski and Nadolski, 2018, 224). Those were serious Polish assets at the Paris Peace Conference. The Ukrainians who underwent a similar path still in a much shorter time (between February and November 1918) and with much weaker elites were able to build up very few elements of their statehood and to the worse while signing the Brest Litovsk Treaty (February 9<sup>th</sup> 1918) presented themselves to the western allies as the protégé of Germany. In result France refused visas to all those members of the Ukrainian delegation sent to the Paris Peace Conference who had represented Ukraine

in Brest Litovsk (Batowski, 1968, 171; Dąbkowski, 1985, 120; Hass, 1980, 16; Lewandowski, 1974, 88, Rudnyćkyj, 1938, 3). The history of Vasyl Vyshyvanyi (Wilhelm Habsburg) – a pretender to the Ukrainian throne (Snyder, 2010, 368) having been planned to be created within the German project of Mitteleurope (Pajewski, 1959, 448) won Ukrainians no sympathy in Paris either. It was however not an exceptional situation. There were plenty of monarchical projects based on the German dynasties in the region in 1918. Such plans were prepared for Lithuania (Mendog II – Wilhelm Karl von Urach of Württemberg) and Finland (Väinö I - Friedrich Karl von Hessen – elected by the Parliament in Helsinki as a hereditary king of Finland on October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1918). Germany played the role of an effective military protector of Ukraine, Finland, Estonia and Latvia against Bolsheviks. The peoples threatened with the Soviet invasion accepted that role of Berlin. The Entente was forced to meet the challenge and to replace the II Reich in that game or to recognize the German domination in the east. It chose the first option. Let us remind once more – it was Germany who was the main Entente's enemy till November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1918 and not Bolshevism which while liquidating Russian front became ipso facto the Entente's enemy too since what it did objectively ameliorated the geopolitical position of Germany. It was France who was the most interested in that dimension of the political game in Central-Eastern Europe. This is why it started the construction of the alliance system of its own in the region. Poland and Romania finally became the pillars of that system in the East while Czechoslovakia and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (since 1929 – Yugoslavia) in the South.

### **Competition two – who will be the main French ally in the east?**

There were four countries who took part in the competition for the title of the main pillar of the Versailles order in the East and the principal ally of France there: the „White” Russia as a favorite (Mantoux, vol. II, 7, Deruga, 1969, 252), Poland as the second best solution, Czechoslovakia, which in spite of its demographic weakness enjoyed the fact it was not threatened, neither had been destroyed in the result of the hostilities of 1914-1918 that had omitted its territory while on the other hand it was an heir to the bulk of the Austro-Hungarian military industry complex of the great power's potential (Zgórniak, 1993, 131). Ukraine was the fourth player – the weakest one and the first who was eliminated.

It has been already pointed out above the “White” Russia was on the top of the ranking of the candidates for the anti-German allies of France – that was a real ally of the French dreams. From the French point of view the Russia of that kind should have shared a common border with Germany and should have been as powerful as possible. Should the Bolsheviks have been defeated the very existence of Poland not to mention the existence of Ukraine were contradictory to the fundamental security interest of France. Both the countries if independent would separate the French dream ally (the „White” Russia) from the French mortal enemy (Germany) thus threatening the Republic with loneliness in its future possible clash with a more powerful German Reich Paris was rightfully afraid of. In that logic just for moral reasons and due to the 13<sup>th</sup> point of the Wilson Plan of January 8<sup>th</sup>, 1918 (the US position could not be just ignored) Poland should have been offered a kind of autonomy or just a promise of it (let us call it „the independence” within the borders of the Polish Kingdom that had been created at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 enlarged with the former Prussian part of Poland. Such a Poland should have been “allied in a close military alliance with the democratic Russia”) still not a real independence.

**Poland** was considered as *un alli  de remplacement* – “a substitute ally” just in a case the Bolsheviks would have survived, and the anti-German French-“White” Russian Alliance had proved unattainable.

On June 25<sup>th</sup>, 1919 the Supreme Council of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers authorized Poland for the Polish Army to conduct its military operations up to the River Zbruch thus giving its consent for the Halich Army (the Western Ukrainian one) to be kicked out from the Eastern Galicia (Żurawski vel Grajewski, 2017, 58-62). The creation of a stable Polish-Romanian common front against the Bolsheviks to separate Russian “Reds” from the Hungarian Soviet Republic was the main idea that lied down behind that decision (Mantoux, 1955, vol. II, 152, PPC 1946, vol. V, 779). The Council did not agree however to recognize Lviv and the Eastern Galicia as a part of the Polish state. Poland was expected to be granted the League of Nations mandate to rule them just like France was in the case of Syria and Lebanon or Great

Britain in the case of Palestine, Iraq and Transjordan. It was Czechoslovakia who was the main competitor to Poland to the role of the mandatory power over Eastern Galicia. The Czechs since the 19th century had been seduced with the illusion of the pan-Slavic brotherhood - a Russian imperial propaganda instrument skillfully wielded by Russian propagandists so the newly having been created Czechoslovakia still kept on dreaming of the common border shared with Russia. Prague was therefore ready to take the control of the province in question and then to give it up painlessly to Russia at the first request of France (Stankiewicz and Piber, 1974, vol. II, 352, Bierzanek and Kukułka, 1967, vol. II, 365, PPC 1946, vol. VIII, 175-177, and PCC 1946, vol. IX, 99-101, 115-116, 118, 175-176, 235; Sladek and Valenta, 1968, 152, Zaks, 1972, 89). The victory of Denikin was commonly expected in Paris at that time. The Denikin's Volunteer Army Offensive had just been launched approaching to Orel, Tula and Moscow (Chmielewski, Wilk, 1985, 83, Meller, Niekricz - lack of the year of edition, 113, Mawdsley, 2010, 245-272). Should "the Whites" had been victorious the leaders of the Great Powers gathered in Paris were ready to give Eastern Galicia to Russia to which it had never belonged before (Kumaniecki, 1969, 76). France needed Poles only to fight Bolsheviks together with Denikin, the alliance with whom was advised to Piłsudski by the allied supreme commander in Europe marshal Ferdinand Foch. The task was obviously possible to be accomplished in the summer and early autumn 1919. The Bolsheviks would have been not able to resist the combined Polish-Denikin's strikes still Denikin was a champion of the idea of the "iedinaya, velikaya i niedielimaya Rassiya" ("Единая, Великая и Неделимая Россия - One, Great and Undivisibly Russia") and therefore was ready to negotiate the autonomy of the "Privislinskiy Kray" (Vistula Country), of course only as long as he was forced to struggle with with Bolsheviks (Skaradziński, 1993, 289-296, Juzwenko, 1973, 204-205). His expected victory over the "Reds" would reduce Poland to the role of just another rebellious province that should be pacified, and Russian order should be restored in it. Should such a victory have been achieved Poland would have been put in a position in which the Ukraine of Petlura actually was - i.e. in a position of the country that was at war with both the "Red" and the "White" Russia. The latter conflict would have completely deprived Poland of any support of the Entente (Juzwenko, 1973, 206). Should Bolsheviks had been defeated Poland were the main obstacle in the construction of the French-Russian alliance and if the "White" Russian Armies had started their march on Warsaw, *Mission Militaire Française* (the French Military Mission) headed by general Maxim Weygand (Schramm, 1987, 13-133) would have been established *en Russie* (in Russia), and not *en Pologne* (in Poland); the destination of the French military equipment, munition and other war materials supplies would have been changed accordingly. The Polish Army would not have received not only tanks, airplanes, field guns but even a pair of the old shoes either from France.

## Victorious Poland

For Poland to support Denikin meant almost sure quick victory over Bolsheviks and almost sure immediate involvement of the country in the next war - this time against the „White” Russia - the war in which Ukraine had already been. That would have meant a lonely struggle against the entire Russian power and in a deep contradiction to the vital security interests of France. The only factor that gave Poland the Entente support in Warsaw's struggle against Moscow was the Bolshevik character of the latter - its role as a power hostile to the Versailles order and by that very fact allied to Germany.

The consent of the Supreme Council of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers to grant Lviv and the Eastern Galicia temporary to Poland was taken on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1919 - i.e. when Denikin had been already defeated and when it was obvious that the „White” Russia is not able to reach them anymore (Żurawski vel Grajewski, 2017, 71). The final and definitive recognition of the Polish borders in the east by the Council of Ambassadors\* of the Great Powers (March 15<sup>th</sup>,

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\* The formal body created by Great Britain, France and Italy to whom the Supreme Council of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers delegated its competences about the issues of secondary importance that had been left unsolved by the Paris Peace Conference when the very Conference was over. (Żurawski vel Grajewski, 2017, 17).

1923) took place when the latest hopes to overthrow Bolsheviks died in the West. Poland won the competition with Russia for the title of the main pillar of the Versailles order in the East. It could win it only while competing against the Bolshevik Russia never against the “White” one.

Piłsudski, while rejecting the suggestions of Foch as far as the co-ordination of the military operations with Denikin were concerned, took the best possible decision. His duty as the Head of the Polish State was not to save the humankind from Bolsheviks but to save the independence of Poland just having been newly restored after 123 years of the Russian, the Prussian and the Austrian yoke. He accomplished that „mission impossible” putting Poland in a position of the ally of the victorious Western Great Powers and keeping the enemies of Poland (Germany and Russia) in the position of the enemies of the West.

The Western Powers were democracies. Having had fought for four previous years the bloodiest war ever experienced by the humankind till those times they were not able to send millions of their citizen-soldiers to the fields of the Central and Eastern Europe to implement the decisions of the Paris Peace Conference. These were therefore the directly interested nations of the region who were the executors of the will of the Conference – Romanians, Serbs, Czechs, and Slovaks vis a vis Hungary, Poles vis a vis Germany, Greeks and Serbs vis a vis Turks and Bulgarians. Wherever the forces of the executors had proved not to be sufficient the decisions of the Paris Conference remained merely on the paper. (That was the case of the Treaty of Sévres, that was rejected by Turkey and smashed on the battlefields of the Turkish-Greek war of the years 1919-1922 (Richter, 2016, 211, Stavridis, 2009, 374, Wituch, 1980, 249-268).

The Eastern borders of Poland were not decided in Paris. The French capital was merely the place where they were acknowledged. Their lines had been drawn with swords not with pencils. The Western Ukrainian diplomacy (WUPR) in exile while striving for the Council of Ambassadors decision in 1923 made a mistake. The Ukrainian leaders conducted their diplomatic action in a way a lawsuit is usually conducted in the court of justice. No surprise – the majority of its staff has used to be Austro-Hungarian lawyers. They overestimated the juridical dimension of the issue and underestimated the political reality. They pressed the Council to take a decision while it was in the interest of the WUPR to keep the provisional juridical status of the Eastern Galicia as long as possible and the lack of the final decision since in the situation that existed in Europe 1923 such a decision if taken must have been taken in favour of Poland (Żurawski vel Grajewski, 2017, 133). The international circumstances were shaped by the Franco-Belgian occupation of the Ruhrgebiet (January 10th, 1923) (Harasimowicz, 1981, 29-38, Kotłowski, 2004, 101-122, Wroniak, 1992, 312-313) and the Lithuanian coup in Klaipeda / Memel (January 12-15th, 1923) (Mikulicz, 1976, 66–91, Łossowski, 2007, 37-53). The Great Powers did not want further destabilisation. Lithuania had lost its moral title to protest against the Polish military action in Vilnius since it made a similar action in Klaipeda. This made the decision about Polish northern-eastern border less complicated for the Great Powers. As far as the southern-eastern part of it was concerned the absolute fall of any hopes for the victory of the “Whites” in Russia resulted in a situation in which any denial of the recognition of the Polish sovereignty in the Eastern Galicia or any other part of the eastern territories of the Second Republic of Poland would have meant a consent to the conquest of those lands by the USSR. While having no will to give up those territories to the Bolsheviks one had to give them to Poland and that was the sense of the decision finally taken by the Council of Ambassadors (Kumaniecki, 1969, 73-92, Żurawski vel Grajewski, 2017, 130-134). The status quo that resulted from that decision was destroyed only by the German-Soviet invasion of Poland in September 1939.

The Paris Peace Conference and the Council of Ambassadors that was its continuation took many decisions on the Central and Eastern European issues. Nevertheless, the fate of the peoples who lived in that region was decided first of all in the battlefields. The struggling peoples boosted their chances for victory while winning the support of the Allied and Associated Powers (that was the case of Poles, Romanians or the Baltic Peoples) or reduced them when they failed to get it (like Hungarians, Ukrainians or Georgians). Such a support had its material dimension (weapon, military equipment, war materials, military advisers and instructors, rarely troops) and the political and juridical one (the decisions of the Conference). The military, political and organizational efforts - in general nation building efforts of the Central and eastern European Peoples combined with the interests of the Great Powers who supported some of them and were hostile to the others finally shaped the Versailles order in that part of Europe. Poland, Czechoslovakia,



Romania, the Baltic States were the beneficiaries of it while the main enemies were Germany, Soviet Russia and Hungary who however differed from the former with its small potential still Hungary had been deeply wronged so turned into a profoundly revisionist nation. Ukrainians and Belarusians were the most tragic losers. The former after having fought the heroic still to some extent chaotic struggle, the latter – due to historical reasons were too weak even to try to fight in any considerable scale.

Bulgaria - the most southern nation of the region - finally failed its struggle for Makedonia that started in 1878, led to the Bulgarian success in San Stefano and the failure at the Congress of Berlin (Dymarski, 2010, 139-152, Malinowski, 2006, 254, Rubacha, 2004, 266-348, Wereszycki, 2010, 384-441). Bulgaria lost as well its position of the strongest Balkan country won in a victorious war of 1885 against Serbia (Faszczka, 2018, 255) the position that was acknowledged in the first Balkan war of 1912 and questioned effectively only by the coalition of all her neighbours in the second Balkan war in 1913. The treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine (November 27<sup>th</sup>, 1919) imposed on it by the victorious powers and executed by Greek and Serbian forces with some allied support ended its rivalry with Serbia too. The latter won it uniting all southern Slavs but Bulgarians under its rule. The military impotence of Bulgaria that resulted with that defeat was acknowledged later on during Demir Kapù (Petrich) incident in 1925 which on the other hand proved that Bulgaria was not treated as an eternal enemy by the Allied Powers. France, Britain and Italy saved it from the Greek invasion that time using the League of Nations procedures (Ahojja-Patel, 1974, 252, Barros, 1971, 923-924).

The European system was created after the World War I under the considerable impact of the United States. The League of Nations remained as a symbol of that phenomenon. The Americans however who had strongly influenced the decisions of the Paris Peace Conference then refused to accept the political and military responsibility for the functioning of the system and withdraw over the ocean falling into isolationism. In such circumstances the system proved to be fragile. Nevertheless, it proved as well to be crucial for the development of the modern political forms of the Central and Eastern European nations to whom (except for Ukrainians and Belarusians) it offered twenty years of independence – the priceless respite from foreign domination.

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