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# Military Aspects of the Dispute Between Poland and Lithuania over the North-Eastern Borderlands (1919–1920): a Polish Perspective

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*Abstract.* In 1918, the Republic of Poland, recovering from a century and a half of servitude, was in conflict not only with the former partitioning powers, but also with new nation states that were forming on their ruins. Lithuanians, creating their own state, rejected the proposal to return to the idea of a Polish-Lithuanian union. They chose the road to state independence, although, to do so, they often had to seek agreements with Germany and Soviet Russia. With the use of Polish literature on the subject, the article outlines the military aspects of the dispute between Poland and Lithuania over the Vilnius and Suwałki regions in the period when the foundations of the independence of both countries were being shaped, focusing on the period 1919–1920. The source base for the study consists mainly of documents of military provenance.

**Keywords:** *the war of 1920, Borderlands, Foch Line, Józef Piłsudski.*

*Anotacija.* 1918 metais Lenkijos Respublika, per pusantro šimtmečio atsigavusi po baudžiamosios, konfliktavo ne tik su buvusiomis dalijančiomis valdžiomis, bet ir su jų griuvėsiuose besikuriančiomis naujomis tautinėmis valstybėmis. Lietuviai, kurdami savo valstybę, atmetė siūlymą grįžti prie Lenkijos ir Lietuvos sąjungos idėjos. Jie pasirinko valstybinės nepriklausomybės

kelią, nors dėl šio sprendimo dažnai tekdavo ieškoti susitarimų su Vokietija ir Sovietų Rusija. Straipsnyje, pasitelkus lenkų literatūrą šia tema, išdėstyti kariniai Lenkijos ir Lietuvos ginčo dėl Vilniaus ir Suvalkų regionų aspektai tuo laikotarpiu, kai buvo formuojami abiejų šalių nepriklausomybės pamatai, daugiausia dėmesio skiriant laikotarpiui tarp 1919 ir 1920 m. Didžioji dalis straipsnio šaltinių yra karinės kilmės dokumentai.

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**Esminiai žodžiai:** 1920 m. karas, pasienio regionai, Foch Line, Józef Piłsudski.

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The term “borderlands” appeared in the Polish language in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when Poles realized how much these lands differed from Central Poland. Before 1914, geographically, the “Borderlands” were associated with the lands lost by the Commonwealth to Russia after 1772, but not belonging to the Kingdom of Poland. Poles were a minority there, but a specific type of minority. For Russian pressure shaped a particular mentality of the Polish borderland man – a defender of a “post” of national importance.

Reborn after a century and a half of servitude, Poland was in conflict not only with the former partitioning powers, but also with new nation states that were being formed on their ruins. Lithuanians, creating their own state, rejected the proposal to return to the idea of a Polish-Lithuanian union, just as they did not accept the incorporation idea announced by Polish delegates at the Peace Conference in Paris. They chose the pathway to independence, although, in order to go through it, they often had to seek agreements with Germany and Soviet Russia, states that were hostile to Poland.<sup>1</sup>

The aim of this paper is to outline, with the use of Polish literature on the subject, the military aspects of the dispute between Poland and Lithuania over the Vilnius and Suwałki regions in the period of the formation of the foundations of independence of both countries after World War I. Many myths and prejudices arose around the conflict. From the fall of 1915 until February 1918, the eastern front was relatively stable, and the lands inhabited by Poles and Lithuanians located on its western part became the subject of German “state-building” policy.

The source base for the study consists mainly of the files of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division of the Supreme Command of the Polish Army.<sup>2</sup> The above means that the activity and

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<sup>1</sup> Those interested in a bibliographic review of Lithuanian-Polish relations should analyze the works of JURKIEWICZ, Jan. *Rozwój polskiej myśli politycznej na Litwie i Białorusi w latach 1905–1922*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1983; and SOBCZAK, Jacek. *Potomkowie Lecha i Gedymina. Stosunki polityczne między Litwą a Polską w pierwszych latach odrodzenia państwa litewskiego*. Poznań: WNPiD UAM, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> See JABŁONOWSKI, Marek; KOSESKI, Adam. *O Niepodległą i Granice. Komunikaty Oddziału III Naczelnego Dowództwa Wojska Polskiego 1919–1921*. Volume I. Warsaw and Pułtusk: Akademia Humanistyczna

achievements of a special administrative unit, i.e., the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories, were left beyond the scope of deliberations. This body was established by J. Piłsudski<sup>3</sup> after Poland regained its independence, and before defining its borders, with the intention of achieving the goal of a common state organism, as perceived at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries by Polish political circles associated with the later First Marshal of Poland. They were convinced that independence would be incomplete without the Vilnius and Suwałki regions. The recognition of the national and social reality of Lithuanians, the issues of their national consciousness, political and independence aspirations were omitted.<sup>4</sup>

Without even attempting to discuss the bibliography of the topic, it should be mentioned, however, that from the Polish publications that appeared before 1939, a few works are worth noting: WALIGÓRA, Bolesław. *Dzieje 85-go Pułku Strzelców Wileńskich*. Warsaw: Wojskowy Instytut Naukowo-Wydawniczy, 1928, and WALIGÓRA, Bolesław. *Na przełomie. Zdarzenia na ziemiach Białorusi i Litwy oraz w krajach bałtyckich (1918–1919)*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Bellona, 1934; BORKIEWICZ, Adam J. *Dzieje 1-go pułku piechoty Legionów (lata wojny 1918–1920)*. Warsaw: Wojskowe Biuro Historyczne, 1929; SMOLEŃSKI, Józef. *Walki polsko-litewskie na Suwalszczyźnie we wrześniu 1920 r.* Warsaw: Wojskowe Biuro Historyczne, 1938; STUDNICKI, Władysław. *Współczesne państwo litewskie*. Warsaw: Gebethner i Wolff, 1922; KUMANICKI, Kazimierz W. *Odbudowa państwowości polskiej. Najważniejsze dokumenty 1912–kwiecień 1924*. Warsaw: Księgarnia J. Czarneckiego, 1924; KUTRZEBA, Tadeusz. *Bitwa nad Niemnem*. Warsaw: Wojskowy Instytut Naukowo-Wydawniczy, 1926; PRZYBYLSKI, Adam. *Wojna polska 1918–1921*. Warsaw: Wojskowy Instytut Naukowo-Wydawniczy, 1930. A lot of sources in this field can also be found in the outlines of the history of individual infantry and cavalry regiments of the Polish Army published before 1939. Among other studies, it is worth mentioning the work of RÖMER, Michał. *Litwa. Studium odrodzenia narodu litewskiego*. Lviv: Pilskie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1908, as well as a work by BUDECKI, Zdzisław. *Stosunki polsko-litewskie po wojnie światowej 1918–1922*. Warsaw: Koło Naukowe Szkoły Nauk Politycznych, 1928.

From the works published after 1945, in our opinion, attention should be paid primarily to the studies of Piotr ŁOSSOWSKI, an outstanding expert on Polish-Lithuanian

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im. A. Gieysztor and WDiNP UW, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> PIŁSUDSKI, Józef Klemens (1867–1935) was a politician, statesman, and First Marshal of Poland. He was Poland's Provisional Chief of State in the years 1918–1919, the Chief of State in the years 1919–1921, the President of the Council of Ministers twice, from October 2, 1926, to July 26, 1928, and from August 25, 1930, to December 4, 1930. From the May coup to his death, he was the Minister of Military Affairs.

<sup>4</sup> See GIEROWSKA-KAŁLAUR, Joanna. *Zarząd Cywilny Ziem Wschodnich (19 lutego 1919–9 września 1920)*. *Dzieje Najnowsze*, 2003, Volume 34, Issue 3; GIEROWSKA-KAŁLAUR, Joanna. *Straż Kresowa a Zarząd Cywilny Ziem Wschodnich. Współdziałanie czy rywalizacja*. Warsaw: NERITON, 1999, and GIEROWSKA-KAŁLAUR, Joanna. „O Niepodległą i Granice” *Raporty Straży Kresowej 1919–1920. Ziem Północno-Wschodnich*. Volume 7. Warsaw and Pułtusk: Akademia Humanistyczna im. A. Gieysztor and WDiNP UW, 2011.

relations, including: *Stosunki polsko-litewskie w latach 1918–1920*. Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1966, and *Stosunki polsko-litewskie 1921–1939*, Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN, Mazowiecka Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczno-Pedagogiczna w Łowiczu, 1971; *Litwa a sprawy polskie 1939–1940*. Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1982; *Po tej i tamtej stronie Niemna. Stosunki polsko-litewskie 1938–1939*. Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1985; *Konflikt polsko-litewski 1918–1920*, Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1996; the work of Henryk WISNER should also be mentioned: *Wojna nie wojna. Szkice z przeszłości polsko-litewskiej*. Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1978, and *Litwa i Litwini. Szkice z dziejów państwa i narodów*. Olsztyn: Pojezierze, 1991; PAJEWSKI, Janusz. *Budowa Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej 1918–1926*. Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1995; SIERPOWSKI, Stanisław. *Piłsudski w Genewie. Dyplomatyczne spory o Wilno w roku 1927*. Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1990; and STOCZEWSKA, Barbara. *Litwa, Białoruś, Ukraina w myśli politycznej Leona Wasilewskiego*. Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 1998; SZOPER, Dariusz. *Sukcesorzy Wielkiego Księstwa. Myśl polityczna i działalność konserwatystów polskich na ziemiach litewsko-białoruskich w latach 1904–1939*. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo ARCHE, 1999; BUCHOWSKI, Krzysztof. *Polacy w niepodległym państwie litewskim 1918–1940*. Białystok: Instytut Historii Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 1999; NOWAK, Andrzej. *Polska i trzy Rosje. Studium polityki wschodniej Józefa Piłsudskiego (do kwietnia 1920 roku)*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001; ŻOŁĘDOWSKI, Cezary. *Białorusini i Litwini w Polsce, Polacy na Białorusi i Litwie. Uwarunkowania współczesnych stosunków między większością i mniejszościami narodowymi*. Warsaw: Instytut Polityki Społecznej UW, 2003; CENCKIEWICZ, Sławomir. *Tadeusz Katelbach (1897–1977). Biografia polityczna*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo LTW, 2005; and ZULYS, Audrius A. *Polska w polityce zagranicznej Litwy w latach 1938–1939*. Gdańsk: Muzeum II Wojny Światowej w Gdańsku, 2015. From the recently published studies, attention is drawn to an extensive work by REZMER, Waldemar. *Polsko-litewski konflikt zbrojny 1918–1921. Geneza i przebieg*. In: GIBIEC, Magdalena, HRYCIUK, Grzegorz, KLEMENTOWSKI, Robert (Eds.). *Rozpad imperiów. Kształtowanie powojennego ładu w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w latach 1918–1923*. Wrocław, Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2020, pp. 417–476.

The rich sources on Polish-Lithuanian relations are dominated by diaries, and among them the 6-volume edition of Michał RÖMER's diaries (1911–1945), published by Ośrodek Karta, Warsaw 1917–1918. RÖMER's biography was prepared by SOLAK, Zbigniew. *Między Polską a Litwą. Życie i działalność Michała Römera 1880–1920*. Kraków: ARCANA, 2004.

It is also worth remembering that despite the lack of diplomatic relations between the two countries, they did conclude agreements regulating specific issues. In this matter see, among others: “Kaunas Protocol on the Ceasefire Between the Central Lithuania Troops and the Lithuanian Army” [Pol. *Protokół kowieński o zawieszeniu broni między wojskami Litwy Środkowej a litewskimi*] of November 29, 1920 (Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland 1923 No. 49, item 333), “Polish-Lithuanian Provisional Pact

Regarding the Rights Granted to Residents, Owners of Lands Located on Both Sides of the Polish-Lithuanian Border, Crossed and Separated by the Aforementioned Line” [Pol. *Układ tymczasowy polsko-litewski, dotyczący uprawnień przyznany mieszkańcom, właścicielom gruntów położonych po obu stronach linii granicznej polsko-litewskiej, przeciętych i oddzielonych wspomnianą linią*] of November 7, 1928 (Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland 1929, No. 29, items 285 and 286).

## The Third [Operational] Division of the Supreme Command of the Polish Army

The Third [Operational] Division of the Supreme Command of the Polish Army was established on May 9, 1919. It was headed by Lieutenant Colonel Julian Stachiewicz.<sup>5</sup> The unit worked under his command until July 1920, when he was replaced by Colonel Tadeusz Piskor.<sup>6</sup> In the indicated period, the unit was reorganized several times, mainly due to general changes in the Armed Forces (for example, changing fronts into armies, unifying tactical operations, etc.). The Division was divided into sections, then into departments. The tasks of the Records Department and the East Section within its structure included, inter alia, issuing operational commands and communiqués from the western and eastern fronts. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Division issued them once or even twice a day. They captured the entirety of events on all current fronts of the country. The communiqués were repeatedly issued by Tadeusz Kutrzeba<sup>7</sup> apart from the above-mentioned officers at the head of the Division.

<sup>5</sup> STACHIEWICZ, Julian (1890–1934) was a General of the Polish Army, active in the independence movement, Capitan of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the Polish Legions, Chief of Staff of the Polish Army in 1916, participant in the Greater Poland Uprising, head of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division of the Staff of the Supreme Command of the Polish Army, Head of the Military Historical Bureau in the years 1923–1925 and 1926–1934.

<sup>6</sup> PISKOR, Tadeusz (1889–1951), Major General of the Polish Army, from 1901 in the independence movement, participant in fights in the Polish Legions, from 1918 in the Polish Army, including: Chief of the General Staff of the “Bug” Operational Group, in the 2nd Legion Division, in Cavalry Operational Group, Head of the 3rd Division of the Supreme Command of the Polish Army, Second Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Border Guard in 1921–1925, Commander of the 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in 1925–1926, Chief of the Border Guard in 1926–1931, then an army inspector. In 1939 Commander of the Lublin Army, from 1945 in exile. See KRYSKA-KARSKI, Tadeusz; ŻURAKOWSKI, Stanisław. *Generałowie Polskie Niepodległej*. Warsaw: Editions Spotkania, 1991, p. 54; STAWECKI, Piotr. *Słownik biograficzny generałów Wojska Polskiego 1918–1939*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Bellona, 1994, pp. 250–252.

<sup>7</sup> KUTRZEBA, Tadeusz (1886–1947), Major General of the Polish Army and a historian, from 1906 in the Austrian army, from 1918 in the Polish Army. Head of the Bureau of the Inner War Council, the 2nd deputy of Chief of the Border Guard in 1925–1927, Commander of the Higher Military School in 1929–1939. In 1939 Commander of the Poznań Army, then a deputy of Commander of the Warsaw Army. After 1945 in exile. See KRYSKA-KARSKI, Tadeusz, and ŻURAKOWSKI, Stanisław. *Generałowie Polskie Niepodległej...*, p. 45; STAWECKI, Piotr. *Słownik biograficzny generałów Wojska Polskiego...*, pp. 187–188, and ŻOCHOWSKI, Stanisław. *Monografia generała dywizji Tadeusza Kutrzeby*. Lublin: Retro, 1977.

In connection with the demobilization of the army in November 1920, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division limited its activities, and on April 20, 1921, by order of the Supreme Command of the Polish Army, it was liquidated. Its powers were taken over by the 3<sup>rd</sup> “a” (IIIa) Division of the Inner War Council and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division of the General Staff of the Ministry of Military Affairs. After its liquidation, the files of the Division were handed over to the Military Historical Bureau, where they remained untidy until 1939. During the war and occupation, they shared the fate of the entire resource of the Military Archives.<sup>8</sup> After the war, they were transferred to the Central Military Archives in Rembertów, where in 1960 they were put in order by Mieczysław Cieplewicz, PhD.<sup>9</sup> They are a rich and useful source for learning about the combat activities of the Polish Army in 1919–1920. It seems that the daily operational commands and communiqués are the most important sources about the Division’s activity. From today’s perspective, one can also see that they have become a precise calendar of those years.

## **Background: The North-Eastern Borderlands in Polish Political Thought in the Years 1914–1918**

The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was not favorable for Poland and Poles. Over a hundred years ago, the country disappeared from the map of Europe, and the Polish question ceased to be an international issue. The separated lands of the First Polish Republic (I Rzeczpospolita) were under constant Germanization pressure in the west and Russification pressure in the east. Only in Galicia could one speak of a limited development of Polish education and culture.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> On the fate of Polish documents in the period 1939–1945, see the study of STARZEWSKI, Marek. *Niemiecka polityka archiwalna na ziemiach polskich włączonych do Rzeszy 1939–1945*. Warsaw–Łódź: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1991.

<sup>9</sup> CIEPLEWICZ, Mieczysław (1934–1996), PhD, was a military historian, archivist, employee of the Military Historical Bureau and the Central Military Archive in Rembertów; he was also a source editor and author of numerous works, including: *Generałowie polscy w opinii Józefa Piłsudskiego*. *Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny*, 1966, No. 1.; *Obrona Warszawy w 1939 r. Wybór dokumentów wojskowych*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, 1968; *Wojsko Polskie w latach 1921–1926. Organizacja, wyposażenie, wyszkolenie*. Wrocław: Wojskowy Instytut Historyczny Ossolineum, 1998.

<sup>10</sup> In 1867, a new concept of the Habsburg state was finally formed. The dualistic imperial-royal monarchy of Austria and Hungary was established. Galicia found itself in the Austrian part. A year later, the struggle for the scope of autonomy in this area began, which ended in the mid-1870s. Offices and administration fell into Polish hands, and Polish became the official language. The autonomous institutions were the Sejm and its executive body, the National Department, which had authority over poviats. An important element for the development of participatory political culture were the elections to both the Sejm and the Council of State. However, the current class system deformed the election result and did not correspond essentially to the actual social system. The landowners themselves also influenced the course of the vote. There were numerous bribes. Before the elections, the wealthy would organize parties in order to obtain the desired election result. This is where the term “pork barrel” was born. As

Changes of a profound nature were brought about by the Great War, which ended in conditions not foreseen by any government deciding to join any of the coalitions in 1914. This time also brought about significant changes in the perception of the North-Eastern Borderlands by parties and other political circles. At the outbreak of the conflict, most politicians assessed the events taking place in these areas as an internal problem of the partitioning powers. As activities ended, the issue of the Borderland's identity was becoming an international problem.<sup>11</sup>

<b>ACTIVISM</b>		<b>PASSIVISM</b>	<b>Class Movement</b>	
1. Pro-Russian orientation. 2. Pro-Habsburg orientation (trialistic). 3. Revolutionary orientation. 4. Pro-German orientation.				
<b>Negation of the Polish matter</b>	<b>Linking the Polish case / question with the international situation (anticipating an imminent European war)</b>	<b>Conservatism</b>	<b>Liberalism</b>	
<b>Military action</b>				<b>Political action</b>
<b>SOCIALIST MOVEMENT</b>				<b>National Democratic Movement</b>
<b>Social revolution</b>	<b>The universal war for the freedom of peoples</b>			
<b>REVOLUTIONARY LEFT</b> The Polish Socialist Party-the Left The Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania	<b>INDEPENDENCE LEFT (Józef Piłsudski)</b> The Polish Socialist Party-Revolutionary Faction			<b>National Democracy „Endecja” (Roman Dmowski)</b>

1 Scheme. *Political Orientations of the Polish Society. Based on own studies*

a consequence, in the '70s and '80s, representatives of the property owners were often elected from the fourth-rural area. Therefore, there is no doubt that the development of the peasant movement took place in Galicia. Its main goal was to fight for the social awareness of the most disadvantaged groups.

<sup>11</sup> See interesting (though now partially outdated) considerations on this matter of JABŁOŃSKI, Henryk. *Z rozważań o II Rzeczypospolitej*. Wrocław-Warsaw: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1987, pp. 25–61.

## 1914

The military conflict of the European powers in the summer of 1914 increased Poles' hopes of regaining their own statehood. In the discussions, questions were asked about Poland's place in Europe. It was beyond dispute that the core of the emerging country must be the Congress Kingdom, which would be extended to the west or the east. This was the beginning of a dispute over political orientations.<sup>12</sup>

The problem of the Borderlands in the first year of the war was obscured by a more important issue – the restitution of the state. Its vision functioned on two levels: the sentimental one, where it was seen within the pre-partition borders, and the pragmatic one – determined by the partitioning powers. From the latter perspective, politicians, regardless of their differences, spoke of the unification of Polish lands, either under the tsar's scepter or within the Habsburg monarchy.

## 1915

The issue of the Borderlands became more palpable in mid-1915 when German victories shifted the front line to the areas east of the Kingdom and Galicia. Probably the activists of the Polish Socialist Party – Revolutionary Faction (see Appendix II) were not alone in their views, when at their congress in early January 1916 they argued that Russia's war defeats, expulsion from the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, created a new situation conducive to the creation of an independent Polish state from the liberated lands of the Russian partition. Rejecting the Austro-Polish ("trialistic") solution, the activists of the Polish Socialist Party – Revolutionary Faction proposed Poland in the form of Congress Poland and the Kaunas, Vilnius, and Grodno governorates.<sup>13</sup>

In the subtext of this concept, an option for Germany can be clearly seen. It was hoped that the lands taken from Russia would create Poland. Soon, the Bloc of Polish Democratic Organizations was formed in Vilnius, which on September 28 announced a declaration on the restitution of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in union with Poland. Obviously, these actions were dictated by the occupiers. On the other hand, Zofia Golińska-Daszyńska, in a brochure published at that time, "A Central European Economic

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<sup>12</sup> One of the first to discuss this issue in Polish literature on the subject was SKRZYPEK, Andrzej. *Miejsce północno-wschodnich kresów Rzeczypospolitej w polskiej myśli politycznej doby I wojny światowej*. In: *Polacy, Litwini, Niemcy w kręgu wzajemnego oddziaływania. Z zagadnień Litwy Pruskiej i stosunków niemiecko-litewskich i polsko-litewskich w drugiej połowie XIX i XX wieku (do 1939 roku)*. Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo WSP, 1992.

<sup>13</sup> Similar views on the territorial shape of the future Poland can be found in an anonymous brochure from March 1916, published in Warsaw. The author calls for Poland to base itself on Germany, and at the same time warns against annexing the lands inhabited by Ukrainians, which, in his / her opinion, may introduce the factor of unrest and opposition.



Union and Poland,” opting for the Austro-Polish solution, saw the future Polish state as a Kingdom united with Galicia and extended to Volhynia.<sup>14</sup> In the opinion of the eminent researcher of this period, Janusz Pajewski, this was a point of view typical of the parties supporting the Supreme National Committee.<sup>15</sup> It seems that the dilemma of Lithuania or Volhynia at that time was dependent on the areas in which German and Austrian troops operated.<sup>16</sup>

## 1916

The political breakthrough in the approach to the Polish question began in the spring of 1916. It was then that the Germans began to think about the possibility of using the human potential of the occupied Polish territory for their own military needs. This brought the Polish issue to the agenda of European politics.<sup>17</sup> Thus, it made it possible

<sup>14</sup> SKRZYPEK, Andrzej...

<sup>15</sup> PAJEWSKI, Janusz..., p. 190.

<sup>16</sup> “The Systemic and Administrative-Political Principles of the Future Kingdom of Poland” [Pol. *Zasady ustrojowe i administracyjno-polityczne przyszłego Królestwa Polskiego*] (October 15, 1915) formulated by the Austrian Prime Minister Karl Graf von Stürgkh (1859–1916) envisaged the status of the crown country, part of the Austrian Habsburg monarchy, for the lands of the former Congress Kingdom, which were occupied by the troops of the Central Powers. The Ballhausplatz proposal, however, was not well received in the Reich. During the visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, István (Stephan) Burian von Rajecz (1851–1922) in Berlin (04.1916), Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg (1856–1921) stated that Germany linked the solution of the Polish case with the creation of a “buffer state” – allied with the Reich. The anonymous draft of the constitution of the future Kingdom of Poland and the state treaty with the German Reich (an integral part of the constitution), based on the political solutions of the then Prussian constitution, gave the Polish throne to Prince Friedrich Christian Albert Leopold Anno Sylvester Marcius (the second son of the last king of Saxony, Frederick Augustus III, who abdicated on November 13, 1918 – the later Margrave of Meissen and Duke of Saxony – and his wife, the Tuscan Princess Louise Habsburg-Lothringen). This concept resulted from historical and political conditions – the Saxon succession to the Polish throne in the Constitution of May 3 and the Constitution of the Duchy of Warsaw and family ties. See AFFEK, Mariusz. *Kwestia kandydatury do tronu polskiego w czasie I wojny światowej. Pro Fide, Rege et Lege*, 1999, No. 1 (33), pp. 8–10.

<sup>17</sup> Among the potential candidates to the throne in the spring of 1916 were: Wettin, one of the Hohenzollerns and the Bavarian dukes: Leopold Maximilian Joseph Maria Arnulf of Bayern (brother of the Bavarian king Ludwig III) and Rupprecht Wittelsbach (son of Louis III; mother: Maria Teresa Henrietta Dorota Habsburg-Este) – “as long as they were Catholics and enjoyed the support of Vienna [translation].” The candidate suggested in June 1916 by Emperor Wilhelm II of Austria, at the price of the total subordination of the Kingdom to Germany, was Archduke Charles Stephen Eugene Viktor Felix Maria of Austria. A number of arguments spoke for his candidacy – good knowledge of the Polish language, kinship with the Piasts and Jagiellons, family ties with the Czartoryski and Radziwiłłs, the estate in Żywiec, patronage over Polish culture. However, neither Franz Joseph nor Charles I wanted to accept the candidacy of his cousin from Żywiec to the Polish crown. Austria was afraid of being overly compliant with the Poles, which could pose a risk of separating Galicia from Austria. They continued to support the idea of appointing Friedrich Christian Albert Leopold Anno Sylvester Macarius, Prince of Saxony, Duke of Saxony (as head of the House of Wettin after 1932: Friedrich Christian, Margrave of Meissen) to the throne. However, the monarchical concepts of the partitioning powers ended with a further course of military and political events. See AFFEK, Mariusz, *op.cit.*

to make bolder demands regarding the Borderlands. However, the hope of regaining this territory was related to leaning on Germany.

In July 1916 Artur Śliwiński,<sup>18</sup> a prominent politician associated with Piłsudski, treating the Austro-Polish solution as a transitional goal, considered the creation of a Polish state composed of Galicia, a Kingdom and enlarged eastward by joining Lithuania with Vilnius as far-reaching. Justifying his position, why he focused on Lithuania, he emphasized that the western territories such as Poznań, were and would remain Polish, and as for Lithuania, its Polishness or our rights to it ceased to exist in Polish political ideology since 1863.<sup>19</sup>

The position of the Polish Socialist Party presented at the conference in Warsaw in August was more radical. The party distanced itself from the direction of the Supreme National Committee and emphasized that: “We do not want our ‘corner’ in Austria [...] we insist on complete independence, we demand a separate Polish state composed of Polish lands torn from the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, if possible, and from other districts of Poland [translation]”<sup>20</sup>

An important turning point in the case of Poland was the Act of November 5, 1916, which created the Polish state associated with Germany (the Regency Kingdom) of an undefined geographical shape. A Regency Council functioned in Warsaw from September 12, 1917. It consisted of three Poles: Zdzisław Lubomirski,<sup>21</sup> Józef Ostrowski,<sup>22</sup> and Aleksander Kakowski.<sup>23</sup> From that moment on, the rank of territorial demands made by parties from various sides of the political scene clearly increased.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> ŚLIWIŃSKI, Artur (1877–1953) was a historian, journalist, politician, associate of J. Piłsudski; from 1902 a member of the Polish Socialist Party, from 1915 the President of the National Central Committee, from 1917 in the Provisional Council of State, a deputy mayor (vice-president) of the City Council of Warsaw in 1917–1918, deputy mayor (vice-president) of the city 1918–1919. See more: CZEKAJ, Katarzyna. *Artur Śliwiński*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Semper, 2011; ZAWADZKI, Jarosław Maciej. *Senatorowie losy wojenne i powojenne*. Warsaw: Kancelaria Senatu, 2013, p. 14, p. 154, p. 170, pp. 187–189.

<sup>19</sup> GARLICKI, Andrzej. Główne założenia polityki Centralnego Komitetu Narodowego w oświeceniu Artura Śliwińskiego. *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 1959, Issue 1, pp. 118–126.

<sup>20</sup> PAJEWSKI, Janusz. *Odbudowa...* p. 182.

<sup>21</sup> Prince LUBOMIRSKI, Zdzisław (1865–1943) was a conservative politician and social activist. In the years 1916–1917 he was a Mayor / President of Warsaw. He was also an activist of the Party of Real Politics; in the years 1917–1918 a member of the Regency Council; in the years 1928–1935 a Senator from the Nonpartisan Bloc for Cooperation with the Government list.

<sup>22</sup> OSTROWSKI, Józef (1850–1923) was a conservative politician and landowner; from 1905 member of the Party of Real Politics (first Chair); in the years 1906–1910 member of the Russian State Duma. In 1916 he switched to the activists’ party. He was a Coregent of the Kingdom of Poland (1917–1918).

<sup>23</sup> Cardinal KAKOWSKI, Aleksander (1862–1938) was a metropolitan Archbishop of Warsaw, the last titular Primate of the Kingdom of Poland. From 1910 he was the Rector of the St. Petersburg Roman Catholic Theological Academy; from 1913 the Archbishop of Warsaw. He was a Coregent of the Kingdom of Poland (1917–1918). In 1919 he was elevated to the cardinal dignity by Pope Benedict XV. He was the organizer of the theological department at the University of Warsaw and a co-founder (1927) of the Catholic Action.

<sup>24</sup> In this situation, in 1916, the protests of Lithuanians at the German authorities regarding the results of the census, which showed that Poles dominated in Vilnius, should not be surprising. See REZMER, Waldemar. *Polsko – litewski...*, pp. 417–418.

The tsarist government, encouraged by the German-Austrian initiative, decided to take a political (or at least verbal) reversal. On December 2, 1916, Prime Minister Alexander Trepov<sup>25</sup> made a declaration in the Duma: “We must take the lands of Poland that have always been behind the cordon from the enemy. We want to rebuild a free Poland within its ethnographic borders and unbreakable connection with Russia [translation].” Identical wording a few days later was included in the order of Tsar Nicholas II<sup>26</sup> to the army and navy on December 25, 1916.<sup>27</sup>

## 1917

The declarations of the Russian side were important, because they constituted the minimum from which the politics of the victorious political forces in the Empire after the February Revolution started. As for the Polish issue, it was defined by 1) the announcement of the Petrograd Soviet of March 27, 1917, and 2) the declaration of the Provisional Government of March 29.<sup>28</sup> The right of the Polish nation to have its own state, granted therein, adopted by Western countries as the binding guidelines for Poland.<sup>29</sup>

The Provisional Council of State<sup>30</sup> responded to the Provisional Government’s Declaration. In its appeal of April 6, 1917, it took up the problem of the Borderlands for the

<sup>25</sup> TREPOV, A. (1862–1918) was a Russian politician, Minister of Communication in 1915–1916; Prime Minister in 1916.

<sup>26</sup> NICHOLAS II (1868–1918) was the last Tsar of Russia, reigning in 1894–1917. SOB CZAK, Jan. *Mikołaj II – ostatni car Rosji. Studium postaci i ewolucji władzy*. Pułtusk-Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Bellona, 2009.

<sup>27</sup> TOPOROWICZ, Wiesława. *Sprawa polska w polityce rosyjskiej 1914–1917*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1973, p. 233; and MATERSKI, Wojciech. *Kwestia polska w polityce Rosji lat Wielkiej Wojny 1914–1918*. In: SZUMSKI, Jan; ZASZTOWT, Leszek (Eds.). *Rok 1918. Odrodzona Polska i Sowiecka Rosja w nowej Europie*. Warsaw: ASPRA, 2019, pp. 302–304; see also JANOWSKI, Halina; JĘDRUSZCZAK, Tadeusz (Eds.). *Powstanie II Rzeczypospolitej. Wybór dokumentów 1866–1925*. Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1981; document 130: *Rozkaz dzienny Mikołaja II do rosyjskich wojsk lądowych i morskich*.

<sup>28</sup> See *Powstanie...*, document 143: *Orędzie Piotrogrodzkiej Rady Delegatów Robotniczych i Żołnierskich, głoszące prawo Polski do niepodległości* and document 144: *Proklamacja Rządu Tymczasowego Rosji w sprawie powstania niepodległego państwa polskiego*.

<sup>29</sup> In the historiography of the era of the People’s Republic of Poland, the dominant view was that the message of the Petrograd Soviet was the most important act on the Polish road to independence. In this context, the significance of the Provisional Government’s declaration was marginalized. In fact, the aforementioned declaration was of key importance for the recognition of Poland’s right to independence, as it was the Entente that appealed to the Provisional Government, encouraging it to take a clear position on the Polish matter. The declaration of March 29 had a major impact on the actions of the Western countries in the following months. One can see this, for example, in France’s decision to create a Polish army on its territory. See ŁOSSOWSKI, Piotr. *Kwestia polska i polityka zagraniczna*. In: SIERPOWSKI, Stanisław (Ed.). *Polska na tle procesów rozwojowych Europy w XX wieku*. Poznań: Instytut Historii Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2002, pp. 45–46.

<sup>30</sup> The Regency Council, on the basis of its own Act of February 4, 1918, established the Council of State of the Kingdom of Poland, which consisted of 110 members (12 virilists, 55 elected members, and 43

first time.<sup>31</sup> It stated that the fate of the lands lying between ethnographic<sup>32</sup> Poland and Russia cannot be submitted to the exclusive judgment of the All-Russian Constituent Assembly – “the fate of these lands should be decided in accordance with the world power interests of independent Poland, respecting the will of the peoples inhabiting these lands [translation]”.<sup>33</sup> The Provisional Council’s declaration was shortly preceded by Roman Dmowski’s memorial<sup>34</sup> presented in the British *Foreign Office*, where he presented his concept of the future of the Polish state. The basic premise was the conviction that Russia would not be able to arrange the future of Poland. He was in favor of creating a strong Polish state. As for the eastern border, he saw it rather in the form of a line after the second partition (i.e., after 1793) – including the Kaunas, Vilnius, Grodno Governorates and part of Minsk.<sup>35</sup> Dmowski presented the above-mentioned concept in a more mature form in the work entitled “Central and Eastern European Issues”<sup>36</sup> [Pol. *Zagadnienia środkowo-i wschodnio-europejskie*], which was received by the governments of the Entente countries in July 1917. The above assumptions constituted both the core of the program of the Polish delegation to the peace conference and the

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members appointed by the Regency Council). The Council could include citizens residing within the General-Governorate of Warsaw or Lublin. The Marshal was the head of the Council. The Presidium of the Council consisted of a Marshal, two Deputy Marshals, and four Secretaries. The tasks of the Council of State included: cooperation with the occupation authorities in passing laws, preparing the draft constitution of the Kingdom of Poland, passing the state administration budget transferred to the Polish state authorities, and exercising control over the government’s activities. The Council of State was dissolved by the Regency Council on October 7, 1918.

<sup>31</sup> See *Powstanie...*, document 147: *Deklaracja TRS w związku z odezwą rosyjskiego Rządu Tymczasowego*.

<sup>32</sup> Today’s understanding of the “ethnographic boundaries” is different.

<sup>33</sup> *Materiały archiwalne do historii stosunków polsko-radzieckich*, Warsaw 1958, Volume 1, p. 419. The first monographs about the Provisional Council of State were written by SULEJA, Włodzimierz. *Próba budowy zrębów państwowości polskiej w okresie istnienia Tymczasowej Rady Stanu*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1981. See more WINNICKI, Zdzisław Julian. *Rada Regencyjna Królestwa Polskiego i jej organy (1917–1918)*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Wektory, 2017, p. 25; and others.

<sup>34</sup> DMOWSKI, Roman Stanisław (1864–1939) was a politician, political journalist, MP from the 2nd and 3rd State Duma of the Russian Empire; a co-founder of the National Democracy, the main ideologist of Polish nationalism; postulating the unification of all Polish lands and gaining autonomy within the Russian Empire, and then regaining independence based on an alliance with Russia and the Entente; at the end of World War I, he was the head of the Congress of the New Right, a member of the Legislative Sejm, a Polish delegate to the Paris Conference in 1919. He was a political opponent of the project of creating a federal state and a creator of the incorporation concept of the state. See, among others: WAPIŃSKI, Roman. *Roman Dmowski*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1988; KAWALEC, Krzysztof. *Roman Dmowski. Biografia*. Wrocław-Warsaw: ZYSK i S-ka, 2002; W. Wiesław, *Drugie życie Dmowskiego. Polityka*, 47/2012, pp. 58–61; WOLIKOWSKA, Izabella. *Roman Dmowski. Człowiek, Polak, Przyjaciel*. Warsaw: Nortom, 2007; and also DOBRACZYŃSKI, Jan. *Spadające liście, powieść historyczna o Romanie Dmowskim*. Warsaw: Biblioteczka Myśli Polskiej, 2010.

<sup>35</sup> DMOWSKI, Roman. *Pisma*. Volume VI. Warsaw: Antoni Gmachowski i S-ka, 1937, pp. 264–265.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* 270. As regards the political thought of R. Dmowski, see broadly, inter alia: WAPIŃSKI, Roman. *Roman Dmowski*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1988; KAWALEC, Krzysztof. *Roman Dmowski. Biografia*. Wrocław-Warsaw: ZYSK i S-ka, 2002; BIAŁOKUR, Marek (Ed.). *Roman Dmowski i jego współpracownicy*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2008.

program of the National Democracy in the following years.<sup>37</sup> This concept became known as the incorporation option. The moment of receipt of the said memorial by Western countries coincided with the establishment in August 1917 in France and Switzerland of the Polish National Committee.

The Polish demands met with a reaction from Germany.<sup>38</sup> Its leaders decided to meet the Lithuanian proposals. Lithuanians were of the opinion that the partitions had definitively abolished the Polish-Lithuanian union. As a consequence, as early as 1916, they approached the German authorities with a suggestion that Lithuania be granted the same civil self-government as Poland had. They received it in September 1917, when the Council of Lithuania [Lietuvos Taryba] was established.<sup>39</sup> It negotiated with Germany on the state future of Lithuania, and on December 11 it adopted a resolution “on the rebuilding of an independent Lithuanian state with its capital in Vilnius and freeing Lithuania from ties that had ever tied it with other states [translation]”.<sup>40</sup> The establishment of the Council and the adopted resolutions provoked protests of the United Polish Parties, which was motivated by ignoring the will of the majority of residents.<sup>41</sup> In this way, the Polish-Lithuanian dispute began.

It seems that the second concept of Poland’s eastern policy, competitive to incorporation and known as the federation option, provided a certain chance for its solution. Its genesis should be looked for in the thought of the labor movement. The 13th Congress of the Polish Socialist Party met in June 1917 in Piotrków and it stated that “the Polish working class would unwaveringly strive in communion with the proletariat of other countries to create an independent Republic of Poland [translation].” At the same time,

<sup>37</sup> PAJEWSKI, Janusz. *Odbudowa*. p. 178.

<sup>38</sup> The ongoing Polish-Lithuanian conflict was beneficial to the Germans, it facilitated the implementation of a new shape of relations in this part of Europe, the creation of a political entity subordinated to Berlin and referred to as Mitteleuropa. See PAJEWSKI, Janusz. *Mitteleuropa. Studia z dziejów imperializmu niemieckiego w dobie pierwszej wojny światowej*. Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1959; and GOWOROWSKA-PUCHAŁA, Izabela. *Mitteleuropa. Rdzeń Starego Kontynentu*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 1997.

<sup>39</sup> *Taryba [Lietuvos Taryba]*, the Council of Lithuania, which existed from September 18, 1917, to May 5, 1920. *Taryba* was headed by A. Smetona. On February 16, 1918, the Council proclaimed the independence of Lithuania; in June, it proclaimed Lithuania a kingdom and offered the throne to Wilhelm Karl of Urach (Herzog von Urach; Graf von Württemberg). This proposal was abandoned after the defeat of the German Empire on the Western Front. On November 2, 1918, it passed a Provisional Constitution, making *Taryba* the sole legislative body, with its Presidium taking over the highest executive power. On November 11, 1918, the Germans agreed to create a sovereign Lithuanian government. *Taryba* established two governments (A. Voldemaras – November 3, 1918, and M. Sleževičius – December 26, 1918). It ceased its activity after the election of the Legislative Sejm. In Polish literature on the subject see, among others: OCHMAŃSKI, Jerzy. *Historia Litwy*. Warsaw-Wrocław, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Ossolineum, 1990; ŁOSSOWSKI, Piotr. *Litwa*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Trio, 2001; LEWANDOWSKI, Jan. “Wybijanie się na niepodległość” w roku 1918 w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej. In: GRINBERG, Daniel; SNOPOKO, Jan; ZACKIEWICZ, Grzegorz (Eds.). *Rok 1918 w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej*. Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu, 2010, pp. 27–28.

<sup>40</sup> LEWANDOWSKI, Jan. „Wybijanie się na niepodległość” ..., p. 16.

<sup>41</sup> ŁOSSOWSKI, Piotr. *Po tej i po tamtej...*, p. 87.

it was emphasized that only the Constituent Assembly of Lithuania and Belarus can decide about the fate of these countries, and that “the deepest conviction that uniting the two countries on the basis of a voluntary state union is in the interest of Lithuania and Belarus, as well as of Poland [translation]”<sup>42</sup>

Fundamental changes of a deeply political nature took place at the end of 1917. It seems that the creation of Poland was already at this point a foregone conclusion, although neither its borders, political system nor alliances were settled. Another revolution in Russia contributed to changes in the country’s periphery. The Borderlands, which until recently had been the hinterland of the front, became an area of emptiness. The Russian army abandoned the area, the Bolsheviks fought for political survival mainly in capitals and industrial centers; counter-revolutionary centers were formed where they had access to the sea. The Borderlands became a no-man’s land.

## 1918

A consequence of the new situation in Eastern Europe were the German-Russian negotiations in Brest-on-the-Bug, where the representatives of both sides met. Their intentions were obviously different. The Germans planned not only to regulate their relations with Bolshevik Russia, but also to legally sanction the creation of several small countries in this part of the continent, including Poland and Lithuania. They were to become the domain of their influence, secure the imperial future, as well as the possibility of economic and population expansion. Hence, despite the efforts, the representatives of Poland, namely the Regency Council,<sup>43</sup> were not allowed to negotiate. The Bolshevik delegation had its own, different vision of post-war Europe. One of its members, Adolph Joffe,<sup>44</sup> preached that peace between Russia and the Central Powers should be concluded without the annexation of contributions. It was tantamount to allowing the people of the Borderlands, including Poles and Lithuanians, to freely express themselves about their future.<sup>45</sup> Bolshevik slogans, including “Peace to the huts! War on the palaces!” the

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<sup>42</sup> JABŁOŃSKI, Henryk. Polityka PPS w czasie wojny 1914-1918. *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 66, 1959, pp. 329–331.

<sup>43</sup> WINNICKI, Zdzisław Julian. *Rada...*, p. 53, see also LEWANDOWSKI, Jan., „Wybijanie się na niepodległość”..., p. 19.

<sup>44</sup> ABRAMOVICH JOFFE, Adolph (1883–1927) was a Soviet politician, diplomat. He began his revolutionary activity as a teenager. In 1903 he joined the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, supporting the Mensheviks. Forced to emigrate, he stayed, among others in Berlin and Vienna, where he edited *Prawda* together with L. Trocki. In 1917, after arriving in Petrograd, he joined the faction of inter-district members of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party led by Trotsky. In October 1917, a member of the Petrograd Military-Revolutionary Committee, in December 2017 he was delegated to Brest-Litovsk for talks with Central Powers. They led to the conclusion of a separatist peace by Soviet Russia on March 3, 1918.

<sup>45</sup> See, among others BATOWSKI, Henryk. *Rozpad Austro-Węgier 1914–1918 (Sprawy narodowościowe i działania dyplomatyczne)*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1982, p. 187; HOLZER, Jerzy; MOLENDĄ,

right of nations to self-determination or the transfer of land to peasants, had a huge political load. However, their assumption of power posed a deadly threat, especially to new state organisms in the east of the continent.<sup>46</sup>

The Brest-Litovsk negotiations and their consequences aroused a wave of indignation among Poles, even referred to as “the next partition.” The cause of the outrage was primarily the treaty of the central states with Ukraine, establishing as the basis the western borders of this country, the western borders of the Chełm region and granting Ukrainians a part of Podlasie. The Brest-Litovsk pacts put an end to the existing two-option policy and imposed the need to look for new solutions.<sup>47</sup> The situation was not changed by the German proposals from the end of August, promising Poles the incorporation of Vilnius into the Polish state on the condition that Poland and Germany would be united by a close political alliance as well as a military and economic union.<sup>48</sup>

The executive act to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was the decree of August 29, 1918, canceling the partition agreements between Russia, Prussia, and Austria.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the legal basis of the partitions disappeared, and the former allied obligations for third countries disappeared. In the Borderlands areas, then occupied by the German whose control was sometimes illusory due to the size of the areas, the Polish underground grew, and Lithuanian aspirations grew as well. In August 1918, the German army began to suffer serious defeats on the Western Front. In September, Austria called for peace. In Polish and Lithuanian societies, there was a conviction that the page of their fates was turning.

In November 1918, the reborn Poland was separated from the areas controlled by Bolshevik Russia where the German army was stationed. These occupied territories were the Borderlands, and it was known that the Germans would soon have to leave them. The question arose of who would take the lands. Poles and Lithuanians put forward their historical rights. The Bolsheviks believed that they should take possession of the

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Jan. *Polska w pierwszej wojnie światowej*. Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Wiedza Powszechna, 1963, p. 272.

<sup>46</sup> LEWANDOWSKI, Jan „Wybijanie się na niepodległość?...”, pp. 20–21.

<sup>47</sup> The enormous indignation of Polish society meant that the Regency Council, disregarded by the governments of the central states and its government, faced a serious political crisis at the threshold of its political functioning, see more: WINNICKI, Zdzisław Julian. *Rada ...*, pp. 53–54; and BORODZIEJ, Włodzimierz; GÓRNY, Maciej. „Chleba i pokoju!”. *Konflikty społeczne w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej 1917–1921*. In: ZASZTOWT, Leszek; SZUMSKI, Jan (Eds.). *Rok 1918. Odrodzona Polska i Sowiecka Rosja w nowej Europie*. Volume I. Warsaw: ASPRA, 1919, pp. 281–182. Taking the problem from a historical distance, it must be admitted that the Brest-Litovsk negotiations and the decisions made there were another step on the road to rebuilding the independence of the Polish state.

<sup>48</sup> This change in Germany’s attitude towards the issue of Vilnius’ affiliation was related to the aspirations noted by Berlin in Lithuania – also in the circles that had previously cooperated with it – to become independent and to abandon the plans of the Prussian-Lithuanian union. For more on this issue, see JABŁOŃSKI, Henryk. *Z rozważań...*, pp. 58–59.

<sup>49</sup> Decree of the Council of People’s Commissars of the RSFSR on the cancellation of the treaties concluded by the government of the former Russian Empire with the governments of the German and Austro-Hungarian Empire, containing an item on the cancellation of the treaties on the partitions of Poland, see *Powstanie II Rzeczypospolitej ...*, pp. 413–414, doc. 202.

lands of the former empire. The key question for the future was who would first seize power and legalize it in areas abandoned by German troops. At the end of 1918, all the political forces active in this area created various organizations by marking their presence. Lithuanian and Belarusian self-defense units were established to secure the Polish state of property.<sup>50</sup> The Regency Council appointed General Władysław Wejtko<sup>51</sup> the commander of self-defense, recognizing the forces subordinate to him as part of the Polish Army. However, it was not possible to keep Minsk, and in the face of the city's expected occupation by the Red Army, the self-defense unit withdrew at the end of November, together with the German army, to Vilnius, which at the end of the year was still cut off from Congress Poland by a belt of German troops.

The establishment of the Polish state in November 1918 became an important turning point in the struggle for the Borderlands.<sup>52</sup> The Moraczewski government<sup>53</sup> set itself the priority task of uniting all lands inhabited by the Polish population. This program was never brought to fruition.<sup>54</sup> The territory of the country was more precisely defined by the Decree of the Chief of State of November 28 announcing the elections to the Legislative Sejm and specifying the constituencies. To the east of Congress Poland, they included only the following poviats: Białystok, Sokółka, and Bielsko. The Decree also announced that representatives of Poles in Lithuania and Russia would be appointed to the Sejm in consultation with the local Polish society.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>50</sup> See BORKIEWICZ, Adam. *Dzieje 1-go...*, pp. 9–40; FILIPOW, Krzysztof. Skryte oddziały Wojska Polskiego: Samoobrona Liwy i Białorusi (1918–1919). In: GRINBERG, Daniel; SNOPOKO, Jan; ZACKIEWICZ, Grzegorz (Eds.). *Rok 1918 w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej*. Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu, 2010, pp. 414–418; see more REZMER, Waldemar. *Polsko-litewski...*, pp. 419–420.

<sup>51</sup> WEJTOKO, Władysław (1859–1933), Major General of the Polish Army. He graduated from the Nikolaev School of Engineering in St. Petersburg, served in the tsarist army. In the fall of 1918, he managed to get to Minsk and, on the orders of the Chief of the General Staff of the Polish Army, General T. Rozwadowski, on November 28 took over command of Polish Self-Defense units in Lithuania and Belarus and joined the Polish Military Organization. In December, by a decree of the Commander-in-Chief, he was included in the Polish Army and appointed the Commander of all Polish units in Lithuania and Belarus. See KRYSKA-KARSKI, Tadeusz, and ŻURAKOWSKI, Stanisław. *Generałowie Polski...*, p. 65, STAWECKI, Piotr. *Słownik biograficzny...*, p. 346.

<sup>52</sup> For more information on the general situation in the world, in Poland and in Lithuania at the time of Poland's regaining of independence see GIEROWSKA-KAŁLAUR, Joanna. *Zarząd Cywilny...*, pp. 17–59.

<sup>53</sup> MORACZEWSKI, Jędrzej (1870–1944) was a trade union activist, politician and journalist, graduate of the Lviv Polytechnic University, one of the leaders of the Polish Social and Democratic Party and the Polish Socialist Party; Member of the Reichsrat, member of the Temporary Coordinating Commission of Confederated Independence Parties, served in the 1st Brigade of Legions, Minister in the Provisional People's Government of the Republic of Poland; President of Ministers on November 18, 1918–16 January 1919. For biography see GOŁOTA, Janusz. Jędrzej Moraczewski (1870–1944). *Pierwszy premier II Rzeczypospolitej. Przegląd Nauk Historycznych*, 3/1, 2004.

<sup>54</sup> For more on the Moraczewski Cabinet see KORNAT, Marek; LIBERA, Paweł (Eds.). *Protokoły posiedzeń Rady Ministrów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1918–1923, Gabinet Jędrzeja Moraczewskiego 18 listopada 1918–16 stycznia 1919*. Volume I. Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN, 2020.

<sup>55</sup> KUMANIECKI, Kazimierz Władysław. *Odbudowa państwowości polskiej*. Warsaw: Nakł. Księgarni J. Czarneckiego, 1924, p. 147.



## Confrontation in the Years 1919–1920

The relations between Poles and Lithuanians at the end of 1918 found themselves in a dead end, and the problem of the Vilnius and Suwałki regions' belonging was far from solved. The appointment of the Provisional Governing Commission for the Vilnius-based district of Northern Lithuania on December 21 was protested by Lithuanians.<sup>56</sup>

The Lithuanian government was evacuated from Vilnius in December 1918 along with German troops.<sup>57</sup> The Polish self-defense formation was unable to oppose the incoming Bolshevik troops that took the city on January 5, 1919.<sup>58</sup> In this situation, Józef Piłsudski's plans for resolving the Lithuanian issue (February–March)<sup>59</sup> were defined more precisely. The idea was to create the impression of the liberation of the Vilnius Region as a friendly act towards Lithuanians who were directly threatened by Bolshevism.<sup>60</sup> Lithuanians perceived this issue differently, which was reflected in sending a diplomatic mission to Warsaw in the middle of April headed by Jurgis Šaulys<sup>61</sup> and calling for recognition of the independence of the state with the capital in Vilnius as conditions for an agreement with Poland, and for the granting of Grodno and Suwałki governorates to Lithuania.<sup>62</sup>

It was not possible to reach any consensus, because on April 19, Polish troops entered Vilnius, removing the Bolsheviks,<sup>63</sup> which further complicated mutual relations, despite certain gestures made by the Polish side.<sup>64</sup> Due to the ensuing situation, Lithuanians did

<sup>56</sup> WISNER, Henryk. *Wojna nie...*, p. 123. On the Polish-Lithuanian contacts in the years 1914–1918 see ŁOSSOWSKI, Piotr. *Stosunki...*, pp. 26–33 oraz także *Po tej i tamtej...*, p. 83.

<sup>57</sup> ŁOSSOWSKI, Piotr. *Po tej i tamtej ...*, p. 95. One of the first attempts to sketch the Polish-Lithuanian confrontation in the fall of 1920 in the light of military provenance materials was undertaken by JABŁONOWSKI, Marek in the work: *Spór polsko-litewski w świetle komunikatów operacyjnych Naczelnego Dowództwa Wojska Polskiego w 1920 r.* In: SKRZYPEK, Andrzej; SZOSTAKOWSKI, Stanisław (Eds.). *Polacy, Litwini, Niemcy w kręgu wzajemnego oddziaływania. Z zagadnień Litwy Pruskiej i stosunków niemiecko-litewskich i polsko-litewskich w drugiej połowie XIX i XX wieku (do 1939 roku)*. Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo WSP, 1992.

<sup>58</sup> On the events in Vilnius and the adjacent territories in December 1918 and the first months of 1919 see REZMER, Waldemar. *Polsko-litewski...*, pp. 421–429.

<sup>59</sup> WISNER, Henryk. *Wojna nie...*, p. 123. In the context of the subject, it is worth noting the opinion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of April 9, 1919: *Układ z rządem litewskim nie może być zawarty przed akcją wojskową*.

<sup>60</sup> The Chief of State thought about the union of four capitals: Warsaw, Vilnius, Minsk, and Kiev, to which the Baltic states were to join.

<sup>61</sup> ŠAULYS, Jurgis (1879–1948) was a Lithuanian diplomat, advocate of the understanding with Poland in the 1930s; MP in Berlin, to the Holy See, in Warsaw in 1939.

<sup>62</sup> ŁOSSOWSKI, Piotr. *Kształtowanie się państwa ...*, pp. 96–97; ZULYS, Audrius. *Polska w polityce...*, pp. 44–45.

<sup>63</sup> The fighting in the city lasted from April 19 to 21, when in the afternoon the Bolsheviks withdrew towards Maišiagala. At 6 p.m. J. Piłsudski arrived in Vilnius by train, see BORKIEWICZ, Adam. *Dzieje...*, p. 96; PRZYBYLSKI, Adam. *Wojna polska 1918–1921*. Warsaw: Wojskowy Instytut Naukowo-Wydawniczy, 1930, pp. 48; WYSZCZELSKI, Lech. *Wojsko polskie w latach 1918–1921*. Warsaw: Neriton, 2006, p. 308.

<sup>64</sup> For example, General E. Śmigły-Rydz, most likely on April 21, issued an appeal to the population: "(...) we are far from any partitioning and imposing by abuse the local population some or other forms of

not enter into dialogue with the Polish side on the issue of cooperation and federation of the two countries.<sup>65</sup> As it seems, difficulties may have resulted from different perspectives on the Paris negotiations at the time. There, Lithuanians sought to disconnect their cause from the historical and political context of Poland or Russia. Poland sought, above all, the support of the Entente in the war against Bolshevik Russia. Moreover, in the case of Warsaw, there were serious discrepancies in the perception of the union or federation with Lithuania between the two basic Polish political orientations, which were personified by J. Piłsudski and R. Dmowski.<sup>66</sup>

Between the fall of 1918 and April 1919, as emphasized by Waldemar Rezmer, Polish Self-Defense Units, and then the regular army, fought with demoralized groups of German soldiers and armed communists, and then with Bolshevik units. The latter also became an opponent of the Lithuanian national troops.<sup>67</sup> There were no Polish-Lithuanian clashes.<sup>68</sup>

As a result of the action of the Polish Army, on April 26, 1919, the first contact between Polish and Lithuanian troops took place in the area of the village of Jewie [Vievis] west of Vilnius, no armed clash took place there.<sup>69</sup> In the following weeks, there were only incidents, including in the area of Merez [Merkinė], Jewie [Vevis], and Szyrwinty [Širvintos] and in the Suwałki region.<sup>70</sup> Both sides claimed the right to take control of the disputed territory. According to the documents, the Polish side closely watched and analyzed the development of the situation,<sup>71</sup> and the Lithuanians, avoiding use of

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state and political existence [translation]”, see JABŁONOWSKI, Marek; STAWECKI, Piotr. *Następca Komendanta Edward Śmigły-Rydz. Materiały do biografii*. Warsaw-Pułtusk: ASPRA-JR, 2014, p. 98. In this context, it seems that the author’s “Eastern concept” of the Chief of State announced on April 22, 1919, entitle “Appeal to the Inhabitants of the Former Grand Duchy of Lithuania” (“Vilnius Appeal”) See PIŁSUDSKI, Józef. *Pisma zbiorowe*. Volume V. Warsaw, 1937, pp. 75–76 (reprint Warsaw 1990).

<sup>65</sup> It is worth noting that the Polish side also sent its own missions to Kaunas during this period, headed by M. Romer (April 1919) and St. Staniszewski (May 1919). Just like the mission of J. Saulys in Warsaw, it did not lead to the approximation of the positions of both sides, see, among others: ŁOSSOWSKI, Piotr. *Kształtowanie się państwa ...*, p. 97; ZULYS, Audrius. *Polska w polityce...*, pp. 45–46.

<sup>66</sup> ŁOSSOWSKI, Piotr. *Po tej i tamtej...*, pp. 96–98. On this subject see the recently published interesting material by KORNAT, Marek. *Polska – Rosja Sowiecka. Listopad 1918–kwiecień 1920. Konflikt koncepcji terytorialnych i spór o kształt Europy Wschodniej*. In: SZUMSKI, Jan; ZASZTOWT, Leszek (Eds.). *Rok 1918. Odrodzona Polska i Sowiecka Rosja w nowej Europie*. Volume I. Warsaw: ASPRA-JR, 2019, p. 73–114.

<sup>67</sup> ŁOSSOWSKI, Piotr. *Konflikt...*, pp. 47–48; and REZMER, Waldemar. *Polsko-litewski...*, p. 431.

<sup>68</sup> REZMER, Waldemar. *Polsko-litewski...*, p. 419.

<sup>69</sup> The units subordinate to General E. Śmigły-Rydz, when entering the aforementioned town, found a patrol of Lithuanian troops there. Vievis was captured by Poles despite the opposition of a Lithuanian officer, see BORKIEWICZ, Adam. *Dzieje...*, p. 107; ŁOSSOWSKI, Piotr. *Po tej i tamtej...*, p. 106, dates this meeting to April 24.

<sup>70</sup> REZMER, Waldemar. *Polsko-litewski...*, pp. 430–431.

<sup>71</sup> The services subordinate to General E. Śmigły-Rydz observed the development of the situation in the areas controlled by Lithuanians and the German troops stationed there; in May 1919 the General wrote to J. Piłsudski: “I believe, against your instructions on the expansion of the Lithuanian army, Poles belong to it keep in order to have: a) permanent messages, b) to be able to withdraw them with the greatest

force,<sup>72</sup> clearly articulated their position in contacts with representatives of the Polish Army, and their attitude was becoming more and more hostile every day.<sup>73</sup>

Political contacts were not severed. There were talks between the Lithuanian delegation in Warsaw and the Polish delegation in Kaunas. However, the negotiations did not bring any approximation of positions. That summer, mutual relations overlapped with, on the one hand, military measures in Kaunas, Lithuania, involving the occupation of further territories and pushing back Lithuanian troops by Polish troops (from July 4), and, on the other hand, with the unsuccessful Polish coup in Kaunas.<sup>74</sup> After the Lithuanian countermoves and numerous arrests, the Polish Military Organization in Kaunas practically ceased to exist.<sup>75</sup> On the other hand, there were events in the

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possible effect in the event of a possible action [translation];” see PRZYBYLSKI, Adam. *Wojna ...*, p. 84; JĄBŁONOWSKI, Marek; STAWECKI, Piotr. *Następca...*, p. 100.

<sup>72</sup> While making this remark, one should remember about the significant difference between the military and economic potentials of Poland and Lithuania and, consequently, their possibilities. Poland is a country that, from the first weeks of independence, was creating an ever-expanding army of several hundred thousand, while Lithuania began organizing military forces at the end of 1918, according to REZMER, Waldemar. *Litewskie lotnictwo wojskowe 1919–1940*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK, 1999, pp. 20–22; and REZMER, Waldemar. 1 Pułk Huzarów Armii Litewskiej im. Hetmana Janusza Radziwiłła. In: KARPUS, Zbigniew (Ed.). *W kraju i na wychodźstwie. Księga pamiątkowa ofiarowana Profesorowi Sławomirowi Kalembece w sześćdziesięciopięciolate urodzin*. Toruń-Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo UMK i Uniwersytet Warmińsko-Mazurski, 2001, pp. 791–814, a cavalry detachment and two infantry regiments were formed (the First Infantry Regiment in Alytus, the Second Infantry Regiment in Vilnius). In 1936, Lithuania was a country with an area of 56,000 km<sup>2</sup>, with a population of 2.5 million, while Poland had 388,000 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 35.1 million. See more on STAWECKI, Piotr. *Wojsko II Rzeczypospolitej*. In: TOMICKI, Jan (Ed.). *Polska odrodzona. Państwo. Społeczeństwo. Kultura*. Warsaw: Konfrontacje Historyczne, 1988, pp. 188–189; ŁOSSOWSKI, Piotr. *Po tej i tamtej...*, p. 58; *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny*, Warsaw 1939, p. 16.

<sup>73</sup> “O Niepodległą i Granice” volume I, Komunikaty Oddziału III ..., p. 182, see doc. 193, communiqués of April 30, 1919 [evening] (hereinafter KO III NDWP), where it was noted that Lithuanian officers came here [to Vilnius]: Colonel Adamkowicz and Major Szkirpa and presented the following ultimatum: they demand Vilnius as an operational base and the road Vilnius-Szyrwinty [Širvintos]-Wilkomierz [Ukmergė] and Vilnius-Malaty [Molėtai]-Uziany [Utena], if the above points are not accepted, the Lithuanian government will consider it a hostile speech against the Lithuanian army, and in particular against the Lithuanian government. For these reasons, any response by the Polish Forces in moving from Koszary [Kaišiadorys] and Orany [Varėna] to Vilnius will be considered the same hostile Polish intentions. Therefore, naturally, the Lithuanians did not want to hear about the demarcation line set out in the instructions given by Piłsudski. At the same time, a report came from Dziewulski’s group that Orany [Varėna] was occupied by the 1st Lithuanian battalion, (2 cannons), and the Lithuanian commander announced that he had an order to man the Grodno-Vilnius railway line. Until the final agreement was established in Warsaw, the Lithuanian troops would remain where they were. A few days later (KO III NDWP, p. 197, see doc. 212, communiqué of May 10, 1919 [evening]) it was reported that on the night of May 7 to 8, Lithuanian troops entered Szyrwinty [Širvintos] (100 soldiers), behaving defiantly and by indicating openly that greater forces were to come, and then they would move on to Vilnius.

<sup>74</sup> The Polish Military Organization in Kaunas planned (August 1919) an attempt to overthrow the Lithuanian government of M. Sleževičius. The aim was to create a cabinet favorable to Poland. The support of local Lithuanian activists sympathetic to Poles was counted, but these calculations turned out to be in vain. The attempted assassination was thwarted by the Lithuanian services. Basic information: ŁOSSOWSKI, Piotr. *Konflikt polsko-litewski 1918–1920*. Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1995, pp. 56–57.

<sup>75</sup> See more ŁOSSOWSKI, Piotr. *Stosunki...*, pp. 111–148.

Suwałki region, where the indignation among the local Poles triggered the Entente's proposals to resolve the border dispute, which was unfavorable for Warsaw. When the retreating Germans were replaced by the Lithuanians, an uprising broke out on the night of August 22–23, supported by Polish troops.<sup>76</sup> Sejny was captured, and by September 10 the Foch Line was reached.<sup>77</sup>

The attempt by Lithuanians to regain the Suwałki region ended in failure. Both sides resolved their internal problems and expanded their armed forces.<sup>78</sup> Attempts to reach an agreement and political dialogue, including by Augustinas Voldemaras<sup>79</sup> in Warsaw, brought only a very limited improvement in mutual relations.<sup>80</sup>

The last months of the year on the Lithuanian-Belarusian front were primarily persistent fights between Polish and Soviet troops in the Daugavpils region, which was also the goal of Lithuanians. Ultimately, the city, together with the Citadel, was captured on January 4, 1920, after Polish troops hit in "Operation Winter".<sup>81</sup>

For the political and military authorities in Warsaw, the attitude of the Western powers to the problems of the demarcation line dividing both sides was extremely important. From this point of view, the message of October 27, 1919, sent by Polish envoy in Paris, Maurycy Zamoyski<sup>82</sup> to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, draws attention, noting, inter alia: "The question of the demarcation line between the Polish and Lithuanian troops ceased to interest the Conference. If the Polish authorities wanted

<sup>76</sup> The uprising organized by the Polish Military Organization lasted 5 days (August 22–28, 1919), and after its dramatic course, it culminated in the annexation of the disputed territory to the Polish state. Basic information: ŁOSSOWSKI, Piotr. *Kwestia przynależności państwowej Sejneńszczyzny w latach 1918–1920*. In: *Materiały do dziejów ziemi sejneńskiej*. Białystok: Prace Białostockiego Towarzystwa Naukowego, 1963, p. 358; CENCKIEWICZ, Sławomir. *Tadeusz Katelbach...*, pp. 109–130, especially footnote 385; and MAŃCZUK, Tadeusz. *Z Orłem przeciw Pogoni. Powstanie sejneńskie 1919*. „*Mówią Wieki*”, 2003, No. 12 (258), pp. 32–37.

<sup>77</sup> WISNER, Henryk. *Wojna nie wojna*, p. 135. The staff of the Allied Forces made an attempt to draw the line between Lithuanians and Poles. On July 26, 1919, it obtained the sanction of the Supreme Council of the Entente (see the attached map). It went down in history under the name of the Foch Line. For more see ŁOSSOWSKI, Piotr. *Stosunki...*, pp. 199–240 and *Po tej i tamtej...*, pp. 109–110.

<sup>78</sup> REZMER, Waldemar. *Polsko-litewski...*, pp. 436–437.

<sup>79</sup> VOLDEMARAS, Augustinas V (1883–1942) was a Lithuanian politician, the first Prime Minister of Lithuania in 1919 and again in 1926–1929.

<sup>80</sup> ZULYS, Audrius. *Polska w polityce...*, p. 48.

<sup>81</sup> KO III NDWP, p. 407, see documents 488 and 489, communiqués of January 4 and 5, 1920; See more PRZYBYLSKI, Adam. *Wojna...*, p. 125; JABŁONOWSKI, Marek; STAWECKI, Piotr. *Następca...*, pp. 19–20 and 104–106.

<sup>82</sup> ZAMOYSKI, Maurycy Klemens (1871–1939), coat of arms Jelita, count, 15<sup>th</sup> ordinate in Zamość – a Polish politician, diplomat, social activist, vice-president of the Polish National Committee in Paris, member of the Polish National Committee (1914–1917), in 1918 he became a member of the Committee of the National of Poland in Paris and a member of the Polish delegation to the Paris Conference, then an envoy of the Republic of Poland in Paris (1919–1924); for seven months from January 19, 1924 he held the office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs; in 1922 he owned estates with an area of 190,900 ha. For biography see JANICKA, Joanna. *Maurycy hrabia Zamoyski. Zarys losów życiowych i politycznych oraz wgląd w struktury gospodarcze ordynacji*. Lublin: Norbertinum, 2000.

to change this line, it would be enough to occupy the territory with the army, no one would be arguing about it here [translation].”<sup>83</sup>

The state of mutual contacts in this period seems to be well reflected in the operational communiqués of the Polish Army High Command and other military documents. There is very frequent information about the penetration of Polish and Lithuanian patrols and troops across the demarcation line, which resulted in small skirmishes. Both sides were deeply distrustful.<sup>84</sup> Polish staff officers were afraid of Lithuanian-German or Lithuanian-Soviet cooperation directed against Poland.<sup>85</sup> There were also numerous acts of rape.<sup>86</sup> With the non-existent demarcation line, Polish troops significantly exceeded the Foch Line, Lithuanian attempts to push Poles beyond the above-mentioned line failed.<sup>87</sup>

The first months of 1920 did not bring much information about Lithuanian issues in the communiqués, but it was noted that a small number of Lithuanian troops showed offensive tendencies. This means that the above-mentioned tension was not discharged. It can be briefly assessed that, similarly to the previous quarter, both sides were ready to fight. During the fights wounded were killed and prisoners were taken.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Documents and materials on the history of Polish-Soviet relations, volume II, Warsaw 1961, p. 415.

<sup>84</sup> KO III NDWP, p. 334, see doc. 387, where in the communiqué of September 22, 1919, it was stated “When our troops were engaged in Dyneburg [Dźwińsk], the Lithuanians intend to depart from Dyneburg and attack our rear [translation].” See also the communiqué of September 27, 1919 (KO III NDWP, p. 338, doc. 392) informing about the Lithuanian offensive action: “Lithuanians on the whole front are regrouping their forces, sometimes switching to offensive action. Their troops attacking Owanty [Alunta] (30 km south-east of Wilkomierz [Ukmergė]) were repulsed. In Druskininkai, the Lithuanians forced our outpost to withdraw. Near Kopciowo [Kapčiamiestis] (south-east of Sejny), the Lithuanians are building trenches on both sides of the road [translation].”

<sup>85</sup> The communiqués repeatedly contained information about the concentration of Lithuanian forces directed against Poland and clashes between patrols. See e.g., the communiqué of September 25 (KO III GNI, p. 336, see doc. 390: Eastern section) “Lithuanians concentrate their forces near Jewie [Vievys] (35 km north of Vilnius), Kowale [Kalviai] and Jezno [Jieznas], both places to the north East of Olita [Alytus] [translation]” and the communiqué of September 26 (KO III NDWP, p. 337, see doc. 391: West section) “Lithuanians concentrate their forces in Łoździeje [Lazdijai] (30 km south-east of Kalwaria [Kalvarija])” or the communiqué of January 27, 1920 (KO III NDWP, p. 424, doc. 512: West section) “(...) in the area of Skotliszki [Stakliskes], our patrol encountered a Lithuanian patrol, 2 Lithuanians were killed and our soldier was wounded [translation].”

<sup>86</sup> In the communiqué of September 28, 1919, there was information about rapes on the Polish population (KO III NDWP, p. 339, doc. 393: West section) “north of Grodno to the west of the Nemunas bank, the Lithuanians took the villages of Świętojańsk, Bugirdy, Warwiszki [Varviškė], plundering and murdering the Polish population [translation].”

<sup>87</sup> REZMER, Waldemar. *Polsko-litewski...*, p. 433.

<sup>88</sup> See the communiqué of January 12 (KO III NDWP, p. 412, doc. 496: West section): “Lithuanians attacked our 100-strong unit in Owanty [Alunta], forcing it to retreat east of the village of Szpula. Our response is in progress [translation].” January 13 (KO III NDWP, p. 497, doc. 413: West section) “our troops took Owanty [Alunta] back. To the east of Wojaliszki [Vajasiškis] and in the Pozelwa [Želva] region, the Lithuanians observe us, but with the least action on our part they run away in a panic. As it turns out, Owanty [Alunta] was seized on the order of the Commanders of the Lithuanian Square from Uciana [Utena] [translation].” January 15 (KO III NDWP, pp. 414–415, doc. 499: West section): “according to the testimony of refugees, Lithuanians (the 2nd Infantry Regiment with a battery and an assault detachment) concentrate in the area of Olita [Alytus]. An equally strengthened group was found along the demarcation line in Koniuchy [Kaniūkai], Linki [Linkuva], Sytele, Mejsztucy and Michniuny [Mikniūnai].

This caused, inter alia, the reaction of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>89</sup>

The situation accelerated sharply after the Polish offensive in Ukraine in April. The actions launched against Soviet Russia took a catastrophic turn for Poland in the

On January 14, Lithuanians attacked our outpost in Skotliszki [Stakliškės], forced it to withdraw, killing the Commandant of the station. Our response is in progress [translation];” On January 16 (KO III NDWP, p. 415, doc. 500: West section) “according to the testimony of civilians and own intelligence results, the 1st and 2nd Lithuanian Infantry Regiments arrived in Owanty [Alytus]. After the arrival of the cavalry probably on 15<sup>th</sup> Lithuanians are to start a campaign against us. At Bolniki we repulsed the Lithuanians beyond the demarcation line [translation];” On January 17 (KO III NDWP, p. 416, doc. 501: West section) “according to the testimony of the population, the concentration of Lithuanian troops in Owanty [Alytus] is confirmed. Three infantry battalions and a squadron were to arrive there again. Lithuanians in the vicinity of Merez [Merkinė] arm the population. An artillery ammunition depot has arrived in Wiłkomierz [Ukmergė]. The 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment is expected with a strength of 2,000 people. Lithuanians fired at the manor house in Czabiszki [Čiobiškis] and attacked our outpost in Kadysz [Kadyšas] (15 km south of Kopciowo [Kapčiamiestis]) and took 6 prisoners captive [translation];” On January 18 (KO III NDWP, p. 417, doc. 502: West section) “Lithuanian troops in Dyżany, Owsianiszki [Ausieniškes], Kiejtowiszki [Kietaviškės], and Preny [Prienai] were confirmed by our military intelligence. Lithuanian patrols crossed the demarcation line in Koleśniki [Kalesninkai] but were repulsed. Armored train >>Paderewski<< was attacked from the side of Oława [Alovė] and Meljon, the attack was repulsed [translation];” On January 20 (KO III NDWP, p. 419, doc. 505: West section) “the 4<sup>th</sup> Lithuanian Infantry Regiment moved east to Koszedary [Kaišiadorys]. Its troops are located in the villages of: Kietowiszki [Kietaviškės], Owsianiszki [Ausieniškes], Kozakiszki [Kazokiškės], and Lelany [Leliūnai]. Lithuanians are robbing the Polish people. A delegation from Oława [Alovė] asked for our help. To the south-east of Olita [Alytus], in the village of Butrymowicze, our patrol encountered a Lithuanian patrol. During a two-sided shooting, one Lithuanian soldier was killed, and one was wounded. Two villagers who helped Lithuanians were arrested [translation];” On January 22 (KO III NDWP, p. 420, doc. 507: West section) “a Lithuanian horse patrol attacked our outpost in Butrymowicze. The attack was repulsed. That day our patrol met with a Lithuanian patrol in Skuduziszki, the commander of this the patrol was captured by the Lithuanians, but immediately recaptured by their own people [translation];” On January 24 (KO III NDWP, p. 422, doc. 509: Western section) “our air intelligence discovered a larger group of Lithuanian artillery in the Alytus region;” On February 7 (KO III NDWP, p. 430, doc. 523: West section) “the Lithuanian patrol which tried to cross the demarcation line in the area north-west of Jewie [Vievis], was driven away by a machine gun [translation];” On February 13 (KO III NDWP, p. 434, doc. 529: Western section) “in the area of Szyrwiny [Širvintos] and Muśniki [Musninkai], 5 Lithuanian soldiers of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiments passed to our side [translation];” On March 7 (KO III NDWP, p. 448, doc. 552) “Lithuanians took the village of Skrejciany, but were repulsed beyond the demarcation line [translation];” On March 8 (KO III NDWP, p. 449, doc. 553) “Lithuanians attacked our outpost in the village of Meluny [Mieluny] (5 km north of Oława [Alovė]), but they were forced to retreat [translation];” On March 14 (KO III NDWP, p. 453, doc. 559) “Lithuanians attacked our outpost in the area east of Wiłkomierz [Ukmergė]. The attack was repulsed. Apparently, the revolutionary Lithuanian army, unable to capture Kaunas, march towards Olita [Alytus] to join the 1st Infantry Regiment, transports of weapons and ammunition come to Lithuania from Germany [translation];” On March 25 (KO III NDWP, p. 463, doc. 570) “Lithuanians fired a machine gun at the bridge in Czabiszki [Čiobiškis], and on our side one man was killed [translation];” On March 27 (KO III NDWP, p. 465, doc. 572) “Lithuanians with a force of 25 men with 2 machine guns attacked the village of Grabiały [Grabijolai] (south of Jewie [Vievis]), looting and robbing it. In the area of Aleksandrowo [Aleksandravas] and Dźwińsk [Dyneburg] Lithuanians organize voluntary partisan units, distributing hand weapons, machine weapons, and hand grenades to civilians in the villages [translation];” And on April 16 (KO III NDWP, p. 481, doc. 593) “near Druskininkai, the Lithuanians were starting fire at our outposts. In Antokolec [Antakalniai] (7 km south-east of Wiłkomierz [Ukmergė]), our patrol took 6 prisoners [translation].”

<sup>89</sup> In view of the incidents taking place in the Vilnius and Suwałki regions, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw notified the Entente delegation in January 1920 that in the event of repeated aggressive behavior by the Lithuanian side, military measures necessary for our security would be ordered immediately, see REZMER, Waldemar. *Polsko-litewski...*, p. 437.

following months.<sup>90</sup> The note of the Polish government to the Lithuanian authorities of July 4 on the recognition of the Lithuanian government, which remained largely unanswered, draws attention.<sup>91</sup> These days, in some communiqués, one can find information about the activation of the Lithuanian troops facing the Polish 7<sup>th</sup> Army.<sup>92</sup>

On July 5, the Polish authorities, in view of the extremely difficult situation on the front, decided to ask the Western powers to mediate in the conflict with Soviet Russia. Prime Minister Władysław Grabski<sup>93</sup> went to the Spa Conference. The effects of his mission aroused very mixed feelings. The adopted demarcation line of Daugavpils-Vilnius-Grodno-Brest-Litovsk was assigned to Poland by the Białystok Oblast and part of the Suwałki Governorate. Under pressure from the English, Vilnius was to be temporarily returned to Lithuania. In return, the Western powers, especially England, offered their mediation in concluding a truce with the Bolsheviks.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>90</sup> From the extensive Polish literature on the subject, see PIŁSUDSKI, Józef. Rok 1920. In: *Pisma zbiorowe*. Warsaw, 1937; ŻELIGOWSKI, Lucjan. *Wojna w 1920. Wspomnienia i rozważania*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, 1990; documents: TARCZYŃSKI, Marek; BARTNIK, Andrzej; et al. (Eds.). *Bitwa Warszawska 13–28 VIII 1920. Dokumenty operacyjne (13–17 VIII)*. Volume I. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Rytm, 1996 and *Bitwa Warszawska 13–28 VIII 1920. Dokumenty operacyjne (17–28 VIII)*. Volume II. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Rytm, 1996; TARCZYŃSKI, Marek; BARTNIK, Andrzej; et al. (Eds.). *Bitwa Lwowska 25 VII–18 X 1920. Dokumenty operacyjne (25 VII–5 VIII)*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Rytm, 2002; TARCZYŃSKI, Marek; BARTNIK, Andrzej; et al. (Eds.). *Bitwa Niemeńska 29 VIII–18 X 1920. Dokumenty operacyjne (29 VIII–19 IX)*. Volume I. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Rytm, 1998; studies: MIERZWIŃSKI, Henryk. *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1919–1920*. Biała Podlaska: Instytut Wychowania Fizycznego i Sportu, 1991; CZUBIŃSKI, Antoni. *Walka o granice wschodnie Polski w latach 1918–1921*. Opole: Instytut Śląski w Opolu, 1993; DAVIES, Norman. *Orzeł Biały, Czerwona Gwiazda*. Kraków: Znak, 1998; NOWIK, Grzegorz. *Zanim złamano Enigmę. Polski radiowywiad podczas wojny z bolszewicką Rosją 1918–1920*. Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza RYTM, 2004; WYSZCZELSKI, Lech. *Wojna polsko-rosyjska 1919–1920*. Volumes 1–2. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Bellona, 2010.

<sup>91</sup> In the face of the Soviet attack in May, the Lithuanians decided that in the existing circumstances, much greater benefits (the recognition of the Lithuanian state, settlement of territorial disputes) would bring them an agreement with the Bolsheviks, with whom they had been negotiating in Moscow since May 7, 1920, which ended on July 12 and resulted in the signing of a peace treaty.

<sup>92</sup> On May 31 (KO III NDWP, p. 520, doc. 635) “Lithuanian patrol invaded the village of Kadzuny (4 km north-east of Kukziszki [Kuktiškės]) and on that day the Lithuanians attacked our outposts in the village of Poszeszółka (3 km north-west from Szyszole [Šešuoliai]) then our outposts near Merez [Merkinė], Druskininkai, and Nemejtany (10 km north-east of Skotliszki [Stakliškės]);” On June 2 (KO III NDWP, p. 523, doc. 637) “The Lithuanians were starting fire at our positions near Jewie [Vievis] all day long. They also fired at Poworanty [Pavartėnai] and Baciulańce [Puciłańce] in the Daug region [translation].”

<sup>93</sup> GRABSKI, Władysław Dominik (1874–1938) was a Polish politician, social and independence activist, economist, and historian; in 1905–1912 he was a member of the Russian Duma, member of the Polish National Committee, president of the Central Civic Committee of the Kingdom of Poland in Russia (1915–1918). From October 26 to November 4, 1918, Minister of Agriculture and Crown Goods, member of the Supreme People’s Council in 1918, MP from the National People’s Union (1919–1922), Minister of the Treasury from October 13, 1919, to June 9, 1920, Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland until July 24, 1920. For biography see DROZDOWSKI, Marian Marek. *Władysław Grabski*. Rzeszów: WSliZ, 2002.

<sup>94</sup> For a broader issue of the government’s activities in the period of a sharp deterioration in Poland’s military situation see ŁOSSOWSKI, Piotr. *Kształowanie się państwa polskiego i walka o granice (listopad*

The situation developed dynamically. The concept of assembling a Polish-Lithuanian alliance, in which French representatives were actively involved, was received by Lithuanians with great skepticism.<sup>95</sup> On July 14, Soviet and Lithuanian troops captured Vilnius.<sup>96</sup> This cooperation was possible, because on July 12, a Lithuanian-Soviet peace treaty was signed in Moscow in which the parties agreed, inter alia, that Vilnius would be part of Lithuania. In the ongoing struggle, the Lithuanians decided to be neutral, although they gave Bolshevik Russia permission to use Lithuanian territory in accordance with the needs of the ongoing war.<sup>97</sup> As a result of the development of the events, part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lithuanian-Belarusian Division was taken into captivity in Lithuania. Lithuanian troops occupied the area of the Suwałki region abandoned by Poles (Sejny, July 29). There were numerous incidents.<sup>98</sup> Due to the deep retreat of the Polish troops, their direct contact with the Lithuanian forces was cut off.

From mid-August, the military situation on the war fronts changed dramatically in favor of the Polish side.<sup>99</sup> In the north, Polish troops very quickly found themselves near the demarcation line. Poles, as a condition for talks with Lithuanians, made them

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1918–czerwiec 1921). In: *Historia dyplomacji polskiej, 1918–1939*. Volume IV. Warsaw: PWN, 1995, pp. 146–154. On the prime minister's policy and the situation of the government in July 1920, see also  
<sup>95</sup> ĀTOR, Adam. *Gabinet Władysława Grabskiego, 23.VI.1920–24.VII.1920*. In: FARYŚ, Janusz; PAJEWSKI, Janusz (Eds.) *Gabinety Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*. Szczecin-Poznań: Wydawnictwo Likon, 1991, pp. 66–67; and MORAWSKI, Wojciech. Władysław Grabski, premier rządu polskiego 23.VI.1920–24.VII.1920, 19.XII.1923–14.XI.1925. In: HOJNOWSKI, Andrzej; WRÓBEL, Piotr (Eds.). *Prezydenci i premierzy Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*. Wrocław-Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich, 1992, pp. 123–124.

<sup>96</sup> ŁOSSOWSKI, Piotr. *Kształtowanie się państwa...*, p. 150.

<sup>97</sup> In the opinion of ŁOSSOWSKI, Piotr (*Po tej i tamtej*, p. 137), the Lithuanians reached Vilnius on July 15 after battles with Polish troops, one day after the city was regained by the Soviet army. On the other hand, the operational communiqué of July 16 (KO III NDWP, pp. 576–577, doc. 681) clearly states that also Lithuanian troops entered Vilnius at the same time as the Bolshevik troops.

<sup>98</sup> WISNER, Henryk. *Wojna nie wojna...*, pp. 139–141; REZMER, Waldemar (*Polsko-litewski...*, pp. 440–441) quotes a fragment of a note from the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs G. Chicherin (Tchitcherin) to the Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs J. Purickis from July 19, 1920: "We joyfully greet the joint actions of the Lithuanian and Russian armies against the Polish imperialists [translation]." This situation was aptly defined by J. Piłsudski (Rok 1920. Łódź, 1989, p. 85): "From that moment on, we, Poles, had two wars, instead of one (...) Lithuania emerged from its neutrality and took part on the side of the Soviets [translation]."

<sup>99</sup> REZMER, Waldemar. *Polsko-litewski...*, p. 442.

<sup>99</sup> On the subject of the Battle of Warsaw and its consequences, see footnote 82, moreover, among others: KUKIEL, Marian. *Bitwa Warszawska*. Warsaw: Polski Instytut Wydawniczy, 2005; WYSZCZELSKI, Lech. *Bitwa na przedpolach Warszawy*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Bellona, 2008; ZAMOYSKI, Adam. *Warszawa 1920. Nieudany podbój Europy. Kłeska Lenina*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2009; CISEK, Janusz; PADUSZEK, Konrad; RAWSKI, Tadeusz. *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1919–1921*. Warsaw: Wojskowe Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej, 2010; NOWAK, Andrzej. *Ojczyzna Ocalona. Wojna sowiecko-polska 1919–1920*. Kraków: Biały Kruk, 2012; ŁUKOMSKI, Grzegorz; SZUMIEC-ZIELIŃSKA, Elżbieta. *Zwycięstwo Polski, ocalenie Europy! Bitwa Warszawska 1920 na tle wojny polsko-bolszewickiej 1919–1921*. Łomianki: LTW, 2020.



acknowledge the Foch Line and withdraw from the Suwałki region.<sup>100</sup> The treaty signed in Spa was considered non-binding, as the Poles managed to deal with their opponent on their own. On August 27, the Council for State Defense (see Appendix III) left the Supreme Commander-in-Chief free to proceed with actions in the disputed territories.<sup>101</sup>

The Polish-Lithuanian military confrontation took place in the southern Suwałki region. Lithuanians tried to keep the Grabowo-Augustów-Sztabin line. Polish troops, after the diplomatic intervention of Minister A. Sapieha, began to push them back on August 28.<sup>102</sup> On August 31, the First Legions Infantry Regiment took Augustów without resistance.<sup>103</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> Polish Army launched a march on Suwałki and Sejny, the Foch Line was under siege. Lithuanian troops withdrew without a fight.<sup>104</sup> After a few days, the Lithuanian command decided to try to oust the Polish troops. On September 2, the Lithuanians launched an attack<sup>105</sup> and on September 5, Sejny and the flanked Suwałki

<sup>100</sup> WISNER, Henryk. *op. cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>101</sup> General E. Śmigły-Rydz issued an operational command on August 27, 1920, in Łapy, stating in it, inter alia: “The intention of the Command of the 2nd Army is to free Suwałki from the invasion of the Bolsheviks and to prepare for further offensive combat (...) in order to enable early control of the passages on the Nemunas to the North from Grodno, see *Bitwa warszawska. Dokumenty operacyjne*, part II (August 17–28), elaboration and preparation for printing by a team led by TARCZYŃSKI, Marek. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Rytm, 1996, pp. 691, 721.

<sup>102</sup> The exact composition of the Polish forces, intended to take over the Suwałki region (organization, characteristics of units, numbers) see SMOLEŃSKI, Józef. *Walki polsko-litewskie na Suwalszczyźnie we wrześniu 1920 roku*. Warsaw: Wojskowe Biuro Historyczne, 1938, pp. 51–59; and REZMER, Waldemar. *Polsko-litewski...*, pp. 448 et seq.

<sup>103</sup> The communiqué of August 30, 1920 (KO III NDWP, p. 637, doc. 726) informed about the reception of the units and “standing ovation by the population.” The Lithuanian unit (90 people) encountered near Augustów claimed that it had moved beyond the demarcation line only temporarily and was withdrawing without resistance. SMOLEŃSKI, Józef. *Walki polsko-litewskie...*, p. 65, states that the city was captured on August 28, and also notes that the Lithuanian infantry, which was disarmed by Polish units (3rd Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment), remained there.

<sup>104</sup> See the communiqué of September 1 (KO III NDWP, p. 641, doc. 728: 2) “during the day on August 30, the units of the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade and the 41st Infantry Regiment crossed the Biebrza near Nowa Kamienna and reached the Szczebra-Olszanka area at night from August 30 to 31. The Second Squadron was sent to Sejny. There were no armed clashes with the Lithuanians. Lithuanian troops are retreating to the North as our troops progress. On the rest of the front of the 2nd Army, apart from a two-sided intelligence operation, the situation remained unchanged [translation].”

<sup>105</sup> The communiqué of September 3 informed that (KO III NDWP, p. 644, doc. 730) “at 11 o’clock, 2 Lithuanian companies in Lipowo attacked an outpost of the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment. Our facility has withdrawn. One killed Lithuanian was found. A cavalry officer was sent to the meeting place, which was attacked again by two Lithuanian groups. In order to take Lipów back, the 2nd Infantry Companies of the 41<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment was sent. At 4 p.m. a cavalry regiment in Sejny was attacked. Telephone connection was lost. A group of soldiers has been sent to establish communications. According to reports, the people in Sejny are struggling. On the part of our troops, there was no reason for an armed clash.” In the following days, the Lithuanian pressure increased, see, for instance, the communiqué of September 5 (KO III NDWP, p. 647, doc. 732) “Lithuanians took the town of Gruszki [Hruskie], then attacked with overwhelming forces our company in Sztabin [Štabinas] from the side of Krasny Bór [Krasnybór] and forced it to withdraw towards Augustów (...). According to a further report of the 211<sup>st</sup> Uhlans, Jaminy was captured by Lithuanians. Kolnica (south-east of Augustów) was captured by Lithuanian troops with the force of

were occupied, where persistent fighting continued.<sup>106</sup> The Polish troops responded, while the Lithuanian ones suffered heavy losses and were forced to withdraw.<sup>107</sup> On September 10, Polish troops were again on the Foch Line. Despite the arrangements and the announcement that a truce would take place on the afternoon of September 13, the fighting continued. On the morning of that day, the Lithuanians made another attempt to seize Sejny. This time it was a success.<sup>108</sup> This proves the enormous determination of the Lithuanian side. According to the Polish reconnaissance, in the second half of

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200 bayonets. After taking control of Gruszki [Hruskie] with one battalion and Serski Las with three battalions, the Lithuanians continue their attack in the south-west direction. Lithuanian troops with a force of 1,300 bayonets and 4 cannons took the passage between Lake Serwy and Tobałowo village. Three Lithuanian attacks near Suchorzeczka [Sucha Rzeczkka] finally forced our troops to withdraw to Studzieniczna (...) In Czerwonka, the 7<sup>th</sup> Uhłans Regiment with 2 companies of the 41st Infantry Regiment, repulsed the Lithuanians, who in a panic retreated along the road to Kalwaria [Kalvarija]. Two companies and a half of squadron gave chase. Our prey is: 1 field kitchen and 6 carts. Own losses 1 killed, 2 seriously injured, approx. 40 slightly wounded. According to unverified news, in the area to the north of Suwałki 10 Lithuanian battalions are to be located [translation].”

<sup>106</sup>The communiqué of September 7 (KO III NDWP, p. 650, doc. 734) read “The 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade: in the operation in the Bryzgiel region, Macharce, and Serski Las, the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Uhlan Regiments took 150 prisoners, 8 field kitchens, and 60 carts. Next to Lithuanian Major Romanowski an operational command message was found, on the basis of which it was claimed that the Lithuanians in our section had already engaged 11 battalions from 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiments in the first line. Lithuanian attacks in the Rutka-Tartak area towards Suwałki were repulsed. The town of Jegliniec was captured by Lithuanians (...). Further in the area of Dębniak, the Lithuanians crossed the former line of Russian trenches. Two companies of the 41<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment and half a squadron of the 7<sup>th</sup> Uhłans Regiment, having overcome the Lithuanians’ resistance at Czerwonka, threw them north of Budziak [Budzisko]. The second 2 companies of the same regiment, forced to fight by the Lithuanians in Sidor and Kleszczowskie [Kleszczówek], threw the Lithuanians to Rutka-Tartak and Lubowo, taking 40 prisoners [translation].” Some communiqués emphasized the cooperation of Lithuanians with Soviet troops, as well as with civil authorities created by the Bolsheviks. See, for example, the communiqué of September 8 (KO III NDWP, pp. 651–652, doc. 735) “After prior agreement with the Bolsheviks, the Lithuanians left Lipsk Murowany and retreated through Hołynka in the Sopoćkinie region. The above-mentioned towns were captured by the Bolshevik army. According to the commander’s testimony, the 48<sup>th</sup> Soviet Infantry Regiment, the Nowy Dwór-Kuźnica-Sokółka area was to be given to the Lithuanians. On this matter, the commander of the 6<sup>th</sup> Soviet Division communicated with a Lithuanian dignitary, first in Lipsk, then in Grodno. Lithuanians took over the Grodno-Vilnius railway line and pass all Bolshevik transports. The collaboration of Lithuanians with the Bolsheviks was found in Lipsk, where the Bolsheviks had their telephone post (the latter message comes from a representative of the French mission) [translation].”

<sup>107</sup>The communiqué of September 9 (KO III NDWP, p. 654, doc. 736). The withdrawal of the Lithuanian troops without a fight was most likely caused by the significant advantage of the Polish troops. On the subject of losses see broadly J. Smoleński, *op. cit.*, pp. 96–123.

<sup>108</sup>The communiqué of September 14 (KO III NDWP, p. 660, doc. 741): “At 8:00 o’clock, on September 13, Lithuanians in the strength of one battalion with an armored car attacked Sejny from the east and from the north-east. After fierce two-hour battle, the 3rd Uhłans Regiment was forced to withdraw from Sejny. At the same time, Lithuanian intelligence troops approached Giby and Krasnopol. The 3rd Cavalry Regiment captured the Skustełe [Kustełe]-Daniłowce line to Lake Białe (...). The Lithuanians brought in 2nd, 3rd, and 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiments. During the night our units retreated along the Czarna Hańcza river [translation].” It should be noted that the Polish side in the communiqués of September 12 and 13 (KO III NDWP, pp. 657–659, doc. 739 and 740) informed about the concentration of Lithuanian troops. See also J. Smoleński, *op. cit.*, pp. 247–269.

September, despite the ceasefire, they grouped their forces (10 infantry regiments) on the section from the Prussian border to Sopoćkinie.<sup>109</sup>

The described events did not end the Polish-Lithuanian confrontation in the fall of 1920. The directive of the Polish Commander-in-Chief on the Battle of the Nemunas assumed the breach of the Soviet defense along the lines of the Grodno ports and the Svislach river.<sup>110</sup> The planned maneuver of the left wing of the Polish troops, consisting in crossing the Nemunas (below Grodno) and flanking the Soviet troops from the north (Suwałki-Sejny region) was of fundamental importance. This meant that Polish troops had to march through the territory acquired by Lithuanian troops (the Sejny-Druskininkai axis),<sup>111</sup> and the aim was to destroy them to such an extent that they would not be able to threaten the implementation of the operation. In short, Poland decided to violate Lithuania's neutrality. After the regrouping of troops, the operation began on September 22.<sup>112</sup> The Polish troops struck with all the force they could. The 1<sup>st</sup> Legions Infantry Division broke through the Lithuanian front, followed by the 1<sup>st</sup> Lithuanian-Belarusian Infantry Division. About 1,000 prisoners were taken, including 30 officers, 2 field batteries, and 1 heavy battery.<sup>113</sup> The Lithuanians suffered a complete defeat during the largest military confrontation of the two countries in 1920. Polish troops achieved their goals, which brought them success in the long run.<sup>114</sup> The shield forces of the Polish troops reached

<sup>109</sup>SADOWSKI, Jan. *Studia taktyczne z historii wojny polskiej 1918–20*. Volume VIII. Warsaw: Wojskowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1928, p. 6 and REZMER, Waldemar. *Polsko-litewski...*, pp. 452–453.

<sup>110</sup>For a discussion of the order of the Commander-in-Chief No. 1 / III of September 19, 1920, the establishing of groups to attack and assigning tasks, see *Studia taktyczne...*, pp. 1–6.

<sup>111</sup>On September 18, 1920, the Commander of the 2nd Army of the Polish Army, General E. Śmigły-Rydz, issued the operational command No. 55 specifying the probable date of the German operation, on the previous day informing the commanders of tactical unions subordinate to him about the direction and purpose of the planned tasks, he ordered: "Stop the Lithuanian front near Augustów, repulse Lithuanians to the north, overwhelm the 2nd brigade with the crossings on the Nemunas near Druskininkai and this way perform an army wing group (...) maneuver towards the rear of the Russians, hitting their reserve [translation];" see TARCZYŃSKI, Marek; BARTNIK, Andrzej; et al. (Eds.). *Bitwa Niemeńska 29 VIII–18 X 1920. Dokumenty operacyjne*. Volume I. Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytm, 1998, pp. 455–456. The preparation of the attack on the Lithuanian front, the organization, the characteristics of the units, and the action plans of the commanders of large units are presented by SMOLEŃSKI, Józef. *Walki polsko-litewskie...*, pp. 247–269.

<sup>112</sup>On the military aspects of the operation, see REZMER, Waldemar. *Polsko-litewski...*, pp. 454–457.

<sup>113</sup>The communiqué of September 23 (KO III NDWP, p. 673, doc. 750): "At noon, our troops, abandoning their defensive position against the Lithuanian troops, despite their aggressiveness, switched to offensive action. The troops of the 1<sup>st</sup> Legionary Division, having broken the resistance of the Lithuanians near the town of Giby and carrying out a wing attack from the north, took Sejny. So far, the counted capture is 1,000 prisoners, including 30 officers, 2 field batteries, and 1 heavy battery. Currently, the 1<sup>st</sup> Legionary Division together with the 19<sup>th</sup> Lithuanian-Belarusian Division continues the march on Druskininkai."

<sup>114</sup>Subsequent materials prepared by the 3rd Division informed about the withdrawal and losses of Lithuanians, see e.g., the communiqué of September 24 (KO III NDWP, p. 674, doc. 751): "The units of the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade and 1<sup>st</sup> Legionary Division, having reached the Druskininkai region yesterday, march on Marcińkańka. The bridge in Druskininkai, defended by 50 Lithuanians, was captured by the 3rd Cavalry Regiment, who took 13 Lithuanians. The rest fled towards Merez [Merkinė]. During the march from Kopciów to Druskininkai, 2 cannons were taken," the communiqué of September 25 (KO

the Foch Line.<sup>115</sup> The Polish side, in the face of the military victory, agreed to bear the political costs related to the negative international reactions that must have been caused by the violation of the territory controlled by Lithuanians.

Face-to-face conversations were not interrupted. The ones that took place in September were to no avail. The conference in Suwałki turned out to be of key importance. As a result of the talks, an agreement was signed on October 7. The Polish delegation agreed to establish a demarcation line along the Nemunas-Orany[Varena]-Ejszyszki[Eišiškės]-Bastuny line, which meant leaving Vilnius on the Lithuanian side.<sup>116</sup>

During the meeting in Suwałki, the name of Orany [Varena] was repeated many times.<sup>117</sup> A railway connection ran through this town, through which Lithuanians could transfer military reinforcements from the Suwałki region to the Vilnius region. The Polish military decided to prevent this. On October 3, after fierce fighting, the railway station in Orany [Varena] was in Polish hands.<sup>118</sup> Attempts to get it back were unsuccessful. The importance of this fact became clear a few days later, when the Lithuanian-Belarusian division, commanded by General Lucjan Żeligowski,<sup>119</sup> “revolted”

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III NDWP, p. 675, doc. 752): “A group consisting of the 1<sup>st</sup> Lithuanian-Belarusian Division, 19<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, and the 2nd Cavalry Brigade took the village and the Porzecze railway station, defended by the 7<sup>th</sup> Lithuanian Regiment and 2 squadrons of the Bolshevik cavalry. An armored train under steam, 300 prisoners, and railway material were captured. Part of the 7<sup>th</sup> Lithuanian Regiment retreated to Grodno and Stara Ruta” and the communiqué of September 26 (KO III NDWP, p. 677, doc. 753): “Communication with the 2nd Cavalry Brigade, which was supposed to stay overnight in the area of Stara Ruda, has not been established so far.” SMOLEŃSKI, Józef. *Walki polsko-litewskie...*, pp. 433–448.

<sup>115</sup> In the communiqués of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, it was emphasized that the Polish troops were following the retreating Lithuanians towards the Foch Line. It was emphasized that with a clear order not to exceed it. See the communiqués of September 30 (KO III NDWP, p. 682, doc. 757): “In the northern section, the withdrawal of Lithuanian troops from Smolyan to the Prussian border was recorded. Own patrols follow the Lithuanians to the Foch Line with a clear order not to exceed” and of October 1 (KO III NDWP, p. 683, doc. 758) “On the section from Sejny to the Prussian border, our troops, following the Lithuanian patrols captured Połokoty [Pólkoty]-Sztabinki-Kompocie-Trakiszki-Żyrwiny-Majdan-Potopy [translation].”

<sup>116</sup> WISNER, Henryk. *op. cit.*, pp. 144–145, see *Powstanie II Rzeczypospolitej...* doc. 302, pp. 599–600.

<sup>117</sup> ŁOSSOWSKI, Piotr. *Po tej i tamtej stronie...* pp. 156–157.

<sup>118</sup> In the communiqué of October 4 (KO III NDWP, p. 684, doc. 761) it was noted that: “The volunteer division relieved by the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was moved northward and on October 3 at 10 a.m. it took the Orany [Varéna] railway station, capturing 1 new undamaged Lithuanian armored train, 1 broad-gauge wagon train, and a locomotive [translation].”

<sup>119</sup> ŻELIGOWSKI, Lucjan (1865–1947) was an infantry Colonel of the Army of the Russian Empire and a general of arms of the Polish Army, participant in the wars for independence and borders in 1918–1920, Knight of the Order of Virtuti Militari, army inspector, Minister of Military Affairs in 1925, retired in 1927. See more KRYSKA-KARSKI, Tadeusz, and ŻURAKOWSKI, Stanisław. *Generałowie ...*, p. 27; STAWECKI, Piotr. *Słownik biograficzny...*, pp. 373–374, biography: FABISZ, Dariusz. *Generał Lucjan Żeligowski, 1865–1947. Działalność wojskowa i polityczna*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2007.

(August 8) and took Vilnius. On October 12, the Central Lithuania was established – a formally independent state body, informally dependent on Poland.<sup>120</sup>

Due to the aforementioned “revolt,” information about the activities of the Żeligowski Division was not discussed in the following days and weeks in the communiqués issued by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division of the Supreme Command of the Polish Army.<sup>121</sup>

## Conclusions

In a nutshell, a few general remarks should be made:

The revolutions in Russia and the military defeat of the Romanov Empire and, shortly thereafter, of the Central Powers, and then the growing wave of social revolts, created a situation of a kind of “vacuum” in Central and Eastern Europe. This was conducive to the realization of awakened national aspirations and it concerned, inter alia, Poles and Lithuanians. One had to have the strength and show tremendous determination to raise and maintain the “power lying in the street.”

The year 1918 was the end of the complicated process of the restitution of nation states in Central and Eastern Europe. The profound political, socio-cultural, and economic changes that took place in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries meant that it was largely a process of creating “new” states, and not a simple restitution of old solutions. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Poland and Lithuania, bearing in mind the historical continuity decisive for the survival of societies deprived of the state, preserving and building their cultural distinctiveness, did not want to create a simple copy of the former Polish Republic in any aspect.

The problem of the identity of the Vilnius and Suwałki regions, situated in the north-eastern Borderlands, became the source of a conflict that politicians in Warsaw and Kaunas did not manage to overcome during the formation of the foundations of the independence of both countries. Attempts to reach an agreement in this matter did not bring any results.

<sup>120</sup> Central Lithuania was incorporated into Poland on April 8, 1922. Basic literature on the subject: JĘDRZEJEWICZ, Waław. Litwa Środkowa i jej życie wewnętrzne (1920–1922). *Niepodległość*, 1983, Volume 16, p. 26; ŁOSSOWSKI, Piotr. Akcja gen. Lucjana Żeligowskiego na Wilno w 1920 r. Prawda i fikcje. *Niepodległość*, Volume XLVII, 1995, pp. 111–128; KRAJEWSKI, Zenon. *Geneza i dzieje wewnętrzne Litwy Środkowej (1920–1922)*. Lublin: Ośrodek Studiów Polonijnych i Społecznych PZKS, 1996; KOLARZ, Beata. *Ustrój Litwy Środkowej w latach 1920–1922*. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2004; GIEROWSKA-KAŁLAUR, Joanna. Litwa Środkowa (1920–1922). *Zeszyt Naukowy Muzeum Wojska w Białymstoku*, 2005, Issue 18, pp. 117–125; ŁACH, Wiesława. „Bunt” Żeligowskiego. *Kulisy przyłączenia Wileńszczyzny do Polski 1920–1922*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Bellona, 2014.

<sup>121</sup> Initially, in the communiqué of October 9 (KO III NDWP, p. 691, doc. 766), it was stated that communication with General Żeligowski’s group was broken. Later, the communiqués of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division did not mention the activities of the units subordinate to General Żeligowski. The Vilnius operation (October 8–9, 1920) and the combat of the Central Lithuania army with the forces of Kaunas Lithuania are discussed by REZMER, Waldemar. *Polsko-litewski...*, pp. 457–467.

Lithuanians, creating their own state, rejected the Polish proposals to establish union ties. They were afraid of Polish cultural influences and demographic and military advantage. They chose the road to independence, although in order to do so, they had to seek agreements with Germany and Soviet Russia. Poles underestimated their attachment to the issue of their own state and the achievements they had accomplished in this field. Poland's efforts to win over Lithuania as an ally ended in failure.

The specificity of Poland's activity in the period of creating the state and building its borders (and this also applies to relations with Lithuania) was that military activities were intertwined with diplomatic efforts. Poland, like most of the newly emerging countries of Central and Eastern Europe, fought *manu militari* for its borders, creating a strong and well-equipped army.

During military operations in the Borderlands, Poles and Lithuanians made mistakes in their mutual relations. In addition to clashes of military divisions, numerous lootings took place, and there were casualties on both sides. Lithuanians did not remain neutral during the Polish-Bolshevik war. After the victory at Warsaw and their return to Lithuanian-Belarusian lands, the Poles broke the ceasefire agreement signed with the Lithuanians, and the subject of the dispute was taken over Vilnius by the allegedly rebellious troops subordinate to L. Želigowski. This fact became one of the main arguments of the Lithuanian side, which in subsequent years accused Poles of treason.

Traced military aspects of Polish-Lithuanian relations in the years 1919–1920, the accumulation of which took place in the autumn of 1920, contributed to the creation of the border, considered by the Lithuanians only as a demarcation line. Consequently, it was not marked out in the field. In 1923, the line was sanctioned internationally.

After several years of armed struggle for the independence and borders, diplomatic efforts, successes, failures, and mistakes, the Second Republic of Poland (II Rzeczpospolita) was shaped as a relatively large country with vast borders reaching the Baltic and the Daugava River in the north. The geopolitical situation of the state in the years 1918–1939 (due to the complicated relations with its neighbors, including Lithuania) was difficult, full of short-term disputes and serious threats. From the perspective of 1939, it turned out that it did not have friendly countries in its immediate vicinity on which it could rely in times of danger and war.

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# Lenkijos ir Lietuvos ginčo dėl šiaurės rytų pasienio kariniai aspektai (1919–1920): Lenkijos perspektyva

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## Santrauka

1918 metais Lenkijos Respublika, per pusantrą šimtmečio atsigavusi po baudžiamosios, konfliktavo ne tik su buvusiomis dalijančiomis valdžiomis, bet ir su jų griuvėsiuose besikuriančiomis naujomis tautinėmis valstybėmis. Lietuviai, kurdami savo valstybę, atmetė siūlymą grįžti prie Lenkijos ir Lietuvos sąjungos idėjos. Jie pasirinko valstybinės nepriklausomybės kelią, nors dėl šio sprendimo dažnai teko ieškoti susitarimų su Vokietija ir Sovietų Rusija. Vilniaus ir Suvalkų regionų tautiškumo problema tapo abiejų šalių konflikto šaltiniu. Bandymai susitarti šiuo klausimu buvo bergždi. Lietuviai, kurdami savo valstybę, atmetė Lenkijos pusės pateiktus pasiūlymus. Lenkai neįvertino lietuvių prisirišimo prie savo suvereniteto ir pasiekimų šioje srityje. 1920 m. rudenį kulminaciją pasiekę 1919–1920 m. Lenkijos ir Lietuvos santykių kariniai aspektai prisidėjo prie sienos, lietuvių laikomos tik demarkacine linija, sukūrimo. 1923 m. ši linija buvo pripažinta tarptautiniu mastu.

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